THE

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

OR,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY, SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC, GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES OF THE BIBLE.

BY

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK.

FORMATION OF THE GOSPELS.—Christ our Lord was the great subject of the teaching of the apostles. They began, generally speaking, as we see them in the *Acts of the Apostles*, with His resurrection from the dead; they knew His resurrection to be effected, from personal experience; and by saying over and over again that they had seen Him risen, they carried conviction at last to the minds of their hearers. Then they went on to describe His crucifixion, and its wonderful meaning for the lost race of man. Besides this, they appear to have repeated, in a simple way, what they had seen our Lord do, and had heard Him say, during the years of their companionship with Him,—thus giving, indirectly, but most fully, a complete impression of His character. And here, as it seems, we have the true account of the way in which the experience came to be written. Looking to the composition of the Gospels, looking to their structural method, it is hardly probable that each evangelist sat down one day to write his narrative straight off, as a modern writer might sit down to write a book from memory, or out of the contents of old documents lying before him. The Gospels are evidently made up of the contemporary preaching of the apostles, and their difference in method and style is largely to be accounted for by the difference in the audiences the apostles addressed. St. Matthew, no doubt, preached in Judea, and to populations who required, first of all, to be satisfied that Jesus corresponded to the Messiah of prophecy; hence his frequent "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." St. Mark takes notes from the preaching of St. Peter to audiences which were still Jewish, but more in contact than those of Judea with the Greek and Roman world. St. Luke grouped together those features of our Lord's work and teaching, which were repeated again and again in the cities of Greece and Asia Minor, as illustrating the aspects of the redemption especially insisted on by St. Paul. St. John supplies what earlier narratives had omitted; in his Gospel we have the record of a teaching addressed to the populations, whether at Ephesus or elsewhere, deeply influenced by Alexandrian modes of thought. The Gospels, as we have them, grew out of the oral teaching of the apostles, and were reduced to writing, to order, to system, either (as in the case of the first and the last) by the apostles themselves, or (as in that of the other two) by persons in their confidence. This will explain differences of order in the narratives, the repetitions, the expansions, even some of the apparent discrepancies. The Gospels are not systematized narratives; they are collections of popular instructions on the birth, work, words, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, addressed by those who had lived with Him from His baptism to His ascension, to the various populations whose conversion or edification they were engaged in promoting. (*Canon Liddon.*)

THE ORAL AND THE WRITTEN GOSPELS.—We may fairly take the following conclusions as established. That the apostles of Christ felt it to be their main duty to *preach* Christ, not to write about Him; that they were disposed to speak rather than to write, by character, by habit, by all the influences of their time and race: That, consequently, the original Gospel was rather an oral tradition than a written book:

That this oral tradition was *historic*, setting forth in a lively and natural way the things which Jesus said and did: That it was the theme and substance of their Discourses and of their Epistles: That the constant delivery of this oral Gospel was a Divine expedient for teaching them what of all they remembered concerning Christ was most potent on the hearts and minds of men, and so for securing a more perfect written Gospel when the time for writing had come: That in the four written Gospels—four and yet one—we have a record of the deeds and words of Christ in the fullest accord with the message originally delivered by the apostles: And that whosoever believes in the blameless life and beneficent ministry of Christ, in His death for our sins, and in His resurrection as the crowning proof of life everlasting, holds a true and adequate Gospel. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

GOSPEL AND GOSPELS.—It is a matter of interest and significance that, in the biblical records, we have not only *gospel* but *Gospels*. We have *gospel*, running like a golden thread through the whole Bible, connecting history, precept, proverb, prophecy, and binding the entire constituents of "the volume of the Book" into unity. We should certainly have had no Bible at all had there been no *gospel*. But in particular portions of the progressive revelation the golden gospel line becomes doubled as it were, or trebled, or multiplied in some still higher ratio. The whole texture of certain paragraphs or large sections gleams and glows with *gospel*. Such are the Messianic Psalms. Such is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. And such, of course, are the four Gospels of the New Testament. The *gospel* is so efflorescent in these *Gospels* that the lovers of the Bible have, from a very early period of the Christian era, agreed to call them, 'par excellence,' *the Gospels*. (*James Morison, D.D.*)

ORIGINS.—People are eager to hear about the latest excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, cities on the slopes of Vesuvius, which were destroyed (before the end of St. Paul's life) in A.D. 63. The Gospel documents are of more consequence than Pompeii and Herculaneum. They, too, have been dug out, in a sense, almost within the memory of man. History is the field of their excavation. The ashes of exploded theories—the lava-streams of controversy and dogma—have, in times past, submerged the origin of the New Testament; indeed, I think they have scarcely cooled down yet, for the angry subsoil still smoulders with theological rancour whenever it is stirred. Still, there is at length a set resolve on the part of the people to get at what lies beneath the surface. The Christian world of the nineteenth century is asking—not what it is possible to induce people to believe about the Christian records of the first and second centuries, chief among which stand the four Gospels—but what is *true*. Now, what is true is, to some extent, *certainly* known, and may, to some extent, be *probably* inferred. We must transport ourselves in imagination to Jerusalem in the first century; we must follow the written rills of narrative, then the oral freshets of tradition wherever we come upon them; we must take our divining-rod of sound historical criticism and mark jealously the spots where the living streams gush forth; we must follow the direction they take, until, in a few short years, they are seen to converge and swell into the Gospel rivers of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*. The Crucifixion took place about A.D. 33, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar—up to that time there is no trace of a written Gospel. The Acts give a retrospect from 33 to about 63 when Nero's monstrous reign was drawing to a close. The main points stand out with considerable distinctness. We note the Church's comparative peace—the rise of persecution, the first martyrdom, the first imprisonments, the growing differences between the old Jews and the Judeo-Christians — between the Judeo-Christians like James of Jerusalem, and the Greek and Roman Christians like Paul and his followers. Still there is no written Gospel. St. Paul scours the Mediterranean from 54 to 67-9,

founds his churches in Asia Minor and at Rome, writes his Epistles, and disappears about 68-9. Still there is no written Gospel. Meanwhile, what was going on at Jerusalem? . . . . Early in 68 the little band of Christians fled to the mountains beyond Jordan, and settled on the other side of the Peraea hills, at Pella. . . . . Shall we look once more and for the last time upon the faces of that saintly group —upon the aged mother of our Lord—upon Lazarus, perchance upon Nicodemus, Nathaniel, Joseph of Arimathea, and the Marys who ministered unto Jesus in the days of His earthly career? Some, if not all, of these, must have been among the refugees at Pella. Undoubtedly they had the evangelic tradition — chaste guardians of the sacred relics, second founders of Christianity—and all who wished to know about Jesus would make a pilgrimage to visit these holy personages, around whose heads the aureole was already beginning to gather. Apostles and evangelists must have been there—remnants of the twelve and of the seventy sent out two and two—and Peter must have paid his farewell visit, previous to his departure for Italy. Matthew may have been there more than once when collecting materials for a Gospel, or perchance the *Logia*, "sayings," of Christ which went by his name. O far-off light that for ever hangs over those distant Peraean hills! O heavenly radiance that for ever rests upon those saintly faces! O distant voices still echoing down the ages, ye will be for ever dear and sacred to all who love the Divine Master! Truly as we follow in imagination that little group of obscure Jews, in that lonely mountain village, we can almost see the springs of evangelic history bubbling up from the virgin soil, a thousand little rills of tradition flowing from those distant hills, until they find their congenial channels, and flow forth to line with their four silver streaks the whole field of future history. From mouth to mouth were the words and deeds of Jesus passed by the Christian exiles of Pella. The little forms of oft-repeated words (bunches of sentences) would have a tendency to fix themselves. The most happy and expressive would be apt to suffer but little variation, but no one would be in a hurry to write them down—what is deeply engraved upon the heart need not be written. We do not write down our central thoughts for fear of forgetting them; but we are ready to repeat them at any time. As one after another Evangelist or Apostle passed out into the world to teach, he might bear with him little "forms of sound words"; the oft-repeated sentences would doubtless get written down in time, especially when Epistles came to be sent round. Between the years 66 and 70 there were probably a great many of these groups of evangelic sentences—acts, incidents of Christian life—floating about all over Asia Minor, along the line of Paul's great missionary voyages. Not a Jewry from Jerusalem to Rome (and, even before the dispersion of the Jews, little Jewish quarters were to be found in most Greek and Roman cities) but would have some bunches of sayings, miracles, parables, anecdotes, episodes in the life of Jesus. . . . At once we see that dislocated fragments of the same, or similar, utterances have been in the hands of the different compilers, sometimes with a context, sometimes without; that selections more or less appropriate have been made, according to the method, opportunity, capacity, or even literary taste, or absence of literary taste, in the sacred compiler. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*)

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.—The writers of the first three Gospels deal in the main with the same parts of our Lord's life-history, and hence their writings may be read side by side for illustration of each other. For this reason these Gospels have been called *synoptic*, *i.e.*, comprehended in one view. They narrate events which took place for the most part in Galilee and the lands adjacent thereto, and speak of no visit made by Jesus to Jerusalem, except that final one, which was terminated by the Crucifixion. For the history of His other visits to the Holy City, we have only the accounts given in the Gospel of St. John. The question arises, How can this similarity be accounted for? And how, with so much similarity, does it come

to pass that there are such great differences? First of all, the resemblances are so many and so close, that we must admit at once, in spite of the different arrangement of the materials, that what we are reading was in some way drawn by the three evangelists from a common source. But the differences in their narratives are also very striking. In those portions which are most completely common to all three, each writer omits some things and adds others which give a special character to his version of the Gospel history. Compare, *e.g.*, the three accounts of the Transfiguration. In the seven or eight verses devoted to this event by each evangelist, the great lines of the picture are the same in all. Yet St. Matthew alone tells of the shining of the face of Jesus, and that He touched the disciples to rouse them after the vision was over. It is St. Mark alone who compares the whiteness of the Lord's raiment to snow, and adds the graphic detail, "so as no fuller on earth can white them"; while St. Luke is the only one who records that the visit to the mount of Transfiguration was made for the purpose of private prayer; that Moses and Elias, in their discourse, spake of our Lord's approaching Passion; and that the disciples of Jesus were overcome by sleep. Yet amid these and other minor variations, what we may term the salient points of the history, the expression of St. Peter that it was good to be there, and the words spoken by the heavenly voice, are in such close accord that they might be supposed, if standing alone, to have been drawn from the same document, or at all events, to be different close translations of the same original. Hence some have suggested an original Gospel in Aramaic, as a means of accounting for such exact agreement where it exists. But such near resemblances are but few in each section of the common story, while the variations are numerous. We cannot, therefore, believe that the form of the synoptic Gospels is to be explained by supposing that the writers had some common materials from which to translate. And in the setting (as we may name it) of the events which he relates, each evangelist differs so much from his fellows, that it is impossible to conceive that any of the three made, after any sort, a copy from the others. We are therefore driven to consider the way in which the Gospel narrative was first published, to see if that may help us to an explanation. The first converts heard Christ's life-history by word of mouth. After the day of Pentecost the apostles and disciples went forth preaching, but did not at once set about writing a Gospel. As they preached, they would tell, now of one phase of the Lord's words and works, and now of another, as best suited their purpose, adding such exhortations as seemed needful. That this was so we can see from *Acts*. When the hearers of these first Christian sermons became interested, that which they would most desire to remember would be what the Master had said and done. Of these things narratives would from time to time be written; but as the speakers would not always in the same account preserve exactly the same phraseology, it is easy to see how narratives might become current, varying, within certain limits, in their words. The chief matters, and those on which lessons were to be specially founded, would be kept always very much the same, but the rest of the diction might be modified in various ways. The variations which appear in parallel portions of these three Gospels are just such as oral teaching, oft repeated, might be expected to exhibit; for we should bear in mind that the oral tradition of the Gospel history was different from any other oral tradition with which we are acquainted. It was not the transmission of a narrative through different mouths, and at distant intervals of time; it was a repetition, by the same persons, of the same story, almost day by day. And thus, from the preaching of the apostles, resulted the close resemblances in the separate histories of Jesus. The Gospels, in their variety and in their simplicity, are a true picture of what the first teachers must have spoken; and the differences which we thus accept, in the language used by those who were eye-witnesses of Christ's life, and fitted by His Spirit to be ministers of the Word, are not without their lesson. They tell

of unity, but show that uniformity is by no means necessary thereto. (*J. R. Lumby, D.D.*)

RELATION TO ST. MATTHEW AND ST. LUKE.—The Gospels of St. Mark and St. Matthew have so much in common, sometimes with each other only, sometimes with St. Luke also, that it is clear that they must have drawn more or less from a common source. Nothing, however, can be more against the whole tenor of internal evidence than the hypothesis that St. Mark epitomised from St. Matthew, or that St. Matthew expanded from St. Mark. The narrative of the second Gospel is in almost every instance fuller than that of the first, and its brevity is obtained only by the absence of the discourses and parables which occupy so large a portion of the other. On either of these assumptions the perplexing variations in the order of events are altogether inexplicable; comp. *e.g.*, Matt. viii. with Mark i. 4, 5. What is, with our scanty *data*, the most probable explanation is, that the matter common to both represents the substance of the instruction given orally to disciples in the Church of Jerusalem and other Jewish-Christian communities coming, directly or indirectly, under the influence of St. Peter and St. James, as the apostles of the Circumcision (Gal. ii. 9). The miracles that had most impressed themselves on the minds of the disciples, the simplest or most striking parables, the narratives of the Passion and Resurrection, would naturally make up the main bulk of that instruction. St. Matthew, the publican apostle, conversant with clerkly culture, writing for his own people, closely connected with James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, would naturally be one exponent of that teaching. St. Mark, the disciple and "interpreter," or secretary, of St. Peter, would as naturally be another. That they wrote independently of each other is seen, not only in the addition of new facts, the graphic touches of description, but from variations which would be inexplicable on any other assumption; such, *e.g.*, as Mark's *Dalmanutha* for Matthew's *Magdala*, *Syro-Phœnician woman* for *Canaanite*, *Levi, the son of Alphæus*, for *Matthew*. Short as the Gospel is, too, there is one parable in it (iv. 26–29), and one miracle (vii. 31–37), which are not found in St. Matthew. It is remarkable, moreover, that there are some incidents which St. Mark and St. Luke have in common, and which are not found in St. Matthew: that of the demoniac in chap. i. 23–27; Luke iv. 33–37; the journey through Galilee; the pursuit of the disciples; the prayer of the demoniac; the complaint of John against one that cast out devils; the women bringing spices to the sepulchre. Of these phenomena we find a natural and adequate explanation in the fact that the two evangelists were, at least at one period of their lives, brought into contact with each other (Col. iv. 10, 14; Philem. verse 24). It is probable that neither wrote his Gospel in its present form until the two great apostles whom they served had entered on their rest; but when they met each must have had the plan formed and the chief materials collected, and we may well think of them as comparing notes, and of the one, whose life had led to less culture, and whose temperament disposed him to record facts rather than parables or discourses, as profiting by his contact with the other, and while content to adhere to the scope and method which he had before marked out for himself, adding here and there what he learnt from his fellow-worker whose "praise was in the Gospel" (2 Cor. viii. 18). (*Dean Plumptre.*)

THE SECOND GOSPEL CONFIRMS THE FIRST.—In those passages where St. Mark's narrative coincides in substance and language with that of St. Matthew, he rarely fails to introduce some slight incident, marking his own minute personal acquaintance with what he is relating. Consequently, he repeats St. Matthew, not because he does not know, of his own individual knowledge, the truth of what he is writing, but because he does know it; and because he also knows that his predecessor St. Matthew has given a faithful account of it: and therefore he adopts that account;

and this adoption, by such a writer, is the strongest confirmation of the truth of the narrative of St. Matthew which he adopts. Surely this was a wise course of procedure. It was one that might well have been suggested to the evangelist St. Mark by the Holy Spirit of truth. The Holy Ghost Himself had inspired the Evangelist St. Matthew, who had proved his love for Christ by leaving all for His sake; and who, as one of the chosen Twelve, was a constant companion of Christ, and thus, in human respects, was a competent witness of His actions; and who received the supernatural effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and was led by Him into all truth, and was enabled by Him to remember what Christ had said to the apostles. Therefore the Gospel of St. Matthew was the work of the Holy Ghost. Doubtless the Apostle St. Matthew was chosen by Divine providence, on account of his personal graces and qualifications, as a fit instrument for the work of an evangelist; but in writing a Gospel for the perpetual edification of the Church, he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, and accordingly his Gospel has ever been acknowledged by the Spirit of God, speaking in the Church, and receiving that Gospel as divinely-inspired Scripture. In like manner, St. Mark was prepared for the work of an evangelist by human discipline and earthly opportunities; but his Gospel is the work of the Holy Ghost. We should therefore be taking a low and erroneous view of the subject if we were to say that St. Mark *copied* St. Matthew, or that the Holy Spirit *transcribed* any passage of a human writer. The true statement of the case is this. The Holy Spirit, Who had been pleased to choose and to employ the appropriate instrumentality of St. Matthew to write the first of the four Gospels, chose also and employed the appropriate agency of St. Mark for the work of an evangelist; and by his instrumentality He vouchsafed to *repeat* some portions of that sacred message which He, the same Spirit, had been pleased to deliver by St. Matthew; and thus, by choosing *fit* instruments for the work, He condescended to give such evidence of the truth of the Gospel as would be of weight with reasonable men, arguing on earthly premises and considerations; and at the same time by *repeating* in a second Gospel what He had spoken in a preceding one, He imparted greater solemnity to what had been uttered, and gave to the world the strongest assurance of its truth by this *reiteration*, and showed by this specimen that though the Gospels written by St. Matthew and St. Mark had not only a general design for the edification of all, but also a special purpose and peculiar direction—the one being intended particularly for Jewish readers, the other specially for Romans, and for a mixed society of Gentiles and Jews; yet that in substance, and also in great measure in letter, there is one and the same Gospel for all. This process of *repetition* is by no means derogatory to the dignity of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, it is one of the characteristics of Inspiration. It pervades the whole volume of Revelation. It is a consequence of the dignity of the subject, and of the love of God, who desires to afford the clearest proofs of the truth of what He delivers, and of its unspeakable importance to man. (*Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.*)

TITLE.—The Gospel ascribed to St. Mark was neither by himself, nor by the subsequent compilers of the New Testament canon, designated *the Gospel "of" Mark*. The word *gospel* was not specifically employed, in the time of the evangelists, to denote a particular kind of book or biography. It had a more generic import. It meant *good news;* and just because it had that meaning, it was specially applied by Christians to the best of all good news, the news regarding Jesus Christ as the Divine Saviour of sinners. Hence the united compositions of the four evangelists were often, in the post-apostolic ages, called collectively *the Gospel*. And each evangelical record in particular was *the gospel "according to" the particular evangelist who compiled it*. The gospel in each case was *one*, "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark i. 1); but it was that one gospel under the peculiar

phase of a particular biographical presentation. Hence the phrase "*according to.*" It is not, as some have contended, precisely equivalent to "*of*," for the gospel was not regarded as an emanation from the mind of the writer. It was not, in its essence, the product of any human compiler or composer; but, as delivered by the evangelists, it assumed in its form as distinguished from its essence, a peculiar phase in harmony with the size, shape, and symmetry of "the earthen vessels" in which it was "handed out," that it might be "handed on." In the great majority of manuscripts, the title of this Gospel is either substantially, or entirely, the same as in our common English version. In the Syriac Philoxenian version the word *holy* is introduced before the word *Gospel*, and the phrase *according to* is merged: *the Holy Gospel of Mark.* In the Syriac Peshito version there was an attempt, though not remarkably felicitous, to do more justice to the idea suggested by the preposition: *the Holy Gospel, the Announcement of Mark the Evangelist.* (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

THE NAME "MARK."—Marcus or Mark was a Latin name, and became a common Latin *prænomen*, as, for instance, "Marcus" Tullius Cicero. The diminutive Marcellus was a surname of the Claudian family. A distinguished member of that family, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, defeated Hannibal at Nola. Cicero has an oration "*Pro* Marco Marcello." The Evangelist Mark, however, was, notwithstanding his Latin name, a Jew. His entire Gospel bewrays his nationality, and breathes the spirit of an Israelite who, though delivered from Jewish narrowness and bigotry, was still "an Israelite indeed." In the letter too, as well as the spirit of his composition, the *mark* of a Jewish mind is indelibly impressed. The reason why the evangelist either assumed, or got imposed on him his Latin name, is now unknown; probably he found it convenient, when out in the wide world, to wear a Gentile name. It might be even to himself, as well as to his friends, and to all with whom he had to do, a significant badge, indicating that he was now a Christian cosmopolitan. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) The name of Mark is by some supposed to be derived from the Latin "marcus," a hammer; not "marcellus," a little hammer, but "marcus," a strong hammer, able to crush the flinty rock, and thus indicative of the spiritual power wielded by the evangelist, and enabling him to break the stony hearts of the Gentiles, and to rouse them to penitence and faith and a holy life. (*Dean Bickersteth.*)

AUTHOR.—John Mark was the son of one Mary, who dwelt at Jerusalem. There he was probably born (Acts xii. 12). He was the cousin of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10). The theory that he was one of the seventy disciples has no warrant. His mother seems to have been a person of some means and influence, and her house a rallying-point for Christians in those dangerous days. Her young son, already an inquirer, would soon become more anxious to work for Christ. He went with Paul and Barnabas as their "minister" on their first journey; but at Perga he turned back (Acts xii. 25; xiii. 13). On the second journey St. Paul would not accept him again as a companion, but Barnabas his kinsman was more indulgent; and thus he became the cause of the memorable sharp contention between them (Acts. xv. 36–40). Whatever were the reasons for Mark's infirmity of purpose, they did not separate him for ever from Paul, for we find them together at Rome (Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24). St. Paul speaks of a possible journey of Mark to Asia. Somewhat later he is with St. Peter at Babylon (1 Peter v. 13). Of this journey we have no more evidence; of its date, causes, results, we know nothing. It may be conjectured that Mark journeyed to Asia Minor (Col. iv. 10), and thence went on to join Peter at Babylon. On his return to Asia he seems to have been with Timothy at Ephesus when Paul wrote to him, during his second imprisonment, and Paul was anxious for his return to Rome (2 Tim. iv. 11). (*Archbp. Wm. Thomson.*) According to the testimony

of St. Jerome, St. Mark wrote a short Gospel at Rome, at the request of the brethren there; and St. Peter, when he had heard it, approved of it, and appointed it to be read in the churches by his authority. St. Jerome says, further, that St. Mark took this Gospel and went into Egypt; and, being the first preacher of Christ at Alexandria, established a Church with so much moderation of doctrine and of life, that he constrained all those who had opposed Christ to follow his example. Eusebius states that he became the first bishop of that Church, and that the catechetical school at Alexandria was founded under his authority. It is further stated that he ultimately died a martyr's death at Alexandria. But the evidence upon this latter point is not sufficiently trustworthy. Tradition says that the body of St. Mark was translated by certain merchants from Alexandria to Venice, A.D. 827, where he was much honoured. The Venetian Senate adopted the emblem of St. Mark—the lion—for their crest; and when they directed anything to be done, they affirmed that it was by the order of St. Mark. (*Dean Bickersteth.*)

MARK, THE CITIZEN.—John, *alias* Mark, was essentially a man of towns. In early life he was known as John of Jerusalem; he was at one time a close adherent of Paul, and to the end, notwithstanding their early differences of opinion, he remained in the eyes of that Apostle to the Gentiles profitable to the ministry. Later in life he was known as Mark of Rome, where tradition declares him to have been the near friend and secretary of Peter, the substance of whose teaching is generally admitted to be set down in Mark's Gospel, which was written from memory after Peter's death. Mark's mother, Mary, seems to have been a person in comfortable circumstances. The family lived at Jerusalem, and Mary's house was much frequented by St. Peter and his adherents. It was probably the attraction of Mary's home, with its friendly circle of reformed Jews—its social gatherings and stirring routine of city life—that attracted Mark, the citizen, when he left Paul and Barnabas to plunge by themselves into the wild regions of Pamphylia and Lycaonia. He attached himself to Peter. Peter never had Paul's passion for travelling, though necessity drove him now and again up and down Palestine, and, in all probability, once at least—and once too often—to Rome, where Mark was still his faithful companion. There he may have seen the last of Peter, crucified head downwards; perhaps, too, of Paul—after his second trial before Nero—beheaded outside Rome. He himself disappears, and makes no sign—leaving behind him, however, a name associated with the greatest of the Jewish Apostles, and with the greatest of all Apostles; and a Gospel—derived from Peter—but not untouched with the spirit of Paul. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*)

DATE OF PUBLICATION.—It is not possible, at present, to determine the particular year of the publication of this Gospel. Not even is it possible to determine the decade of years within which the publication must have taken place. All is mere conjecture regarding years and decades. Still there are certain data on which an approximate date may be assigned. The succession of Patristic testimonies back to Papias makes it certain that the Gospel was in existence, and well known, in the first century. Since, moreover, it is all but certain that the John Mark of the *Acts* was the writer of the Gospel, and since it is probable that he was quite "a young man" at the time of the crucifixion, and consequently still young when he was assumed by Paul and Barnabas as their ministerial attendant, we may reasonably suppose that he would not defer the composition of his Gospel till he was overtaken by extreme old age. If he did not, then we have something like a foothold on which to reach some data for an approximate date. It is not likely, at all events, that the composition of the Gospel would be deferred to a period later than the year 70, the date of the overthrow of Jerusalem. Indeed, it is most unlikely that it would be deferred till that period. If St. Mark was about twenty years of age

at the time of the crucifixion, he would be nearly sixty about the year 70. Besides, there seems to be, in the peculiar inter-stratification of the contents of chap. xiii., taken in conjunction with the statement in chap. ix. 1, evidence on which we may, with probability, support the conclusion that Mark, at the time he composed his Gospel, connected in his mind, as a matter of "private interpretation" and expectation, the glorious personal appearing of our Lord with the anticipated destruction of Jerusalem. The precise "times and seasons" were not distinctly and minutely unrolled to the eyes of evangelists and apostles. The prophetical perspective did not show the length of the intervals that intervened along the path of the future, and the inspired writers were consequently left, like the prophets of old, to search "what and what manner of times" were referred to. This being the case, there is, in the inter-stratification referred to, evidence that increases the probability that the Gospel must have been written before the year 70. There is another incidental item of evidence that leans and leads toward the same conclusion. Why should the evangelist (chap. xv. 21) particularize the fact that Simon of Cyrene was *the father of Alexander and Rufus?* Obviously because Alexander and Rufus were living at the time when the Gospel was published. Simon himself seems to have been deceased. His identity is remembered by means of his surviving sons. He would probably be in middle life, or beyond it, when he undertook his journey to the city of his fathers to celebrate the passover. But it was "the beginning of days" to him; and not to himself only, it would appear, but to all his household. His sons became men of mark in the Christian circle. It would, however, be quite improbable and unnatural to go forward to a period near the close of the century for the time of their prominence. A period before the destruction of Jerusalem is far more likely to have been the season when they were conspicuous. At all events, we could not, with the least shadow of probability, pass the terminating decades of the first century and go over into the second. (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

THE FIRST READERS OF THE GOSPEL.—The position which St. Mark occupied in relation both to St. Paul and St. Peter—his connection with the former being resumed after a long interval—would make it probable that he would write with a special eye to Gentile rather than Jewish readers; and of this the Gospel itself supplies sufficient evidence in the full explanation of the customs of the Jews as to ablutions and the like in vii. 3, 4, in the explanation of the word corban in vii. 11, perhaps also in his description of "the *river* of Jordan" in i. 5. A closer study suggests the thought, in full agreement with the traditional testimony, that he wrote with a special view to Christians of the Roman Church. He alone describes Simon the Cyrenian as the father of Alexander and Rufus (xv. 21), as though that fact had a special interest for his readers. There is but one Rufus mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, and he meets us in Rom. xvi. 13 as one who was prominent enough in the church of that city for St. Paul to send a special message of remembrance to him; and it may be inferred, with some likelihood, that the wife or widow of Simon of Cyrene (having previously met St. Paul at Corinth, for some personal knowledge is implied in the words "his mother and mine") had settled with her two sons in the imperial city, and had naturally gained a position of some importance. The very name of *Marcus* indicates some Latin affinities; and it is noticeable, in this connection, that a larger number of words Latin in their origin appear in this Gospel than in any of the others. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

RELATION OF THIS GOSPEL TO ST. PETER.—The Holy Scripture tells us nothing whatsoever respecting the writing of this Gospel. There is no preface to it fixing its authorship, as in the case of St. Luke's Gospel, of the Acts, and of most of the Epistles; but if there be one single fact of the early Church more certain from the united concurrence of all Church history than any other, it is that the composition

of his Gospel was occasioned by, and closely connected with, St. Mark's intimacy with St. Peter. Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius are alike in their testimony on this. . . . They all testify to the same fact, which is the entire dependence of St. Mark's Gospel on the preaching of St. Peter. Most of them teach that it was an accurate reproduction, and yet there is sufficient discrepancy between them to show that they were not all derived from the same source. The differences in the statements are principally upon the matter of the extent of St. Peter's superintendence, from that of Origen, who tells us that St. Peter "guided" St. Mark in his composition, to that of one of the statements of Clement, "which when Peter understood, he directly neither hindered nor encouraged it,"—but this latter seems to refer rather to the publication than to the writing. The contents fully bear out the external evidence for the Petrine origin of this Gospel, for they present the extraordinary phenomenon of one who was certainly not an eye-witness of the acts of the Lord, describing them as if he had not only been an eye-witness, but a very observant one. It is a remarkable fact that St. Mark's real Gospel, *i.e.*, that which presents his peculiarities of close observance and faithfulness in minute detail, really commences with St. Peter's first entrance into close companionship with the Lord, *i.e.*, at chap. i. 18. Immediately following upon this, we find a very detailed description of a miracle of the casting out of an evil spirit in the synagogue, an account only found in Mark; then the going to Peter's house, and the healing of his wife's mother, present two or three slight touches true to nature which are not in St. Matthew. Then the sojourn in Peter's house is given with many details, which would not be preserved in a body of tradition, but which would abide in a loving memory, such as that the Lord rose up early, a great while before day, and went out to a solitary place to pray. Again, in the beginning of the next chapter we have the healing of the sick of the palsy, "borne of four," given with a fulness of incidental detail which is in extreme contrast with the somewhat bare and hurried notice of the same in St. Matthew. For another thing, St. Mark more than any other Evangelist, notices the looks and gestures of the Lord: He looked round about to see her that had done this thing; He beheld the rich young ruler, and loved him; He looked round about upon His disciples when He warned them of the danger of riches. Whether, then, we look to the extraordinary unanimity in ecclesiastical records, or to the contents of the Gospel, nothing can be more certain than that it is based upon the teaching and preaching of St. Peter, and indeed reproduces it, so that we may adopt the words of Tertullian: "The Gospel which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was," and of Origen, "Mark composed it as Peter guided him." (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) Mark is more engaged with the acts than with the discourses of our Lord. Why? Perhaps because the events struck Peter's mind forcibly, but, being an uneducated man, his account of words and speeches was somewhat imperfect; his memory for anything like a sustained sermon was not good. But the life of love was all in all to him. *That* he could not help remembering. One act of mercy and pity and wonder is set down after another, until Mark's sacred gallery is hung with vivid pictures, unconnected, indeed, with each other, but all marked by the central presence of the same Divine Figure, who went in and out amongst men doing good. Now it is the synagogue thronged with eager faces, but the sermon has been forgotten; or a house in Capernaum besieged by an impatient crowd outside; a poor creature, who could not be got in at the door, suddenly let down in the midst of the astonished assembly, through the mud roof. Or it is sunset, after the heat of the day, in the sudden twilight, with the last red streak dying out of the sky, the sick are brought on mats and laid about in the open streets and bazaars, and the work of healing is prolonged by the glare of torches or the dazzling light of the Syrian moon far into the night. It is ever the sweet and tender nature of the Son of Man which impresses Peter, the rugged fisherman, and which

is held up before us. The good Physician, who confined not His attention to the soul, but ministered also to the body; the kind Jewish Rabbi, who had a word of sympathy even for the Gentile woman, a friendly greeting for the outcasts of the city, and a healing touch for the lepers. Aye, and Peter was touched, too, sympathetically by his Master's feelings; he watched His looks, he caught the ebb and flow of His Divine emotions. And Mark has set it all down for us. He has told us how the beloved Teacher's eye flashed with *anger* upon those who would have interfered with the cure of palsied men; how He *sighed* deeply over the stupidity and insensibility of His hearers, and at once set to work with some still more simple parable; how He could not bear to see any one suffer without hastening to their relief; and how He was moved with *compassion* when He saw the poor people dropping by the wayside with hunger and fatigue. Who, as he reads, might not well lift up his eyes to heaven, and say, "So would I have seen my Lord, so would I have marked the mercy-posts of His earthly career, so would I have beheld Him sigh and weep, and work and suffer, and pray for man, so may I even now listen to the words of Him who spake as never man spake, as they drop from the lips of the aged Peter, and are recorded for me by John Mark, his faithful interpreter and friend." Too brief, but infinitely precious is that record—Mark, earliest and most undogmatic of Gospels, yet containing all that it is vital for us to know about Christianity. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) A question naturally suggests itself here. If St. Mark's Gospel was written under the inspection of St. Peter, and, as some ancient writers have said, from his dictation, why was it not rather inscribed with the name of that apostle? Would it not have had greater weight, if it had borne that name? Perhaps, with reverence be it said, the Holy Spirit may have intended to teach some practical lessons by this arrangement. St. Mark is known from Holy Scripture as "the son" of St. Peter. The Gospel written by St. Mark's instrumentality has ever been regarded by the Church as having been composed under the sanction and authority of his spiritual father. It may be considered virtually as much the Gospel of St. Peter as if St. Peter's name were prefixed to it. It therefore, in fact, possesses the weight of that apostolic name. But the adoption of another name in its title has its proper use and significance. It may be recognized as a silent token of the humility of the Apostle St. Peter, not ambitious for the exhibition of his own name in the eye of the world. Perhaps also he was of opinion that, as one Gospel had been already written by an *apostle*, St. Matthew, it might be more conducive to the edification of the Church, if the next gospel were not designated with the name of any of the apostolic body, lest it might be imagined by some that the graces of the Holy Ghost and the gift of inspiration were limited to particular persons; or that the *apostles* of Christ had a Gospel of their own, which was not equally received by the whole body of believers. The Holy Spirit might deem it expedient to employ St. Mark, who was not an apostle, in delivering the same Gospel as had been preached by word of mouth and in writing by apostles, in order to show the unity and universality of that Gospel; and that it signifies little *who* the organ is, by whom the Holy Ghost speaks, or *who* the instrument is, by which He writes; but that the main thing to be considered is, *what* is spoken and *what* is written, and from *whom* the message comes. *Who is Paul? Who is Apollos?* Who is Cephas? Who is Mark? but *ministers*, by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man. (*Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.*)

PLAN.—Only the public ministry of Christ is here recorded. This is presented in two portions—the first giving the whole ministry in Galilee to its close (chaps. i.–ix.), and the second the last ministry in Jerusalem to the ascension (x.–xvi.). In each of these there are three parts. The first part of the first book is a brief introduction to the whole, noticing the preaching of John, the baptism, and the temptation of Christ. In the second part the ministry in Galilee is given, until the mission of the

apostles; there being after the account of a few days in Capernaum, an account of the first journey in Galilee, when four disciples accompanied their Lord; and then an account of a second journey with the twelve apostles. Before this is related, some account is given of the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, which, appearing immediately after the return to Capernaum from the first journey, was renewed on other occasions. The mission of the twelve for a few weeks separates the two parts of the ministry in Galilee; the account of the later period beginning with the death of John the Baptist and the return of the apostles. At this time the increased opposition of the rulers led to many removals from Galilee; first to the other side of the lake, then to the Gentiles in the district near Tyre, and afterwards to the country about Cæsarea Philippi. The occasions of these changes are related, and some of the miracles and discourses which belonged to the different journeys. The Transfiguration of Christ, at the close of this period, was one of a series of events manifesting His glory, and foreshadowing His death. The second book begins, after an interval of several months, with the last journey to Jerusalem, chiefly on the other side the Jordan. Here, too, the first part is introductory, presenting in a series of incidents and discourses the lessons on self-denial and love which our Lord gave the disciples when on the way; these lessons having respect to family relations, to outward riches, and to worldly ambition. The next part contains an account of the ministry of Christ when He came to Jerusalem. Some important events are first given, and then a series of discourses, controversial and didactic, belonging to the first three days of the week; which are followed by the predictions spoken afterwards to a few of the apostles. The last part of the history gives the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Preceding preparatory events being first recorded, the last evening with the disciples is then related. This is followed by the account of the two trials—before the Jewish sanhedrin, and the Roman governor. The last two divisions give the death and burial of Christ, His resurrection and ascension. Certainly no part is without order; the chronological order is followed, with a few exceptions easily explained. Selection and purpose may be discerned everywhere; an order befitting the subject and object, both human and Divine. (*J. H. Godwin.*)

CONTENTS.—The contents of the Gospel may be divided generally into four sections. I. The Introduction (i. 1–13). II. The works of Jesus, the Son of God, in Galilee (i. 14–ix. 50). III. A journey to Jerusalem, and residence there (x. 1–xiii. 37). IV. The sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord. (*Archbishop Wm. Thomson.*)

LEADING IDEAS.—I. *Jesus is Lord*, not only of nature and the world of spirits, not only of storms and diseases, but of the sick, stormy, guilty, sorrowing, passionate, ignorant, yet yearning heart of man. He speaks, men are "astonished and amazed." He moves from place to place; wherever He goes, He is the magnet of the human soul. "All men seek for Him." Even when He is shrouded far in the silence of the desert, even when He is in the house, "He cannot be hid." Still as He walks His way of life, rays of supernatural light stream from the sky, that is usually so cold and passionless, round the pathway of the Galilean peasant. They fear, as we all fear, when the sound of the tide of eternity suddenly breaks upon our ear, and we see for a moment the heaving and glimmer of its awful waves. "They fear exceedingly," and "are astonished with a great astonishment," and "are sore amazed in themselves." As that master hand sweeps without effort the chords of the human soul, its deepest and finest tones—amazement, wonder, reverence, trust, adoration—answer to the marvellous touch. II. *The life of Jesus is one of alternate rest and victory, withdrawal and working.* So, in chap. i., we find the retirement in Nazareth, the coming forth to be

baptized; the withdrawal into the wilderness, the walk in Galilee; the rest in the cool sanctuary, where the dawn breaks upon the kneeling man, and the going forth to preach to the heated and struggling crowd. Thus, once more, the withdrawal to the Mount of Olives is followed by the great conflict of the Redeeming Passion, while that is succeeded by the withdrawal into the Sepulchre. It is the book of the wars of the Lord, and the rest of the Lord. The first rest was in Nazareth; the first trophies were the four apostles. The last rest is in the heaven of heavens, in the privacy of glorious light; the last victory (for this great book never ended with the words "they were afraid") is diffused over all time—"the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." (*Bishop William Alexander.*)

PECULIARITIES OF THIS GOSPEL.—I. SAYINGS OF JESUS. Without this Gospel we should not have possessed the great axiom (the safeguard at once against superstition and irreverence in regard to all positive institutions whatever), "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The two great words would be away, "Peace, be still!" Something surely would be wanting to the Parables, if we had lost that exquisite illustration of the development of God's kingdom—the seed growing, not mechanically, or in virtue of cultivation, but from within outwardly, by the energy of its hidden life. Here, too ("cleansing all meats:" vii. 19), we see one ray of moral light, falling upon the corruption from which the fastidious imagination turns away sickened. Here, again, in its fullest and most emphatic form, stands that saying which has nerved so many of God's children to face the syllogism, the epigram, and the scaffold. In St. Luke, "whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and Mine;" in St. Mark "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, in this adulterous and sinful generation." In this Gospel only, the closing words of Isaiah are taken up and thrice repeated, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Here alone occurs that awful image taken at once from the Jewish ritual, and from the realm of nature. The Judge of mankind tells us that as every offering was offered with salt, so every human soul must be seasoned by the flame of self-sacrifice and sanctified suffering, or by that of wrath; that it must be bathed in heavenly fire, or preserved undying in the fire of hell (ix. 44, 50). Peculiar to St. Mark's version of the discourse upon the last things, is that sudden reiterated note as of a trumpet, or tolling as of a bell, "Take ye heed, watch ye therefore, watch and pray, watch" (xiii). In the same connection we must not forget three memorable words. He who in the unity of that undivided Person is God and Man, sometimes speaks as if (to use human language) He forgot that He was not in heaven, looking upon all things in the calmness of the perfect and eternal light: sometimes, again, as if earth were indeed His home for a season, as if His prospects were bounded for a while by our lower horizon: "Of that day or hour knoweth none, neither angel in heaven, *nor the Son*, but the Father only" (xiii. 32). Let it not be forgotten that the word of commendation is found in these pages exclusively, which, even within the last few years, dwelt as a burning fire in one woman's heart (Agnes Jones); enabling her to persevere in a work for the pauper-sick, which will never pass away, "She hath done what she could." Here, also, we find the definite prediction to St. Peter, "Even in this night, before the cock crow twice." II. INCIDENTS. The second Adam with the wild beasts in the wilderness, while the whole forty days are filled up with one long silent suggestion of the evil one; His mother and brethren taking steps to arrest Him, on the score of ecstatic absorption; His sleeping in the storm on the pillow; that one ray of light in the other storm, "He *saw them* toiling in rowing"; the restoration of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech, and of the blind man at Bethsaida; His design of remaining hidden in a house; His return to the sea of Galilee; the disciples having one loaf with

them in the ship; the history of His work along the Gaulonite range, east of Jordan; His speaking openly the sayings about His Passion; the sudden disappearing of the heavenly visitants from the Mount of Transfiguration; "the questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean;" the awe of the multitude at the yet unfaded brightness of His countenance; the loving displeasure against the disciples who forbade the little children to come to Him; the not suffering any vessel to be carried through the Temple; the breaking of the alabaster box in the noble extravagance of love; the emphatic record that all drank of the Eucharistic cup; the repetition of the words in Gethsemane; the young man, probably St. Mark himself, who left the linen cloth, and fled away naked; the High Priest standing in the midst; Peter beneath in the palace; the first crowing of the cock; the bowing of the soldier's knees in mockery; the names of the sons of the Cyrenian; and, finally, the special appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection. (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*)

ST. MARK'S THE GOSPEL OF INCIDENTS.—It is particularly mentioned by Papias that St. Peter gave Mark such instruction as was necessary, but "*not to give a history* (or connected narrative) *of our Lord's discourses.*" Now it is the characteristic of St. Mark's Gospel to be a gospel of incidents, particularly miracles, but not of discourses or parables as St. Matthew's. St. Mark gives only four parables, while St. Matthew gives fourteen; and yet they both alike record that "without a parable spake He not unto them." The omission then of so many parables must have been intentional on the part of St. Mark or St. Peter. Then there is not a single line in St. Mark's Gospel of the sort of teaching which we have in the Sermon on the Mount, whereas in St. Luke's Gospel we have much of the teaching of that Sermon reproduced. Take, again, the charge of the apostles. In St. Matthew x. it occupies thirty-six verses. In St. Mark vi. 7–11, it occupies four or five. Take, again, the denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. In St. Matthew it runs over a chapter of thirty-nine verses. In St. Mark it occupies but three verses of chapter xii. I need scarcely mention that St. John's Gospel is principally a Gospel of discourses. So that, compared with the other three Gospels, St. Mark's is so absolutely without didactic matter that it must have been intentionally omitted. To have given more could not have fallen in with the plan of St. Mark, or St. Peter. Now why was this? Evidently because in the body of tradition which St. Peter preached, which is virtually the same as St. Matthew's Gospel as we now have it, there was sufficient didactic instruction, and that given in as perfect a form as possible, whereas in that same body of tradition, the incidents of the Lord's life were not given in as graphic and full a manner as they might have been. The hearers of Peter had been particularly struck with this. The Apostle Peter in his teaching added nothing to the discourses of the Lord, as embodied in the tradition reproduced in St. Matthew (or in some collection of tradition answering to it, but now lost), whereas he did add very materially to the account of the incidents and miracles of the Lord's life. He added those details, those touches of nature which made his accounts that photographic representation, if one may reverently use the expression, which we have in this Gospel, as compared with St. Matthew. God, who gives to each man his particular gift, one after this manner, another after that, may have given to St. Matthew a retentive memory to reproduce faithfully parables and long discourses. He gave to St. Peter an eye observant of all the lesser details which add lifelike charm to a narrative. And these it was which the Roman Christians desired to have preserved, and so they begged St. Mark to reproduce the accounts of miracle and incident, and as the oldest historian tells us, "not to give a history of our Lord's discourses." (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

CHARACTERISTICS.—The key to this Gospel seems to be that the writer was minded

to write an account of the wonderful life and power of Jesus, the Son of God. He conveys, and in a marked manner, the shortness of the time in which all was transacted, and the rapidity and wonderful activity of this great life. Doctrinal discourses are foreign to this purpose. The relation of Jesus to the Jewish Scriptures is likewise made less prominent. The word "straightway," or "immediately," is used forty-one times in this shortest Gospel; a marked peculiarity. The wonder-working Son of God sweeps over His kingdom, swiftly and meteor-like; and men are to wonder and adore. His course is sometimes represented as abrupt, mysterious, awful to the disciples; He leaves them at night; conceals Himself from them on a journey. The disciples are amazed and afraid (x. 24, 32). And the evangelist means the same impression of awe to be imparted to the reader. Periods of solitude and rest are interposed in this stormy, hurried life. . . . Some speak slightly of this picture of what is called a "restless" career, and contrast it with the calmer and more sculpture-like representation which they pretend to find in St. Matthew. But the sketch in this Gospel is true to history. The constant persecutions, from which it was needful to flee, even sometimes beyond the bounds of Herod's kingdom, to Tyre, or to some solitary spot on the sea-shore; the crowds that followed Him in wonder, forgetful of food and shelter, that they might see with eyes what others told in their ears; the pitiable cases of sickness and mutilation from which that loving eye is never turned away; the constant presence of the twelve disciples, with all their doubts, and crude beliefs, and problems to solve: a life made up of such elements must have been one of constant pressure, not indeed of "hurry" in the usual sense of the word; for if there is one truth more than another that we may learn from the lives of those who have lived by the Spirit of God, it is that the soul may be kept in peace in the midst of great outward pressure. Hence, the representation of this Gospel can be seen to be true and faithful, if only it be granted that Jesus lived, and that in a ministry of three years He went about teaching, and preaching, and healing, the object of constant persecution, yet never abating His zeal on account of His enemies. (*Archbishop Wm. Thomson.*)

CHARACTERISTICS—WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LAST TWELVE VERSES.—What St. Mark brings out, with those swift and vivid touches which all careful readers of his Gospel have noticed, is the personal action and work of the Son of God as Lord of the world, and conqueror of the hearts and faith of men. He represents Him as establishing an *increasing dominion over evil and over nature*, and overcoming the powers that oppose Him till at last He rises from the grave. He recalls the words of command addressed to the raging evil spirits, to the wild and overwhelming waves, to the barren yet leafy fig tree. As he goes on, he describes the works of healing and of power wrought by the Son of God over more violent or more subtle forms of evil. First, a devil is cast out—then it is a legion and army of devils. First, a fever is assuaged—then it is a vehement storm that is stilled. First, a leper is cleansed, whose outward man is tainted—then a poor woman suffering for many years an inward plague. First, a paralytic, with suspended energy, is restored—then the daughter of Jairus is brought back from actual death. And this gradual revelation by potent word and mighty work, goes on side by side with another. Our Lord must indeed conquer the spirits of evil, and prove Himself the God of Nature, but He has also, and as His chief work, to achieve dominion over the wills and affections of mankind. And here there is a different method to be put in practice. He will only conquer those who *will receive Him*. He *could*, indeed, *force* belief, as He drove the legion to acknowledge Him, and as He rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, "Peace, be still." But this is not the method of His wisdom. There is, it would seem, in the eyes of God, and under the rule of the laws by which He governs the human race, *no value but in willing service*—in service where the man consents, even though he do it with difficulty and labour. And so St. Mark sets

before us how the Son of God gradually reveals Himself in opposition to dulness of perception and want of faith, and how some accept Him after long and patient education, and some to the end refuse. How, then, does the last chapter fit on, as a conclusion to the body of the Gospel? With a perfect and exact harmony, we reply, such as no mere compiler could have attained, and it continues, without a break, all the threads which run through the main texture of the book. It describes, in short, how even after the Resurrection, the faith of the disciples still was slow, and their hearts still hard. How the women at the tomb fled in trembling and amazement. How the disciples disbelieved Mary Magdalene. How the two who met Him going into the country failed to convince the rest. How at last He appeared to all Himself, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, and thus finally, and after a long and gradual process, gained a conquest over their wills. Then it was that He addressed them with the discourse at the close of the book, bidding them go and preach the Gospel to every creature, offering salvation to believers, and threatening condemnation to disbelievers. Promising fourfold powers like His own to those who believe—a power over spiritual evil, an increase of natural gifts, a superiority to physical dangers, and a virtue of healing diseases. Then, and not till then (when He reveals His full majesty by the transfer of these graces to others), does He receive the title of Lord. "The *Lord* (it is said), after He had spoken with them, was received up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And they —they are now no longer faithless, but believing. Having convinced and gained *them*, He has gained the instrument which He came down on earth to fashion, the only instrument which in His wisdom He thinks fit to use in the conversion of the world —the instrument of personal faith begetting faith. And thus endowed, they go forth and preach everywhere, but not in their own strength, but His, for the Lord works ever with them, and confirms their doctrine by means of suitable miracles, just as in His own ministry He worked such marvels as had a moral relation to the truths He came to teach. "And they went forth (we read) and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Any one who will read this last chapter carefully, will observe how it gathers up in a wonderful way the chief points of the whole Gospel. The lives which run through it are brought to a point; and there is, as it were, an unveiling of the system of which they are the constructing elements. (*John Wordsworth, M.A.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

ST. MARK.

CHAPTER I.

VER. 1. **The beginning.**—*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ:*—I. In John's way of living there was the beginning of a gospel SPIRIT. (*a*) Self denial. (*b*) Nonconformity to the world. II. In John's preaching and baptizing there was the beginning of the gospel DOCTRINES AND ORDINANCES. (*a*) Remission of sin upon a true repentance. (*b*) Christ—His pre-eminence, power, and promises. III. In John's success there was the beginning of a gospel CHURCH. (*M. Henry.*) *The beginning of the gospel:*—This expression suggests—I. Unexampled LOVE. II. A glorious EPOCH. To it all the old converge, from it all the old radiate. It was the planting of a moral sun in man's heavens, the opening of a living fountain in man's desert. III. A magnificent PROGRESS. The beginning seemed very unpropitious and unpromising. For remedial truth was shut up in the breast of one lonely man, and He the son of a Jewish peasant. But what has it become? The solitary seed covers many acres with precious grain, the little spring has swollen into a majestic river, bearing on its bosom the soul of the world to a higher civilization, a purer faith, and a diviner morality. (*Anon.*) *The beginning of the gospel:*—I. A WONDERFUL THING HERE BEGUN. The gospel—good news, &c. One might have expected justice and wrath to make an end of sin and sinners, instead of a beginning of a new dispensation of mercy and love. II. A WONDERFUL BEGINNING of this wonderful thing. So unostentatious—one man preaching in a wilderness; so solemn—one voice disturbing the silence; so novel—a way prepared for another man; so strangely answering to ancient prophecy. III. This wonderful beginning of the wonderful new, was the BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WONDERFUL OLD. Yet no one thought that a dispensation so solemnly inaugurated, marked by prophets, sustained by miracles, was having its death-knell tolled by that one man in the wilderness. (*J. C. Gray.*) *The gospel of Jesus Christ:*—I. Our first theme is the GOSPEL. 1. What is the gospel? (1) That the word, both in Greek and English, originally means good news, glad tidings. Gospel is good news in the same sense that it was good news when you heard of the recovery of a parent or child. (2) That it is good news from God to man—from heaven to earth—from the infinitely holy to the lowest depths of human wretchedness and sin. It is not good news from America to Europe; it is a voice from heaven, breaking through the silence or discord of our natural condition. Oh, could the tumult of this life cease to fill our ears, we might hear another sound—good news from God to each of us. (3) That it is good news in relation to your sins, salvation, and eternity. It remedies the greatest evils and supplies the deepest wants of man. 2. Whose gospel it is. It is not an impersonal or abstract gospel; it is not the gospel of a man, nor yet of a distant God; it is the gospel born of God and man; it is described as the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. (1) It is "the gospel of Jesus," that is, the good news of a Saviour. (2) But it is also the gospel of Christ: the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. (3) But who is sufficient for these things, or who is equal to the great work shadowed forth by these titles? The necessity of a Divine Person to assume this trust is evident from the nature of the trust itself; the Son of God is the Saviour and Prophet. II. THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Where did it begin of old? (1) That the gospel as

a message of salvation may be said to have begun in the eternal counsel of the Divine will; in the eternal purpose of the God who sent it. We must not regard the gospel as a sort of after-thought to make good the failure of another method of salvation. (2) That the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ was not in the New Testament, but in the Old; it began in the simple first promise to our first parents. (3) The gospel may be said to have had a new beginning in the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist. 2. Where does this gospel begin now? (1) That it begins for the most part in religious education—in the simple teaching at maternal knees. (2) In the moving of the Holy Spirit. (3) There are providential recommencements of the gospel both to communities and to individuals. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *The great scheme started*:—I. The most wonderful EPOCH in the annals of time. II. The most WONDERFUL PRODUCTION IN THE REALM OF LITERATURE. All the Bible is inspired: both Old and New Testaments: 1. By the meaning of the language used in the Bible when speaking of itself. 2. From the unity of idea underlying the entire record. 3. From the teaching of Christ in regard to it. This gospel is the most wonderful production in the realm of literature. 1. Because of the age of the book. 2. Because of the number of men who took part in its authorship. 3. The scope and spirit of its teaching. 4. Because of its universal adaptation. 5. Because of the effects it produces. (*T. Kelly.*) *The origin of the gospel*:—This short verse contains four great wonders. 1. The greatest wonder of heaven—"the Son of God." 2. The greatest wonder of humanity—"Jesus Christ the Son of God." 3. The greatest wonder of all knowledge—"the gospel of Jesus Christ." 4. The most wonderful era—"the beginning of the gospel." I. There was an ABSTRACT or absolute beginning to the gospel in the Divine mind. The love, pity, wisdom of God were the sources of the gospel. II. The gospel had a PROPHETIC beginning in the first revelations made to Adam, the patriarchs and prophets. "To Him gave all the prophets witness." III. The gospel had its ACTUAL beginning in the ministry of John and the incarnation of Jesus. IV. The gospel had an EFFICACIOUS beginning which is to be dated from the death of Christ. Until then nothing efficient was done. V. The gospel had an OPERATIVE or practical beginning in the commission given to the apostles after the resurrection—"Beginning at Jerusalem." VI. The gospel viewed in its whole history, hitherto is BUT YET AT ITS BEGINNING. It has only begun to bless and save mankind. VII. When the great consummation of its triumph is come we shall only be at the beginning of the gospel. It will have no end. Has it had a beginning in you? (*The Evangelist.*) *Unity and progress of Divine dispensations*:—I. THE GOSPEL HAS HAD THREE BEGINNINGS, yet each of them may be spoken of as *the* beginning. 1. In the Divine counsels, when it was but a thought. 2. In the incarnation, when it became a Person. 3. In believers, when it becomes a new creation. II. ONE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL IS ALWAYS INTRODUCTORY TO ANOTHER. 1. The thought. 2. The agent or representative. 3. The result. Divine revelation is always consistent and progressive. III. No BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL CAN BE TRUE AND EFFECTUAL EXCEPT AS IT LEADS TO A SPIRITUAL CONSUMMATION. The prophets pointed to John, John to Jesus, Jesus to the Holy Ghost. This shows (1) The transitoriness of all mere ceremony; (2) the uselessness of all mere knowledge; (3) the possibility of the highest fellowship with God. IV. LESSON TO PIONEERS. A man only works well in proportion as he knows the measure of his power and the limit of his mission. When the frame-maker mistakes himself for the painter, art is degraded. It does not follow that because a man knows the alphabet, he can write a book. The pioneer must never go in the king's clothes. April cannot do the work of August. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The commencement of the gospel*:—I. Contemplate the gospel as a PROGRESSIVE REVELATION. II. This commencement of the gospel was IMPORTANT (1) As the only true revelation of God; (2) as the only true revelation of man. III. The commencement of the gospel was HAPPY. 1. Because the commencement of the gospel delivered from the tyranny of the law. 2. Because it provided an escape from the dire consequences of sin. 3. Because it unfolded the happy destiny of the race. IV. The commencement of the gospel was HOPEFUL. Learn—1. God's consideration for the need of man. 2. The self-consistency of a gospel thus gradually unfolded. 3. That it should be our continued endeavour to reproduce the gospel in our lives. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Beginnings*:—The first sentence of this gospel is the title to the whole of it—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Here again is a characteristic form of expression. This evangelist uses the word "began" over and over again, a score of times at least. Jesus "began to teach" (iv. 1);

the multitude "began to implore Him to depart" (v. 17); the leper "began to publish" the miracle (i. 45); Christ "began to send out" the twelve (vi. 7); the soldiers "began to mock Him" (xv. 18); revilers "began to spit on Him" (xiv. 65). The tale is just full of "beginnings" all through to the end. I. It began first in the PURPOSE of the Almighty Father. See how Mark brings this out by his double quotation from the old and long-dead prophets. There was certainly a plan of redemption before a man was redeemed—"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." We cannot help thinking Mark knew in the outset what wonderful matters he had to record. For here, all driven up compactly together, is found the finest group of first things in the New Testament: the first sermon on repentance, the first baptism of a convert, the first sensible manifestation of the Holy Ghost, the first voice from heaven in recognition of Jesus' office and glory, the first fight with Beelzebub, and the first victory over temptation. This did not happen so; it must have been ordered so. Thus the gospel began in God's purpose. II. It had a second beginning IN THE ADVENT OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. III. It had another also IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST. See how Mark shows this clearly by the witness of the dove on the head of Christ as He comes up from the Jordan, and by the use of the energetic word "drive" when describing the urgency with which our Lord was constrained to endure the temptation. The good news of salvation began to be told in the moment when Satan received his defeat; it was the Spirit of God which here brought on the conflict and crowned the Victor with success. It is at this special point that the admonition reaches ourselves. The question above all others for us to ask and to answer is this: How does the work of the Holy Ghost effect the beginning of the gospel in the soul of an unregenerate man? The reply to this is not difficult. Sometimes by a strange disturbance, a sovereignly wrought uneasiness in the heart and conscience; the sinner does not know, perhaps, the explanation of his restlessness, but he becomes sure that his peace is not made, and that it ought to be made, with an offended God. Then also sometimes the Spirit uses the quiet communication of truth. By the slower processes of patient education a child is led on up into the knowledge of God. Then the Holy Ghost moves that awakened life, and unites it savingly to Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. And sometimes this same Divine Agent of regeneration employs dispensations of providence, prosperous or adverse. Some practical lessons are taught us here, and they will be remembered better if they are stated in order. 1. Every good and great thing originates in a purpose as certainly as God's gospel did in God's purpose. Every enterprise exists as a thought before it exists as a realization. No man ever became a Christian without as definite a purpose to begin the gospel in his heart as Mark had when he commenced to write his gospel in the Bible. 2. So there is a second lesson to learn: every true life must have a plan. Christ's life had God's plan. Any life will accomplish more if it finds the Divine plan and accepts it. If an author is compelled to plan a story with characters in it, in order to even moderate success in managing the unities, must he not likewise be forced to plan a career which he proposes to live out? 3. Put alongside of this another lesson: eminence and excellence come from consistency in matching ends to beginnings. Human beings are reached and moved best by long and steady forces, rather than by those which are intermittent. 4. Now for the best lesson of all: when once the gospel has had its real beginning in any energetic life, nothing can take it away at the end. Heaven is the end. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The Genesis of the New Kingdom*:—Intense interest fastens upon "beginnings." There is large scope for the play of imagination. We gaze with exquisite pleasure on the laughing face of a royal babe, or on the launch of a mail-ship, or on the babbling rise of some historic river. Human life is full of "beginnings." I. CHRIST'S INCARNATION WAS A GREAT BEGINNING FOR HUMANITY. II. THIS BEGINNING HAD ITS HIDDEN ROOTS IN THE PAST. III. THIS NEW CREATION IS BOTH LIKE AND UNLIKE THE OLD. It is *like*, in that it opens with a voice. It is *unlike* in the fiat uttered. Attention here is challenged for the message, not for the man: it is a *voice*. The man is a cipher, the doctrine everything. IV. BEGINNINGS ARE OFTEN ATTENDED WITH PAIN. The desert life of John, with its ascetic austerities, was painful. It was painful to the natural man—to his social tendencies. Each day begins in midnight darkness. Each year is born in wintry cold and gloom. The life of the plant opens with the fracture of the seed. And the beginning of the gospel's life in individual souls is attended with sorrow and mortification. V. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS A BEGINNING WITHOUT AN END.

In the kingdom of Messiah, the prophecy becomes fact—"Thy sun shall no more go down." Prophets foresaw the fall of the earthly Jerusalem; no prophet has ever foreseen the decay of the heavenly. The gospel is power—infinite power. Is there no limit to man's development? None. By virtue of Christ's gospel, we are always beginning. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) **Of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.** *The author and subject of the gospel*:—I. CHRIST JESUS IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS GOSPEL. How great, then, is the sin of those who despise, or refuse to believe and obey the gospel. They reject Christ Himself. Take heed we be not guilty of this sin, for God will severely punish it. Yet, how common is this contempt of the gospel nowadays! How little do some care to hear it unfolded in the public ministry: a small matter hinders them. One cause of such contempt is this, that men are not yet thoroughly persuaded that the doctrine, delivered by a frail man like themselves, is, and can be, the doctrine of Christ Himself; they neither see nor feel any Divine power of Christ working in and by this doctrine when it is delivered; therefore they think it to be the word of a man, not the word of Christ Jesus the Son of God. But know this, that Christ Jesus uses the ministry of weak men, yet the word and message which they bring is the message of Christ Himself. And what if we bring this treasure to you in earthen vessels? Yet the treasure is not the less worth. II. CHRIST IS ALSO THE CHIEF SUBJECT, MATTER, AND ARGUMENT OF THE GOSPEL. Whatever is taught in the gospel is either (1) concerning the Person of Christ; or (2) concerning His offices, as He is our Priest, Prophet and King; or (3) concerning the benefits we have by Him, such as justification, salvation, &c.; or (4) touching the means of enjoying these benefits from Christ, as faith and repentance. So that Christ Jesus is the sum and main scope of the doctrine of the gospel. (*G. Petter.*) *How to receive the gospel*:—How gladly do we entertain good news touching our body, goods, friends, or outward estate! How welcome is it to us! (Prov. XXV. 25.) And shall not this blessed tidings of the salvation of our souls by Christ, which is brought to us in the gospel, be much more welcome to us? Is not the news of liberty welcome to the prisoner; the news of a pardon from the prince, welcome to the condemned malefactor? And what are we by nature, but prisoners under the bondage of sin and Satan—malefactors and traitors before God, guilty of eternal damnation? Oh, then, let us joyfully embrace the doctrine of the gospel, which brings to us the news of spiritual freedom from sin and Satan, purchased by Christ, and of the pardon of our sins procured for us by Him. How highly should we prize this doctrine; how happy should we think ourselves, when we may enjoy the preaching of it; and how far should we be from despising or neglecting so great salvation! (*Ibid.*) *The substance and design of the gospel*:—I. ITS SUBSTANCE. 1. Jesus Christ is the Great Teacher. 2. The Great Atoner. 3. The Great Example. His life was in harmony with His teaching; reflecting, like a stainless mirror, the purity and benevolence of His precepts. II. ITS DESIGN. 1. To reveal the heavenly world. 2. To prepare us for that world. Enlightenment, forgiveness, and sanctity, are the antecedents of glorification. These things come to us through the teaching, atonement, and example of Jesus. Thus the gospel makes us meet for joyful fellowship with holy angels, before the throne of God and the Lamb. (*P. J. Wright.*) *The gospel*:—The gospel is an anthem from the harps of heaven; the music of the River of Life washing its shores on high, and pouring in cascades upon the earth. Not so cheerful was the song of the morning stars; nor the shout of the sons of God so joyful. Gushing from the fountains of eternal harmony, it was first heard on earth in a low tone of solemn gladness, uttered in Eden by the Lord God Himself. This gave the key-note of the gospel-song. Patriarchs caught it up, and taught it to the generations following. It breathes from the harp of the Psalmist, and rang like a clarion from tower and mountain-top, as prophets proclaimed the year of Jubilee. Fresh notes from heaven have enriched the harmony as the Lord of Hosts and His angels have revealed new promises, and called on the suffering children of Zion to be joyful in their King. From bondage and exile, from dens and caves, from bloody fields and fiery stakes, and peaceful deathbeds, have they answered, in tones which have cheered the disconsolate, and made oppressors shake upon their thrones; while sun, and moon, and all the stars of light, stormy wind fulfilling His words, the roaring sea and the fulness thereof, mountains and hills, fruitful fields, and all the trees of the wood, have rejoiced before the Lord, and the coming of His Anointed for the redemption of His people, and the glory of His holy Name. (*Dr Hoge.*) *One gospel*:—There is only one gospel. There are

many religions amongst men: almost all of them are *Laws*—codes of precepts for the guidance of life; but Christianity is pure gospel—glad tidings of great joy. The angels gave it that name (Luke ii. 10), and the experience of multitudes that none can number has approved it. (*R. Glover.*) *The Bible without Christ*:—Take Christ away from the Bible and it is immediately destroyed. In ancient times a celebrated artist made a most wonderful shield, and worked his own name into it so that it could not be removed without destroying the shield. It is just so with the Bible and Christ. (*Foster*). **The Son of God.**—*Christ's Divinity practically proved*:—The Deity of the Son of God is, to me, not proved merely in propositions. I believe that he who believes in the Godhead of Jesus Christ has all history, all etymology, all philosophy, and all true reading of the case entirely on his side. But I do not look to propositions, to logical formulæ, to any bare statements, however exact, for the proof and confirmation that this claim is founded in righteousness. Do you think that I build my hopes of eternity upon some little etymological technicality? Do you suppose that my dependence is founded altogether upon the construction of a phrase or the mood and tense of a verb? We have nothing to fear from that side of the argument, so far as I have been able to collate the testimonies of competent men. But I do not rely upon it in preaching the Deity of the Son of God, and in committing myself to the great claim which Jesus makes on behalf of His own nature. What do I trust then? The moral reach, the spiritual compass, the indefinable and inexpressible sympathy of the Man. When He touched my heart into life, I did not say, "Hand me down the Greek grammar and the Hebrew lexicon, and three volumes of the encyclopædia, to see how this really stands." I knew it to be a fact. Nobody ever did for me what He has done. Once I was blind; now I see. I go to other men—writers, speakers, teachers—hear what they have to say, and, behold, they are broken cisterns that can hold no water. I go to the Son of God, whose teaching is written in the New Testament, and it gets into the deep places of my life; it redeems me; it goes further than any other influence, and does more for me than any other attempt that ever was made to recover and bless my life. It is, therefore, in this great sweep of His, in this reply to every demand that is made upon His resources, this infinite sufficiency of His grace, that I find the exposition and the defence of His Godhead. Some things must be felt; some things must be laid hold of by sympathy, affection, sensibility. The heart is in some cases a greater interpreter than the understanding. There is a time when logic has to say, "I can do no more for you; do the best you can for yourself!" Then love goes forward, and necessity feels it; and it is in that further insight and penetration that the Godhead of the Nazarene, as it appears to me, is vindicated and glorified. . . . . As I looked upon the sun this November morning, shining through some beautiful blue clouds, a man called upon me to prove that that sun was, in his judgment, as far as he could make out by "the tables," about sufficient to light the world. He turned over long pages of logarithms, and tables of various kinds, fractions and decimals, and long processions of figures; he asked me for a slate and a pencil, and he was going to make it out to my satisfaction that the sun was just about sufficient to enlighten a hemisphere at a time. I ordered him off! Why? I saw it; I felt it; the whole thing was before me, and if that man had never been born, and the slate had never been made, I should have known that this great sun poured light upon the earth until there was not room enough to receive it, and that the splendour ran off at the edges and flamed upon other stars! And yet sometimes men call upon us with slates, pencils, sponges, for the purpose of showing us by their calculations that Jesus Christ cannot be God the Son. I have lived long enough to know that He is God enough for me. What more can I want? He raises the dead; He redeems my life from destruction; He fills the mouth with good things; He numbers the hairs of my head; He carries me up-hill many a time when I am weary and the wind is bleak; He visits me in my distress and my affliction. My Lord! my God! I will not receive Thee merely through grammars and technical discussions. I will receive Thee because when Thou dost come into my heart, I know that all the heaven that I can contain is already within me when Thou art near. My Lord! and my God! (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The Son of God*:—The Son of God is no voluntary effect of the Father's power and wisdom, like the created universe, which once did not exist, and might never have existed, and must necessarily be ever confined within the bounds of time and space. He is the natural and necessary, and therefore the eternal and infinite, birth of the Divine fecundity, the boundless overflow of the Eternal Fountain of all existence and per-

fection, the infinite splendour of the Eternal Sun, the unspotted mirror, and complete and adequate image in Whom may be seen all the fulness of the Godhead. (*R. Watson.*) *Christ not* A *Son, but* THE *Son*:—This implies something other than that general fatherly relation which God sustains to all His intelligent creatures. Even among the heathen, great kings, heroes, lawgivers, and patriots are thought to be somehow sons of God. There was also the Oriental mystic, who, imagining himself a part of the universal all, a drop in the great ocean of being, was fond of calling himself a son of God. But Jesus is "*the* Son." And one has not to read far, in either of the Gospels, to be able to discover that here the phrase is used in a very definite sense. He is not so named as one who, like other men, bears the Divine image; nor as the object of special affection; nor as the greatest being in the universe next to God. He bears to the Father a more intimate relation. Together with the Father, He is the object of trust, love, and worship; the same in power and glory; to be honoured of all men, even as they honour the Father. The evangelist starts with this view. He whose story he is now to relate, is the incarnate Son of God. (*H. M. Grout, D.D.*) *The Divinity of Christ*:—A Divine Christ is the central sun of Christianity; quench it, and all is confusion worse confounded. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **As it is written in the prophets.**—*The appropriateness of this double prophecy*:—Its authors were—I. The FIRST prophet (Isa. xl. 3) and the LAST (Mal. iii. 1.) who *wrote*. John was the last prophet of the old dispensation and the first of the new who *spoke*. II. The one like John was a prophet of HOPE; the other like him again was the prophet of DESPAIR. III. Isaiah set the door ajar for CHRISTIANITY which John flung wide open: Malachi began to shut the door on JUDAISM which John closed. (*Anon.*) **Which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.**—*Need of preparation for Christ*:—In the East, few good roads are ever made; and such roads as have been made are generally kept in most wretched repair. Hence, when a sovereign is about to visit any part of his dominions, it is requisite that a messenger be sent on before to get the way made ready. Such, in things spiritual, was John's mission. Men's ways were in a wretched state. Encumbrances and stumbling-blocks lay everywhere scattered about. Mud and mire were the order of the day. It seemed impossible for any one to get along through life with unpolluted garments, or without stumbling and falling, and getting bruised and broken. The real preparation that was needed was in the hearts of the people. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *How to prepare the way for Christ*:—How was John to prepare the people to receive Christ? 1. By foretelling them that Christ was to come immediately after him. 2. By preaching the doctrine of Christ, touching His Person and offices. 3. By preaching the doctrine of faith in Christ, stirring up the people to believe in Him as the Messiah. 4. By preaching repentance, exhorting them to turn unto God from their sin, that so they might be fit to receive Christ. 5. By administering baptism. (*G. Petter*). *Man's part in the work of spiritual preparation*:—Though the preparation of the heart for Christ is the special work of God's Spirit, yet He requires that we also should do that which lieth in us toward this preparing of ourselves: though God only can work this preparation, yet He will have us use the means by which it may come to be wrought. He does not work in us, as in stocks and stones that have no sense or motion; but He first moves us by His Spirit, and enables us to the preparation of our hearts, so that we being moved by Him may, after a sort, move ourselves in using the means to prepare our hearts. 1. We must labour to be truly humbled in the sense of our sins, and of our natural misery without Christ. We are never fit to embrace Him, till we feel how wretched we are without Him. 2. We must labour to forsake all sin in heart and affection, and we must purge the love of it out of our hearts. 3. We must get a hungering and thirsting desire after Christ. 4. We must use all means to get faith, whereby to receive Christ into our hearts. (*Ibid.*) *The heart prepared to receive Christ*:—Labour we daily in preparing our hearts unto Christ: strive we to make Him a plain way, and a straight path into our heart. To this end, remove the annoyances of this way of Christ: thy sins and corruptions are the hindrances: take away these by true repentance, that they stop not up the way of Christ, and bar Him out of thy heart. Labour also for true faith in Christ, that by it thou mayest be fitted to receive Him, and that He may come to dwell in thee. Do not think that ever Christ will come into thy heart to dwell there, or that thou canst ever be fit to receive Him, if thou be not careful of preparing thyself to entertain Him. Will any earthly prince go to take up his lodging in such a house or city,

where he knows there will be no preparation for his entertainment? No more will Christ in a heart unready to receive Him. (*Ibid.*) *Preparing the way of the Lord*:—The reference may be to the state of the Jewish Church and the Gentile nations. But what is applied generally to the nations is equally applicable to every human heart. I. THERE ARE FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES TO BE REMOVED. 1. Prejudice. The gospel is often viewed under a false light, or through a perverting medium. The self-denial, the purity, the separation from the world which Christianity inculcates begets prejudice in many. 2. Carnality. Base desires, carnal affections, &c., present formidable obstacles to the claims of the Lord (Luke xiv. 18–20). 3. Hardness of heart. By nature impenitent, blind to its own extreme sinfulness, and, even after confession of sin, unwillingness to forsake them (Isa. xlvi. 12, 13; Ezek. xi. 19). 4. Self-righteousness. Though spiritually diseased and dying, men imagine themselves "whole," and without need of a physician. They will not accept salvation by simple faith in the merits of another (Rom. x. 1, 2). II. REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY TO THE REMOVAL OF THESE OBSTACLES. (*A. Tucker.*) *Christ's way to be prepared, not ours*:—See what all ministers of the Word must chiefly labour in, even to prepare men for Christ; and this is the main thing to be aimed at in our preaching—we are not to preach ourselves, but Christ; we are not to prepare our own way, or the way of any other, but the way of Christ in the hearts of our people. To this end, we are to speak so to the consciences of our hearers that we may (if possible) by our ministry work faith and repentance in them, and so make way for Christ to enter into their hearts. (*G. Petter.*) *Preparatory work needful for spiritual progress*:—When you see a party of men engaged in taking levels and measuring distances along a particular line of country, and a little afterwards, other men laying rails, and building bridges, and cutting tunnels, it is not difficult to guess that the great tide of commerce is about to surge over that region. When loads of wood and stone are laid down on a vacant lot, it is at once evident that a building is about to be erected. So the Old Testament prophecies and John's preaching showed that the way was being prepared for the coming of Jesus. After the Romans had reduced a country to the position of a province, one of their first cares was to construct a strong military road into it. Thus the way was always prepared for their legions. In the East when some great chief is passing through the country, it is not uncommon to make new ways for his passage. Travellers in unsettled parts of the country soon learn to appreciate as never before the advantages of having roads along which to journey. Ways must be constructed for the progress of Christ's truth in the world and in the heart. (*The American Sunday School Times*). *Road building in the East*:—To "prepare the way" before a sovereign is, and always has been, so universal a practice in the East that wherever an unusually good spot of road is found, or indeed any piece of way that shows signs of labour, a tradition or fable is almost invariably found to lie along it to the effect that that piece of road was built expressly for the passage of such a royal personage, either the sovereign of the realm which includes the territory, or one of his guests of equal exaltation. On going from Cairo to the pyramids, over an exceptionally good road, the traveller will not fail to be told that it was built for the Prince of Wales, or for the Empress Eugénie, or for the Khedive himself, or even, rarely, for Napoleon the Great. (*Ibid.*) *The law of preparation*:—God doesn't need man's help in anything; but He chooses to call for it in a great many things. And when God does leave a place for man's work, man must do his part—or take the consequences. God is ready to give a crop to the farmer; but He calls on the farmer to plough and plant and harrow and hoe in preparing the way for God's sun and shower, and power of increase. If the farmer fails to so prepare the way of the Lord for a harvest, he must prepare for a famine—or starve. God is ready to give a blessing on our homes; but we must prepare the way of the Lord for a blessing there, by our love and our faithfulness and our industry. It is not enough to hang up a framed chromo on the dining-room walls: "God bless our home!" As in the field and in the home, so in our hearts. If we want God's presence and blessing there, we must prepare the way for them. We must plan to find room for the Lord in our hearts. We must make ready to do His bidding. We must decide to give up all habits of life that are inconsistent with His service. We must make a proffer of ourselves, of our time, of our talents, of all our possessions, to the Lord. If we refuse to do this, we must not wonder that whoever else has a blessing we are without it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **The voice of one crying in the wilderness.**—*Ministerial zeal and bold-*

ness:—I. MINISTERS OUGHT TO SHOW ZEAL AND EARNESTNESS IN THEIR OFFICE (Isa. lviii. 1.; Hosea viii. 1.; 2 Tim. iv. 2). A minister of the Word must not do the work of the Lord negligently or coldly, but with zeal and fervency of spirit. This zeal and earnestness consists chiefly in (1) being affected and moved in his own heart with that which he delivers, feeling the power of it in himself; (2) labouring so to speak as to affect and move his hearers to the embracing of that which is taught. This is done by the particular applying, and earnest urging and pressing of the doctrine taught, to the consciences of the hearers; when it is not only delivered in general manner, and so left, but particularly applied, for the reproving and convincing of sin in people, and for the stirring of them up to good duties (Eccles. xii. 11). The doctrine of the Word (preached by the ministers of it) is compared to nails fastened, to show that it must be driven home, and up to the head (as it were), by the hammer of application. II. MINISTERS SHOULD ALSO, WITH COURAGE AND BOLDNESS OF SPIRIT, DELIVER THE WORD AND MESSAGE OF THE LORD (Eph. vi. 20; Jer. i. 17.; Ezek. iii. 9). We deliver not our own message, but that of God; we speak not in our own name, but in the Name of the Almighty. Let us then, with all boldness, deliver God's message, not forbearing to reprove sin, nor concealing any part of the truth, for fear of men's displeasure. (*G. Petter.*) *God's use of man's voice*:—The highest praise of a prophet is that he should be simply a "voice" employed by God. God borrows voices still. While the weapons of our warfare are heavenly, the weapons of His warfare are earthly. For the human lips a Divine message must be sought; for the Divine message human lips are requisite. Consecrate thy lips to Him, and He will pour grace into them. (*R. Glover.*) *The preacher a voice*:—A preacher should, if possible, be nothing but a voice, which should be always heard and never seen. To cry is to preach with such force as is worthy of the truth, without lowering the voice through complaisance. To this end he must not be a man of the world, but one who comes, as it were, out of the wilderness, without relations, without friends, without secular engagements, which may thwart and obstruct his ministry. The first man who appears in the gospel is one entirely dedicated to repentance: the first example and the first precept are an example and a precept of repentance—so necessary is this to salvation! (*Quesnel.*) *Novelty and mystery*:—I. A WONDERFUL PREACHER. 1. The subject of prophecy. 2. The last of the prophets. 3. Choosing a strange place to preach in. 4. Adopting an antiquated garb and manner. II. A WONDERFUL SERMON. 1. Not the exposition of a creed. 2. Not concerning traditions and ceremonies. 3. Personal—as repentance is a personal duty. 4. Practical—as leading to visible results. III. A WONDERFUL CONGREGATION. 1. Strangely composed—of city and country people. 2. All travelling a great distance to hear the preacher. 3. All yielding to the truth—confessing their sins. 4. All submitting to the rite imposed by the desert preacher. (*J. C. Gray.*) *Christ's public entrance upon His ministry*:—I. THE NEED OF THE HUMAN HERALD OF CHRIST. Though our Lord came in the fulness of the time, the time was not ready for Him, so far as His own people were concerned. The popular heart was intensely cold and unrepentant. A certain measure of national disaster will bring repentance and reformation. People read chastisement in their sorrows. But without spiritual guides there comes on religious indifference. The popular heart was softened. It was prepared for the truth, and to be an honest witness of Christ's miracles. Here lies the whole philosophy of the Christian ministry. Christ could operate directly on the heart without the human instrument. But He requires of man that he go before Him, and do all that the human voice can do, and then He comes to complete the order of salvation. He gives man as much as he can do and bear in the great work of saving men. II. THE HUMAN PREPARATION OF CHRIST FOR HIS WORK. III. THE SUBJECTION OF THE SERVANT TO THE MASTER. (*J. F. Hurst, D.D.*) *A rough man for rough work*:—He had rough work to do; therefore a man of refined taste and delicate organization could not perform it. John is fitted for his work—a coarse man levelling mountains and filling up valleys, sternness in his looks, vehemence in his voice. The truth is—Reformers must despise the conventionalities of society. They have rude work to do, and they must not be too dainty respecting the means they adopt to effect it. Adorn your frontispieces, embellish your corner-stones, but let the foundations be as rugged as you please. Decorations are for the superstructure, strength and solidity for the base. Luther has often been charged with rudeness, coarseness, and even scurrility. The indictment contains, perhaps, too much truth for us successfully to gainsay. But we should not forget that he had a coarse age to deal with, coarse enemies to contend with, coarse sins to battle with.

Coarse or not coarse, the question is—Did he do his work? If he did that, who are we to cavil at the means he used? Would our smooth phrases and rounded periods accomplish the task of regenerating half Europe, and of giving the other half a shaking from which it has not yet recovered, nor is likely to recover this century? Regenerate half Europe indeed! Shame upon us! We cannot regenerate half a parish, and who are we to find fault with a man who regenerated half a continent? Who will go to fell forest trees of a thousand years' standing with a superfine razor? Is not the heavy axe the fit tool wherewith to cut them down? (*J. C. Jones.*)

Ver. 4.—**John did baptize in the wilderness.**—*The age in which the Baptist ministered:*—The age of Tiberius, spiritually speaking, was not unlike the Victorian age. Some people were still satisfied with the old religious forms. Their piety still flowed through the time-worn channels of creeds and catechisms. There will always be these survivals, what we call "old-fashioned people"; they belong to the past, let them alone, they will get to heaven in their own way. Others—in the days of Tiberius and Victoria—respectable but heartless formalists, really without religion, but apparently full of it, cling to the orthodox forms. You will always find such wooden-headed, stony-hearted supporters of things as they are, without a breath of the new life in them, boasting that they are Abraham's children. But a surging crowd of restless, eager spirits, sons of the new time, impatient of worn-out creeds, churches, establishments, orthodoxies, what shall I say of these? Ah! these are the disciples of John. These wait for the inner personal appeal, "repent;" the fresh symbol, "baptism"; the spiritual emancipation, "remission of sins"; the new Divine Man; the holy effluence; the fiery chrism. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The Baptist's training:*—Besides baptizing, he did a good deal else there; for he was "in the deserts till the day of his showing forth unto Israel." He had the usual good education of a priest's son, and would know most of the Bible by heart. His father and mother had taught him, as only saintly hearts can teach a child, the wealth of God's mercy, the grievousness of sin, the promises of God to His people, the hope of a great Redeemer. They had told him the wonders connected with his birth in such a way as not to move his conceit, but to charge his conscience with the sense of a high calling awaiting him. They had told him of a miraculous birth of One whom Anna and Simeon and themselves had been moved by the Spirit of God to hail as the Promised Christ. He had from time to time gone up to Jerusalem to the feasts, and had thus seen and heard enough of the miseries of his people, and of the hypocrisy and worldliness of their priests and leaders, to make him long for the appearing of the promised Redeemer. So he sought calmness and strength and light in the desert with his God. The desert dangers destroyed all fear; the hardness of the desert fare, all love of ease. The writings of the great prophets of the past were the friends whose companionship moulded him. Prayer for his people arose perpetually from his priestly heart. Increasingly he felt that the one misery of man was sin; and the one need of man a Saviour, whose sacrifice would take away its guilt, and whose baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost would destroy evil and create good in them. In the wilderness the great temptations had their fiercest force, but were fought and conquered; the temptation to shrink from the tremendous task; the temptation to despair of men hearing his message or obeying his call; the temptation to fear his own break-down in faith; the temptations of darkness and doubt, all assailed him there. He could not have come in the power of the Spirit to his work, unless victory over such assaults had strengthened him. He knew that death was the reward which the world had always given God's prophets. He faced till he ceased to fear it. So, clad in the single garment, still worn by the poorest Bedouin; living on locusts and wild honey, as the extremely poor sometimes still do in the same region; he walked and talked with God until the time was ripe for his coming forth. (*R. Glover.*) *Solitary communion with God:*—Every preacher and teacher, to do his work aright, must go into the wilderness. There would be more prophecy if there was more privacy. An ounce of truth discovered by yourself has more power in it than a pound imparted to you by some one else. Do not grudge the time you spend alone with God. He will teach all His scholars what none others can impart. (*Ibid.*) *The Baptism of John:*—Ablutions in the East have always been more or less a part of religious worship—easily performed, and always welcome. Every synagogue, if possible, was by the side of a stream or spring; every mosque still requires a fountain or basin for lustrations. But John needed more than this. No common

spring or tank would meet the necessities of the multitudes who resorted to him for baptism. The Jordan now seemed to have met with its fit purpose. It was the one river of Palestine, sacred in its recollections, abundant in its waters; and yet, at the same time, the river, not of cities, but of the wilderness; the scene of the preaching of those who dwelt not in kings' palaces, nor wore soft clothing. On the banks of the rushing stream the multitudes gathered—the priests and scribes from Jerusalem, down the pass of Adummim; the publicans from Jericho on the south, and the lake of Genuesareth on the north; the soldiers on their way from Damascus to Petra, through the Ghor, in the war with the Arab chief, Hareth; the peasants from Galilee, with ONE from Nazareth, through the opening of the plain of Esdraelon. The tall "reeds" in the valleys waved, "shaken by the wind"; the pebbles of the bare clay hills lay around, to which the Baptist pointed as capable of being transformed into "children of Abraham"; at their feet rushed the refreshing stream of the never-failing river. There began that sacred rite which has since spread throughout the world. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The ministry of John the Baptist:*—I. HIS QUALIFICATIONS for his ministry. "He was in the deserts," etc. He was a meditative man. This love of retirement into nature's places of impressive solitude is good for the soul. The fountains of thought and religious feeling are best filled thus. The best poems, speeches, sermons, are born under such conditions. John possessed another good qualification for his ministry in the simplicity of his tastes and habits. "A man who has no wants," says Burke, "has obtained great freedom and firmness, and even dignity." II. The DOCTRINE of his ministry. He proclaimed the need of repentance. Where one man objects to the preaching of searching truth, ten will approve it. Confession of sin is humbling but salutary. He told them of Christ who was about to come and complete his imperfect work. Without Christ repentance is superficial. III. The CHARACTERISTICS of his ministry. From its extraordinary effect, that mysterious influence of the Spirit, which gives the unction characteristic of all mighty preachers, must have distinguished John's ministry. The tones of the Holy Christ, with which he was filled from his mother's womb, were heard in his preaching. Joined to this supreme quality of the preacher, John had other qualities of a remarkable kind. He was a direct preacher. He was a plain and faithful preacher. He magnified Christ to the forgetfulness of himself. (*A. H. Currier.*) *Nature's solitude refreshing:*—There is something in nature's solitudes most congenial and refreshing to souls of the larger mould. Of William the Conqueror it is said that "he found society only when he passed from the palace to the loneliness of the woods. He loved the wild deer as though he had been their own father." (*Ibid.*) *A faithful ministry beneficent:*—Such plainness of dealing may appear, at first thought, harsh and repulsive. But before this judgment is given, it is well to inquire whether plainness and fidelity on the part of the preacher are any proof of unkindness. Is the keeper of a weather-signal station unkind, who hoists the storm-signal, that the shipping may stay in the harbour, or fly to its shelter, when word comes to him from his chief that a storm is at hand? Let him fail once to do his duty. Instead of a plain and truthful signal, let him put out an ambiguous or an unmeaning one, and let the ships, which fill the harbour or cover the adjacent sea, sail forth and go on in entire security, until the tempest comes and catches them in its irresistible grip and scatters their wrecks along the shore. Then see the widows wring their hands and wail, and their fatherless children cry over the lifeless dead, which lie stark and cold on the sand, and say whether it was kind and good to keep back the warning that might have prevented such ill. A child may complain of the robin whose boding note prognosticates the rain which interferes with its play, but a man, able to understand that God sends the rain, will thank the bird for the warning. (*Ibid.*) *It is not wise to disregard a faithful ministry:*—They had the good sense to perceive that the truth, though sometimes severe and painful, is nevertheless truth, and not to be run away from. As wisely might the sailor on a dangerous coast, befogged in mist and uncertain of the way, close his ears to the fog-bell which warns him of the rocks, as for a sinful man to find fault with and avoid the messenger of God, who proclaims that truth by which his soul is saved. Better is it to charge the messenger to hold back nothing. A reasonable soul fears nothing so much as those false delusions of the mind which soothe men's alarms and lull concern to sleep—at last to destroy them. (*Ibid.*) *John the fulfilment of prophecy:*—The Old Testament is full of prophetic intimations and clear predictions concerning the coming Saviour. Beginning faintly and far away, they grow in distinctness and fulness, until John ushers in the long-expected Redeemer. Like

the chorus of bird-songs which herald the dawn, which, beginning with the soft chirp of a half-awakened songster, gradually increases and swells till the whole air throbs with melody, so the prophetic strain which tells the coming Christ rises in strength until He appears. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 5. **And there went out to him all the land of Judæa.**—*The Baptist's audience:*—It was a mixed multitude of almost every class. The other Evangelists help us to realize its heterogeneous character. There were Pharisees, whose scrupulous routine of external observance had woven around them a web of self-satisfied pride; and Sadducees, whose reaction from superstition had landed them in a cold and heartless infidelity. Among these there would be followers of Shammai, cleaving to tradition and rigidly orthodox; sympathisers also with his opponent Hillel, just emerging from that slavery to the letter which had taken the very life out of their religion. There were soldiers, too, who, through the lawless rapacity of their generals, had learned to think only of loot and plunder; and the hated publicans, with their overreaching and fraudulent exactions, the byword for all that was lowest and most contemptible—all were there, and for all he had the same message, "Repent." The Rabbis have a wonderful comment on the import of that message. "If," they say, "Israel would repent, they would be redeemed." (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *What induced them to flock to him thus?*—1. The excellency of his person. 2. The novelty of his doctrine. 3. The zeal and earnestness of his preaching. 4. The strangeness of the place where he preached. 5. The austerity and strictness of his life. (*G. Petter.*) *The crowd going out to the lonely man:*—Notice, the man of the crowd goes to the man of the desert. The publican, the soldier, even the Pharisee. Strange attraction this, yet recurrent. He who knows most of himself, he who has learned himself in solitude, will know most of others. It has ever been thus. The world has gone to the cloister, not the cloister to the world; the city finds solace in the desert, never the desert in the city. A few years ago, all Paris flocked to the Curé d'Ars—an obscure provincial priest, without much learning or preaching power either, but they found in him the fresh springs of comfort, the word of prophecy, the call to repentance, which in every soul's solitude is the cry most certain to pierce. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Secret of John Baptist's influence:*—In one word, it was "reality." In an age of hollowness and hypocrisy never equalled before or since, such a characteristic was bound to startle men and arrest their attention. The Baptist, if any one, practised what he preached. His protest against sin was embodied by his example. Take a single illustration from his habit and dress. He came to denounce luxury and soft clothing and sumptuous fare, and he was a living example of the austerity which he called for. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Confessing sin:*—Steps towards conversion. 1. To seek an enlightened guide. 2. To open our heart to him, by acquainting him with our manner of life. 3. To receive directions concerning repentance from him. 4. To baptize ourselves, as it were, by his advice, in tears and works of mortification. It is an instinct and a duty which is, so to speak, natural, for a man to confess his sins, and to humble himself for them, when once he is touched with a true contrition; but to do this is not at all natural to human pride. Repentance is a pool, or rather a river, which carries our impurities far from us, so as never to be resumed again. Lord, Thou art the only one who can put us into it! (*Quesnel.*) *The necessity of confession of sins:*—There is a two-fold confession of sins necessary in the practice of repentance. I. To GOD. 1. It must come from a feeling heart, touched with sense of sin and grieved for it: not verbal, or from the teeth outward. 2. It must come from a hatred and loathing of the sins confessed, not from fear of punishment merely. Saul. Pharaoh. 3. From hope of mercy, else we witness against ourselves. Judas. 4. Free and voluntary, not forced from us. God requires a freewill offering, else it is not pleasing to Him. 5. It must not be only in general terms, but there must be a laying open of our particular known sins, so far as we can remember them. II. To MEN. Not always necessary, but in some cases only. 1. When by our sins we have offended and scandalized men—either the Church in general, or some particular persons. 2. When any sin lies heavy on our conscience, so that we cannot find ease or comfort. In this case, it is necessary to open our hearts, and to acknowledge that sin which troubles us, to some faithful pastor, or other Christian brother, who may minister spiritual advice and comfort to us. (*G. Petter.*) *John the Baptist:*—I. THE PREACHER. Fearless, honest, earnest; and these characteristics are sure to attract public notice and confidence. The secret of his power over men seems to have

been that he was fully convinced that he was sent on a Divine mission, and was so engrossed in fulfilling it, that he cared little for anything else. What John the Baptist *was* was quite as effective preaching as anything he said. II. But if the preacher was notable, his PREACHING was equally so. The man's words caught the colour of his character. They were positive, straightforward, unmistakable. He aimed directly at the great need of his generation. It was not a pleasing style of address. When the Church preaches the simple gospel, men stop to listen and prepare themselves to welcome Christ. The majority of men are not influenced by mere doctrinal speculation, any more than a sham fight can determine the fortunes of a nation. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The inspiration of work for God*:—When he is conscious that he is sent of God as a messenger of glad tidings to the poor and needy, how relatively unimportant all other business appears! When he realizes that all the wealth and blessings of the kingdom of God are to be his for ever, how trifling are the few temporary burdens he is called to bear! how petty the sacrifices he is asked to make! It is said that when Pliny saw from a distance the eruption of Vesuvius, he forsook his occupation and launched his boat and rowed toward the flaming mountain, forgetting the labour and the peril in the fascination of the sight; and when one sees, even from afar, the light of the city of God, there is such longing to get nearer the brightness, that approach, at any cost, seems cheap. You remember the old legend, which has been so beautifully done into verse by one of our poets, of the monk who was charmed from his cell-door by the singing of a bird, and, though the sweetness of the song was such that it seemed to him that he only walked an hour, yet on his return he found that a hundred years had passed. When we are in such spiritual condition that we hear heavenly voices calling us, no way of duty seems long or hard. The most exhausting service is a delight. What the Church wants is to know, like John the Baptist, that its responsibility is its privilege, and then it will have zeal enough for its opportunity. What the individual Christian wants is to realize the grandeur of his position and the greatness of his mission, and he will need no other urgency to faithfulness. (*Ibid.*) *Efficiency more than refinement in work for God*:—Napoleon was once told by certain professionals that his impetuous methods were uncivil and contrary to all military traditions. His reply to his critics was: "Gentlemen, battles are not to be won by compliance with the rules of etiquette, by postponing action until the enemy is drawn up in line, and his officers, having put on their gloves, stand hat in hand, saying, 'We are ready. Will you please to fire first?'—and to win the battle is what I am after." There is danger that the Church may lay so much stress on what it calls the amenities and proprieties, that it may fail to win the battle—the one thing which God has put it into the world to do. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. **And John was clothed with camel's hair.**—*Rules for sobriety in diet*:—1. It must not exceed our means. 2. It must not exceed our station. 3. It is to be taken at fit times—when hunger dictates (Psa. cxlv. 15; Eccl. x. 16, 17). 4. We must use such food as may serve to maintain strength and health of body, not such as tends to the hurt and overthrow of our health. 5. Our food should be such as may make us more fit for performance of the duties of our calling and of God's service. (*G. Petter.*) *The Baptist's plain fare*:—Coarse meat they were (locusts), but nature is content with little, grace with less. Bread and water with the gospel are good cheer. Our Saviour hath taught us to pray for bread, not for manchet or junkets, but downright household bread; and Himself gave thanks for barley-bread and broiled fishes. A little of the creature will serve turn to carry thee through thy pilgrimage. One told a philosopher, If you will be content to please Dionysius, you need not feed upon green herbs. He replied, And if you can feed upon green herbs, you need not please Dionysius; you need not flatter, comply, be base, &c. (*John Trapp.*) *Why did John Baptist use such mean apparel and diet*:—1. It was agreeable to the custom of the place were he lived, and easy to be had there. 2. That he might resemble Elias, in whose spirit he was to go before Christ. 3. Because he was a Nazarite from his mother's womb. 4. Preaching the doctrine of repentance, he practised mortification in his own person. 5. That he might procure reverence to his person, and authority to his ministry. 6. To leave us a pattern and example of sobriety and temperance. (*G. Petter.*) *Rules to be used in the use of apparel, that it may be sober and moderate*:—1. According to our ability and maintenance in goods or lands. 2. Answerable to our station and dignity, in that place and calling wherein we live.

3. According to the laudable custom of that country where we live. 4. Such as may serve to express the inward graces and virtues of the mind, such as modesty, humility, &c. Therefore it must be comely and decent, not gaudy or garish. 5. Following the example of the most grave and sober men and women that live in the Church and are of our own rank; not after that of the lightest and vainest sort of the people. 6. Our apparel must be worn and used to the right ends for which it is appointed by God. (*Ibid.*) *Wild honey*:—A good old French bishop, in paying his annual visit to his clergy, was very much afflicted by the representations they made of their extreme poverty, which indeed the appearance of their houses and families corroborated. While he was deploring the state of things which had reduced them to this sad condition, he arrived at the house of a curate, who, living amongst a poor set of parishioners, would, he feared, be in a still more awful plight than the others. Contrary, however, to his expectations, he found appearances very much improved. Everything about the house wore the aspect of comfort and plenty. The good bishop was amazed. "How is this, my friend?" said he; "you are the first man I have met with a cheerful face and a plentiful board. Have you any income in addition to the stipend of your cure?" "Yes, sir," said the clergyman, "I have; my family would starve on the pittance I receive from the poor people I instruct. Come with me into the garden, and I will show you the *stock* that yields me an excellent interest." On going to the garden, he showed the bishop a large range of bee-hives. "There is the bank from which I draw an annual dividend. It never stops payment."

Ver. 7. **There cometh one mightier than I after me.**—*Christ mightier than the Baptist*:—This not then apparent. As the two met on the banks of the Jordan it appeared the reverse: John the embodiment of matured strength; mighty in word, wondrously successful; *the* great man of the epoch. Jesus had given no evidence of greatness. But things are not what they seem. Jesus is mightier than John. I. In His PERSON. "The power of God." II. In His PREACHING. Neither in manner nor matter did John "astonish" as Christ did. Christ's words were spirit and life. III. In His WORKS. John did no miracle. IV. In THE PERMANENCE OF His MINISTRY. We hear the last of John's disciples in Acts xix. 1–7. Christ's disciples are an ever-increasing body to-day. V. In His DEATH. Christ's death really began His ministry: John's closed his. VI. In His POWER OVER THE HUMAN HEART. John could only move its fears while he was here; Christ can win its love and devotion now that He has gone. (*Anon.*) *Unloosing Eastern sandals*:—The custom of loosing the sandals from off the feet of an Eastern worshipper was ancient and indispensable. It is also commonly observed in visits to great men. The sandals, or slippers, are pulled off at the door, and either left there or given to a servant to bear. The person to bear them was an inferior domestic, or attendant upon a man of high rank, to take care of and to return them to him again. This was the work of servants among the Jews, and it was reckoned so servile that it was thought too mean for a scholar or disciple to do. The Jews say: "All services which a servant does for a master, a disciple does for his master, except unloosing his shoes." John thought it was too great an honour for him to do that for Christ, which was thought too mean for a disciple to do for a wise man. (*Burder.*) *The Baptist's humility*:—The highest buildings have the lowest foundations. As the roots of a tree *descend* so the branches *ascend*. The lower the ebb the higher the tide. Those upon the mountains see only the fog beneath them, whilst those in deep pits see the stars above them. The most fruitful branches bow the lowest. The best trees refused to be king, but the bramble affected it (Judg. ix). (*Trapp.*) *Retiring with humility in favour of another*:—He retired with dignity and ease, and with a glowing tribute to our Lord's Divinity. He had the instinct of the true teacher. That one who would not rather see his disciple surpass him in memorable service for humanity is far too small for his position. Michael Angelo's monument in the Westminster Abbey of Florence is magnificent, and attracts all eyes; but his humble teacher lies beneath a slab of the church floor, and the very name is worn by the feet of worshippers during the centuries. Who will complain that the two are misplaced? The teacher did his work well, and shines too in the fame of the master. But the disciple had what the master never had. So He who had been baptized by John, possessed what John did not have, and the beauty of John's ministry lay in a recognition of this fact. He knew as well how to close his life as he had known how to begin it. (*Amer. Sunday School Times.*) *Shoe-strings; humble service*:—This

is what John understood, and what you must understand, that it is an honour to be permitted to do the humblest work for Jesus Christ. If when the queen was riding through our streets, with soldiers before her and soldiers behind, and crowds of people all along the way, you stood there with a little bunch of flowers in your hand and offered them to her, and she took them and thanked you with a smile, I fancy you would be very proud because the queen had been pleased to accept your little service. It was so John the Baptist felt: he felt that there were great, strong angels who would have reckoned it an honour to be allowed to untie the Lord's shoe-latchets, and while the Lord could have such pure servants as these, he felt that *he* was unworthy the honour. (*J. R. Howat.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Jesus came from Nazareth.**—*Nazareth of Galilee: The fitness of the spot*:—1. Its seclusion. It lies in a narrow cleft in the limestone hills which form the boundary of Zabulon, entirely out of the ordinary roads of commerce, so that none could say that our Lord had learnt either from Gentiles or from rabbis. 2. Its beauty and peacefulness. The flowers of Nazareth are famous, and the appearance of its inhabitants shows its healthiness. It was a home of humble peace and plenty. The fields of its green valley are fruitful, and the view from the hill which overshadows it is one of the loveliest and most historically striking in all Palestine. (*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*) *Nazareth*:—The village of Nazareth is reached by a narrow, steep, and rough mountain path. But the distant view of the village itself, in spring, is beautiful. Its streets rise in terraces on the hill-slopes toward the north-west. The hills rise above it in an amphitheatre around to a height of five hundred feet, and shut it in from the bleak winds of winter. The flat-roofed houses, built of yellowish-white limestone of the neighbourhood, shine in the sun with a dazzling brightness, from among gardens and fig-trees, olives, cypresses, and the white and scarlet blossoms of the orange and pomegranate. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *Hidden worth*:—Oh how much hidden worth is there, which, in this world, is either lost in the dust of contempt and *cannot* be known, or wrapt up in the veil of humility and *will not* be known! But sooner or later it *shall* be known, as Christ's was. (*M. Henry.*) *Jesus Christ's early youth and baptism*:—I. There is here an intimation of the fact, that Christ had hitherto RESIDED IN THE CITY OF NAZARETH, in lower Galilee. 1. The name of this city attached itself to Jesus Christ as a term of reproach. 2. In this city Christ lived thirty years in seclusion, &c.—discharging the humble and homely duties of His station—thus obeyed the law in all its precepts. II. WHEN CHRIST WAS ABOUT TO SHOW HIMSELF TO ISRAEL, HE CAME TO JOHN TO BE BAPTIZED. He thus acknowledged the appointment of John, and honoured his office. He was made subject to the law. He thus dedicated Himself to the service of God. III. The baptism of Christ was signalized BY SEVERAL MIRACULOUS AND STRIKING ACCOMPANIMENTS. 1. The heavens were opened. 2. The Spirit descended. 3. There was a voice from heaven. (*Expository Outlines.*) **And was baptized of John in Jordan.**—*Our Lord's baptism*:—It is not possible for us to understand the whole mystery of this act, but we may reverently consider some of the motives which prompted the amazing condescension. 1. It may have been to consecrate water for the remission of sins. Just as the brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the waters at the first creation reduced order out of chaos, and prepared that element for all the purifications of the first dispensation; so when the moral re-creation of the world was inaugurated the operation of the same Blessed Agent, descending upon our Lord in the river Jordan, sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin. 2. It may also have been that He designed thereby to be made one with His brethren, or to taste for their sakes at the outset of His ministry that curse of sin which He felt in all its intolerable burden at the close, before His cry of desolation. 3. Another motive He has expressly revealed. When the Baptist shrank back from an act that must have seemed profane, He pointed out that it was incumbent on Him to show an example of perfect obedience to His Father's will. 4. Underlying this resolution of obedience was the consciousness of a deep humiliation. His self-abasement reached its lowest depth in His baptism. To be misinterpreted and misunderstood at every step was bad enough; but to be told that by His own confession He was a sinner, one with publicans and harlots, and that by His own act and deed He admitted His guilt and sought to have it removed—such self-abasement is more than man can either measure or conceive. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The public commencement of a great life*:—I. THAT IT EMERGED FROM COMPARATIVE OBSCURITY. "From Nazareth of Galilee." Christ's coming from Nazareth would tend—1. To correct the proud notions of those to whom He came.

2. It would be a means of self-discipline. II. THAT IT WAS CHARACTERIZED BY TRUE HUMILITY. 1. Humility was shown in appreciating the worth of another man's work. 2. By giving pre-eminence to a man of inferior moral worth. 3. By submitting to the ceremonialisms of life. III. THAT IT WAS FAVOURED WITH HAPPY VISIONS—"He saw the heavens opened." 1. Christ was favoured with a revelation of the unseen world. 2. This revelation was given in the performance of a comparatively trivial duty. IV. CHRIST WAS HONOURED BY A DIVINE COMMENDATION—"This is my beloved son," &c. 1. This commendation was paternal. 2. It was sympathetic. Learn: 1. Comparative solitude is the best preparation for a life of public usefulness. 2. That men are not to be judged by the surroundings of their childhood. 3. That humility is the true adornment of a young man about to commence public life. 4. The happy interchange of sympathy between heaven and a truly pious soul. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *The baptism of Christ*:—Note, I. The TIME of it—"In those days," A.D. 28, Jesus thirty years of age, the age at which the Levites began their ministry. II. The PLACE of it. Either the ancient ford at Succoth or near Jericho. III. The MANNER of it. Of John. In Jordan. To fulfil all righteousness. IV. The BLESSING that followed it. Credentials of Messiahship. Anointing for ministry with power (Cf. Rom. i. 4; Acts x. 38). Tranquility (Dove; see Isa. vi. 6). Expression of Divine favour. (*H. Thorne.*) *The baptism of Christ: Its significance*:—Jesus was baptized by His forerunner, who was both the representative of the old economy and the preacher of repentance for the new. I. In the former relation the Baptist performed on the person of the Christian High Priest the washing which preceded His anointing with the Holy Spirit. The typical high priests were washed before their anointing. II. In the latter relation the preacher of repentance administered the pledge of penitent washing for the Messiah to One who was also the representative of sinful man. Two ends were thus accomplished. 1. Christ was baptized as the Head and Surety of the human race; assuming in its symbol the transgression of mankind. 2. He was designated as the Messiah, in whom were combined all the offices to which His types were of old anointed. In the former sense, His baptism represented a sin assumed but not shared; He was "numbered with the transgressors," and "came by water" before He came by "blood." In the latter it represented the perfect purity which His pre-eminent ministry required; the water represented not the cleansing, but the absense of the need of purification. (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*) *The Baptism of Jesus*:—If we can distinguish between the important and the unimportant in this scene, between the transient and the permanent, we shall not study it in vain. Essential truths do not grow old. 1. Applying this test we find that one of the unessential truths concerning Christ's baptism is its mode. The exact mode could not be reproduced; none of us can have the Jordan ford for our baptismal font. 2. The heavenly phenomena accompanying the baptism are not among its essential features. The accessories cannot, from their very nature, be universal. What then were the essential features? I. CHRIST OUR LORD THERE SET FOR US A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE. Baptism was an ordinance of God; Christ will not exempt Himself from any duty. Why should I be baptized? Because God commands it. Have you less need than Christ? The King of Glory did not despise it as "a mere form of the Church." He received baptism as ratifying the mission of His great forerunner, and He also received it as the beautiful symbol of moral purification and the humble inauguration of a ministry which came "not to destroy the law but to fulfil." II. THAT IT WAS HIS WAY OF PUBLICLY RENOUNCING SIN AND PUBLICLY PROFESSING RELIGION. Christ is our Example as well as Redeemer. Every true follower of Christ must publicly renounce his sins and confess his faith. III. THE EVIDENT APPROVAL OF THE FATHER IN HEAVEN. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The baptism of Jesus*:—I. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WAS THE SIGN OF THE CLOSE OF JOHN'S COMMISSION AS THE FORERUNNER. Every ministry has its culmination. Well if it be borne with John's self-abnegation and humility! II. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WAS THE SIGN OF THE OPENING OF CHRIST'S COMMISSION AS THE REDEEMER. III. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WAS THE SIGN OF A NEW ERA OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE. This gift now was the prelude and foretoken of that great pentecostal bestowment. IV. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WAS THE SIGN OF THE SPEEDY FULFILMENT OF THE FATHER'S GREAT DESIGN OF REDEEMING LOVE. V. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. It should enhance our love to Jesus to see Him identifying Himself with all His sinful people. 2. We have an example of reverance for all God's ordinances. 3. Baptism significant in connection with Christ's own baptism. When it is more than a mere ceremony it is our burial with Christ into His death, pledges us to fulfil all righteousness. 4. Christ kept His

baptismal vow. He has fulfilled all righteousness, not for Himself alone, but for His people also. (*Anon.*) *The Saviour's consecration to His work*:—I. OUR LORD WAS CONSECRATED TO HIS WORK BY HIS BAPTISM BY THE FORERUNNER. The inferior started the superior on His public work. Many a man has received the first open recognition of his mission from one mentally and spiritually lower than himself. II. OUR LORD WAS CONSECRATED TO HIS WORK BY PRAYER. St. Luke, who calls attention frequently to the prayers of Jesus, alone mentions this important fact. No great work should be entered on without prayer, especially no work connected with God's kingdom. III. OUR LORD WAS CONSECRATED TO HIS WORK BY THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT. Outward ordinances, as the laying on of hands, &c., are for this end, &c. IV. OUR LORD WAS CONSECRATED TO HIS WORK BY THE APPROVAL OF THE FATHER. The approval and blessing of God are essential to a true work. (*Anon.*) *The coronation of the King*:—The baptism was, on His part, the assumption of His Messianic office; and on God's, His anointing or coronation as the King. There are three stages in this lesson: The preliminary dialogue, which explains the paradox of the baptism of the sinless by and with the sinful, the Divine anointing of the King, and the Divine proclamation. I. THE BECOMINGNESS OF THE APPARENTLY UNBECOMING BAPTISM. The stern preacher bows in lowliest abasement before his carpenter cousin, and feels that his own character shows black against that lustrous whiteness. Who would have thought, when John was flashing and thundering against sin, that such sense of his own evil underlay his boldness? He clearly feels that Jesus is his superior, and needs no baptism of repentance. How had he come to this conviction? Difficulties have been raised as to the consistency of these words with his declaration that he "knew Him not." But, not to dwell on the fact that anticipations and expectations are not knowledge, why should this insight into the character of Jesus not have then been granted to him by prophetic intuition, as he gazed on the gentle face? Why should not the Divine voice have then for the first time sounded in John's heart, "Arise, anoint Him: for this is He"? It is a pure assumption that John had previous knowledge of Jesus. The city in the hill country of Judæa where his boyhood had possibly been passed, was far from Nazareth, and he had very early betaken himself to the desert and its isolation. The circumstances of the nativity may, or may not, have been known to him; but there is no reason to explain this conviction of the inappropriateness of his baptism of Jesus by previous knowledge. The other explanation seems to me both more probable and more accordant with his prophetic office. Christ accepts without demur the place which John gives Him. He always accepted the highest place which any man put Him in, and never rebuked any estimate of Himself as enthusiastic or too lofty. If Jesus had not up till that moment lived a perfectly sinless life, He committed a black sin in tacitly endorsing this estimate of Him. If He had lived such a life, on what theory of His nature is it explicable? A sinless man must be more than man. The same consciousness of blamelessness is put into plain words in His answer to John, which is Jesus' own explanation of His baptism. It was an act of obedience to a Divine appointment, and therefore it "became" Him. It was the fulfilment of "righteousness;" that is to say, Jesus did not confess sin, but professed sinlessness in His baptism, and submitted to it, not because He needed cleansing, but because it was appointed as the duty for the nation of which He was a member. Why, then, was He baptized? For the same reason for which He was found in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and submitted to other requirements of the law from which as Son He was free, and bore the sorrows which were not the issue of His own sins, and went down at last to the other baptism with which He had to be baptized, though His pure life had for itself no need to pass through that awful submersion beneath the black, cold waters of death. The whole mystery of His identification of Himself with sinful men, and of His being "made sin . . . for us, who knew no sin," lies in germ in His baptism by John. No other conception of its meaning does justice to the facts. II. WE HAVE NEXT THE DIVINE ANOINTING OR CORONATION. The symbol of the dove seems to carry allusions to the grand image which represents the Spirit of God as "brooding over chaos, and quickening life, as a bird in its nest by the warmth of its own soft breast; to the dove which bore the olive-branch, first messenger of hope to the prisoners in the ark; to the use of the dove as clean, in sacrifice; to the poetical attribution to it, common to many nations, of meek gentleness and faithful love. Set side by side with that, John's thought of the Holy Spirit as fire, and we get all the beauty of both emblems increased, and understand how much the stern ascetic, whose words burned and blistered, had to learn. He knew "what manner of spirit" the King possessed and bestowed

Meekness is throned now. Gentleness is stronger than force. The dove conquers Rome's eagles and every strong-taloned, sharp-beaked bird of prey. "The Prince of the kings of the earth" is anointed by the descending dove, and His second coronation is with thorns, and a reed is His sceptre; for His kingdom is based on purity and meekness, is won by suffering, and wielded in gentleness. As is the King, so are His subjects, whose only weapons He has assigned when He bids them be "harmless as doves." The purpose of this descent of the Spirit on Jesus was twofold. In John's Gospel it is represented as principally meant to certify the Baptist of the identity of the Messiah. But we cannot exclude its effect on Jesus. For Him it was the Divine anointing for His mediatorial work. A king is king before he is anointed or crowned. These are but the signs of what we may call the official assumption of His royalty. We are not to conceive that Jesus then began to be filled with the Spirit, or that absolutely new powers were given to Him then. No doubt the anointing did mark a stage in His human development, and the accession to His manhood of all that was needed to equip it for His work. But the Spirit of God had formed His pure manhood ere He was born, and had dwelt in growing measure in His growing spirit, through all His sinless thirty years. Since He was a man, He needed the Divine Spirit. Since He was a sinless man, He was capable of receiving it in perfect measure and unbroken continuity. Since His baptism began His public career, He needed then, and then received, the anointing which at once designated and fitted Him for His work of witnessing and atonement. III. WE HAVE FINALLY THE DIVINE PROCLAMATION. GOD HIMSELF TAKES THE HERALD'S OFFICE. The coronation ends with the solemn recitation of the style and title of the King. Two Old Testament passages seem to be melted together in it: that in the second Psalm, which says to the Messianic King, "Thou art My Son;" that in Isaiah xlii. 1, which calls on the nations to "behold . . . Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." God speaks from heaven, and quotes a psalm and a prophet. Why should He not speak from heaven an illuminating word, which interprets whole regions of the Old Testament? This Divine testimony touches first the mystery of our Lord's nature. "Son of God" is not merely a synonym of Messiah, but it includes the distinct conception of Divine origin and of consequent Divine nature. The name implies that the relation between Him and the Father is unique. The voice attests the Divine complacency in Him. The form of the verb in the Greek implies a definite past delight of the Father in the Son, and carries back our thoughts to that wonderful intercourse of which Jesus lets us catch some faint glimpse when He says, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." From eternity the mysterious depths of the Divine nature moved in soft waves of love, and in its solitude there was society. Nor can we leave out of view the thought that the Father's delight in the Son is through the Son extended to all who love and trust the Son. In Jesus, God is well pleased towards us. That complacent delight embraces us too, if we become sons through faith in the only begotten Son. The dove that rested on His head will come and nestle in our hearts, and brood there, over their chaos, if we have faith in Christ. (*A. McLaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. The heavens opened.—*The Divine Trinity:*—This was the inauguration and proclamation of the Messias, when He began to be the great Prophet of the New Covenant. And this was the greatest meeting that ever was upon the earth, where the whole cabinet of the mysterious Trinity was opened and shown, as much as the capacities of our present imperfections will permit; the Second Person in the veil of humanity; the Third in the shape, or with the motion, of a dove: but the First kept His primitive state; and as to the Israelites He gave notice by way of caution, "Ye saw no shape, but ye heard a voice," so now also God the Father gave testimony to His Holy Son, and appeared only in a voice, without any visible representment. (*Bishop Jeremy Taylor.*) **The Spirit like a dove.**—*Like a dove:*—A most captivating symbol. The eagle, too, was in our Lord; everything about Him was mingled with the sublime; but the dove was predominant. Not only while on earth, but all along the ages, it is the power of His gentleness and tenderness and meekness—His love, in short, that has been victorious. He has "wooed" and "won." (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Dovelike properties in Christ:*—I. INNOCENT and harmless (Heb. vii. 26). II. LOVING and tender-hearted (Eph. iii. 19). III. MEEK and gentle (Matt. xi. 29). This is matter of singular comfort to the faithful members of Christ: for Christ being innocent and harmless like the dove, yea, pure from all spot of sin, this His purity and holiness is imputed to so many as truly believe in Him; and by it they are accepted, as holy and pure

through Christ, though in themselves they are polluted and sinful. Again, Christ being also a loving, gentle, and meek Saviour, He will not deal with us in rigour or wrath; but in compassion, love, and gentleness, accepting our weak endeavours in His service, pardoning our wants and infirmities, and cherishing in us the smallest beginnings of grace (Isaiah xlii. 2, 3). Strive we to imitate our Saviour Christ in these properties of the dove. (*G. Petter.*) *The dove temper in the Church*:—The Holy Spirit came as a dove, a gentle, joyous creature, with no bitterness of gall, no fierceness of bite, no violence of rending claws, loving human houses, associating within one home; nurturing their young together; when they fly abroad, hanging in their flight side by side; leading their life in mutual intercourse; giving in concord the kiss of peace with the bill; in every way fulfilling the law of unanimity. This is the singleness of heart that ought to be in the Church; this is the habit of love that must be obtained. (*Cyprian.*) *How to improve our baptism*:—To quicken you to improve your baptism consider—I. BAPTISM IS A PERPETUAL BOND OBLIGING US TO REPENTANCE AND A HOLY LIFE (Rom. vi. 2–4; Col. iii. 8, 9). II. THE IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM IS THE BEST PREPARATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (John xiii. 8). Before the Church, none but baptized persons have a right to the Lord's Table; before God, none but those who have the fruit of baptism have a right to the benefit thereof. III. IF WE IMPROVE IT NOT, BAPTISM WILL BE A WITNESS AGAINST US. One Elpidophorus relapsed into Arianism, and the deacon who baptized him showed him the garments in which he had been baptized, and said, "These shall be a witness against thee to all eternity." But how shall we improve it? 1. We must personally and solemnly own the covenant made with God in infancy. What was then done for us must now be done by us. 2. Renew often the sense of obligation to God, and keep a constant reckoning of obedience (2 Pet. i. 9). 3. Use frequent self-reflection to know whether you are indeed washed from the guilt and filth of sin (1 Cor. vi. 11). 4. Use it as a great help in all temptations (1 Cor. vi. 15). Dionysia comforted her son Majoricus, an African martyr, with this speech, "Remember, my son, that thou art baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and be constant." Luther, when tempted to despair, used to say, "I am baptized, and believe in Christ crucified." (*T. Manton.*) *After baptism*:—I. NEW REVELATIONS GAINED—"The heavens were opened." II. NEW GIFTS IMPARTED—"The Spirit." III. NEW WITNESS ENJOYED—"Thou art My beloved Son." IV. NEW TRIAL IMPOSED—"Tempted of Satan." V. NEW TRIUMPHS SECURED. VI. NEW PRIVILEGES CONFERRED—"And angels ministered unto Him." VII. NEW WORK ASSIGNED—"Preaching the gospel."

Ver. 11. **Thou art My beloved Son.**—*Humiliation and exaltation*:—It will be well for us to remember that our great Example was most highly exalted just when His humiliation was deepest; that it was when He had made Himself one with the sons of men that He was declared to be the Son—the beloved Son—of God. It is a pledge that the lowly, submissive spirit will be greatly sanctified, and that there is no surer way to win the approval of God than by yielding our wills to the authority of those set over us by the Lord, and striving to carry out the rules of the Church in the spirit of Him who accepted at once what His Father had appointed. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *"My beloved Son"*:—I. AN EXPRESSION OF AFFECTION AND APPROVAL. The Father bore witness to the Son. Not for Christ's sake only, but for ours, came that voice, approving the character and authenticating the mission of the Son of God. II. AN IMPLICIT AND AUTHORITATIVE APPEAL for human faith, attachment, and obedience. He of whom the Father thus speaks, is worthy of all our honour, gratitude, and devotion. (*Family Churchman.*)

Vers. 12, 13.—**The Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.**—*The temptation of Christ*:—An awful and mysterious passage in the life of One whose tastes and habits were the very opposite of those of the prophet of the desert—One who loved men and cities, free social intercourse, and scenes of active usefulness. No sooner does Jesus undergo the high consecration of baptism than, instead of stepping forth into public life, He flees to solitude. We cannot unveil the deep mystery of this season of thought and trial. But may we not suppose that when the Spirit descended on Christ, He who had so suffered the limitations of humanity as already to have needed to grow in wisdom and strength, may first have realized, in His human thought, the tremendous import of His mission, and at the same time

may first have grasped the superhuman powers with which to work miracles? If so, overwhelmed with the vision before Him, He may well have sought solitude to meditato on His great work, to obtain inward mastery of His own stupendous powers, and to wrestle with and conquer the fearful temptations that would rise up, urging Him to desecrate those powers to selfish purposes. I. CHRIST WAS TEMPTED. He was not only tested as by a touchstone, but by the more searching ordeal of a direct persuasion to evil. In all there is a lower as well as a higher nature, a self-interest as well as a conscience of duty. If Christ was tempted, it follows that (1) no innocence and no strength can make a soul unassailable by temptation, and (2) to feel the force of temptation is no proof of guilty compliance. II. Christ was tempted BY SATAN. Temptation arises from without as well as from our own hearts. This is why the purest mind is liable to it. III. Christ was tempted AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS MISSION. The greatest obstacles often beset the first steps of a new course—in attempting a new work, in first attacking a bad habit, in entering on the Christian life. This tests genuineness and teaches humility, self-diffidence, and reliance on God. It is a great thing to begin the Christian campaign with a victory in the first battle. IV. Christ was tempted WHEN UNDER HIGH SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES. "The Spirit *driveth* Him." 1. God permits, nay, requires, us to pass through the fire of temptation. 2. Great spiritual elation is often followed by deep depression. 3. New endowments bring new dangers. They who stand highest are in danger of falling lowest. V. Christ was tempted IN THE WILDERNESS. 1. John found the desert the best scene for his life and work, Christ found it a region of evil influences. As one man's paradise may be the purgatory of another, so the haven of refuge of one may be his brother's most dangerous snare. 2. Christ was tempted in a solitary place. We cannot escape temptation by fleeing from the world; we carry the world with us to our retreat. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *The wilderness*:—This wilderness has been identified, by the voice of tradition, in the Greek and Latin Churches, as that wild and lonely region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, called in modern geography, Quarantania. It is an extensive plateau, elevated to a considerable height above the plain of Jericho and the west bank of the Jordan; and hence the literal accuracy of the expression in St. Matthew, that Jesus was "led up" into the wilderness. Travellers have described it as a barren, sterile waste of painful whiteness, shut in on the west by a ridge of grey limestone hills, moulded into every conceivable shape; while on the east the view is closed by the gigantic wall of the Moab mountains, appearing very near at hand, but in reality a long way off, the deception being caused by the nature of the intervening ground, which possesses no marked features, no difference of colour on which to fix the eye for the purpose of forming an estimate of distance. Over this vast expanse of upland country there are signs of vegetation only in two or three places, where winter torrents have scooped out a channel for themselves, and stimulate year after year into brief existence narrow strips of verdure along their banks. The monotony of the landscape and the uniformity of its colouring are varied only when the glaring afternoon sun projects the shadows of the ghostly rocks across the plain, or, at rare intervals, when a snowy cloud, that seems as if born of the hills themselves, sails across the deep blue sky and casts down on the desolate scene the cool dark mantle of its shade. A more dreary and lonely scene it is impossible to imagine. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Man led into temptation for his good*:—Here we learn that God is our Leader into all things which are good for our souls, and that even temptation may be good for us. The same Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness leads us thither too. 1. Christ went into a desert to make expiation for the sins which are committed in society. 2. He went to endure fasting for man's luxury; to suffer want for man's extravagance. 3. He went into the wilderness immediately after His baptism, teaching us thereby that those who are baptized should die from sin and rise again unto righteousness. 4. It is absolutely necessary for us all sometimes to stand aside from the busy crowd, and to seek quiet and retirement for prayer and self-examination, without which our spiritual life must grow feebler and fainter till it dies. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Temptation follows blessing*:—Note that it was immediately after His baptism our Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted. Satan, like a pirate, sets on a ship that is richly laden; so when a soul hath been laden with spiritual comforts, now the devil will be shooting at him to rob him of all. The devil envies to see a soul feasted with spiritual joy. Joseph's parti-coloured coat made his brethren envy him and plot against him. After David had the good news of the pardon of his sin (which must needs fill with consolation), Satan presently tempted him to a new sin in numbering the people; and so all his

comfort leaked out and was spilt. (*T. Watson.*) *Satanic temptations*:—I. THAT THEY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN. 1. To test the work and progress of their moral character. 2. To impart to moral character new traits of beauty. II. THAT THEY OFTEN FOLLOW TIMES OF HAPPY COMMUNION WITH GOD. 1. These altered conditions of soul are often sudden. 2. They are disciplinary. 3. They are unwelcome. III. THAT THEY MARK IMPORTANT CRISES IN THE SPIRITUAL HISTORY OF THE GOOD. 1. They aid self-interpretation. 2. They give insight into the problem of sin. 3. They afford an opportunity of asserting moral supremacy. IV. THAT THEY ARE FREQUENTLY FOLLOWED BY THE SOOTHING MINISTRIES OF HEAVEN. 1. These ministries are angelic. 2. They are personal. 3. They are opportune. 4. They are soothing. Lessons: 1. That temptation should not cause us to depreciate the worth of our moral character. 2. That temptation should increase our knowledge of self, and enhance the progress of our being. 3. That the devotions of the good should prepare them for struggle with evil. 4. That solitude is no safeguard against temptation. 5. That heavenly ministries are at the disposal of a tempted, but prayerful, soul. 6. That man has the power to resist the strongest opposition of hell. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *The temptation of Christ*:—It was not a vision but an actual occurrence between a personal Saviour and a personal devil. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The time. After His baptism. Before His public ministry. 2. The place. It was solitary, dreary, dangerous. 3. The Divine agency. Appointed and regulated by God. 4. Angelic ministrations. II. THE DETAILS. 1. To the use of unlawful means of extrication from difficulties. 2. To presumption on Divine support under self-sought dangers. 3. To spiritual idolatry. III. ITS USES. 1. It tried His character as a man and as a Mediator. 2. It showed His power to overcome the devil. 3. It qualified Him to sympathize with His people. IV. ITS LESSONS. 1. From the contrast between the issues of the temptation in paradise and of that in the wilderness. 2. From the instrument which was used in repelling the temptation. The sword of the Spirit. 3. From the hopes it inspires of victory over all our enemies. (*Various.*) *Jordan exchanged for the wilderness*:—From the baptism He went up, as it were, towards God as the "Beloved Son;" but from the temptation He comes earthward as the Son of Man. The Jordan lies on the heavenly, the wilderness on the earthly, side of Christ. There is a "river," but there is no wilderness, in heaven. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Christ tempted of the devil*:—I. Christ, having received the Spirit, EVER AFTER LIVED UNDER HIS IMMEDIATE GUIDANCE. 1. Everything that Christ said and did expressed the mind of the Spirit. In this respect He is an example. 2. The intensity with which Christ acted is expressed by the word "driveth." 3. The Spirit, as a leader, often takes into the wilderness. II. Christ having been formally anointed to His offices, PREPARES HIMSELF BY FASTING AND PRAYER FOR HIS WORK. It was after Christ had spent forty days in this employment that He was tempted. He afterwards acted in the same manner. Our example. III. CHRIST HAVING RETIRED INTO THE WILDERNESS, HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL. IV. The temptation of Christ FOLLOWED CLOSE UPON THE ENJOYMENT OF THE HIGHEST RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES. V. Christ was tempted IN A PLACE INTO WHICH THE SPIRIT HAD LED HIM. VI. It is stated that Christ, during His stay in the wilderness, WAS WITH THE WILD BEASTS. VII. On this and other occasions ANGELS MINISTERED TO CHRIST. (*Expository Outlines.*) *Satanic agency*:—I. SATAN, THE PRINCE OF DEVILS. Numbers of his agents. His apostasy, and ruin of man. His power on earth, a kingdom. Organized. Long almost undisputed. II. CHRIST CAME TO DISPUTE HIS AUTHORITY. Took an affecting view of human vassalage. III. SATAN, AWARE OF HIS ADVENT, UNDERTOOK TO CONDUCT HIS TEMPTATION. Made His life an incessant conflict. IV. THE DEFEAT OF SATAN QUITE RECONCILABLE WITH HIS PRESENT PREVALENCE. V. Called a spirit, TO EXCITE OUR VIGILANCE. An unclean spirit, to awaken our antipathy. His influence over the heart, great. But only exercised with our consent. VI. THE PERIOD OF HIS REIGN LIMITED. (*J. Harris, D.D.*) *Solitude*:—I. ITS PERILS. Eve was tempted when she was alone; the suicide succumbs when he is pushed with the last degree of loneliness; the darkest thoughts of the conspirator becloud the mind when he has most deeply cut the social bond; when man is alone he loses the check of comparison with others; he miscalculates his force, and deems too little the antagonism that force may excite. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. The risks of solitude are in proportion to its value. Man cannot reach his full stature in the market-place or in association with the excited throng. The desert was to Christ a holy place after the initial battle. In the first instance He was led up into it to be tempted; but often afterwards to be comforted. (*Ecce Deus.*) *Life not all wilderness*:—Some

people see nothing in the world but the wilderness, the devil, and the wild beasts. Resist these temptations, and thou wilt find it full of angels. (*R. Glover.*) **Tempted of Satan.**—*The number forty in Scripture:*—The number forty seems to have had a special mystical meaning. Nine instances in the Bible of events which occurred for forty days or years. 1. The Flood. 2. Bodies embalmed forty days before burial. 3. Israel's wanderings. 4. Goliath's defiance of Israel. 5. Elijah fasted. 6. Ezekiel bore the iniquity of Judah. 7. Repentance of Nineveh. 8. Our Lord's temptation. 9. Interval between resurrection and ascension. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Temptation:*—The word temptation has three meanings in the Bible. 1. A *trial* of our faith, to bring out some hidden virtue. Thus Abraham was tempted of God. 2. A provoking to anger. Thus we tempt God (Psalms xcv. 9, cvi. 14). So we say of a provoking person that he has a *trying* temper. 3. A leading into sin. Thus we are tempted of the devil. (*Ibid.*) *Why does God allow us to be tempted?*—1. To strengthen our faith. The unused limb becomes weak and tender; the neglected instrument of music gets out of tune; the untouched weapon loses its keen edge. So, many a man knows nothing of self-denial until God tries him by a great sorrow. 2. To bring out latent good qualities. 3. To make us watchful. We must prove our armour. We must learn our weak points. 4. That He may one day give us our reward (James i. 12). (*Ibid.*) *Christ's susceptibility to temptation:*—Did Christ, then, merely suffer in the wilderness as any other man has done? Suffering is a question of nature. The educated man suffers more than the uneducated man; the poet probably suffers more than the mathematician; the commanding officer suffers more in a defeat than the common soldier. The more life, the more suffering: the billows of sorrow being in proportion to the volume of our manhood. Now Jesus Christ was not merely a man, He was Man; and by the very compass of His manhood, He suffered more than any mortal can endure. The storm may pass as fiercely over the shallow lake as over the Atlantic, but by its very volume the latter is more terribly shaken. No other man had come with Christ's ideas; in no other man was the element of self so entirely abnegated; no other man had offered such opposition to diabolic rule; all these circumstances combine to render Christ's temptation unique, yet not one of them puts Christ so far away as to prevent us finding in His temptation unfailing solace and strength. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Satan's opportunity:*—No sooner was Christ out of the water of baptism than He is thrust into the fire of temptation. So David, after his anointing, was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. Israel is no sooner out of Egypt than Pharaoh pursues them. Hezekiah had no sooner left that solemn passover than Sennacherib comes up against him. St. Paul is assaulted with vile temptations after the abundance of his revelations; and Christ teaches us, after forgiveness of sins, to look for temptations, and to pray against them. While Jacob would be Laban's drudge and packhorse, all was well; but when once he began to flee, he makes after him with all his might. All was quiet enough at Ephesus before St. Paul came thither; but then "there arose no small stir about 'the way.'" All the while our Saviour lay in His father's shop, and meddled only with carpenter's chips, the devil troubled Him not; but now that He is to enter more publicly upon His office of mediatorship, the tempter pierceth His tender soul with many sorrows by solicitation to sin. (*John Trapp.*) *Satan's wiliness:*—The lion is said to be boldest in the storm. His roar, it is said, never sounds so loud as in the pauses of the thunder; and when the lightning flashes, brightest are the flashes of his cruel eye. Even so he who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, often seizes the hour of nature's greatest distress to assault us with his fiercest temptations. He tempted Job when he was bowed down with grief. He tempted Peter when he was weary with watching and heart-broken with sorrow. And here, too, he tempts Jesus Christ when He is faint with hunger. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Subtlety of Satan's temptations:*—Satan will lie in wait for the Christian in his time of weakness, even as the wild beasts do at the water side for the cattle coming to drink. Nay, when having resisted manfully, the Christian has driven off the enemy, he should look well that he be not wounded by the vanquished foe, who often makes a Parthian retreat. (*J. G. Pilkington.*) *Temptation not necessarily hurtful:*—It is when a child of God is fullest of grace; when he has been declared to be a "son," even a "beloved son" of God; when he has made a public profession of Christianity, that he is most of all exposed to temptation. It seems strange, at first thought, that it should be so; but a little reflection dissipates the strangeness. Let me try to illustrate this. A toolmaker, I suppose, has finished an instrument, but it is not yet sent forth. Why?

Because he has not "tested" it. Well! Enter we his workshop. You look in and observe the process. Your first impression is, he is going to break it. But it is not so. Testing is not an injury. The perfect weapon comes out the stronger, and receives the stamp that will carry it over the world. Even so the testing and trying of the Christian is not an injury. He who has formed the believer for Himself is not going to break or destroy the work, the beautiful work of His own hands. He is purifying, fitting, fashioning, polishing. Carry this along with you, and you will understand how it comes about that at the very moment of your being "full" of the Holy Ghost, at the very moment of your announced sonship, you are most violently assailed. (*A. B. Grosart, D.D.*) I. SONSHIP DOES NOT EXEMPT FROM TEMPTATION. II. TEMPTATION DOES NOT INVALIDATE SONSHIP. III. TEMPTATION, RIGHTLY CONSIDERED, MAKES SONSHIP A LIFE AND POWER. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Our relation to Adam's temptation and to Christ's*:—Adam yielded; Christ overcame. Adam's sin contains all the sin of his children; Christ's victory contains all the victories of His people. There was the vice of all sinning in the one, and there was the virtue of all conquering in the other. When we sin we go down to that sin by the same steps which Adam trod, and when we foil the tempter, we do so with the same weapons that Christ wielded. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Why men are tempted*:—Man is like iron fresh from the mine. The worker of the rude metal will thrust a crude bar of it into the blazing furnace, and turn it hither and thither in the glowing fires, and then lay it on the anvil, and beat it with innumerable blows, and crush it between inexorable rollers, and plunge it into the smothering charcoal, and turn and thrust and temper it, till at length it is no longer the hard, brittle, half earthy material, but something different—tougher, stronger, purer, and more valuable. He does this that the worthless may become useful, and that iron ore may be converted into steel. (*S. Greg.*) *An important interview*:—At one o'clock precisely on the 25th of June, 1807, two boats put off from opposite banks of the Niemen, at the little town of Tilsit. They rowed towards a raft in the middle of the river. Out of each stepped a single individual, and the two met in a small wooden apartment on the raft, while cannon thundered from either shore, and the shout of the great armies on either side drowned the roar of artillery. The two persons were the Emperors Napoleon and Alexander, met to arrange the destinies of the human race. But how vastly more important the interview of the text; in the persons employed in it, in the nature of the transaction, in the result. (*T. Collins.*) *Good stronger than evil*:—Satan would convert Christ; darkness would blot out the light, or throw at least a shadow on its brightness; foulness would cast a stain on the white robe of purity; evil would triumph over good. But no! Light is stronger than darkness; good than evil. The Son looks up to the Father, and in that Divine strength casts the evil one behind Him, and is left alone on the field, more than conqueror. (*S. Greg.*) *Sinlessness unfolds into holiness*:—Sinlessness is negative, holiness is positive; and it was requisite that the "second Adam," like the first, should encounter the devil before His sinlessness could unfold into holiness. (*J. C. Jones.*) *The force of temptation*:—Run with the wind and you hardly know it is blowing. Run against it, and you are convinced of the existence of a resisting medium, and in direct proportion to the speed with which you run, will be your consciousness of the force by which you are opposed. Thus as long as you run with the devil and promptly do his behests, you may be inclined to deny his existence; disobey him, and you will be made painfully aware of his presence, and his endeavours to thwart all your efforts after good. (*Ibid.*) **With the wild beasts.**—*Christ with the wild beasts*:—Is this only one of those graphic touches which this vivid writer so often gives us? Was it a forcible way of describing a total absence of human sympathy? No doubt it served this purpose, but this was not all. When we recognise the correspondence between this and Adam's temptation, our thoughts fly at once to Paradise, and we remember that he too was with the wild beasts, and that God had given him dominion over them, and that during the brief duration of his innocence he must have exercised it unfearing and unfeared. And we fancy we can see in this short but pregnant sentence a hint that He who came to inaugurate an era of restoration, and bring back the times of man's innocence, was not unmindful of the lower creatures and their subjection to vanity. It was a promise of what should one day come to pass when broken harmonies should be restored, and the prediction in Job v. 23, receive its fulfilment. It matters little that we can point to no evidence of its accomplishment as yet, because with the Lord a thousand years are but as one day, and one day as a thousand years. There is no question that the hope was created, and that it laid hold upon the mind of the early Christians, in support of which we have the testimony of the

Catacombs, where our Lord is so frequently represented in the character of Orpheus attracting wild animals of divers kinds by the sound of his lyre. The same was perpetuated by later legends, which made the surpassing goodness of St. Francis throw a spell of mysterious influence, not only over his fellow-creatures, but over birds of the air and beasts of the field. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The power of goodness to tame the animal creation* :—Before the fall Adam dwelt with the beasts on terms of closest friendship; but on the entrance of evil man grew cruel and beasts grew fiercer. But when Christ appeared, free from the taint of sin, the old relationship revived. The disturbed harmony of Eden was restored in the wilderness. Goodness is an unrivalled tamer of the animal creation, and Christ's sojourn with savage beasts is an infallible pledge of the millenium. (*J. C. Jones.*) **And the angels ministered unto Him.** — *Reasonableness of belief in the existence of angels* :—There are many who deny the existence of any spiritual beings save God and man. The wide universe is to them a solitary land, without inhabitants. There is but one filled with living creatures. It is the earth on which we move; and we, who have from century to century crawled from birth to death, and fretted out our little lives upon this speck of star-dust which sparkles amid a million, million others upon the mighty plain of infinite space, we are the only living spirits. There is something pitiable in this impertinence. It is a drop of dew in the lonely cup of a gentian, which imagines itself to be all the water in the universe. It is the summer midge which has never left its forest pool, dreaming that it and its companions are the only living creatures in earth or air. There is no proof of the existence of other beings than ourselves, but there is also no proof of the contrary. Apart from revelation, we can think about the subject as we please. But it does seem incredible that we alone should represent in the universe the image of God; and if in one solitary star another race of beings dwell, if we concede the existence of a single spirit other than ourselves, we have allowed the principle. The angelic world of which the Bible speaks is possible to faith. (*Stopford Brooke.*) *How little we know of the angels* :—Little is said [in the Bible] of angels. They are like the constellations in space; there is light enough to reveal, to show that they are; but more is needed to reveal all their nature and functions. (*Henry Batchelor.*) *Association of the angels with Christ* :—Their airy and gentle coming may well be compared to the glory of colours flung by the sun upon the morning clouds, that seem to be born just where they appear. Like a beam of light striking through some orifice, they shine upon Zacharias in the temple. As the morning light finds the flowers, so they found the mother of Jesus; and their message fell on her, pure as dewdrops on the lily. To the shepherds' eyes, they filled the midnight arch like auroral beams of light; but not as silently, for they sang more marvellously than when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. They communed with the Saviour in His glory of transfiguration, sustained Him in the anguish of the garden, watched Him at the tomb; and as they thronged the earth at His coming, so they seem to have hovered in the air in multitudes at the hour of His ascension. Beautiful as they seem, they are never mere poetical adornments. The occasions of their appearing are grand, the reasons weighty, and their demeanour suggests and befits the highest conception of superior beings. Their very coming and going is not with earthly movement. They are suddenly seen in the air, as one sees white clouds round out from the blue sky in a summer's day, that melt back even while one looks upon them. We could not imagine Christ's history without angelic love. The sun without clouds of silver and gold, the morning on the fields without dew-diamonds, but not the Saviour without His angels. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Spiritual visitants* :—I have ever with me invisible friends and enemies. The consideration of mine enemies shall keep me from security, and make me fearful of doing aught to advantage them. The consideration of my spiritual friends shall comfort me against the terror of the other; shall remedy my solitariness; shall make me wary of doing aught indecently; grieving me rather that I have ever heretofore made them turn away their eyes for shame of that whereof I have not been ashamed; that I have no more enjoyed their society; that I have been no more affected with their presence. What, though I see them not? I believe them. I were no Christian if my faith were not as sure as my sense. (*Bp. Hall.*) *Ministry of angels* :—It would require the tongue of angels themselves to recite all that we owe to these benign and vigilant guardians. They watch by the cradle of the newborn babe, and spread their celestial wings round the tottering steps of infancy. If the path of life be difficult and thorny, and evil spirits work us shame and woe, they sustain us; they bear the voice of our complaining, our supplication,

our repentance, up to the foot of God's throne, and bring us back in return a pitying benediction to strengthen and to cheer. When passion and temptation strive for the mastery, they encourage us to resist: when we conquer, they crown us; when we falter and fail, they compassionate and grieve over us; when we are obstinate in polluting our own souls, and perverted not only in act but in will, they leave us; and woe to them that are so left! But the good angel does not quit his charge until his protection is despised, rejected, and utterly repudiated. Wonderful the fervour of their love, wonderful their meekness and patience, who endure from day to day the spectacle of the unveiled human heart with all its miserable weaknesses and vanities, its inordinate desires and selfish purposes! Constant to us in death, they contend against the powers of darkness for the emancipated spirit. (*Mrs. Jameson.*)

Ver. 14. **Now after that John was put in prison.**—*Hindrances no injury:*—But John had been doing a good work, doing an important work, doing the very work that God had planned for him to do. Why did the Lord let him be put in prison? Just such interruptions as that to the best men's work, and just such trials as this to the best of men, are in the Lord's plan of the progress of his work, and of the training of His people. When old Father Mills, of Torringford, Connecticut, heard that his son, Samuel J. Mills, "the father of foreign missions in America," had died at sea while his work was at its brilliant starting, the quaint old Yankee preacher said wonderingly: "Well, I declare! The fat's all in the fire again." And it did look that way, didn't it? We can't understand all this; but we can see its commonness. John the Baptist was a child of promise and a child of prophecy. Jesus says of him: "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Yet just as he was fairly inaugurating the Messiah's dispensation, and his work seemed more important than almost any one's else on earth, "John was put in prison." Until you can see just why that thing was permitted, don't worry yourself over some of your little hindrances, or those of your neighbours, asking—as if half in doubt whether or not there is a God, or whether He cares for the interests of His cause and its best friends—"What did the Lord let this happen for?" (*Sunday School Times.*) *The silencing of Christ's ministers not the suppressing of Christ's gospel:*—Out of the ashes of a Faithful God raises up a Hopeful; for the immortal dreamer says: "Now I saw in my dream that Christian went not forth alone; for there was one whose name was Hopeful who joined himself unto him." Though the enemy burn a John Huss God is able to raise up a Martin Luther to take his place: and the martyrdom of Ridley and Latimer does but "light a candle in England which shall never be put out." The casting of the Baptist into prison signalized the commencement of that ministry which unhinged the gates of hell. (*Anonymous.*) *Impediment changed into new impetus:*—I. WE SEE A ROYAL AMBASSADOR SILENCED. II. WE SEE A WORTHIER ENVOY SUBSTITUTED. III. WE SEE THE DEATHLESS ENERGY OF TRUTH. No power known on earth can stop her silvery tongue. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *Christ's preaching:*—John's position had been one of honour. We now contemplate him as the occupant of a dungeon. I. THE HISTORY OF JOHN'S CONNECTION WITH HEROD IS VERY INSTRUCTIVE. It shows—1. The feeling of the world in certain cases towards the truth of its teachers—they "hear it gladly." 2. The experience of the faithful reprovers of human sin—a prison. 3. A leading feature of that kingdom which John introduced. 4. This was fitted to undeceive the Jews. Are you satisfied with the gospel economy? II. No sooner was John cast into prison THAN JESUS HIMSELF BEGAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. 1. When a servant of God has finished his work, he must be satisfied to retire. We think experience, &c., lost; but no. 2. The world will never succeed in suppressing the truth. Let us not be oppressed with anxiety! III. The Evangelist records the SUBSTANCE as well as the fact of Christ's preaching. IV. As soon as Christ began to preach the gospel HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES. 1. On the fact of His calling His disciples we may remark: (1) He made provision for the perpetuity of His kingdom; (2) He brought those who were to be main pillars in the Church under His own training—spiritually; (3) He placed the apostles in circumstances which qualified them to be witnesses to facts. 2. On the manner of His calling His disciples, we may remark: (1) He honoured diligence in humble employment; (2) He chose seemingly weak instruments; (3) He taught that we must leave all in order to follow Him; (4) He furnished an example of effectual calling. Have you "left all"? (*Expository Discourses.*) *Jesus came into Galilee:*—The season was the spring, with its bright heaven, its

fresh sweet earth, its gladsome, soft, yet strengthening air, its limpid living water. And within as without all was springtime, the season of million-fold forces, gladly and grandly creative, of sunlight now clear and blithesome, and now veiled with clouds that came only to break in fruitful showers. (*Principal A. M. Fairbairn.*) *The vicissitudes of a Godly life:*—I. THAT GOOD MEN ARE OFTEN MADE THE SUBJECT OF SOCIAL REPROACH. "John was put in prison." 1. Because the inner meaning of their lives is frequently misunderstood. 2. Because the moral beauty of their character excites the envy of the wicked. 3. Because they are often called to rebuke the wickedness of those around them. II. THAT USEFUL MEN ARE OFTEN RENDERED INCAPABLE OF WORK THROUGH THE TYRANNY OF OTHERS. 1. The power of regal authority to hinder the labours of the morally useful is only partial. 2. It is often capable of wise explanation—(1) It proved that the Baptist was capable of suffering as well as work; (2) That the history of the Baptist might the more easily merge into that of our Lord; (3) To give him rest before entering the solemnities of eternity. 3. It is deeply responsible. III. THAT THOUGH ONE SERVANT OF TRUTH MAY BE REMOVED ANOTHER IS IMMEDIATELY FOUND TO TAKE HIS PLACE. IV. THAT THE MINISTRY CALLED FORTH BY THE EMERGENCY IS OFTEN BETTER THAN THE ONE REMOVED. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) **Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.**—*The scope of our Lord's ministry:*—I. THE KINGDOM HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. It was the kingdom of God. 2. It was at that time to be established. II. WHAT MUST WE DO TO BECOME SUBJECTS OF THIS KINGDOM? 1. Repent of sin. 2. Believe the gospel. Application: (1) Inquiry; (2) Humiliation; (3) Thankfulness. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*) *The kingdom of God:*—This term is used in various senses in the New Testament. 1. The presence of Christ upon earth. 2. The second coming of Christ. 3. His influence upon the heart. 4. Christianity as a Church. 5. Christianity as a faith. 6. The life eternal. It points out sin to be turned from in sorrow: Christ to be believed in with joy. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *The kingdom of God: God reigning in men's hearts:*—There is great meaning in the words that Jesus was continually using to describe the work that He did for men's souls. He brought them into "the kingdom of God." The whole burden of His preaching was to establish the kingdom of God. The purpose of the new birth for which He laboured was to make men subjects of the kingdom of God. Is it not clear what it means? The kingdom of God for any soul is that condition, anywhere in the universe, where God is that soul's king, where it seeks and obeys the highest, where it loves truth and duty more than comfort and luxury. Have you entered into the kingdom of God? Oh, how much that means! Has any love of God taken possession of you, so that you want to do His will above all things, and try to do it all the time? Has Christ brought you there? If He has, how great and new and glorious the life of the kingdom seems. No wonder that He said you must be born again before you could enter there. How poor life seems outside that kingdom. How beautiful and glorious inside its gates! If I tried to tell you how Christ brings us there, I should repeat to you once more the old, familiar story. He comes and lives and dies for us. He touches us with gratitude. He sets before our softened lives His life. He makes us see the beauty of holiness, and the strength of the spiritual life in Him. He transfers His life to us through the open channel of faith, and so we come to live as He lives, by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. How old the story is, but how endlessly fresh and true to Him whose own career it describes. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The kingdom of God an inward state:*—Many people seem to suppose this means some realm after death, where those who have done nothing but mortify themselves here shall do nothing but enjoy themselves hereafter. But what Christ meant by the kingdom of heaven was a life begun here, passing through the grave and gate of death without any breach of spiritual continuity. Unchanged in essence was the life of His kingdom—changeable only in outward accidents. Its essence depended always not on where, but on what you were. The kingdom of heaven was always a state within, not a place, though it worked itself out here below in a visible Church. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The Galilean ministry:*—I. WHEN. After John's imprisonment. One witness of the truth silenced; but another raised up. After Moses, Joshua; after Stephen, Paul. II. WHERE. Galilee. Where could He find work so readily as amidst the ceaseless toil and turmoil of these teeming villages? III. WHAT. 1. Gospel of kingdom of God. Spiritual (1 Cor. xv. 50); righteous (Rom. xiv. 17); near (Luke xxi. 31); inward (Luke xvii. 20, 21). 2. Repentance and faith: thus completing the work of John. (*H. Thorne.*) *Christ the Evangelical minister:*—I. THE PREACHER—"Jesus."

But Jesus differed from all other preachers. 1. He was Divine. 2. He was infallible. 3. He was sympathetic. 4. He was most clear and simple. "Common people heard him gladly," &c. 5. He was most interesting. 6. Most faithful and earnest. 7. He preached most affectionately and tenderly. One of His very last appeals—"O Jerusalem," &c. He wept over it, &c. II. HIS THEME. The gospel. 1. He was the subject of His own ministry. 2. He also proclaimed the kingdom of God. 3. The near approach of this kingdom. 4. The sphere of His ministry at this time was Galilee. Now the world is the field of the gospel—"Go ye into all the world," &c. III. THE SPECIAL APPEAL HE MADE. 1. He urged repentance. 2. He demanded faith. The gospel news must be heard and received as true. Learn: 1. We have the same Saviour. 2. The same gospel—now complete by His resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit. 3. Its blessings are ours on the same terms. 4. Men perish by not believing the gospel of Christ. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **And saying, The time is fulfilled.**—*Repentance and faith:*—I. THE IMPORT OF THE EXHORTATION. 1. By the repentance to which we are exhorted we are not to understand merely an external reformation. To the Pharisees such an exhortation would have been inappropriate and useless. Their outward conduct was exemplary. Nor can we suppose that the repentance to which we are exhorted is a mere sense of sorrow and regret on account of the afflictive and penal consequences to which our transgressions may expose us, either in the present life or in that which is to come. True repentance is "towards God"—"for the remission of sins"—"unto salvation." Putting all these explanatory terms together, we are led to the conclusion that repentance consists in a sorrowful conviction of our having grieved and provoked God, and in an earnest desire and endeavour to be reconciled to Him, and to secure by the remission of our sins the salvation of our souls. These convictions and desires must be substantially the same in character in all true penitents, but are not in all cases equal in degree. Sometimes the heart is rather melted than broken. 2. But by the faith to which we are exhorted we are not to understand merely a general belief in God as the Almighty Creator, and the gracious Governor of all things. It is not merely a faith in the Divine mission and authority of Christ, and in the truth of that system of doctrine which He taught. The exhortation is "Believe the gospel"—that which is peculiar to the gospel. Those whom our Lord addressed believed in God as the Creator, in the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures; making it a boast that they were "Moses's disciples." It must therefore have been something more particularly pertaining to the gospel which they were now exhorted to believe, namely, the doctrine of salvation by Him as their Redeemer—the testimony that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," &c. We must do more than yield assent with the understanding to this great doctrine; as it is with a "broken and contrite heart" that man repents, so "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is, in other words, to feel what we believe, or to exercise a sure trust and confidence in that which we acknowledge to be true. 3. We have already noticed the close and intimate sequence with which the exhortation to faith in the gospel follows the exhortation to repentance; and we may now further remark upon that head, that the one is thus inculcated in connection with the other—1. Because for all true penitents there is a gospel, or a message of good news. Had it been otherwise repentance would have been a dreadful thing. Are you guilty? Here is "a fountain opened for sin." In a word, are you entirely lost? Here is a Saviour "able to save even to the uttermost," &c. 2. This faith is inculcated in connection with repentance, because it is in the act of cordially believing what the gospel says, that we receive the blessings which the gospel offers. II. THE ARGUMENTS OR MOTIVES BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS SUPPORTED. 1. The exhortation to repentance may be regarded as being urged by the assurance that "the time is fulfilled." To all who have not repented "the time is fulfilled"—the time, place, and subject we are considering are all favourable. May it not be said of you that "the time" of your own solemn promise and engagement "is fulfilled." "The time" of God's special influence and grace is "now fulfilled." In the case of some of you it may probably be said, "the time is fulfilled," as you are very near the period when time is to be exchanged for eternity. "Your days are fulfilled, for your end is come." 2. Upon the supposition that you are already penitent, you are encouraged to faith in the gospel by the assurance that "the kingdom of God is at hand." This kingdom is at hand as all things needful for its establishment have been abundantly provided. Indeed, if truly penitent, you are already in a state of preparation for

being made by faith the subjects of His "kingdom." If you are truly penitent, "the kingdom of God is at hand," for God is this moment waiting to set up that kingdom in your hearts. Let repentance and faith ever be connected. There are persons who, in a certain sense, "believe the gospel" without having ever truly repented; they have a speculative faith in the gospel. On the other hand are persons resting in repentance, and on the mere ground of their repentance are looking to be admitted into heaven. Let one follow the other in the order in which Christ has placed them. (*J. Crowther.*) Remark—I. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REPENTANCE BY ITSELF TO PROCURE THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN. II. THE SUITABLENESS OF FAITH TO THE BEING ASSOCIATED WITH REPENTANCE AS A CONDITION. III. THE THOROUGH HARMONY OF BOTH CONDITIONS WITH THE BLESSED FACT THAT ETERNAL LIFE IS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Repentance:*—Many persons who appear to repent are like sailors who throw their goods overboard in a storm, and wish for them again in a calm. (*Mead.*) A saint's tears are better than a sinner's triumphs. (*Secker.*) The tears of penitents are the wine of angels. (*Bernard.*) Repentance begins in the humiliation of the heart, and ends in the reformation of the life. (*Mason.*) There is no going to the fair haven of glory without sailing through the narrow strait of repentance. (*Dyer.*) *Preaching repentance:*—In 1680, Mr. Philip Henry preached on the doctrine of faith and repentance from several texts of scripture. He used to say that he had been told concerning the famous Mr. Dod, that some called him in scorn "Faith and Repentance," because he insisted so much upon these two in all his preaching. "But," says he, "if this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile, for faith and repentance are all in all in Christianity." Concerning repentance he has sometimes said, "If I were to die in the pulpit, I would desire to die preaching repentance, as if I were to die out of the pulpit I would desire to die practising repentance." *Repentance a reversal of conduct:*—A locomotive is rushing at express speed along the main line of a railway, when suddenly, by a pointsman's mistake, it is switched off into a side-line. Instantly the brakes are applied, and the moving mass is brought to a standstill. Then the engineer lays his hand upon a lever, the motion of the engine is reversed, and the train moves back to the main line, and continues on its course. In human life, such an abandoning of the main line is transgression; such a reversal is repentance. The kingdom of God is like a walled city with a single gate, to which outsiders can only approach by one path. That gate is faith; that path is repentance. An old tower in one of the southern counties of Scotland goes by the name of The Tower of Repentance. A herd-boy was one day lying in a field near it, reading his New Testament, when an irreligious gentleman of the neighbourhood stopped and asked him what book he was reading. On being informed, he said with a sneer, "Perhaps, then, you can tell me the way to heaven?" "Oh, yes," replied the boy, "you must go up through that tower." This quaint way of expressing the truth, sent the inquirer off in a more thoughtful mood than when he came. If a man is running *from* the kingdom of God, it is obvious that he must just turn round and run *for* it, if he wishes to reach it. Just as soon as it is possible for a man to reach the top of a hill by running down-hill, will it be possible for the sinner to enter God's kingdom without repentance. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Repentance and faith:*—From these words we learn what it is to preach the gospel. I. We are to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is He that should come—He of whom all the prophets did write—the very Christ, the Saviour of the world. "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand." II. We are to teach men how to receive, and how to act, under these good tidings—"Repent ye," &c. 1. Repentance: Its importance and necessity. Its nature. 2. Our Lord preached not only repentance, but also faith. So the apostles. In every saved soul these two must and do meet together. Not that God deals alike with every saved soul. "Believe the gospel,"—come to Jesus, that you may have a free pardon, &c. (*R. Dixon, D.D.*) *Repentance not immediately followed by faith:*—I have known instances where for years there have been right views of the evil of sin, and of the nature of holiness, and a desire after holiness—and what is this but repentance? imperfect it may be, but still repentance at least in its beginnings: imperfect, it went not far enough, inasmuch as it was without faith. I knew a man, a public character, who wrote to me, in youth, many an instructive letter, a man of no common intellect, who, when only a boy, on reading Martin Luther's book on the Epistle to the Galatians, absolutely rolled in agony on the floor, under a sense of sin and the wrath of God; and though his home influence and his occupation in after life were opposed to his spiritual progress, he never lost his reverence for the

Bible and his desire to be religious. It is a fact that it was his habit to read the Bible with a commentary of a night, after he had left his occupation, which was eminently worldly; and he used to say, "it was his greatest comfort in life." I have, as a boy, listened to his reverential reading of the Bible and that commentary to his family. But the error of seeking salvation by the works of the law prevented his enjoyment of peace, or sense of pardon. It was not till the later years of his life, when the providence of God had removed him from his ensnaring and worldly occupation, that he attained to what the Scripture calls faith—salvation by grace through the faith of Christ—a simple, childlike trust in Christ, as made sin for him, that he might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. For several years of his later time, Archbishop Leighton's works, especially his commentary on St. Peter's first epistle, one of the noblest works which ever came from uninspired man, was his daily companion, from which he seemed never weary of making large extracts: and he owned that he now apprehended faith as he had never done before. Like many others, in his zeal for good works he had thought that such sweeping statements about faith alone being needful for salvation were contrary to good works. Whereas he lived to see and know and feel that faith in Christ works by love, and is the fruitful source of all good and holy works. He found that the Twelfth Article of our Church is the truth of God. "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing to God in Christ, and do spring out *necessarily* of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit." I have no doubt that in the case of my departed friend, as in many others, the Holy Spirit was slowly bringing about His purpose of mercy, through the workings of repentance; and when he had been brought to see that there was no good in him, and that all his strivings after holiness were altogether vain, then came the gift of faith, and he believed to the saving of his soul. As another example of the long separation between faith and repentance, in some souls, I cannot withhold from you the case of one of our greatest literary characters, Dr. Samuel Johnson. His writings have been my companion from my youth up; I early conceived a great admiration of him, not only for his large intellectual powers, but because he stood forth in an immoral age as a friend of revealed religion, and and an earnest teacher of morals. I am fully aware of the defects of his character,—they were many and great; but these imperfections were balanced by some great and noble qualities, accompanied by an intellect of the highest order, which to use his own words, at the close of his *Rambler*, he vigorously employed, "to give ardour to virtue and confidence to truth." Let me briefly sketch his soul's religious history. As a young man at Oxford he took up *Law's Serious Call to the Unconverted*, expecting to find it a dull book, and perhaps to laugh at it. But he found Law an overmatch for him, "This," he says, "was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest about religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry." Nor did he conceal his convictions. He attended church with much regularity; he was indignant when, for political reasons, there was some hesitation about giving the Highlanders of Scotland the Scriptures in Gaelic; he would allow no profane swearing in his presence, and he sternly rebuked any one who ventured to utter in his presence impure or profane language. To a young clergyman he gave this admirable advice, that "all means must be tried by which souls may be saved"; and in one of his writings he declares, that, compared with the conversion of sinners, propriety and elegance in preaching are less than nothing. Yet, with all this honest earnestness, his religion gave him no peace. His views of the gospel were very defective, and partook very largely of that legal spirit so natural to man. He rested, as he himself says, his hope of salvation on his own obedience by which to obtain the application of the Saviour's mediation to himself, and then to repentance to make up for the defects of obedience. "I cannot be sure," he said, "that I have fulfilled the conditions in which salvation is granted; I am afraid I may be one of those who should be condemned." He never could be sure that he had done enough. And yet no one can read his meditations and prayers and not be convinced that he had a deep sense of sin and an earnest desire for holiness, accompanied with great self-abasement before God: but all in vain; there was no peace; there was repentance, but no faith. He had yet to learn that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." And he was taught this blessed truth by the Holy Spirit in his last illness. All his life long he had looked upon death with the greatest terror; but though late, relief was granted to him. At evening time it was light. It appears that a clergyman was the main

instrument in bringing his mind to a quiet trust. In answer to the anxious question, written to him by the dying moralist, "What shall I do to be saved," the clergyman wrote, "I say to you, in the language of the Baptist, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.'" That passage had been often read by him, and made but a slight impression; but now pressed home by the gracious Spirit, it went straight to his heart. He interrupted the friend who was reading the letter. "Does he say so? Read it again!" Comfort came and peace. His biographer tells us, "for some time before his death all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith and his trust in the merits and propitiation of Jesus Christ." Now all those years of darkness, fear, and disquiet, would have been saved had he known and received the free grace of God in Christ—in other words, if he had not only repented, but also believed the gospel. (*Ibid.*) *The call to repentance and faith*:—I. A motive to genuine repentance, and cordial faith in the gospel, may be drawn from the consideration of that appalling misery which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving. II. A motive may be gathered from the riches of God's goodness, especially as dispensed through the merits and intercession of Christ. III. A motive may be gathered from the promise of the Holy Spirit, and from the countless instances which prove that promise to have been actually fulfilled down to this day. (*J. Thornton.*) *Christ preaching repentance*:—I. Christ preached the NATURE of repentance. II. Christ preached the NECESSITY of repentance. 1. The universal necessity may be shown from the character of God, as the Ruler of the world. 2. It may be shown from the state of man. 3. From the fact that an impenitent sinner is unfit for heaven. III. Christ preached the DUTY of repentance. He pressed it home upon every man's conscience. He enforced it by rewards and punishments (Matt. xi. 20, 22; xii. 41). He encouraged men to it. (*J. Carter.*) *Gist of the Saviour's teaching*: — The whole gospel is practically reduced to repentance. Christ joins it to the hope of heaven, as being the only means of arriving there. Here are four points in His teaching. 1. That His Father does everything according to the order of His adorable designs, in the time prefixed in His eternal predestination, and in the manner described in the Scriptures, prefigured in the shadows of the law, foretold by the prophets, and included in the promises, the time whereof is now fulfilled at His coming. 2. That sin has reigned under the law, but that God is to reign under grace and by it, and that the time of this kingdom of grace and mercy is at hand. 3. That the kingdom of God, and His reign by grace, begins with repentance for past sins. 4. That it is established by submission to the yoke of faith, and of the precepts of the gospel, and by the hope and love of eternal enjoyments which it reveals and promises. (*Quesnel.*) *Nature and evidence of repentance*:—I. Repentance is a change of mind concerning (1) God; (2) the law; (3) sin; (4) self; (5) Christ; (6) holiness. II. Repentance is manifested by its effects: (1) Contrition; (2) confession; (3) self-abhorrence; (4) self-abandonment. (*W. W. Whythe.*) *Tokens of repentance*:—The signs of true repentance are—(1) Carefulness not to fall into our former sins again; (2) holy indignation against ourselves for our sins past; (3) a greater hatred of all sin, than we ever had a love for it; (4) constant striving against secret sins; (5) thorough obedience rendered cheerfully to all God's commands. (*G. Petter.*) *Jesus in Galilee*:—I. THE PREACHING OF JESUS WAS SPIRITUAL. His theme was the "kingdom of God." Galilee was full of rabbis who taught for doctrines the commandments of men. Jesus held the minds of men to spiritual themes. His coming was the setting up on earth of the kingdom of God. The countrymen of Jesus looked for that kingdom as one of worldly magnificence. Nothing could deter Him from unfolding its spiritual nature. II. JESUS PREACHED WITH AUTHORITY. He commanded men to repent (verse 16.) He came to be King as well as Saviour. III. JESUS REQUIRED NOT ONLY ACCEPTANCE OF HIS DOCTRINES BUT OF HIMSELF ALSO—"Come ye after Me." IV. JESUS PROFFERS LARGE REWARD TO HIS FOLLOWERS—"I will make you fishers of men." V. JESUS' WORDS AND ACTS WERE A REVELATION OF HIS DIVINE POWER. Rebuking the evil spirit, He bade him "hold his peace and come out of him." That word was irresistible. Lessons: 1. The way to spread the gospel is to tell what Jesus does. 2. If one agency fails to bring men to Christ, let others be employed. 3. Opportunities for greatest duties are found in the discharge of ordinary ones. Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and while there occasion was afforded for healing a demoniac. 4. A broad estimate should be had of the kingdom of Christ. How vast was Christ's view of the kingdom He came to set up; Beings of both worlds were interested in it. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*)

Jesus in Galilee :—I. The ENTRANCE to the kingdom. For a sinful man the only way into a kingdom of righteousness, is through repentance and renewal. II. The MINISTRY of the kingdom. Discipleship means ministry. III. The DEMONSTRATIO of the kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom is good news for the whole man; mind, heart, will, soul and body. At last the gospel of the heavenly kingdom, in its full realization, shall be only a renewal of the gospel of the kingdom that was spoken in Galilee. "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." (*Ibid.*) *Repent and believe.*—Adams likens Faith to a great queen in her progress, having repentance as her messenger going before her, and works as the attendants following in her train. (*J. G. Pilkington.*) *The look of repentance backward and forward* :—Like Janus Bifrons, the Roman god looking two ways, a true repentance not only bemoans the past but takes heed to the future. Repentance, like the lights of a ship at her bow and her stern, not only looks to the track she has made, but to the path before her. A godly sorrow moves the Christian to weep over the failure of the past, but his eyes are not so blurred with tears but that he can look watchfully into the future, and, profiting by the experience of former failures, make straight paths for his feet. (*Ibid.*) *Repentance lifelong* :—"Sir," said a young man to Philip Henry, "how long should a man go on repenting? How long, Mr. Henry, do you mean to go on repenting yourself?" "Sir," was the reply, "I hope to carry my repentance to the very gates of heaven. Every day I find I am a sinner, and every day I need to repent. I mean to carry my repentance, by God's help, up to the very gates of heaven." May this be your divinity and mine! May repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, be Jachin and Boaz—the two great pillars before the temple of our religion, the corner-stones in our system of Christianity. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *Repentance and faith inseparable* :—Here is the sum and substance of Christ's whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such an one and at such a time (just after His baptism), we should give the most earnest heed to it. I. The gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, A COMMAND. He didn't condescend to reason about it. Why is this? 1. To ensure its being attended to. Many would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. 2. That men may be without excuse if they neglect it. II. THIS COMMAND IS TWOFOLD. It explains itself: repent and believe. 1. Repentance. Abhorrence of one's past life, because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it. Avoidance of present sin, because not one's own, but bought with a price. Resolution to live henceforth like Jesus. This is the only repentance we have to preach and to practise: not law and terrors, not despair, not driving men to self-murder—this is the sorrow of the world, which worketh death: godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation through Christ. 2. Faith. That is, trust in Christ. This goes hand-in-hand with repentance. Neither will be of any use without the other. Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Saviour to open shame, frightful sufferings, and a terrible death. III. This command is A MOST REASONABLE ONE. God only asks of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would rejoice to give. You can't expect to be saved while you are in your sins, any more than you can expect to have a healthy body while there is poison in your veins. And then, as to faith, God surely has a right to demand of the creature He has made, that he shall believe what He tells him: IV. This is a command which DEMANDS IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE. The danger is real; the necessity is urgent. *To-day* is the time God graciously gives you; *to-morrow* He may claim as His own. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Low in repentance, high in faith* :—An old saint, on his sick-bed, once used this remarkable expression: "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance, but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." The repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent the one with the other. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet—the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! (*Ibid.*) *Repentance dear to the Christian* :—Rowland Hill, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years, would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." *Repentance bears sweet fruit* :—The sweetness of the apple makes up for the bitterness of the root, the hope of gain makes pleasant the perils of the sea, the expectation of health mitigates the nauseousness of medicine. He who desires the kernel, breaks the nut;

so he who desires the joy of a holy conscience, swallows down the bitterness of penance. (*Scholiast in Jerome.*) *Repentance and faith twin duties* :—Faith and repentance keep up a Christian's life, as the natural heat and radical moisture do the natural life. Faith is like the innate heat; repentance like the natural moisture. And, as the philosopher saith, if the innate heat devour too much the radical moisture, or, on the contrary, there breed presently diseases; so, if believing make a man repent less, or repenting make a man believe less, this turneth to a distemper. Lord, cast me down (said a holy man upon his death-bed) as low as hell in repentance; and lift me up by faith into the highest heavens, in confidence of Thy salvation. (*John Trapp.*) *Repentance a daily duty* :—He that repents every day for the sins of every day, when he comes to die will have the sins of only one day to repent of. Short reckonings make long friends. (*M. Henry.*) *The time fulfilled* :—The same thought as St. Paul's "fulness of time." (Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10). THE KINGDOM OF GOD and of heaven. These two formulæ are used with a slight difference of meaning. 1. "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" STANDS OPPOSED TO THE KINGDOMS OF EARTH: the great world-empires that lived and ruled by the strength of their armies and that were, in means and ends, in principles and practices, bad. These had grown out of the cruel ambitions, jealousies, and hatreds of men and States; had created war, bloodshed, famine, pestilence, the oppression which crushed the weak, and the tyranny which exalted the strong. But the kingdom from above was the descent of a spiritual power, calm and ubiquitous as the sun-to light: plastic, penetrative, pervasive, silently changing from ill to good, from chaos order, both man and the world. 2. "THE KINGDOM OF GOD" HAS ITS OPPOSITE IN THE KINGDOM OF EVIL OR SATAN, the great empire of darkness and anarchy, creative of misery and death to man. It belonged to God, came from Him, existed to promote His ends, to vanquish sin, and to restore on earth an obedience that would make it happy and harmonious as heaven. (*Principal A. M. Fairbairn.*)

Vers. 16-18.—**Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee.**—*The call of the first apostles* :—The call of these men is a strange thing. It is strange that He begins with winning disciples, not working miracles. And it is more strange still that in our poor human nature He should find any fitness to aid Him in His work. You would have thought only heaven could have given the Saviour fellow-workers that would be a comfort and a help to Him. But man can be a worker together with God. Several things are noteworthy in connection with this group of apostles. I. THEY ARE NOT THEOLOGIANS. We do not need high education to fit us to do good. II. But they HAD BENEFITED BY AN EXCELLENT TRAINING. They came from pious homes; they had good schooling and good knowledge of the Bible; also the excellent training that lies in learning a trade requiring diligence and endurance. What special further fitness they needed for their work would come from intercourse with Christ. III. THEY WERE FOUND IN GROUPS. Ties of friendship may assist both consecration and power. IV. They are enlisted GRADUALLY. In no religious matters should we act with haste. Be "like the stars, hasting not, lingering not." Life is not long enough to let us postpone the discharge of duty a single day after its discovery; but it is quite long enough to give us time to reach calmly every conclusion on which we have to act. (*R. Glover.*) *Jesus, as Head of the kingdom, calling His helpers* :—Note—I. The peremptoriness of the call—"Come ye after Me." II. The inducement to obey—"I will make you," &c. III. The promptness of their obedience—"And straightway," &c. IV. The order in which they were called—"Simon Peter" first. V. The kind of men called. Not idlers. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Busy men* :—God calls men when they are busy; Satan, when they are idle. For idleness is the hour of temptation, and an idle person the devil's tennis-ball, which he tosses at pleasure, and sets to work as he likes and lists. (*John Trapp.*) *Why should the Lord choose His foremost apostles from among fishermen?* 1. Their calling had inured them to hardship and danger—the lake on which they exercised their craft being exposed to sudden and violent storms. 2. Their calling, demanding a constant exercise of patience and watchfulness, and being very precarious besides, had made them familiar with disappointment, so that they would not be discouraged by it. Thus their worldly calling would be the best discipline for their spiritual work. They must be prepared to endure hardness, for they had no settled incomes; they must be ready to face death, for at any moment a storm of bloody persecution might arise; they must be patient, both towards churches and souls; and they must be content at times with taking a few converts in their nets, where they might have expected abundant draughts.

(*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *The Lord chose*—I. Unlearned and ignorant men, that His grace might be made perfect in their weakness. That the then known world should have been, in two or three centuries, subdued to the faith by such men, and by such as succeeded them, was, next to the resurrection of Christ, the greatest miracle of Christianity; II. Religious men. They had "justified God" by attaching themselves to the ministry of the Baptist. But they were neither (1) prejudiced Pharisees, who would have had a world of traditional interpretation to unlearn; nor (2) superstitious men, or they would have shown themselves far readier to look for supernatural action from their Master. (*Ibid.*) *The call to service*:—I. HONEST TOIL IS A PREPARATION FOR NOBLER WORK. II. FOLLOWING CHRIST CONSECRATES EVERY VOCATION. Earthly pursuits are the pattern of the heavenly. III. SECULAR PARTNERSHIPS ARE TRANSLATED TO A HIGHER SPHERE. IV. TRUE OBEDIENCE IS PROMPT AND PRACTICAL. V. CHRIST'S SERVICE ALWAYS INVOLVES SACRIFICE. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *The manner in which Christ attracted men to Himself by making their secular calling typical of spiritual work.* I. THAT GOOD MEN SHOULD TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY FOR SEEKING THE MORAL WELFARE OF THOSE WITH WHOM THEY ARE BROUGHT INTO INCIDENTAL CONTACT. II. That good men in embracing every opportunity for the moral welfare of others, might with great advantage APPEAL TO THEM THROUGH THEIR SECULAR CALLING, MAKING IT SYMBOLICAL OF RELIGIOUS WORK AND TRUTH. "I will make you to become fishers of men." 1. This method of appeal is attractive. 2. It may be opportune. 3. It is effective. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christ's election of disciples*:—I. WHOM DID HE CHOOSE? Not the wise and learned; they would have worried the simplicity with endless commentaries, have wrought it into intellectual puzzles, so that the shepherd on the hill could not have understood it. He did not choose the rich; they would have weighted His goodness with the cares of wealth. Did He choose religious leaders? They would dissolve His charity, mercy, in the acid of their theological hatreds. Did He choose the politicians? He would not use political craft. II. "Come," He said, "I will make you fishers of men. And they left all and followed Him." HE WAS NOT WRONG THEN IN HIS CHOICE. These men who gave up all at once for Him, had impulse, heart, impetuosity, love; and these were the main things He wanted for His work. It would be a hard task, and no faint-heartedness or questioning could bear its trials. It was this intensity of spirit that Christ stirred in men. When He spoke men arose from the dead. The source of His influence was partly personal; also it was weighted with infinite, Divine, ideal thoughts; He established living truths in the hearts of men. That was His real power. As life went on His thoughts grew before them. So inspired, they went forth into the world. They saw before them a vast ocean, in whose depths men were lost in ignorance and misery. (*S. A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Christ calling men*:—I. This call was imperative. II. It is first given to two obscure men. III. It is a spoken, not a written, call. IV. They are commanded to follow a person, not a creed. V. This call is abrupt. VI. In all revolutionary movements there have been men who have heard nothing but—"Follow." VII. Those who are called are not such at first sight as might have been expected; yet on examination it will be found that they were the only persons who could have been called, in harmony with the whole ministry of Jesus Christ. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Forsaking all to follow Christ*:—It is *said* that the magnet will not draw in the presence of the diamond: the world cannot hold that soul that is susceptible to the superior power of Christ. The eye dazzled with the glare of the sun sees darkness everywhere else. Leather and iron money was, in the early ages, soon cast aside for gold and silver. How soon we part with lamps and candles when the sun rises. (*T. Brooks.*) *Heart responsive to heart*:—The call met a deep craving of the heart, and at once they joined Christ the man, without knowing anything of Christ the doctrine. The heart wanted a heart; life demanded life. The world had lived long enough on written promises; the cold parchment was becoming colder day by day. There was an aching at the heart of society—a great trouble—an exciting wonder. The call had a peculiar charm about it in so far as it demanded attachment to a visible person. Not a creed but a Life bade them "follow." (*Dr. Parker.*) *The gospel as a fishing net*:—The net to fish for men is commonly the word truly preached; the threads are the words of persuasion; the knots the arguments of reason; the plummets are the articles and grounds of the faith. This net is to be wove with study and pains, to be let down and loosed by preaching, to be gathered up by calling men to account of what was heard, what they have done upon it; it is washed and cleansed by our tears and prayers,

and spread and dried by our charity and mortified affections. And this is the net that we must let down, "though it catch nothing," and "at His word it is to be let down." His word is to be the length and breadth, the whole rule and measure of all our sermons, all your actions. Leave off our work we must not, because it does not answer us with success; but do our work again, and see where we erred, and mark it; find what was the occasion of our ill success, our taking nought, and avoid it. (*Dr. Mark Frank.*) *The estimate Jesus Christ had of humanity in contrast with all the other objects that engaged His attention:*—The more you study Christ's life the more you will see how in comparison with the claims of man everything else was regarded as subsidiary and comparatively unimportant. For rank, for wealth, for fame, for all the pursuit of which fills men with fever and the possession of which leaves them in unrest, Christ cared not a jot. But for man He cared everything. He might be poor, despised, wretched; no matter, he was a man! And when He viewed him thus as a king, though discrowned, as an heir whose birthright was immortality, as a brother of the seraphim, though bowed in the ruin of a crushing overthrow, His whole nature went out to him in a passionate intensity of tenderness, and in His annunciation that He had come to seek and save the lost, Christ but proclaimed His estimate of the greatness of humanity. The first thing which any one of us must seek to possess as a qualification for Christian work is the same overmastering sense of the preciousness of humanity. We shall work for man in proportion as we feel that. Get this thought, then, written in your heart, fixed in your memory as with a diamond, that to consecrate your energy, to devote your might to do the work of Christ, as it bears upon the elevation and salvation of man, will do more to replenish your soul with happiness, and to crown your life with honour, than to reap a harvest of wealth or fame. To bring a little child as a lamb to the fold of the Good Shepherd, to raise the fallen out of the mire to the level of a purer life, and to bring men under the saving influences of Christ's gospel, is a work which angel minds would fain engage in, and one which demands and deserves the highest devotion we can bring to bear upon it. (*W. Kelynack.*) *Primary and subordinate qualifications that are important to be possessed by all those who essay to do good to others:*—And I would remark of all knowledge the most important that must be possessed by him who seeks to influence others for good is the knowledge of man. To know books is much, to be familiar with things is well; but large wisdom in these particulars may consist with much ignorance in dealing with human nature. To know man, to work with success on man, you must know his susceptibilities as well as his aversions, his merits as well as his failings. And you must know this in order satisfactorily to deal with the question how best human nature may be approached, and how most effectually it may be converted to the uses you contemplate. To give shape to an iron bar you need a sledge-hammer stroke of power. To give form to clay, you need but the deft movements of a vigorous hand. And so, in dealing with human nature; the knowledge on which I insist, leading out to the employment of the right means, is one of great moment in the success of our task. It is of no use for any one of us to go through life with a little code of action like a two-foot rule to be the measure of all character. We must deal with men according to their individual character. Some men we must approach through the medium of their hope, and some through the medium of their fear. Some we must strike, but as the bee strikes the flower when he draws the honey from its heart; and others we must shape as the sculptor shapes the block, which he strikes again and again to disemprison the angel that lies hidden in the slab. Now in this, and then in that form, Christian workers will adjust their movements, guided by the knowledge of human nature of which we are speaking, knowing that if men are sought in the right way, and at the right time, like fish you may catch them, but that if you neglect these very primary qualities, you may almost forecast failure where you should expect success. (*Ibid.*) *The making of men-catchers:*—Conversion is most fully displayed when it leads converts to seek the conversion of others: we most truly follow Christ when we become fishers of men. The great question is not so much what we are naturally, as what Jesus makes us by His grace: whoever we may be of ourselves, we can, by following Jesus, be made useful in His kingdom. Our desire should be to be men-catchers; and the way to attain to that sacred art is to be ourselves thoroughly captured by the great Head of the college of fishermen. When Jesus draws *us* we shall draw men. I. SOMETHING TO BE DONE BY US—"Come ye after Me." 1. We must be separated to Him, that we may pursue His object. 2. We must abide with

Him, that we may catch His spirit. 3. We must obey Him, that we may learn His method. 4. We must believe Him, that we may believe true doctrine. 5. We must copy His life, that we may win His blessing from God. II. SOMETHING TO BE DONE BY HIM—"I will make you." Our following Jesus secures our education for soul-winning. 1. By our following Jesus, He works conviction and conversion in men: He uses our example as a means to that end. 2. By our discipleship the Lord makes us fit to be used. 3. By our personal experience in following Jesus, He instructs us until we become proficient in soul-winning. 4. By inward monitions He guides us what, when, and where to speak. 5. By His Spirit He qualifies us to reach men. 6. By His secret working on men's hearts He speeds us in our work. III. A FIGURE INSTRUCTING US—"Fishers of men." A fisher is (1) dependent and trustful; (2) diligent and persevering; (3) intelligent and watchful; (4) laborious and self-denying; (5) daring, and not afraid to venture upon a dangerous sea; (6) successful. He is no fisher who never catches anything. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The higher discipleship*:—Following Christ, if rightly understood, is the destruction of selfishness. It casts off the idols of worldly prudence and worldly maxims from the heart, and puts there instead the supreme self-sacrifice of Christ. Well might these two plain men have said, "What! leave all and follow Thee? leave our nets and boats that we have bought with our few savings? ruin our worldly chances, and go forth to we know not what—all for the hope of doing good? Where is the gain, where is the advantage to ourselves?" But the man who receives Christ into his heart cannot reason in that way. Tell him that he is giving up his worldly chances, that he is injuring his strength, that he is working without hope of reward on earth; and he must still reply, "My aim is not the gratitude of men, but the favour of God. I am not working for the regard of men, but for the 'Well done' of my Master." To do that which pleasure prompts, to do that which does not clash with our inclinations—even the world can go as far as that. But the true disciple is he who leaves his nets and boats at the command of Christ; the man who goes out to a foreign land, leaving kindred and home that he may preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; the Sunday-school teacher who gives up the hour needed, perchance, for rest, that the ignorant may be taught, and the feet of children led into the narrow way. Christ calls us to the higher discipleship, because it is His purpose that we, under God, should bring back the world to His sway. . . . Let us rise above the low level where we can only read the word "duty," to that grander height where we can see that all Christian service is a privilege and a joy; and though heart and flesh fail sometimes, let us walk as seeing the invisible. The divinest life that ever the world knew carried its cross every step of the way, and your life will not be worth much unless you carry your cross too. Nothing great or good is ever born into the world without travail and pain. (*J. H. Shakespeare, M.A.*) *The ministerial office*:—In fishing, whether in sea or among men, there is wanted—1. A net. The gospel. 2. Casting the net. Andrew did this first when he caught Peter his brother (John i. 41); Peter did this most energetically afterwards with his splendid work of preaching. In doing this, Christ directs where; otherwise we may toil all night in vain. 3. Dragging the net to land. Confessional; inquiry-room, &c. 4. Mending the nets. Heretics and schismatics unite against it, and so break the net. Inside foes are the worst—the dog-fish and sharks of the gospel-net. Hence a mender is wanted. 5. Counting the fish (John xxi. 11). The elect and chosen are many and great; and these do not break the nets. *The apostles' change of employment a gain to them*:—Did those skilled fishermen gain or lose in leaving the lake, the boat, and the net, and becoming the Lord's apostles? Was it to their loss or advantage that they sacrificed the wealth gathered by the net for the privilege of saving men? Ask Peter on the day of Pentecost: ask him when by his lips the gospel is first preached to the Gentiles, and he gathers the first-fruits of a world-wide harvest. Ask John when, at the close of a long life, on the isle of Patmos the heavens opened to him, and the scroll of the future is unrolled, and he with rapt vision is permitted to see the triumphs of the gospel he was called to preach. Ask them now, their names having gone through the world closely associated with Christ, pillars of the Church on earth, and for eighteen centuries sharing with their Lord the glory of the Church above. (*P. B. Davis.*) *The minister is a fisherman*:—As such he must fit himself for his employment. If some fish will bite only by day, he must fish by day; if others will bite only by moonlight, he must fish for them by moonlight. (*R. Cecil.*) *Bait to catch fish*:—Mr. Jesse relates that certain fish give preference to bait that has been perfumed. When the prince of evil goes forth in quest of victims, there does not need much allure-

ment added to the common temptations of life to make them effective. Fishers of men, however, do well to employ all the skill they can to suit the minds and tastes of those whom they seek to gain. (*G. McMichael.*) *Rules for fishing*:—I watched an old man trout fishing the other day, pulling them out one after another briskly. "You manage it cleverly, old friend," I said; "I have passed a good many below who don't seem to be doing anything." The old man lifted himself up, and stuck his rod in the ground. "Well, you see, sir, there be three rules for trout fishing, and 'tis no good trying if you don't mind them. The first is, keep yourself out of sight; and the second, keep yourself further out of sight; and the third is, keep yourself further still out of sight. Then you'll do it." "Good for catching men, too," thought I. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *Catching fish a preparation for catching men*:—Every quality of mind which these fishermen had cultivated will serve the higher purpose now. Their vocation had—I. Called out their PATIENCE. II. Made a large demand on their INVENTIVENESS. Catching men needs sagacity. III. Kept in lively exercise their observant WATCHFULNESS. They found it needful to study all the changes of light and shade; the aspects of sky and sea. To save souls we must be "all eye." IV. Had inured them to DISAPPOINTMENT. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *Grippers*:—I have known a congregation so full of kindly Christian workers that in the low neighbourhood in which they worked they got the nick-name of "*Grippers*." Lowe, hearing the name, thought it must be a new sect, but it only marked the old apostolic quality. All Christians ought to pray for this power of catching souls. It is not violence, loudness, or terror that gives it, but love, goodness, the clear and strong convictions that come from following Christ. (*R. Glover.*)

Vers. 19, 20. **And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James.**—*The call of the sons of Zebedee*:—I. Our first question is, WHAT MANNER OF MEN WERE JAMES AND JOHN WHEN JESUS SUMMONED THEM TO HIS SERVICE? Is it not suggested that they were free from gross vices; open-eyed to truth and righteousness? Converted profligates have rendered eminent service in the kingdom of God; yet the best achievements have usually come from men who have not saturated their natures with vicious indulgences. Secular experience had helped to make the brothers fit for Christ's call. The stormy wind was fulfiling Christ's word, and He was coming to His men walking on the waves of the sea. The qualities of character produced by toil upon the deep were caught up and transfigured in the fulfilment of apostolic tasks. We are shaped by circumstances which look commonplace for future usefulness. James and John had reason to be thankful for helpful communion with others. Their parents must have been a worthy couple, and their companions, Peter and Andrew, were like-minded with themselves. Their thoughts went beyond boats and nets. Their lives looked upward. To the youthful fishermen Christ had already revealed Himself. His spell was on their hearts. II. THE CALL FOR WHICH SUCH VARIED PREPARATIONS HAD BEEN MADE WAS HEARD IN DUE COURSE—"He called them," &c. Though we take it as a matter of course that James and John should make a prompt response, there was the possibility of reluctance and bargaining. Jonah fled. Prompt be our obedience. The call that was heeded involved a purifying fellowship. The men who were named "Boanerges" had dispositions which might have made them men of violent deeds had not Christ assumed the task of refining without weakening the powerful, passionate natures that He won. To be much with Christ is essential to doing well in His kingdom. III. THE SERVICE FOR WHICH THE CALL AND CULTURE PREPARED THE WAY. IV. THE SACRIFICES WHICH THE SERVICE REQUIRED. Zebedee and Salome had their share. For their sons they had made plans with which Christ interfered. Their home was to lose some light. The youths themselves had to endure hardship, but they had love to help them. (*W. J. Henderson, B.A.*) *The beneficent influence of a Christ-attracted life*:—Anything but beneficent those lives might have been. Let the seawater which would madden those who drink it be drawn heavenward, and it will descend as wholesome refreshment for beast and bird and tree and man; and so men that would make the world's life madder become fountains of sweet water after Christ has drawn them into the sky of communion with Himself. You will remember that, and let Him uplift you. To be much with Him is essential to doing well in His kingdom. (*Ibid.*) *A call to discipleship*:—1. This call uttered by Christ was unique in its character. 2. It was emphatic in its authority. 3. It was important in its designation. I. THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP COMES TO MEN PRE-OCCUPIED WITH THE SECULAR DUTIES OF LIFE. 1. Christ does not often call idle men to discipleship. 2. If men

are active Christ does not despise the meanness of their toil. II. The call to discipleship COMES TO SEVERAL IN THE SAME FAMILY. III. It involves the subordination of all human relationships. 1. Of trade relationships. 2. Of domestic relationships. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christ's insight into character*:—In a rough stone, a cunning lapidary will easily foresee what his cutting, and his polishing, and his art will bring that stone to. A cunning statuary discerns in a marble-stone under his feet, where there will arise an eye, and an ear, and a hand, and other lineaments to make it a perfect statue. Much more did our Saviour Christ, who was Himself the author of that disposition in them (for no man hath any such disposition but from God), foresee in these fishermen an inclinableness to become useful in that great service of His Church. Therefore He took them from their own ship, but He sent them from His cross; He took them weatherbeaten with north and south winds, and rough-cast with foam and mud; but He sent them back soupled, and smoothed, and levigated, quickened, and inanimated with that spirit which He had breathed into them from His own bowels, His own eternal bowels, from which the Holy Ghost proceeded; He took fishermen, and He sent fishers of men. (*J. Donne, D.D.*) *What the Gospel ministry is*:—1. Called men: Said to Andrew, Peter, &c., "Follow me." 2. Separated men: "They left all and followed Him." 3. Commissioned men: "I will make you fishers of men." 4. Equipped men: with His presence—with His Spirit. (*The Christian Advocate.*)

Ver. 21. **And they went into Capernaum.**—*Capernaum*:—The Teacher of humility begins His mission at a town where pride chiefly reigned. Preference is due from ministers to the greatest need, not to the greatest inclination. A minister should always begin by instructing, in imitation of God, who leads men, not by a blind instinct, but by instruction and knowledge, by the external light of His Word, and the internal light of His grace. (*Quesnel.*) *Capernaum* (the field of repentance, or city of comfort) was a beautiful little town, situated on the western shore of the Galilean Lake, a short distance from its head. Though small, it was a very busy and thriving town; the leading highway to the sea from Damascus on the east to Accho or Ptolemais on the Mediterranean on the west, ran through it, thus opening the markets of the coast to the rich yield of the neighbouring farms, orchards, and vineyards, and the abundant returns of the fisheries of the lake. The townsfolk, as a rule, enjoyed the comfort and plenty we see in the houses of Peter and Matthew. The houses were built of black lava, though most of them were relieved of their sombreness by being whitened with lime. The synagogue, however, which was the principal architectural ornament of the town, and which the centurion built and presented to the Jews of the place, was of white limestone, the blocks of stone being large and chiselled, and the cornices, architraves, and friezes of which, as evidenced by the ruins, were finely carved. The streets of the village radiated from the synagogue, and stretched up the gentle slope behind it, the main street running north, to Chorazin, a neighbouring town not far distant. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The synagogue*:—The synagogue carries us back for its origin to the land of the exile. Cut off from the sacrificial worship of the temple, devout Jews gathered together for prayer and hearing of the law, and little sanctuaries were built for their meetings; and after the return from captivity, though the statelier ritual of the temple was restored, synagogues in towns and villages became an integral part of the ecclesiastical system. They claim our interest, not only from their association with our Lord's preaching and miracles, but as well from the fact that it was from "the eighteen prayers" which were read therein daily except on the Sabbath, that Jesus drew the chief materials for that which the Christian Church has consecrated for daily use as "the Lord's Prayer." Now, of all the synagogues in Palestine, perhaps that at Capernaum is fullest of historic reference. Its erection at the sole expense of a large-hearted Roman soldier had earned for him the affection of the inhabitants, for when his servant was sick they pleaded with Jesus on the grounds that the petitioner was worthy of special consideration, because "he loved the people and built us the synagogue." The discovery and identification of its ruins in later years have awakened no little attention, and have set at rest a long-standing dispute as to the site of Capernaum. At Tell Hûm, on the lake, remains of a synagogue of unusual size and beauty have been excavated, the style of which belongs to the Herodian period of architecture. It appears to have been a common custom to carve over the entrance of these buildings an emblem, which, as far as we know, with a single exception, was "the seven-branched candlestick," indicating that they were designed mainly for illumination or teaching. The exceptional instance is a

Tell Hûm. The lintel of the chief doorway has a carving in the centre, of "the pot of manna," which is encircled with the vine and clusters of grapes. And it is this which enables us to identify "His own city," as well as the building where He delivered one of His most important discourses. . . . It was in this building that our Lord spent the morning of His first Sabbath-day in Galilee, and He taught with such novel power that the people were filled with amazement. They had been used to the teaching of the scribes, with their interminable details and puerilities, and their slavery to traditional interpretation. There was no freedom of thought or speech, no departure even by a hair's-breadth from the decisions of the doctors, nothing but the dry bones of Rabbinical exposition, and we are not surprised that when Christ came and spoke with "thoughts that breathed and words that burned," and drew His illustrations from the sights and sounds in which they lived and moved, the very freshness delighted them, and they exclaimed at the novelty and independence of His teaching. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Christ in the synagogue of Capernaum*:—I. He entered into the synagogue ON THE SABBATH-DAY. 1. The synagogue—origin unknown. There were two divisions, ten officers, &c. The service—prayer, &c. 2. The Sabbath-day. Christ honoured ordinances. Sanctioned social worship. He is still in the midst of His people. Where will you find Him on the Sabbath? II. In the synagogue CHRIST TAUGHT. Not the first time. His sermon not recorded. The Spirit has amply provided for our instruction. Christ still preaches. III. THE EFFECT. 1. They were astonished. 2. They were not converted. 3. Many wonder, who do not believe. IV. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRIST'S TEACHING was authority. 1. The scribes employed tradition. 2. Christ spoke assured and naked truth—delivered a message from God—awakened the testimony of conscience. (*Expository Discourses.*)

Ver. 22. **For He taught them as one that had authority.**—*Conviction of Christ's authority through His servant's teaching*:—Francis Junius the younger was a considerable scholar, but by no means prejudiced in favour of the Scriptures, as appears by his own account, which is as follows:—"My father, who was frequently reading the New Testament, and had long observed with grief the progress I had made in infidelity, had put that book in my way in his library, in order to attract my attention, if it might please God to bless his design, though without giving me the least intimation of it. Here, therefore, I unwittingly opened the New Testament, thus providentially laid before me. At the very first view, as I was deeply engaged in other thoughts, that grand chapter of the evangelist and apostle presented itself to me (John i.): 'In the beginning was the Word,' &c. I read part of the chapter, and was so affected that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument, and the majesty and authority of the composition, as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered, my mind was in amazement, and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was. Thou didst remember me, O Lord my God, according to Thy boundless mercy, and didst bring back the lost sheep to Thy flock. From that day God wrought so mightily in me by the power of His Spirit, that I began to have less relish for all other studies and pursuits, and bent myself with greater ardour and attention to everything which had a relation to God." *An earnest Preacher and an astonished congregation*:—I. THE EARNEST PREACHER. 1. He recognized the Sabbath as the time for worship. 2. He recognized instruction as the best method of preaching. 3. He discarded all formality. II. AN ASTONISHED CONGREGATION. "Astonished at His doctrine." 1. Because it was new to them. 2. Because they instinctively felt it to be true. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *The authority of Christ*:—I. LET US ASK HOW CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WAS ASSERTED AND CLAIMED. 1. By the tone of His teaching. 2. By His ministerial acts, *e.g.*, the cleansing of the temple. This assumption of rightful power led to the inquiry of the chief priests and elders—"By what authority," &c. He was the Lord of the temple because He was Son of God. 3. By His miracles. "With authority and power commandeth He the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 4. By the exercise of the Divine prerogative of pardoning sin, *e.g.*, in the cure of the paralytic. II. CONSIDER UPON WHAT CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS BASED. Christ's authority is not based upon force, or craft, or popular regard; but upon right and upon conscience. When questioned, He answered inquiry by inquiry, and boldly declared, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." 1. His words are authoritative because they are true. 2. His commands, because they are righteous. 3. He wields the personal authority of peerless love. In all, His authority is Divine, as He is. III. INQUIRE OVER WHOM

AND OVER WHAT CHRIST'S AUTHORITY EXTENDS. 1. Nature knew it. 2. Satan confessed it. 3. Angels recognized it, ministered to His wants, and stood ready to rescue and to honour Him. 4. Men felt it. IV. REMARK THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FOLLOW THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY. 1. For the individual, the fulfilment of his true being, the harmony of obedience with liberty. 2. For the human race, its one only sure and Divine hope—"In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." V. OBSERVE HOW CHRIST'S AUTHORITY AFFECTS ALL HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL. The message of heaven is, indeed, an invitation and a promise. But it is also a command. (*J. R. Thompson, M.A.*) *The teaching of Christ*:—I. THE SUBJECTS HE TAUGHT. 1. He taught the doctrines of religion. 2. He taught the nature and necessity of experimental religion. 3. He taught the necessity of practical religion. He stated that obedience was the only evidence of true discipleship, &c. II. HOW HE TAUGHT THESE THINGS. 1. With direct plainness. 2. He was a faithful and earnest teacher (Matt. xxiii.). 3. He was an affectionate and tender teacher. He did not break the bruised reed, &c. 4. He was a diligent and persevering teacher. 5. He embodied all His instructions in His own blessed example. Application: 1. True Christians are Christ's disciples. They hear Him. This is both a duty and a privilege. 2. Whosoever will not hear Him must perish—"How shall we escape," &c. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Christ the model of the Christian ministry*:—I. HIS DOCTRINE. 1. View His doctrine of God. 2. His doctrine of man. (1) Responsibility. (2) Man's corrupt and sinful state. II. HIS MANNER was in perfect harmony with the matter of His instruction. 1. The leading characteristic of our Saviour's manner as a public teacher was earnestness. 2. The earnestness of Christ was evinced in the simplicity of His teachings. 3. The earnestness of Jesus was further evinced by the consistency of His life with His doctrine. 4. The earnestness of Jesus was still further manifested in the decision and boldness of His manner. 5. His tenderness. (*J. A. Copp.*) *The authority of our Lord's teaching*:—I. Authority of GOODNESS. Invitations. Beatitudes. II. Authority of GREATNESS. Claims universal audience. Superiority to Jonah, Solomon, and all the great names of the Jewish Church. Teaching declarative and dogmatic. III. Authority of SOLEMNITY. His peculiar formula. His denunciations of woe. IV. LEGISLATIVE authority. Revises the Mosaic code. Asserts His superiority to law. Repeals existing economy. Controls laws of nature Himself, and confers the power on others. "I say unto you," His new commandment. Not only enacts laws, but ensures obedience. Conclusion: His teaching exempt from all supposable circumstances unfavourable to authoritative teaching. Taught with the perfect conviction of the truth of His doctrine. His example enforced it. Cordial sympathy with it. Knew the ultimate principles on which His doctrines rested. And the supreme value of the truth He taught. The purity of His motives. The ultimate triumph of His doctrine. All this must have clothed His teaching, especially when contrasted with the prevailing mode of Jewish instruction, with commanding power. His disciples should be distinguished by reverence and docility. These dispositions to be sought and found at the throne of grace. (*J. Harris, D.D.*) *Christ's authority largely derived from His moral atmosphere*:—The weight and impressiveness of a man's words largely depend upon his air, his atmosphere, the mysterious efflux, exhalation, aërial development of his personality, the moral aroma of his character. This subtle influence can only be felt, and cannot be defined. Enter the assembly when young Summerfield is speaking, and there is upon you a power which it is the highest luxury and dearest blessing to feel. There is incense here, and the smell of sacrifice. It fills the entire space from the rafters downwards to the floor; nay, it pierces the walls and issues from the doors. And what shall we imagine concerning the atmosphere of that wonderful Being, who spoke as never man spake? It was not His look, nor His declamation, nor His fine periods; it was not even His prodigious weight of matter; but it was the sacred exhalation of His quality, the aroma, the auroral glory of His person. This is what invested Him with unimpeachable authority, lent to His words spirit and life, and gave to His doctrine its astonishing power. He took the human nature to exhale an atmosphere of God that should fill and finally renew the creation, bathing all climes, and times, and ages with its dateless, ineradicable power. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Ministerial authority*:—1. MEN WILL TEACH WELL ONLY AS THEY TEACH UNDER CHRIST. II. AUTHORITY IS IMPOSSIBLE APART FROM ASSOCIATION WITH THE MASTER. III. AUTHORITY OF LOVE MUST COME FROM INTENSITY OF CONVICTION. IV. HEARERS KNOW THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY. V. THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER IS TO SHOW HIS SUPREMACY OVER ALL OTHER TEACHERS. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 23.—**A man with an unclean spirit.**—*Possessed with a devil*:—The devil is always endeavouring to work on us, and seizes every advantage offered, and works through (1) a darkened mind, or (2) disordered nerves, or (3) a depraved heart. In all ages you find him oppressing with his torture all that are so conditioned, especially those with disordered nerves or depraved heart. The time of Christ was an age of wildness and despair. Oppression drove men mad. The man in the synagogue may have merely had disordered nerves, and have been simply a good man plunged into insane melancholy; or he may have had a depraved heart, sinking at last through remorse into despair. For, all badness tends to grow into madness. Some sin lies at the root of five-sixths of all our English madness. Falsehood and selfishness make men madly suspicious; vice softens the brain; drunkenness especially sinks men into madness. "Whomsoever we obey, his servants we are," and if we obey the devil we soon give him the upper hand over us. (*R. Glover.*) *The man with an unclean spirit*:—I. THE PLACE TO WHICH THE SAVIOUR CAME. "And they went into Capernaum," &c. 1. The occasion which led Him hither was strange and very distressing. In Nazareth He was in danger of losing His life, they "led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong," &c. So He left them, and directed His steps towards Capernaum, where He now appears. 2. The object which brought Him here was one of great interest and importance. He came to Capernaum to make it His future home. As His headquarters, during His public ministry, it was peculiarly adapted, affording facility of communication, as well by land and lake, with many flourishing towns, and of escape into more secure regions in case of threatened persecution. 3. The character which He assumed here was not that of a private citizen, but of a public Teacher. II. THE INDIVIDUAL WITH WHOM OUR LORD CAME IN CONTACT. 1. His miserable condition. 2. The language which this evil spirit employed. (1) His request. He insisted to be let alone, but that could not be. (2) His inquiries—"What have we to do with Thee?" As a Saviour they had nothing to do with Him; they are amenable to Him as their Judge. (3) His confession—"I know Thee who Thou art." This unclean spirit makes a most accurate, explicit, and full confession; it was also full of alarm. III. THE WONDERFUL POWER WHICH JESUS DISPLAYED. We have here to consider—1. His authoritative command—"Hold thy peace," &c. He would not accept the commendation of devils. He silenced them. 2. The spirit's reluctant submission—"And when the unclean spirit had torn him," &c. In vain he struggled to retain his hold of the poor victim. IV. THE EFFECTS WHICH THE MEMORABLE ACT PRODUCED. 1. It excited the greatest astonishment. 2. It caused His fame to be widely extended. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The devil in church*:—I. A DEVIL IN CHURCH. Synagogue means church. For the time being it was a Christian church, because Christ taught in it. In it was a devil. Devils are found in strange places. In Paradise. "Among the sons of God" (Job i.). Notice their infinite impudence. Hard to say whether the man took the devil, or the devil took him. Whichever it was, illustrates his accommodating character. So now a self-righteous devil accompanies men to puff them up with pride; a critical devil to quarrel with the doctrine or the preacher. II. THE DEVIL'S CREED. The demon was orthodox. No heresy in hell. What he believed he publicly professed. Many have a better faith who are silent. His confession was rejected. Profession worthless without submission. Impiety of creed without conduct. III. THE DEVIL'S PRAYER. It was earnest and social, like that of Dives. Possible to pray earnestly and benevolently but in vain. It was prompted by fear and by wickedness. "Leave us alone" to sin and to torment. IV. THE DEVIL'S EXCOMMUNICATION. In coming out he "tore" him, &c., just as an evil-disposed out-going tenant does as much harm as possible in his last opportunity. What an expulsion! Public; by a word; in vain, the devil did not repent. This came of his orthodoxy, for it was without fruit; and of his prayer, for it was without faith. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Holiness is eminently characteristic of Christ*:—1. As He is God. 2. As through a spotless incarnation He was the grand sacrifice for sin. 3. As His own pure nature was the model to which all that believe in Him are to be renewed by the transforming power of His grace. 4. As He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. (*R. Watson.*) *Amazed at the miracles of Christ*:—Don't be startled or driven into unbelief by miracles. God is greater than these. They are not the wonders, but the minor incidents, an index of what is in God, and not the full power of God put forth. I have seen a teacher of physics make experiments in the lecture-room on the electric battery. He makes the miniature flashes crack off its surface. Very interesting, very beautiful, for every tiny spark is the same as the lightning flash

which cleaves the clouds like the sword of an archangel. The same? Yes, but a very small part of the terrific force which awakens the echoes of heaven, and makes the pillars of the earth tremble. You cannot believe in miracles? They are nothing —experiments in the lecture-room. Lo! these are parts of His ways: but the thunder of His power who can understand. (*T. Morlais Jones.*) *Christ casts out a devil*:—I. Christ's teaching was ENFORCED BY A MIRACLE. 1. Proved His commission and His benevolence to man. 2. Illustrated the objects of His kingdom— "to destroy," &c. Our benevolence should aim at this object. 3. The manner of the miracle showed that He would not receive the testimony of devils, even to the truth. The devil is a liar—his testimony not needed, &c. Let us be as careful as to the means employed as to the end. 4. The manner of the miracle shows that a speculative truth may be in a devilish mind. 5. The people were amazed, but did not acknowledge His Messiahship. We wonder—we need not. Let us be convinced of the need of Divine power to enable us to call Jesus the Christ. II. CHRIST'S FAME SPREAD ABROAD. 1. This resulted from His teaching, and still more from His miracles—wonderful, beneficent. 2. The gospel has always united temporal good with spiritual good. Man has sought to separate them—to take one and reject the other. 3. The fame of Christ left the Jewish nation without excuse. (*Expository Discourses.*) *The two antagonistic powers of the sanctuary*:—I. There is the SATANIC POWER in the sanctuary. 1. Satan is there to interrupt the service conducted by an earnest preacher. 2. To occasion distress to human souls. 3. He is entirely subject to the power of Christ. II. There is the CHRISTLY POWER in the sanctuary. 1. To instruct souls. 2. To free souls from the tyranny of the devil. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*)

Ver. 24. **Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee?**—*The happiness of heaven can only be appreciated by the holy*:—Even supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter heaven, he would not be happy there; so that it would be no mercy to permit him to enter. For heaven, it is plain from Scripture, is not a place where many different and discordant pursuits can be carried on at once, as is the case in this world. Here every man can do his own pleasure, but there he must do God's pleasure. It would be presumption to attempt to determine the employments of that eternal life which good men are to pass in God's presence, or to deny that that state which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived, may comprise an infinite variety of pursuits and occupations. Still, so far we are distinctly told that that future life will be spent in God's presence, in a sense which does not apply to our present life; so that it may best be described as an endless and uninterrupted worship. Heaven, then, is not like this world; I will say what it is much more like—a church. For in a place of worship no language of this world is heard; there are no schemes brought forward for temporal objects, great or small; no information how to strengthen our worldly interests, extend our influence, or establish our credit. These things, indeed, may be right in their way, so that we do not set our hearts upon them; still, I repeat, it is certain that we hear nothing of them in a church. Here we hear solely and entirely of God. We praise Him, worship Him, sing to Him, thank Him, confess to Him, give ourselves up to Him, and ask His blessing. And, therefore, a church is like heaven; viz., because both in the one and the other there is one single sovereign subject—religion—brought before us. Supposing, then, instead of it being said that no irreligious man could serve and attend on God in heaven, we were told that no irreligious man could worship or spiritually see Him in church, should we not at once perceive the meaning of the doctrine? viz., that were a man to come hither, who had suffered his mind to grow up in its own way, as nature or chance determined, without any deliberate habitual effort after truth and purity, he would find no real pleasure here, but would soon get weary of the place; because, in this house of God, he would hear only of that one subject which he cared little or nothing about, and nothing at all of those things which excited his hopes and fears, his sympathies and energies. If then a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there, he would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by supreme power from those objects which were still entwined around his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme

Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the Destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not bear the face of the living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His Majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One; without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *The Holy One of God*:—Some rest in praising the sermon and speaking fair to the preacher. The devil here did as much to Christ, to be rid of him. (*Trapp.*) *Jesus rebuking the unclean spirit*:—"Is Satan bigger than me, father?" asked a child. "Yes," replied the father. "Than you?" "Yes." "Than Jesus?" "No." "Then," replied the child, "I don't fear him." (*Anonymous.*) *Jesus not wanted*:—There are those who are possessed by the devil of drunkenness, or of lust, or of foul language, or of dishonesty, and they profess not to believe in Jesus and the gospel; but it is not they do not believe, they are *afraid to believe*. The man who is killing himself by excess, is told by the doctor that he must change his life, or die. He laughs at the advice, and declares that he does not believe it. But he *does* believe it, only he is afraid to think of it. So it is with many who are styled unbelievers. I have heard of a man who said to God's priest who visited him—"We don't want God in this house." There are many such houses, places of business and private homes, where, if people spoke all their mind, they would say, "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? We don't want God in this house." It is an awful thought, my brothers, that sometimes God takes us at our word. It is written, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Alas for those who find in the hour of sickness, and of sorrow, and of death, that God has left them alone! I wonder how many times that man in the Gospel had attended the services of the synagogue before the day when Jesus healed him. Probably he was a regular worshipper there, but he brought his unclean spirit with him. That is just what so many people do now. They come to the church, or attend their meeting-house, and go through the outward forms of religion, but the unclean spirit goes with them. Satan has shut the door of their heart, and no holy word, no pure thought, no tender feeling of remorse and penitence can enter in. This is why so many of our religious services bear no fruit. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Vers. 29–31. **But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever.**—*Simon's wife*:—The Lord chose as the first of His apostles a married man, and after his election to follow the Lord he did not separate from his wife, but the Lord honours the family by sometimes dwelling in their house. St. Paul implies (1 Cor. ix. 5) that at times, at least, she accompanied St. Peter in his journeys. It appears from a very touching account given by Clement of Alexandria, that they were living together when she was called to martyrdom. "They say, accordingly, that Peter, on seeing his wife led to death, rejoiced on account of her call and conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, 'Remember thou the Lord.' Such was the marriage of the blessed, and their perfect disposition towards those dearest to them." (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Miracles are instructive emblems of Scriptural truth*:—Spiritual truth, to be clearly discerned, often needs to be embodied in the more significant language of action. Christ's miracles are like mirrors—bringing within easy view objects hard to see or quite out of sight. The famous picture of Aurora by Guido adorns the ceiling of one of the palaces of Rome. The discomfort attending the effort to look up, for the length of time required to study its beauty, is so great, that one could not adequately estimate its merit if there were no other way of viewing it. But a mirror, set up in the room so as to reflect the picture, permits the beholder to view it at his leisure with perfect ease. So the great miracle of the renewing of the soul is above our inspection, but in the mirror-miracles of Jesus we have reflections, helping us to the better understanding of that spiritual work. Thus we may gain more good from them, than was imparted to those for whose special benefit they were originally wrought. (*J. H. Currier.*) *The Great Physician's skill*:—We have—I. A SCENE OF DOMESTIC TROUBLE. 1. Trouble is widespread and manifold. 2. Earthly kinships are sources both of joy and grief. 3. Domestic trouble should not detain us from God's house. II. AN APPLICATION FOR RELIEF—"Anon they tell Him of her." 1. It was intercessory prayer. 2. We admire the simplicity of their request. 3. Nor should we overlook their promptness of suit. III. GRACIOUS INTERPOSITION. 1. Here is a nearer approach. Though Christ has come near to us He can come nearer yet. 2. Jesus

Christ does not refrain from personal contact. 3. Christ's gracious touch elevates prostrate humanity—"He lifted her up." IV. GRATEFUL RECOMPENSE—"She ministered unto them." 1. The recipient of Christ's grace exhibits gratitude in a practical form. 2. Unconsciously she performed good service for others. 3. Jesus Christ stoops to accept service from all. V. CHRIST'S HEALING VIRTUE BRINGS TO LIGHT SOCIETY'S MANIFOLD SORES. 1. The life of men is also their light. Jesus revealed to men, and to society, their needs. Probably no one knew that there was a demoniac in the synagogue, until Jesus began to teach. Men hide their deeper needs even from themselves, until the Healer comes. 2. Men's minds naturally reason from the special to the general. 3. We must observe how tolerant Christ is of human prejudices and traditional habits. The inhabitants of Capernaum would not bring their sick until the sun had set, *i.e.*, until the Sabbath had closed. Towards human ignorance He is inexpressibly pitiful. 4. The rewards of faithful service are larger service yet. Jesus had blessed a man, a family; now He is required to bless a city. So shall it be in heaven. Fidelity shall be honoured by more responsible service—"Be thou ruler over ten cities." VI. THE MANIFOLD NEEDS OF MAN DISCLOSE THE HIDDEN GLORY OF CHRIST. VII. CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF HUMANITY, BUT THE TERROR OF DEMONS. "The whole city was gathered to Him at the door." Men are more conscious of bodily evils, than of soul malady. But the goodness that attracts men, repels demons. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *Jesus as Healer*:—Note—I. THE VARIETY OF THE CASES OF HEALING. Fever. Divers diseases, demoniacal possession. Leprosy. Christ had no specialty; His resources were varied; He can touch all classes of human need. II. HOW HEALING WAS EFFECTED BY PERSONAL CONTACT—"Took her by the hand." "Put forth His hand and touched him." III. HOW RAPIDLY THE PATIENTS WERE HEALED—"immediately." Ordinarily healing travels slowly; here as if by lightning. So in matters spiritual. IV. HOW MANIFEST WAS THE REALITY OF THE HEALING. Peter's mother-in-law "ministered." Work of Christ in man always seen in its effects. Saul (Gal. i. 23). (*H. Thorne.*) *A domestic drama*:—I. WHAT THE FRIENDS OF THE SICK WOMAN DID. 1. They told *Jesus* of her. Worth while to be sick to be brought to Him. 2. *Anon* they told Him of her, *i.e.*, at once. 3. *They* told Him of her. Often what is everybody's business is nobody's. 4. They *told* Him of her. Prayer is telling Jesus. II. WHAT JESUS DID. 1. He *came*: at once, but not always at once, for good reasons. 2. He *took her by the hand*. Without ceremony: familiarly. 3. *He lifted her up*. Gospel always raises. 4. *He healed her immediately*. Pardon instantly ours when we grasp Christ's hand. III. WHAT THE RESTORED WOMAN DID. Ministered. We are saved *to* work: by precept and example. (*J. S. Swan.*) *The religious uses of time*:—I. SOCIAL SERVICE (ver. 31). II. PUBLIC MINISTRY (vers. 32–34). III. PRIVATE DEVOTION (ver. 35). (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ's public and private ministry*:—Jesus had a public ministry in the synagogue; a private ministry in the domestic circle. I. THE INDIVIDUAL CASE AS WELL AS THAT OF THE MULTITUDES SHOULD RECEIVE ATTENTION. II. BODILY DISEASES AS WELL AS SPIRITUAL AILMENTS ARE WITHIN THE SPHERE OF OUR SOLICITUDE. III. WE ARE TO PUT OURSELVES IN PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE SUFFERING. We can do little by proxy. IV. WE SHOULD NEVER LEAVE A HOUSE WITHOUT LEAVING A BLESSING BEHIND. V. OUR VISITS, LIKE THE MASTER'S, SHOULD NOT BE MERE VISITS OF COURTESY. (*Ibid.*) *Simon's wife's mother*:—If Peter was the first Pope, he set them an example in this respect which all the popes and all the clergy would have been wise to follow. Nature never injures grace. It is not desirable to be without parents in our youth, or without wife or husband in our mature life. The love of another heart is not only a quiet resting-place, but a great aid to goodness; and he who loves well wife or child will love God better for doing so. (*R. Glover.*) *Simon's wife's mother*:—I. LET US ASCERTAIN WHAT IT TEACHES CONCERNING THIS NOTED APOSTLE, SIMON PETER. "Marriage is honourable in all," "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." II. WHAT DO WE KNOW OF THIS WOMAN WHO WAS CURED? But there is something to be said concerning the wife herself, and this is of special importance. There is reason to believe that she remained a most faithful companion and fellow-worker with Peter, whom Paul always calls "Cephas," down to the end of her life. For in one of Paul's epistles an allusion is made to her: he says, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" This was written more than twenty years after Christ's resurrection, when Peter was an old man. As a comment upon the verse, Clement of Alexandria adds: "Peter and Philip had children, and both took about their wives, in order that they might act as their assistants in ministering to women at

their own homes; by their means the doctrine of the Lord penetrated without scandal into the privacy of the women's apartments." III. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS APOSTLE'S FAMILY? There is a beautiful little legend, altogether uninspired, which is found in the history of sacred and legendary art; there is nothing to prevent its being true, and it is certainly worth telling. The story relates that Peter had a lovely daughter, born in lawful wedlock, who accompanied him in his journey from the East. At Rome she fell sick of a grievous infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs. One of Simon's disciples sitting at meat with him said: "Master, how is it that thou, who healest the infirmities of others, dost not heal thy daughter Petronilla?" "It is good for her to remain sick," replied her father, perhaps thinking of the profitable discipline which the pain might bring to her. But that they all might see the power that was in the word of God, he commanded her to get up and serve them at table—which she did. Then afterwards, praying fervently, the maiden was permanently healed. IV. It is refreshing to turn from the mere poetry of a legend to THE SERENE MAJESTY OF HISTORY. And now there is a lesson in almost every particular. 1. Was this woman sick of a great fever? Then we see how Christ is the only help, but always the sure help, in desperate cases. He is able to save bodies and souls "to the uttermost." 2. Did the disciples go and tell Jesus of her? Then we may note the advantage of faith in the Divine and sovereign Saviour. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." 3. Are we told that those home-friends besought the Lord in her behalf? Then we learn how necessary is fervent prayer. "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel." 4. Did our Saviour touch this woman's hand, and touch it only, for her cure? Then observe how delicate is the ministration of Divine grace in the gospel, and let us be gentle with souls. 5. Was it the interposition of other people which availed to bring this sick creature to health? Then how fine is the office of human means and instruments with God. There is really a glorious share in the work of saving souls which He permits. 6. Do we notice that this woman was also lifted up by Jesus? The miracle is a parable; God never lays a commandment on any soul which He does not aid that soul in performing for Him. 7. Did the cured woman rise at once to begin her grateful service? It is by that we know her healing was perfectly done. The good Lord never leaves body or soul half-delivered from ill. 8. Was Simon's wife's mother satisfied to minister to Jesus Christ right off and right there? Then think how much valuable time some impatient people waste in trying to find a field of work for Christ, when most likely the best task lies nearest at hand. This woman entered "the ministry" just as truly as Simon Peter did: he preached, and she served; that was ministry. 9. Were these wonderful privileges misused and perverted by Capernaum? Then let all the world know and remember that it is pre-eminently a dangerous thing to do, this disregard of the merciful manifestations of the Divine presence among men. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Peter's mother-in-law cured:*—I. THE SUFFERER. II. HER COMPLAINT. III. HER CURE. 1. That there was no parade. 2. There was no delay. 3. There was no ground for doubting its reality. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The best house visitation:*—I. How grace came to Peter's house. II. What it did in Peter's house. III. How it flowed forth from Peter's house. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Wherever Christ comes, He comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for His entertainment. (*M. Henry.*) *Domestic affliction healed by Christ:*—I. THE SCENE of this domestic affliction. 1. The home of a disciple. 2. The house visited by Christ. II. THE HEALING of this domestic affliction. I. It was done tenderly. 2. It was done immediately. 3. It was done easily. 4. It was done effectually. III. The healing was followed by MINISTRATION. 1. It was prompted by the glad impulse of her new strength. 2. It was obligated by a remembrance of her Benefactor. 3. It was required by her relatives. 4. It was not avoided by unreal excuses. Lessons: 1. Cultivate in your homes the feeling of discipleship toward Christ. 2. Seek Christ as a constant Visitor to your home. 3. Tell Christ of all your domestic sorrows. 4. Let His healing touch be immediately followed by your active ministration. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Mutual benefits:*—The afflicted should receive sympathy and succour, and return kindness and help. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *Instant healing from Christ:*—By His touch He restored her immediately to health and strength. This no human physician could have done. After a fever a long convalescence ensues before health returns. But in the case of Christ's miracles, it was with diseases as with the sea. After a storm there is a swell, before the sea sinks into a calm. But Christ reduced the fury of the sea by a word to perfect calm, as He did the rage of the fever to

perfect health. She arose and was ministering to Him, thus proving the cure and her own love to its Author. (*Bishop Chris. Wordsworth.*) *The ministry of women*:—Became a servant to them. Her work was common women's work which had simply to do with the physical wants of Christ and His disciples. There are a few women who are called by God to work publicly for Him: but for the most part the ministry of women lies in another direction. We are not to be so much like Miriam and Deborah as like Ruth and Hannah. If we cannot preach we can work for the poor as Dorcas did; we may lend our rooms for Bible readings and prayer meetings, as did Mary the mother of Mark; and like the elect lady we may bring up our children to work in the truth. We can minister to the disciples who are in our house; to ignorant servants; to the sick, and old, and lonely; to those who have few friends and whom other workers overlook. Whatever we are we may do something for Christ. Some can speak for Him, more can sing for Him, and more still can smile for Him. Willing hands will not remain long idle if wedded to thoughtful hearts and observant eyes. (*Marianne Farningham.*)

Vers. 32–34. **And at even when the sun did set.**—*In ministering to the sick, we follow and find Christ*:—I. Describe the scene at Capernaum to which text alludes. Presence of Christ among sick. Wonderful change His visit wrought. What happy hearts and homes; what prayers and praises; what jubilant psalms. II. If we be true Christians, we believe we shall see that same Jesus coming forth to reward those who have done works of mercy in His name. Such works are the only proof of our possessing that charity which is the development and excellence of faith and hope. Such works are within the reach of all. III. Of such works none can be more merciful than the visitation of the sick. Let us all do our best to prevent disease. Better to keep sickness away than to repair its ravages. IV. Help those who help themselves, by providing against the time of sickness—life assurance societies, benefit clubs, &c. V. And those who cannot help themselves. The parish doctor should have less work and more pay. VI. Do we honour the physician? VII. And those who nurse and wait upon the sick? VIII. Do we ourselves visit the sick? So finding Jesus, so taught to suffer and to die. IX. Appeal in His name and in His words. (*Canon S. R. Hole, M.A.*) *Hospital healing*:—When one of the greatest of God's heroes, one of the most illustrious saints of Christendom, made an oration—preached, as we should say, a funeral sermon—concerning a brother, holy and heroic, whose soul was in Paradise—when Gregory of Nazianzum would show unto the people how, though Basil rested from his labours, his works did follow, and he being dead yet spoke—he pointed towards the hospital which Basil had built, and said, "Go forth a little out of the city, and see the new city, his treasure of godliness, the storehouse of alms which he collected; see the place where disease is relieved by charity and by skill, where the poor leper finds at last a home! It was Basil who persuaded men to care for others; it was Basil who taught them thus to honour Christ." (*Ibid.*) *Power to heal*:—I. Its DESIGN twofold. 1. To do good. 2. To prove the Messiahship of Jesus (John xiv. 11). II. Its EFFECT twofold. 1. It awakened general interest in Him. 2. It led many to believe on Him. III. Its ALL-COMPREHENSIVENESS. 1. Over material nature—*e.g.*, walking on the water, curing diseases, &c. 2. Over spiritual nature—*e.g.*, expelling demons, &c. IV. Its LESSONS for us. We should learn from the miracle-working power of Jesus (1) His real and personal interest in us. (2) That nothing can baffle His skill or resist His power if we put our case in His hands. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Christ the restorer of humanity*:—If we may reverently compare this scene with its modern analogies, it bears less a resemblance to anything that occurs in the life of a clergyman, than to the occupation of a physician to a hospital on the day of his seeing his out-patients. There is, indeed, all the difference in the world between the best professional advice and the summary cure such as was our Lord's. But we are, for the moment, looking at the outward aspects of the scene; and it shows very vividly how largely Christ's attention was directed to the well-being of the bodily frame of man. Now it would be a great mistake to suppose that this feature of our Saviour's ministry was accidental or inevitable. Nothing in His work was accidental: all was deliberate, all had an object. Nothing in His work was inevitable, except so far as it was freely dictated by His wisdom and His mercy. To suppose that this union in Him of Prophet and Physician was determined by the necessity of some rude civilization, such as that of certain tribes in Central Africa and elsewhere, or certain periods and places in mediæval Europe when knowledge was scanty, when it was easy and needful for a single person at

each social centre to master all that was known on two or three great subjects—this is to make a supposition which does not apply to Palestine at the time of our Lord's appearance. The later prophets were prophets and nothing more—neither legislators, nor statesmen, nor physicians. In John the Baptist we see no traces of the restorative power exerted on some rare occasions by Elijah and Elisha; and when our Lord appeared, dispensing on every side cures for bodily disease, the sight was just as novel to His contemporaries as it was welcome. Nor are His healing works to be accounted for by saying that they were only designed to draw attention to His message, by certificating His authority to deliver it; or by saying that they were only symbols of a higher work which He had more at heart in its many and varying aspects—the work of healing the diseases of the human soul. True it is that His healing activity had this double value: it was evidence of His authority as a Divine Teacher; it was a picture in detail, addressed to sense, of what, as the Restorer of our race, He meant to do in regions altogether beyond the sphere of sense. But these aspects of His care for the human body were not, I repeat, primary; they were strictly incidental. We may infer with reverence and with certainty that His first object was to show Himself as the Deliverer and Restorer of human nature as a whole: not of the reason and conscience merely without the imagination and the affections—not of the spiritual side of men's nature, without the bodily; and, therefore, He was not merely Teacher, but also Physician, and therefore and thus He has shed upon the medical profession to the end of time a radiance and a consecration which is ultimately due to the conditions of that redemptive work, to achieve which He came down from heaven teaching and healing. (*Canon Liddon.*) *A great hospital Sunday near a great city*:—I. This is the story of a WONDERFUL SABBATH—a true Sunday—"One of the days of the Son of Man." II. What a picture it gives us of HIS POWER AS THE HEALER. And do not these healing powers exerted by Christ declare that there is a spiritual order in the universe outside of the natural order, and beneath whose powers all the natural disorder will be at last reduced to subjection. These miracles are illustrations of the character and intention of God loving us. III. THIS IS THE DOCTRINE; BUT WHAT IS ANY DOCTRINE WITHOUT AN APPLICATION? What is the use of faith in Christ without appropriation? Jesus has not come into the world to condemn, but to heal and save it. His love is universal. Fly to the healing of God in Jesus Christ. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The house of mercy*:—Once it was given to me to see the soul of man as a poor creature out at night in a wild storm and hurricane, flying through the tempest over a wild moor houseless; the wild lightnings blazed across the heath, and revealed one house, and thither fled the soul. "Who lives here?" "Justice." "Oh, Justice, let me in, for the storm is very dreadful." But Justice said, "Nay, I cannot shelter thee, for I kindled the lightnings and the hurricanes from whence you are flying." And I saw the poor spirit hastening over the plain, and the storm-flash lit up another house, and thither fled the soul. "Who lives here?" "Truth." "Oh, Truth, shelter me." "Nay," said the white-robed woman, Truth's handmaid, "Hast thou loved Truth so much and been so faithful to her that thou canst fly to her for shelter? Not so; there is no shelter here." And away in weariness sped the soul through that wild night. Still through the gleams of the blue heavens looked out a third house through the drenching storm. "And who lives here?" said the lost soul. "Peace." "Oh, peace, let me in!" "Nay, nay; none enter the house of Peace but those whose hearts are Peace." And then near to the house of Peace rose another house, white and beautiful through the livid light. "Who lives here?" "Mercy. Fly thither, poor soul. I have been sitting up for thee, and this house was built for thy shelter and thy home." I read and hear such lessons as I watch Christ moving through the sick multitude that Sabbath evening in that old city. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's miracles*:—These may be divided into distinct classes. I. Miracles of RESTORATION. Raising up the afflicted from a helpless, incapable state, to a condition of self-help and usefulness. This Christ's grace is continually doing. Sin works evil results on man's nature similar to, and worse than, those wrought by fever, paralysis, or impotency, making men vicious, shiftless, indolent, useless. The gospel brings back our fallen nature to its proper dignity and worth. II. Miracles DELIVERING FROM EVIL SPIRITS. Do we not sometimes *feel*, even the best of us, as demoniacs *act*? The power of Christ can cure us. III. Miracles of CLEANSING. Sin defiles the purity of the soul, and, so far as this defilement is felt and perceived, it separates the sinner from others. He feels that a gulf divides him from the pure and good; his conscience often drives him into voluntary solitude; and if his sin is particularly gross and shameful, the

sentiment of society sends him into banishment. The seeds of evil which produce this defilement are hid in every soul. They are the source of evil thoughts and base suggestions which we are glad are not visible to all. Who could bare to expose his secret thoughts to the gaze of the world? Who has not need to pray, "Make and keep me pure within?" Christ's grace is able to do this. He cleanses from the foulest leprosy of sin. (*A. H. Currier.*) *There is in man something akin to the diabolical*:—He is subject to violent and wasting passions, often dominated by a fierce and ungovernable temper; exhibits, upon slight provocation, anger, impatience, hatred, revenge; is ill-natured, moody, capricious, sullen; ready at times to take up arms against all the world, and shunned and detested in turn for his spirit of malicious mischief. We have all seen pronounced examples of this sort—probably have suffered from their malice and ill-temper. They may be persons of great energy and ability. They are not indolent or shiftless. They know how to make money, and how to use it for their own advantage. They are keen, shrewd, and successful in business. Sometimes they bestow magnificent gifts—exhibit strange freaks of generosity; but of true kindness and amiability, or the disposition to make others happy, they have but little. They seem, in short, to be possessed by a devil. The fault may be often due to inherited qualities, or to neglect of early training. They were not disciplined to self-control. One of the princes of the old French monarchy manifested in childhood and youth an unhappy disposition of this kind. But he was placed under the care of a wise and pious teacher, who laboured so successfully to correct his violent temper, that he became one of the most amiable of men. A painstaking Christian mother often amends the faults of nature. (*Ibid.*) *Sun-set*:—1. The natural sun set, but the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. Evening and morning Christ was at work. 2. Men come to Christ according to the urgency of their want. Here it was physical. It is well if men can feel their need of Christ at any point. 3. When men begin with their lower wants they should ascend to the higher. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The attraction of Jesus*:—Leaving the Paris exhibition as the sun went down, I noted an electric light that, revolving round and round, shot its ethereal pencilled rays far across the sky, touching with a momentary radiance the vegetation or the buildings across which they passed; and looking up I noted innumerable sparks wavering, vibrating in the illumination. For a moment I could not think what this meant, for there is scarcely any scintillation, and certainly no sparks, thrown off from the electric light. Then in an instant it occurred to me that these bright lights were myriads of insects attracted from the dark ocean of air around, and which, protected from the burning luminary by the strong glass, were safely rejoicing in the ecstasy of those beams. So here, around the beams of spiritual light and love that radiate from the Saviour, the innumerable hosts of suffering, struggling men and women of that day come within the field of our vision. (*J. Allanson Picton, M.A.*) *Diverse elements in humanity dealt with by Christianity*:—A wild, strange flame rages in human nature, that in combinations of great feeling and war and woe, is surpassed by no tragedy or epic, nor by all tragedies and epics together. In the soul's secret chambers there are Fausts more subtle than Faust, Hamlets more mysterious than Hamlet, Lears more distracted and desolate than Lear; wills that do what they allow not, and what they would not, do; wars in the members; bodies of death to be carried, as in Paul; wild horses of the mind, governed by no rein, as in Plato; subtleties of cunning, plausibilities of seeming virtues, memories writ in letters of fire, great thoughts heaving under the brimstone marl of revenges; pains of wrong, and of sympathy with suffering wrong; aspirations that have lost courage; hates, loves, beautiful dreams and tears; all these acting at cross purposes, and representing the broken order of the mind. If some qualified teacher by many years of study could worm out a thoroughly perceptive interpretation of sin, or lecture on the working or pathology of mind under evil, he would offer a contribution to the true success of Christian preaching, greater than, perhaps, any human teacher has ever yet contributed. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Miracles at Capernaum*:—I. CHRIST HEALING. "And at even, when the sun did set," &c. 1. The season was interesting. It was on a Sabbath evening. 2. The ailments of the sufferers were various. 3. The excitement produced was great. 4. The number of those who were cured was considerable. II. CHRIST PRAYING. 1. When He prayed. 2. Where He prayed. III. CHRIST PREACHING. 1. The importance He attached to it—"For therefore came I forth." 2. The places in which He exercised His ministry—"Throughout all Galilee." 3. The encouraging indications which appeared—"All men seek for Thee." (*Expository Outlines.*)

Ver. 35. **And in the morning, rising up a great while before day.**—*If we would pray well, we must pray early*:—Christians have often to choose between the indulgence of a little more sleep and the time of prayer cut short, and scant and hurried devotion, or between a little self-denial in sleep and the freshest and best hours of the day given to God, and God blessing the self-denial by answering the prayer. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Convenience made for private prayer*:—Christ had no conveniences for securing quiet, but He made them. The hill-top was His chamber, and darkness His bolted door. He had no time for prayer, but He made time, rising "a great while before day." Say not you have no time or secret place for prayer. Where there is a will there is a way to get both these things. (*R. Glover.*) *Jesus in secret prayer*:—I. THE BEARING OF THIS FACT ON HIMSELF. 1. It proves the reality of His human nature. 2. It proves that as man He was subject to the same limitations and moral conditions as we are. 3. It proves that even sinless beings, when tried, need Divine help. II. THE BEARING OF THIS FACT ON US. 1. If Jesus prayed, it is neither unscientific nor unbecoming in us to pray. 2. If Jesus prayed, no disciple can become so strong or holy as to be beyond the need of praying. 3. Prayer has positive power with God, and is more than a subjective influence. 4. If Jesus prayed, all ought and need to pray. 5. Having the name of Jesus to plead, every one may be assured of being heard and answered. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Christ praying*:—What an example of swift, unselfish activity. The Saviour cannot forego prayer, it is too important and necessary; but He will not let it interfere with His activity in behalf of others. Keep this in mind when tempted to neglect prayer because time so much taken up with work. I. ONLY BY COMBINING PRAYER AND WORK WILL WORK BE PREVENTED FROM INJURING US. 1. Even spiritual work may not always be beneficial; for it may draw us away from the cultivation of our own personal religious life; or foster within us the spirit of self-elation; or beget within us a feeling of despondency. 2. Secular work, it is easy to see, is likely to affect us injuriously. The wear and tear of the spirit, in the midst of the rush and roar of the world's business for six days in the week, will seriously unfit a man for spiritual exercises on the seventh. Transition from one order of occupation to the other will require an effort he will be too languid to put forth. No remedy but frequent intercourse with God in the midst of toil. II. ONLY THUS WILL WORK BRING TRUE BLESSING. Prayer brings the Divine blessing down. Even Christ sought it thus. Do all work for God, and seek to have God with you in it all. III. ONLY THUS WILL WORK BECOME A DELIGHT TO US. This is an important consideration, since with most of us life is filled with work. Would we not have it a refreshment rather than a burden? The most cheerful, patient, and heroic toilers are those who are most constant in prayer. Only so can we do our work as it ought to be done, and get from it all the good it is intended to yield. (*B. Wilkinson.*) *True prayer difficult*:—Christ was careful to use the best outward helps and furtherances to prayer, such as the opportunity of the morning and the privacy of the place. Whence we may gather, that to pray aright is a difficult work, and not easy to perform. If it were an easy matter, what need for such helps? Christ, indeed, had no need of such helps for Himself: yet He used them for our instruction, to show us what need we have of them, and how hard a thing it is to pray well. 1. We have no ability of ourselves by nature to perform this duty (Rom. viii. 26). 2. There are many things to hinder us in the duty; especially Satan labouring continually to stir up hindrances and disturbances; also our own corrupt hearts, which are apt to be taken up at times of prayer with swarms of idle and wandering thoughts. 3. It is a duty of great excellence and profit, much and often commended in Scripture: no wonder, therefore, if it be difficult, for so are all excellent and precious duties. 4. Prayer is a holy conference with God; and it is hard to speak to God as we ought. Learn from all this the ignorance of those who think it so easy a matter to pray. Because they think it easy they go about it without preparation, without watchfulness over their hearts, and without using any helps to further them in the duty; and the consequence is that they pray in a very slight, perfunctory manner. If they repeat the bare words of the Lord's Prayer, or some other prayer (though without all understanding and feeling), they think this is enough. Indeed, this is an easy kind of praying, or rather saying of a prayer; for it is not rightly called praying, when only the words of a prayer are rehearsed. Such as know what it is to pray aright acknowledge it to be a difficult work. Let us be more diligent and frequent in the exercise of it, that it may become more easy to us. (*G. Petter.*) *Early morning communion with God*:—Colonel Gardiner used constantly to rise at four in the morning, and to spend his time till

six in the secret exercises of the closet, reading, meditation, and prayer; in which last he acquired such a fervency of spirit as, says his biographer, "I believe few men living ever attained. This certainly very much contributed to strengthen that firm faith in God, and reverent, animating sense of His presence, for which He was so eminently remarkable, and which carried him through the trials and services of life with such steadiness and with such activity; for he indeed endured and acted as if always seeing Him who is invisible. If at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionally sooner; so that, when a journey or a march has required him to be on horseback by four, he would be at his devotions by two." *The prayers of Christ*:—Eighteen times our Lord's own prayers are alluded to or quoted; but those passages give us only four aspects of His prayers. I. HIS HABIT of prayer. In five passages (Mark i. 35; Luke vi. 12, v. 16; Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46) we have our Lord withdrawing for prolonged private prayer; at a time when involved in the whirl of public work; before appointing His apostles and establishing His kingdom. In a sixth passage (Luke xi. 1) this habit so impressed the disciples that they asked Him to teach them how to pray. II. HIS THANKFULNESS in prayer. In five more passages, three (Matt. xi. 25; John xi. 41; Luke x. 21) quote an ejaculation of gratitude. The others (Luke iii. 21, ix. 28) are on the occasions of His baptism and transfiguration; the one initiating Him into His mission of teaching, the other into His mission of suffering. III. HIS INTERCESSION in prayer. 1. For His friends (Luke xxii. 32). 2. For His enemies (Luke xxiii. 34). 3. For Himself and His disciples as one with Him (John xvii.) IV. His OBEDIENCE in prayer (Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xv. 34; Luke xxii. 42; John xii. 27). We may draw from these prayers—1. An argument in favour of our Lord's divinity. There is no confession of sin. He prays for, never with, His disciples. 2. We may see an example for ourselves in (1) His belief in the habit of prayer; (2) the reverent limit He assigned to prayer—"Not My will," &c.; (3) His practice of private superadded to public prayer; (4) His joyful continuance in prayer. (*Prof. A. S. Farrar.*) *Prayer*:—I. LONELY. II. PREPARATORY. III. SELF-DENYING. IV. LEISURELY. V. LINGERING. VI. BLISSFUL. (*W. H. Jellie.*) *Secret prayer*:—I. That the Saviour, though perfectly holy, regarded the duty of secret prayer as of great importance. II. That He sought a solitary place for it—far away from the world, and even His disciples. III. That it was early in the morning—the first thing after rising—always the *best* time, and a time when it should not be omitted. IV. If Jesus prayed, how much more important is it for us. If *He* did it in the morning, how much more important is it for *us*, before the world gets possession of our thoughts; before Satan fills us with unholy feelings; when we rise fresh from beds of repose, and while the world around us is still! David thus prayed (Psa. v. 3). He that wishes to enjoy religion will seek a place of secret prayer in the morning. If that is omitted all will go wrong—our piety will wither, the world will fill our thoughts, temptations will be strong, and through the day we shall find it impossible to raise our feelings to a state of proper devotion. The religious enjoyment through the day will be according to the state of the heart in the morning; and can, therefore, be measured by our faithfulness in early, secret prayer. How different the conduct of the Saviour from those who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep! He knew the value of the morning hours, &c. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The devotions of Christ*:—I. THE FACT OF HIS PRAYING. It is a wonderful fact that one like Him should pray at all. But it may be explained. 1. He prayed as a Man. 2. He prayed as Mediator. 3. He prayed as an Example. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS PRAYING. 1. Early. "His morning smiles bless all the day." 2. Frequent. 3. Long. Much of the heart may be thrown into a short prayer. (*Various.*) *The prayers of Jesus*:—I. THE MYSTERY OF THE PRAYERS OF JESUS. If Jesus is God, how could He pray to God? How were there any needs in His nature on behalf of which He could pray? A partial answer is found in the truth that all prayers do not spring from a sense of need. The highest form of prayer is conversation with God—the familiar talk of a child with his Father. Augustine's "Confessions" is an example of this. But the only adequate explanation is Christ's humanity; He was wholly man. Human nature in Him was a tender thing, and had to fall back on the strength of prayer. II. HIS HABITS OF PRAYER. He went into the solitudes of nature. There is a solitude of time as well as of space. It might be an enriching discovery to find out the solitudes in our neighbourhood: silent, soothing influence of nature. Christ prayed in company as well as in secret. III. THE OCCASIONS ON WHICH HE PRAYED. 1. He prayed before taking an important step in life, as when He chose which men to be with Him. 2. He prayed when His life was specially

busy; when He could not find time to eat He found time to pray. We make that an excuse for not praying. Christ made it a *reason* for praying. 3. He prayed before entering temptation. 4. He died praying. IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYERS. 1. The Transfiguration was an answer to prayer—"As He prayed," &c. 2. His baptism was an answer to prayer. Are you a man of prayer? (*J. Stalker, M.A.*) *Jesus rising early for secret prayer:*—I. How diligent the Saviour was in the improvement of His time. II. That no crowd of company or calls of business could divert Jesus from His daily, stated devotions. III. What care our Lord took to find a place of solitude for His prayers, that He might neither meet with disturbance, nor seem ostentatious. 1. One reason why we should retire to a secret place for solitary prayer is, that we may avoid the appearance of ostentation. 2. That we may be undisturbed. 3. That our minds may enjoy greater freedom in communion with God. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *Jesus in prayer:*—I. As simple INTERCOURSE WITH GOD. II. View it in relation to His WORK. So do we need constant prayer in the midst of our work. 1. For calm and holy review. 2. For direction—asking wisdom of God, just as a mariner consults his compass. 3. For qualifications—mental, moral, and even physical. 4. For success. God giveth the increase. 5. For freedom from perverting influences. Our motives are apt to get entangled and our aims confused. In prosperity we are in danger of waxing egotistic, vain, and proud. See it in many a successful business man, and in many a popular minister. In adversity we are tempted to despond. (*The Congregational Pulpit.*) *Secret devotion:*—I. TO EXPLAIN AN EXERCISE OF SECRET DEVOTION. It is little we know of the private life of Christ. In silence there is much instruction. He was often in private retirement (Luke vi. 12; Luke xxi. 37; Luke xxii. 39; John vi. 15). 1. The occasion on which our Lord betakes Himself to this exercise of secret devotion. You observe the connection—after a day of laborious occupation in the public exercises of religion, He sought an opportunity for secret devotion: the one no excuse for the neglect of the other. In the public exercises of religion we most need the private exercises of devotion. There are reasons for this. It is in private that the impressions of the public ordinances must be maintained on the mind. It prevents relapse. Besides, this is a time of peculiar temptation. If a Christian in his public exercises had attained to high enjoyment, every stratagem will be used by Satan to rob him of his treasure. Besides, it is necessary to follow our public services with secret exercises, that we may bring the former to the test. In public we are apt to be excited, but feelings that are excited may be deceitful; and every wise man will test these feelings in the presence of God alone. 2. The next circumstance in this exercise that attracts our attention is the time that our Lord was pleased to choose for it—"In the morning." His self-denial. The morning is favourable to devotion, our minds are not yet disturbed by the cares of the day. What anxiety to give God the best of His services. 3. The place He sought for it. The works of the Divine hand are aids to devotion. 4. The exercise itself—"He prayed." Christ as man needed to pray. We can conceive of Adam in innocence praying; but our Lord needed prayer, as being the subject of *sinless* infirmity; but above all as Mediator. Suggest a few aids to secret devotion—(1) Self-examination; (2) meditation; (3) a determination of future obedience. Christ came out of His solitude with purposes to do the will of His heavenly Father. II. I AM TO ENFORCE THE DUTY OF SECRET DEVOTION BY A CONSIDERATION OF ITS BENEFITS. 1. It has a tendency to produce godliness. Because it brings us into contact with God. It produces simplicity, and godly sincerity, and gentleness. 2. Secret devotion is most favourable to the comfort of the mind. Devotion soothes the mind; it elevates the mind. It imparts joy in religion. 3. Secret devotion is most favourable to usefulnsss. The secret of usefulness among men is a spirit of piety toward God. (*J. Morgan.*) *Secret prayer aids social usefulness:*—In the very manner in which he speaks to every one he meets, in the very way he discharges every duty to which he is called, his spirit is as it ought to be, and therefore the man is walking up and down in society, scattering blessings "on the right hand and on the left." On the other hand, suppose him to have neglected the exercises of secret devotion, he comes out into society with a ruffled temper, with a dissatisfied spirit, finding fault with every body, with every thing, dissatisfied with all, because dissatisfied with himself, neglecting opportunities, doing nothing as it ought to be done, losing the opportunity that God in His providence gives him. Again, look at the spirit in which such a man conducts himself towards others. The spirit of the man of God is a spirit of humility. Think of the language of the 126th Psalm, "He that goeth

forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him"—the man that goes forth in genuine humility and true modesty, and attempts his work, not in the spirit of intrusion or interference, but simply in the strength of God, is the man who in the end will be successful. It is not only the spirit which he cherishes towards man, but that which he cherishes towards God, that insures success. Towards man, his spirit is modest and humble, towards God it is the spirit of dependence. And then you observe in him great steadfastness. He has been with God in the morning in the exercise of secret devotion, and therefore though he may meet with difficulty during the day, he is not to be stumbled by it; it may retard him, it may distress him, but he knows too well what he was to expect, to be overcome; he acts on that principle assured of its justice, "therefore be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (*Ibid.*) *Early risers*:—Dr. Doddridge tells us that to his habit of early rising the world is indebted for nearly the whole of his valuable works. The well-known Bishop Burnett was an habitual early riser, for when at college his father aroused him to his studies every morning at four o'clock; and he continued the practice during the remainder of his life. Sir Thomas More also made it his invariable practice to rise always at four, and if we turn our attention to royalty, we have, among others, the example of Peter the Great, who, whether at work in the docks at London as a ship carpenter, or at the anvil as a blacksmith, or on the throne of Russia, always rose before daylight. *Finding a place to pray*:—Dr. Milne, afterwards the famous missionary in China, when a youth, after leaving home, was situated in an ungodly family. So he used to retire to a sheepcot, where the sheep were kept in winter, and there, surrounded by the sheep, he knelt on a piece of turf which he kept and carried with him for the purpose, spending many an hour there, even in the cold of winter, in sweet communion with his God. (*Anon.*) *Rising early*:—It is a little difficult, especially when the mornings are dark and cold, to get up sufficiently early to have profitable communion with God. Ask God for getting-up grace. A friend told us a few days since that she traced much failure in her religious life to late rising, but God had given her victory over the old habit of lying in bed until the last minute. If Jesus Christ found it necessary to rise "a great while before day," and depart "into a solitary place" to pray, we have need to be with God before the work of the day begins. Ward Beecher says: "Let the day have a blessed baptism by giving your first waking thoughts to God. The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day." *Private devotion*:—I. That private prayer SHOULD BE ENJOYED IN THE EARLY MORNING. 1. Because it insures time for the performance of prayer. 2. Because it is the time when the soul is most free from care and anxiety. 3. Because the world is silent—favourable to the voice of prayer. 4. Because it is favourable to unostentation. 5. Because it is a good husbanding of time. II. That private prayer should be PERFORMED BY THE BUSIEST LIFE. 1. The neglect of private devotion by a busy life is injudicious. 2. The neglect of private devotion by a busy life is inexcusable. III. Private prayer SHOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED BY POPULARITY. IV. Private prayer will AID AND INSPIRE IN THE CONTINUED MINISTRY OF LIFE. "And He said unto them, Let us go unto the next towns, that I may preach there also" (ver. 38). 1. Thus private prayer stimulates to continued activity in life. 2. Private prayer enables a man to awaken the moral activity of others. V. Private prayer LEADS TO A HIGH APPRECIATION OF THE TRUE MISSION OF LIFE. Lessons: 1. That early morning is a good time for prayer. 2. That solitude is favourable to devotion. 3. That the best men need private prayer. 4. That the most busy men have no excuse for the neglect of private devotion. 5. That secret prayer is the strength of all moral life and activity. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Early morning prayer*:—The most orient pearls are generated of the morning dew. Abraham and Job both rose early to offer sacrifice. The Persian magi sang hymns to their gods at break of day, and worshipped the rising sun. (*Trapp.*) *The early morning a friend to the graces*:—It has been said, The morning is a friend to the muses, and it is no less so to the graces. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 36–39. **And when they had found Him.**—*The desire of humanity for Christ*:—While rejoicing in Divine solitude, tho loneliness in which He left the suffering, toiling people was indescribably painful to them. A man born blind does not realize his deprivation, but if there is given him a brief vision of daylight how unutterable his sense of loss when it fades away again. So these people felt them-

selves deprived of the fresh interest and hopes with which they had been inspired when they lost the society and communion of Jesus. But the question was asked by all lips: "Where is He?" And most true is it to-day—be man's opinions what they may—there is no more universal experience of human kind, whether gentle or simple, scientific or ignorant, barbarian or bond or free, than the hunger for that fulness of life which is in Christ Jesus. (*J. A. Picton, M.A.*) *An unconscious prophecy*:—What the disciples said in their wondering delight, shall one day be literally true—all men will be in search of the Saviour of the world. In the first instance the Saviour sought all men, and in the second all men will seek the Saviour. "We love Him because He first loved us." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ the centre of union for all men*:—"All men seek for Thee." Yes, they are tired of their sectarian wranglings; they are wearied out with their ineffectual metaphysical analysis; they are sick of the poor results yielded up by material research; they have lost confidence in their own self-will; they prize no longer their self-conceit; they long to be brothers in the embrace of one common Father, and none can bring them together but Christ. "All men seek for thee." Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (*J. A. Picton, M.A.*) *The reason for Christ's apparently unreasonable departures*:—He had spoken to the people because He desired them to know; and again, He will retire from them, and have His heart set on their well-being as He retires. When you and I have heard the sermon, what remains for us to do? Is it to hear more, or to think about what we have heard? You can learn by hearing, but you can be confused by hearing too much; one sermon may obliterate the effect of the other. So Christ left the people to whom He had been so acceptable, that in the quietude of their homes they might think of that which they had both heard and seen. (*J. Ogmore Davies.*) *Christian evangelization*:—I. That this Christian evangelization was preceded by private devotion. II. That this Christian evangelization was accompanied by an earnest preaching of the truth. III. That this Christian evangelization made use of the already existing agencies of the Church. IV. That this Christian evangelization was just in its conception of work, in that it cast the devil out of men. Lessons: 1. That evangelistic work requires and is worthy of the best talent that can be obtained. 2. That evangelistic work is ennobling to those who engage in it, as well as to those who are contemplated by it. 3. That evangelistic work has done much to cast the devil out of the masses of our large towns. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christ, a home missionary*:—From these words I commend to your notice—I. THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN YOUR OWN LABOURS, AND THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF YOUR LORD AND SAVIOUR, AS PERFORMED IN THE FIELD OF HOME MISSIONS. 1. In the scene of your labours. The title of missionary denotes one sent forth, and especially belongs to one whose errand is to propagate religion. Christ was sent from God—"The great Apostle of our profession" (Heb. iii. 1). To bring the glad message to our earth from the far heavens, He emptied Himself of glory, &c. It was to an alien race that He ministered. His personal ministry was far more limited and national in its character than was His message. Whatever His intent, in narrowing the field of His toils as a preacher, the fact is evident that to the land of Canaan, or the bounds of His native country, His ministerial labours were confined, and Jesus Christ, while upon earth, was a Home Missionary. Now a work which occupied the greatest of preachers can never be unimportant, &c. 2. In the commission under which He acted, the message He bore, the manner in which He published it, and the mode in which His labours were sustained. II. THE CONSEQUENT DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO CONTINUE AND ABOUND IN THE LIKE GOOD WORK. Whether we look to the advantages which our nation presents for such labour, or to its peculiar necessities; to our duty as Christians, or our interests as men loving their country; to the general obligations of the Church, or our own personal and special privileges and responsibilities—on every hand are teeming incitements to energy and liberality, to perseverance and courageous devotedness. (*W. R. Williamson, D.D.*)

Vers. 40–45. **And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him.**—*The cured leper still rebellious*:—I. HIS DISEASE. II. HIS APPLICATION. 1. We have here an intelligent appreciation of Christ as the Healer. 2. We have an instance of genuine earnestness. 3. We see here the marks of true humility. 4. A sample of prayer for a special gift. 5. But here is illustrated a very unworthy conception of Christ's love. III. HIS CURE—"Jesus spake and it was done." 1. His method bears proof of Divinity—"I will, be thou clean." 2. The cure was instantaneous. 3. It was complete. 4. The cure must have been welcome. IV. HIS OBLIGATION. 1. That

obligation covered the whole area of his life. 2. The healer always becomes the sovereign. He who commanded the disease, commanded the patient also. 3. The requirement of Christ was founded in solid reason. 4. The obligation involved public acknowledgment and substantial gift. V. HIS CONTUMACY. 1. Complete redemption is not obtained until the will is subdued. 2. This man's contumacy was thoughtless. 3. This contumacy was fraught with disastrous effects. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *The approach of a needy life to Christ:*—I. THE DEEP NEED OF THIS MAN'S LIFE—"And there came a leper unto Him." 1. It was a need that filled the life of this man with intense misery. 2. It was a need from which no human remedy could give relief. 3. It was a need that brought him into immediate contact with Christ. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS NEEDY LIFE APPROACHED THE SAVIOUR. 1. His appeal to Christ was characterized by a truthful apprehension of his need. 2. His appeal to Christ was characterized by an acknowledgment of the Divine sovereignty. 3. His appeal to Christ was characterized by great earnestness. 4. His appeal to Christ was characterized by deep humility. 5. His appeal to Christ was characterized by simple faith. III. THE RESPONSE WHICH THE APPEAL OF THIS NEEDY LIFE AWAKENED IN THE BENEFICENT HEART OF CHRIST. 1. It awakened tender compassion. 2. It received the touch of Divine power. 3. It attained a welcome and effective cure. Lessons: 1. That it is well for a needy life to approach Christ. 2. That a needy life should approach Christ with humility and faith. 3. The marvellous way in which Christ can supply the need of man. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christ's touch:*—I. Whatever Diviner and sacreder aspect there may be in these incidents, the first thing, and, in some senses, the most precious thing in them is that THEY ARE THE NATURAL EXPRESSION OF A TRULY HUMAN TENDERNESS AND COMPASSION. It is the love of Christ Himself—spontaneous, instinctive—without the thought of anything but the suffering it sees—which gushes out and leads Him to put forth His hand to the outcast beggars and lepers. True pity instinctively leads us to seek to come near those who are its objects. Christ's pity is shown by His touch to have this true characteristic of true pity, that it overcomes disgust; He is not turned away by the shining whiteness of the leprosy. Christ loves us, and will not be turned from His compassion by our most loathsome foulness. II. We may regard the touch AS THE MEDIUM OF HIS MIRACULOUS POWER. There is a royal variety in the method of our Lord's miracles; some are wrought at a distance, some by a word or touch. The true cause in every case is His own bare will. But this use of Christ's touch, as apparent means for conveying His miraculous power, illustrates a principle which is exemplified in all His revelation, namely, the employment, in condescension to men's weakness, of outward means as the apparent vehicles of His spiritual power. Sacraments, outward ceremonies, forms of worship, are vehicles which the Divine Spirit uses in order to bring His gifts to the hearts and the minds of men. They are like the touch of Christ which heals, not by any virtue in itself, apart from His will which chooses to make it the apparent medium of healing. All these externals are nothing, as the pipes of an organ are nothing, until His breath is breathed through them, and then the flood of sweet sound pours out. Do not despise the material vehicles and the outward helps which Christ uses for the communication of His healing and His life, but remember that the help that is done upon earth, He does it all Himself. III. Consider Christ's touch AS A SHADOW AND SYMBOL OF THE VERY HEART OF HIS WORK. Christ's touch was a Priest's touch. He lays His hand on corruption and is not tainted. It becomes purity. This was His work in the world—laying hold of the outcast—His sympathy leading to His identification of Himself with us in our misery. That sympathetic life-long touch is put forth once for all in His incarnation and death. Let our touch answer to His; let the hand of faith grasp Him. IV. We may look upon these incidents as being A PATTERN FOR US. We must be content to take lepers by the hand, to let the outcast feel the warmth of our loving grasp if we would draw them into the Father's house. (*A. McLaren, D.D.*) *Christ touches corruption without taint:*—Just as He touches the leper and is unpolluted, or the fever patient and receives no contagion, or the dead and draws no chill of mortality into His warm hand, so He becomes like His brethren in all things, yet without sin. Being found in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knows no sin, but wears His manhood unpolluted, and dwells among men blameless and harmless, the Son of God, without rebuke. Like a sunbeam passing through foul water untarnished and unstained; or like some sweet spring rising in the midst of the salt sea, which yet retains its freshness and pours it over the surrounding bitterness, so Christ takes upon Himself our nature and lays hold of our stained

hands with the hand that continues pure while it grasps us, and will make us purer if we grasp it. (*Ibid.*) *The cleansing of the leper*:—I. Let us put together the FACTS of the case. II. The principal LESSONS suggested by this narrative. 1. Here is an illustration of the good effects of speaking about religious truth in connection with Christ. The fame of Christ was spread abroad throughout Syria, and found its way to the leper. 2. That doubts are no reason why we should not go to Christ—"Lord, *if* thou *wilt*," &c. 3. That no possible circumstances ought to prevent our going to Christ for salvation. 4. Christ's love and willingness to save is the great idea of the gospel. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Cleansed by Christ*:—A nun in an Italian convent once dreamed that an angel opened her spiritual eyes, and she saw all men as they were. They seemed so full of uncleanness that she shrank back from them in horror. But just then Jesus Christ appeared among them with bleeding wounds, and the nun saw that whoever pressed forward and touched the blood of Jesus, at once became white as snow. It is so in every-day life. It was Jesus who cleansed that reformed drunkard from the stain of his sin. Years ago he was poor and ragged and unclean. To-day he is clean and healthy and well dressed; the grace of Christ has been manifested in the cleansing of the outer as well as of the inner man. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Cleansing of the leper*:—I. THE PITIABLE OBJECT THAT IS HERE PRESENTED. The malady was one of the most distressing that ever seized a human being. It was usually regarded as produced by the immediate agency of the Most High. The rules prescribed for its treatment were very minute and stringent. Among the many immunities with which we are favoured in this happy land, may be reckoned the entire absence of leprosy. But if bodily leprosy is unknown among us, spiritual leprosy is not. 1. It was hereditary. 2. A representation of sin in the consequences with which it was attended. II. THE APPLICATION WHICH HE MADE. 1. It was earnest. 2. It was humble. 3. It expressed great confidence in the Saviour's ability. 4. It indicated some doubt of His willingness to exert the power He possessed. III. THE RESPONSE HE MET WITH. 1. The emotion which the Saviour felt—"Moved with compassion." 2. The act He performed—"Put forth His hand, and touched him." 3. The words He uttered—"I will; be thou clean." 4. The effect produced—"The leprosy departed from him." IV. THE DIRECTIONS HE RECEIVED. 1. These instructions were necessary. The law enjoined that the priest should pronounce the leper clean before he could enjoy the privileges—whether social, civil, or religious—of which he had been deprived. 2. However needful these instructions may have been, the restored leper, in the fulness of his joy and gratitude, was unable to comply with them. See the ability of Christ to save. A personal application to Him is necessary. (*Expository Outlines.*) *Christ's relation to human suffering*:—Christ presented to us in three aspects. I. AS A WORKER—"He stretched forth His hand and touched him." This act was—1. Natural. The means employed were in harmony with His nature as a human being. Christ felt His oneness with the race. 2. Profound. A common thing apparently, yet who can tell what power was in that "touch." Doubtless there was the communication of a power invisible to human eyes. 3. Beneficent. Here we have the cure of an incurable. 4. Prompt. The earnest appeal obtained an immediate response. This was characteristic of Christ. II. AS A SPEAKER—"And saith," &c. This shows—1. His Divine authority—"I will." Such a fiat could have come only from the lips of a Divine person—"Never man spake," &c., "With authority He commandeth," &c. (ver. 28). 2. His consciousness of power. Christ fully knew what power He possessed. Not so with man; consequently how much latent energy lies dormant in the Church of Christ. 3. His possession of power—"Be thou made clean." At the unfaltering tones of Christ's voice all diseases fled. III. AS A HEALER—"And straightway the leprosy departed," &c. This healing was—1. Instantaneous. 2. Perfect. (*J. G. Churchill.*) *The Saviour and the leper*:—No one afflicted with this loathsome disease was allowed to enter the gates of any city. In this case, however, the man's misery and earnestness led him to make a dangerous experiment. Persuaded of the Lord's power to heal; longing to put it to the test; almost sure of His willingness; he will rush into the city, and ere ever the angry people have had time to recover from their astonishment at his boldness, he hopes to find himself cured and whole at the feet of Jesus. There was both daring and doubting in his action. The man's earnestness is seen further in his manner. 1. He KNELT before the Lord, and next fell on his face—his attitude giving emphasis to his words. 2. He BESOUGHT Jesus—in fear, in doubt, in secret dread lest the Lord should see some reason for withholding the boon he craved, but yet in faith. And his faith was great. He did not,

like Martha, consider Christ's power as needing to be sought from God; he believed it to be lodged already in Christ's person; and he also believed His power to be great enough to reach even his case, although as yet no leper had received healing from Christ. 3. His faith was REWARDED. Jesus touched him—no pollution passing from the leper to Him, but healing going from Him to the leper. 4. Instantly the leprosy departed. Nothing is a barrier to the Lord's will and power. (*Andrew A. Bonar.*) *Leprosy:*—As to this disease observe: heat, dryness, and dust, predispose to diseases of the skin everywhere, and all these causes are especially operative in Syria. Insufficient food assists their action; and boils and sores are apt to fester and poison the system. Leprosy is a disease found over a large tract of the world's surface; it is found all round the shores of the Mediterranean, from Syria to Spain, in a virulent form, and in North and South Africa. It was carried to various countries in Europe by those who returned from the crusades, and became prevalent even in England, in the times when our forefathers had no butcher meat in winter but what was salted, and little vegetable diet with it. In a form less virulent than in Palestine, it exists in Norway, where the government supports several hospitals for lepers, and seeks to prevent the spread of the disease by requiring all afflicted with it to live—unmarried—in one or other of these. Probably, salt fish in Norway forms the too exclusive food of the poor, as it also probably did in Palestine in the time of Christ. Mrs. Brassey found it in the islands of the Pacific. It is so common in India that when Lord Lawrence took formal possession of Oude, he made the people promise not to burn their widows nor slay their children (the girls), nor bury alive their lepers. It was a loathsome disease, eating away the joints, enfeebling the strength, producing diseases of the lungs, almost always fatal, though taking years to kill. It was the one disease which the Mosaic law treated as unclean; perhaps, as being the chief disease, God wished to indicate that all outward misery had originally its root in sin. He that was afflicted with it had to live apart from his fellows, and to cry out "unclean" when any came near him; often, therefore, could do no work, but had to live on charity. He was not permitted to enter a synagogue unless a part were specially railed off for him, and then he must be the first to enter and the last to quit the place. It was as fatal as consumption is with us; much more painful; loathsome as well, infecting the spirits with melancholy, and cutting the sufferer off from tender sympathies and ministries when he most needed them. (*R. Glover.*) *The leper's prayer:*—This prayer is very remarkable. For observe—I. THE CASE WOULD SEEM ABSOLUTELY HOPELESS. Many could feel that for a Lordly spirit like Christ's to have control over evil spirits was natural, but would have held the cure of a leper an impossibility; for the disease, being one of the blood, infected the whole system! If onlookers might so think, how much more the leper himself! Every organ of his body infected deeply, how wonderful that he could have any hope. But he believes this great miracle a possibility. Yet note—II. HIS PRAYER IS WONDERFULLY CALM. In deepest earnest he kneels. But there is no wildness nor excitement. Mark also—III. HOW A GREAT LAW OF COMPENSATION RUNS THROUGH OUR LIVES, and somehow those most grievously afflicted are often those most helped to pray and trust. I once saw a leper at Genadenthal in South Africa—an old woman. "Tell him," said she to the doctor, who took me to see her, "I am very thankful for my disease; it is the way the Lord took to bring me to Himself." This man had had the same sort of compensation, and while the outward man was perishing the inward man was being renewed day by day. Copy his prayer, and ask for mercies though they seem to be sheer impossibilities. (*Ibid.*) *"Can" and "will":*—It is an old answer, that from *can* to *will*, no argument followeth. The leper did not say unto Christ, "If Thou canst, Thou wilt;" but, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst." (*H. Smith.*) I. The cure of our souls is the pure effect of the goodness and free mercy of God. II. Jesus Christ performs it by a sovereign authority. III. His sacred humanity is the instrument of the Divine operation in our hearts. IV. It is by His will that His merits are applied to us. Fear, for He does not put forth His healing hand and touch all; hope, for He very frequently puts it forth, and touches the most miserable. (*Quesnel.*) *The world's treatment of lepers, and Christ's:*—You remember the story of the leper which the poet Swinburne has woven into one of his most beautiful, most painfully realistic, poems. He tells about a lady at the French Court in the Middle Ages, who was stricken with leprosy. She had been courted, flattered, idolized, and almost worshipped for her wit and beauty by the king, princes, and all the royal train, until she was smitten with leprosy. Then her very lovers hunted her forth as a banned and God-forsaken thing; every door

in the great city of Paris was slammed in her face; no one would give her a drop of water or piece of bread; the very children spat in her face, and fled from her as a pestilential thing, until a poor clerk, who had loved the great lady a long way off, and had never spoken to her until then, took her to his house for pity's sake, and nursed her until she died, and he was cast out and cursed himself by all the religious world for doing it. That was what the leper had become in the Middle Ages, and something like that he was among the Jews of our Saviour's time, hated by men because believed to be hated by God, carrying in his flesh and skin the very marks of God's anger, contempt, and scorn, the foulest thing on God's fair earth, whose presence meant defilement, and whom to touch was sin. That was the thing that lay at Christ's feet, and on which that pure, gentle hand was laid. He stretched forth His hand and touched him, and said, "I will, be thou clean;" and straightway his leprosy was cleansed. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *Christ's saving touch*:—I. THE WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH CHRIST KINDLED HOPE IN THESE DESPERATE WRETCHES. He helped men to believe in themselves as well as in Himself. We cannot see how it was done. Nothing had been said or done to give this confidence in his recoverability, yet he has it. You can show a man in a score of ways, without telling him in so many words, that you do not despair of him. A glance of the eye is enough for that. The first step in saving the lost is to persuade them that they are not God-abandoned. II. CHRIST'S TOUCH. Christ saved men by touching them. He was always touching men, their hands, eyes, ears, lips. He did not send His salvation; He brought it. Gifts demoralize men unless we give part of ourselves with them. (*Ibid.*) *The use of personal contact*:—Our gifts only demoralize men unless we give part of ourselves along with them. Even a dog is demoralized if you always throw bones to it instead of giving them out of your hand. You breathe a bit of humanity into the dog by letting it lick your hand, and it would almost rather do that than eat your bone. What have we done to save men when we have sent them our charities? Almost nothing. We have filled their stomachs, indeed, and lightened their material wants, but have sent their souls still empty away. (*Ibid.*) *The cleansing of the leper*:—There are in this case elements which ought to be found in any man who is suffering from soul disease and defilement. I. A PAINFUL CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS TRUE POSITION. He looked at his leprosy; felt its pain; knew its disabling uncleanness. The sinner sees his sin as a disgrace, a danger, and a disgust. II. A PROPER SENSE OF HIS PRESENT OPPORTUNITY. Great Healer was approaching; Lord of love and pity was here; representative of heaven passed by. He was drawn to Jesus; prostrate before Jesus; urgent upon Jesus. A present decision; a present acceptance; a present salvation. III. A PLAIN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LORD'S POWER. "Thou canst;" I can't; others can't; but Thou canst, I know it, because Thou hast cleansed others; hast power to cleanse; hast come forth to cleanse. IV. A PRESSING URGENCY CONCERNING THE LORD'S PLEASURE. "If Thou wilt." Perhaps I am too vile. It may be my sorrow may plead. In any case I will take my refusal only from Thee. Observe—1. The leper makes no prayer. Readiness to receive is in itself a prayer. Uttered prayer may be no deeper than the mouth; unuttered prayer may be evidence of the opened heart. 2. The leper raises no difficulty. He comes—worships—confesses his faith—puts himself in the Lord's hands. 3. The leper has no hesitation as to what he needs—"Make me clean." As to whom he trusts—"Thou canst." As to how he comes—"A leper." Misery in the presence of mercy—humility pleading with grace—faith appealing to faithfulness—helplessness worshipping at the feet of power. Such is a leper before the Lord. Such is a sinner before the Saviour. Such should we be to this day of grace. (*J. Richardson, M.A.*) *The method of spiritual salvation illustrated*:—I. The leper put himself UNRESERVEDLY in the hands of the Healer. II. Christ instantly gave PRACTICAL EXPRESSION TO HIS OWN DEEP PITY. III. THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRIST'S CURE. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Leprosy a symbol of sin*:—I. FROM A SMALL BEGINNING IT SPREADS OVER THE ENTIRE MAN. II. ITS CURE IS BEYOND THE REACH OF HUMAN SKILL OR NATURAL REMEDIES. III. IT IS PAINFUL, LOATHSOME, DEGRADING, AND FATAL. IV. IT SEPARATES ITS VICTIM FROM THE PURE AND DRIVES HIM INTO ASSOCIATION WITH THE IMPURE. V. IT IS A FOE TO RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES. IV. IT CAN BE REMEDIED BY THE INTERPOSITION OF GOD. (*Anon.*) *Christ's pity shown more in deeds than in words*:—I doubt whether Christ ever said anything about the Divine compassion more pathetic or more perfectly beautiful than had been said by the writer of the 103rd Psalm. It is not in the words of Christ that we find a fuller and deeper revelation of the Divine compassion, but in His deeds. "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand

and *touched* him," touched the man from whom his very kindred had shrunk. It was the first time that the leper had felt the warmth and pressure of a human hand since his loathsome disease came upon him. And said, "I will, be thou clean." (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *The leper cleansed*:—I. Sorrow turns instinctively to the supernatural. II. Christ is never deaf to sorrow's cry. III. Christ is superior alike to material contamination and legal restriction. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Christ's mission a protest against death*:—Every healed man was Christ's living protest against death. The mere fact of the miracle was but a syllable in Christ's magnificent doctrine of *life*. Christ's mission may be summed up in the word—Life; the devil's, in the word—Death; so that every recovered limb, every opened eye, every purified leper, was a confirmation of His statement, "I have come that they might have life." (*Ibid.*) *The cleansing of the leper*:—I. A melancholy PICTURE to be studied. II. An excellent EXAMPLE to be copied. 1. He made his application in the proper quarter. He "came to Jesus." 2. He made his application in the right way. 3. He made his application in the proper spirit, "kneeling." III. A sweet ENCOURAGEMENT to be taken. IV. A necessary DUTY to be performed. Silence and the offering of sacrifice. Gratitude; penitence; consecration. V. An uncommon MISTAKE to be avoided. "He began to blaze abroad the matter." (*T. Whitelaw, M.A.*) *Reasons for silence respecting Christ's miracles*:—Our Lord did not mean that the man should keep it only to himself, and that he should not at all make it known to any; for He knew that it was fit His miracles should be known, that by them His Divine power and the truth of His doctrine might be manifested to the world; and therefore we read that at another time He was willing a miracle of His should be made known (Mark v. 19). But Christ's purpose here is to restrain him—I. From publishing this miracle rashly or unadvisedly, and in an indiscreet manner. II. From revealing it to such persons as were likely to cavil or take exceptions at it. III. From publishing it at that time, which was unfit and unseasonable—(1) Because Christ was yet in the state of His abasement, and was so to continue till the time of His resurrection, and His Divine glory was to be manifested by degrees till then, and not all at once; (2) Because the people were too much addicted to the miracles of Christ, without due regard to His teaching. (*G. Petter.*) With the charge to tell it to the priest the Saviour gave the charge to tell it to no one else. I. Christ did not want a crowd of wonder-seekers to clamour for a sign, but penitents to listen to the tidings of salvation. II. The man would be spiritually the better of thinking calmly and silently over His wondrous mercy, until at all events he had been to the Temple in Jerusalem and back. Do not tattle about your religious experience; nor, if you are a beginner, speak so much about God's mercy to you that you have not time to study it and learn its lesson. This man, had he but gone into some retired spot and mastered the meaning of His mercy, might have become an apostle. As it is, he becomes a sort of showman of himself. (*R. Glover.*) *Unostentatious philanthropy*:—I. THIS UNOSTENTATIOUS PHILANTHROPY WAS CONSEQUENT UPON A REAL CURE. II. WAS ANIMATED BY A TRUE SPIRIT. Some people enjoin silence in reference to their philanthropy—1. When they do not mean it. Mock humility. 2. Lest they should have too many applicants for it. Selfishness or limited generosity. 3. Others in order that they may modestly and wisely do good. So with our Lord. Much philanthropy marred by its talkativeness. III. WAS NOT ATTENDED WITH SUCCESS. Hence we learn—1. That the most modest philanthropy is not always shielded from public observation. 2. That there are men who will violate the most stringent commands and the deepest obligations. Lessons: 1. To do good when we have the opportunity. 2. Modestly and wisely. 3. Content with the smile of God rather than the approval of men. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The judicious reserve which should characterize the speech of the newly converted*:—Observe: I. THAT A WISE RESERVE SHOULD BE EXERCISED BY THE NEWLY CONVERTED IN REFERENCE TO THE INNER EXPERIENCES OF THE SOUL. Because unwise talk is likely—1. To injure the initial culture of the soul. 2. To awaken the scepticism of the worldly. 3. To be regarded as boastful. 4. To impede the welfare of Divine truth. II. THAT THIS WISE RESERVE MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH THE IMPERATIVE OBLIGATIONS OF THE SANCTUARY. 1. To recognize its ordinances. 2. To perform its duties. 3. To manifest in its offerings a grateful and adoring reception of beneficent ministry. With this no reserve of temperament or words must be allowed to interfere. III. THAT THIS WISE RESERVE IS SOMETIMES VIOLATED IN A MOST FLAGRANT MANNER. How many young converts act as the cleansed leper. We must be careful to speak at the right time, in the right manner, under the right circumstances. (*Ibid.*) *Show thy-*

self to the priest:—The reasons for the command are not far to seek. 1. The offering of the gift was an act of obedience to the law (Levit. xiv. 10, 21, 22), and was therefore the right thing for the man to do. In this way also our Lord showed that He had not come, as far as His immediate work was concerned, to destroy even the ceremonial law, but to fulfil. 2. It was the appointed test of the reality and completeness of the cleansing work. 3. It was better for the man's own spiritual life to cherish his gratitude than to waste it in many words. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Ver. 45. **And they came to Him from every quarter.**—*Gathering to the centre*:—I. Of the open or PROFESSIONAL coming to Christ. The gospel when it is preached draws many to itself who are not saved by it. Many come to Christ from the lowest motives; to receive benefits; some out of transient enthusiasm. Out of the best haul a fisherman ever makes, there is something to throw away. II. Of the first real SPIRITUAL coming to Christ by faith. Let us try to help those who are coming to Christ. All who come to Christ from every quarter never one was disappointed with Him yet. III. The DAILY coming of saved souls to Jesus. They come from every quarter as to mental pursuits; from all points of theological thought; from every quarter of spiritual experience. IV. THAT GREAT GATHERING WHICH IS APPROACHING NEARER EVERY MOMENT. Saints come to Jesus in glory from every quarter. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Coming to Christ by various roads*:—Seeking rest and health last week, I seated myself for a little while near a very rustic church which stands embowered in a wood, and as I sat there I moralized upon the various paths which led up to the church porch. Each trackway through the grass came from a different quarter, but they all led to one point. As I stood there this reflection crossed me: even thus men come to Christ from all quarters of the compass, but if indeed saved, they all come to Him. There is a path yonder which rises from a little valley. The little church stands on the hill side, there is a brook at the bottom, and worshippers who come from the public road must cross the rustic bridge and then ascend the hill. Such comers rise at every step they take. Full many burdened ones come to Christ from the deep places of self-abasement; they know their sinfulness and feel it; their self-consciousness has almost driven them to despair; they are down very low, and every step they take to Christ is a step upwards. They have a little hope as they look to Him, and then a little more, till it comes to a humble trust; then from a feeble, trembling trust it rises to a simple faith, and so they advance till when they stand near to Jesus they even reach to the full assurance of faith. Thus from soul distress and self-despair they come to the Lord Jesus, and He receives them graciously. Through the churchyard there was another path, and it ran up-hill from where I stood, and therefore every one who came that way descended to the church door. These may represent the people who think much of themselves; they have been brought up in morality and lived in respectability in the town of Legality; they have never turned aside to the grosser vices, but are among the models of behaviour. Every step these good people take towards Christ is downward; they think less of themselves and still less; regret leads to repentance, repentance to bitter grief, and grief leads to self abhorrence, till they come down to the level where Jesus meets with sinners, by owning that they are nothing, and that Christ is all. The two paths which I have mentioned were supplemented by a third, which led through a thick and tangled wood: a narrow way wound between the oak trees and the dense underwood, and I noticed that it led over a boggy place, through which stepping stones had been carefully placed for the traveller, that he might not sink in the mire. Many a seeker has found his way to Jesus by a similar path. Dark with ignorance, and briary with evil questionings, the path winds and twists about, and leads through the Slough of Despond, wherein a man had need pick his steps very carefully, or he may sink in despair. Those whom grace leads arrive at rest in Christ, but it is through the wood and through the slough. Once more, I remarked another path, which came in from the farmer's fields, through lands where the plough and the sickle are busy, each in its season; so that those who come from that quarter to worship come across the place of toil, and may fitly represent those who are full of earnestness and effort, but have as much need of Jesus as any. They do not know yet the way of salvation, but they follow after righteousness by the law, and strive to enter in at the strait gate in their own strength. But if they ever come to Christ they will have to leave those fields and the plough and sickle of their own strength, and submit to receive Jesus as their all. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–12. **And again He entered into Capernaum.** *The general ministry of Christ:*—Christ's apparent delays are only the maturings of time—the ripenings of opportunity. He will come, not when impatient men think best, but when His wisdom determines: neither too soon nor too late. I. WHERE CHRIST IS DESIRED CHRIST COMES. He visits with equal readiness every willing heart. In penitent and submissive natures He finds His favourite haunts. II. Christ's presence in the house CANNOT BE CONCEALED. Holy influences emanate from Him, freely as light from the sun. III. CHRIST BINDS TOGETHER ALL CLASSES. IV. HUMAN LIMITS ARE TOO NARROW FOR CHRIST'S KINGDOM. God's plans are expansive; let us beware of trying to contract them. We must enlarge our ideas, until they are commensurate with God's truth; we must enlarge our sympathies until they embrace every human need. V. CHRIST IMPROVES EVERY OCCASION. Whatever is needed, He is ready to supply. Each individual in that crowd had some special want, but not one was making special application. But Christ could not be idle. His business was to minister. If they did not want a word of healing, they all wanted a word of instruction. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *It was noised that He was in the house:*—I. HOUSES WHERE CHRIST WILL DWELL. 1. The human heart. 2. The Christian family. 3. A spiritual Church. II. The CHIEF GLORY OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH—not the building, nor the form of service, nor the social position of its members, nor the eloquence of the preacher, nor its past history—but the CHRIST who dwells within it. III. THE SELF-MANIFESTING NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION. If Christ be within the heart, the family, or the Church—the fact will be known abroad. Though the rose is not seen its fragrance is perceived. Its glitter betrays the presence of gold. Clouds cannot conceal the sun, for the day-light declares its ascendency. IV. THE CHIEF DRAWING POWER OF CHRISTIANITY. If we would draw the multitude we must do it, not so much by eccentricities — advertisements, as by obtaining the presence of Jesus Christ. He will draw all men unto Him. Christ within will attract the multitude without. (*L. Palmer.*) *The king and his Court:*—Where the king is there is his Court. (*Anon.*) *A happy town:*—Happy town in such an inhabitant, and in this respect lifted up to heaven. Indeed, in this, heaven came down to Capernaum. (*Trapp.*) *Shiloh:*—Where Shiloh is there shall the gathering of the people be. (*M. Henry.*) *Christ in the house:*—I. WHEN CHRIST MAY BE SAID TO BE IN THE HOUSE. 1. When the Bible is there. 2. When a good man enters it and carries with him the savour of Christ. 3. When He dwells in the heart of any one in the family—parent, child, servant, &c. 4. Into whatever house a Christian family enters, Christ enters with it, &c. II. SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CHRIST IN THE HOUSE. 1. If it be noised that Christ is in the house good men will be drawn to it and bad men will keep away. 2. There will be a witness for God there. 3. There is a direct communication between it and the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 4. That house is under the peculiar protection of Divine Providence. 5. The sympathies of good men are drawn towards it. Conclusion: We should seek Christ on our own account; and we should seek Him on account of others. (*G. Rogers.*) *Jesus in the house: piety at home:*—How many are longing for grand spheres in which to serve God. They admire heroic men and women who have been bold for the truth, and wish they had some daring opportunity in which to exhibit Christian heroism and endurance. St. Paul says to such persons (1 Tim. v. 4), "I will tell you of a place where you can show forth all that is beautiful and glorious in the Christian character, and that place is the domestic circle;" "Let them first learn to show piety at home." Indeed, if a man does not serve God on a small scale, he never will serve Him on a large one. (*J. N. Norton.*) *How Christ enters the house:*—Christ Jesus gains admission to the house in various ways. Sometimes it is through the sweet influence of a little child, who has heard of Him in the Sunday-school. Sometimes Jesus finds His way into the house through the agency of a good book or a tract. Sometimes He leaves the fragrance of His example behind Him, after the visit of a friend. Jesus may only be present in the house in the person of the humblest servant, and yet the influence of that servant will be felt. (*Ibid.*) *Family worship:*—Bishop Coxe, in the preface to his "Covenant Prayer," gives this interesting narrative. "A few years ago I visited an old feudal castle in England. One of its towers dates from King John's time; its outer walls bear marks of siege and damage from the guns of Cromwell. The young owner,

lately married, was beginning his housekeeping aright, and when I came down into the old hall to breakfast, his servants were all assembled for prayers with the family. Though I was asked to officiate, I reminded my kind host that every man is a priest in his own household, and I begged him to officiate as he was used to do. So he read prayers and Holy Scripture, with due solemnity, and we all kneeled down. Happening to lift my eyes, I observed over his head, upon a massive oaken beam that spanned the hall, an inscription in old English:

"'That house shall be preserved, and never shall decay,
Where the Almighty God is worshipped, day by day. A.D. 1558.'"

(*Ibid.*) *Piety in the house proved by virtue in the children*:—If I am told in general terms of a mother, that she has gone to the studio of a photographic artist to obtain a portrait of herself, and if the question afterwards arise, did she sit alone, or did she group the children round her feet, and hold the infant on her knee? I do not know, for I was not there; but show me the glass which the artist has just taken out from a vessel of liquid in a dark room, and is holding up to the light. What figures are those that are gradually forming upon its surface? In that glass rises the outline of that maternal form; and the forms of the children come gradually in, variously grouped around her. Ah! I know now that this mother sat not alone when the sun in the heavens painted her picture in that glass. The character and condition of children, through all their after life, tell plainly who were closest to her heart, and whose names were oftenest on her lips, when the mother held communion with Jesus in the house. (*Arnot.*) *Christly influence in the home*:—Travelling on the Lake Lugano, one morning, we heard the swell of the song of the nightingale, and the oars were stilled on the blue lake as we listened to the silver sounds. We could not see a single bird, nor do I know that we wished to see—we were so content with the sweetness of the music: even so it is with our Lord; we may enter a house where He is loved, and we may hear nothing concerning Christ, and yet we may perceive clearly enough that He is there, a holy influence streaming through their actions pervades the household; so that if Jesus be unseen, it is clear that He is not unknown. Go anywhere where Jesus is, and though you do not actually hear His name, yet the sweet influence which flows from His love will be plainly enough discernible. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ in the house*:—I. That Christ in the house is an ATTRACTION—"Many were gathered together." II. That Christ in the house is an INSTRUCTION—"He preached the word unto them." III. That Christ in the house is a BENEDICTION. 1. A benediction of healing. 2. A benediction of pardon. 1. That Christ is willing to dwell in the homes of men. 2. That when Christ dwells in the home it is visible to the world that He does so. 3. That the home-life should be a perpetual but silent sermon. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. **And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.**—*The charities of the poor*:—"Borne of four." The charities of the rich are published far and wide, and all men talk of them. Let us turn from them to think for a little of the charities of the poor. But how do we know that the paralytic in this story belonged to the poor? From St. Mark. When he says (ii. 4) "They let down the bed," he employs a different word for bed from St. Matthew, viz., the Greek form of the Latin *grabatus*, the pallet or camp-bed used by the poor (Cf. John v. 8; Acts v. 15, ix. 33). This is one of those graphic touches by which he so often gives additional interest and pictorial vividness to his narrative. (Cf. in the context, "Capernaum," ver. 1, "about the door," ver. 2, "broken it up," ver. 4, "son," ver. 5, and text, "borne of four.") The story suggests as to the charities of the poor—I. THAT THEY GENERALLY SPRING FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD—"Four." Who were they, friends or kinsfolk? Most probably neighbours. There is something sacred in neighbourhood. It is an ordinance of God, and the source of countless kindnesses and sweet humanities. II. THAT THEY ARE OFTEN NAMELESS—"Four." The deed of love is chronicled, but nothing is said to identify the doers. So of thousands. Their simple, unostentatious charities are unnamed and unhonoured. But their record is on high. III. THAT THEY ARE CALLED FORTH IN CASES OF GREAT DISTRESS—"Palsy." Type of many. No place exempt from trouble. Multitudes of the poor suffer grievously. IV. THAT THEY ARE CHARACTERIZED BY MUCH DISINTERESTEDNESS AND GENEROSITY. Of the charities of the poor it may be said, as Spenser says of the angels, that they are "all for love and nothing for

reward." V. THAT THEY ARE PERSONALLY EXERCISED. Most of the rich act by proxy. How different with the poor. They act for themselves. VI. THAT THEY REACH THEIR HIGHEST FORM WHEN THEY ARE THE MEANS OF BRINGING SOULS TO CHRIST. VII. THAT THEY SHALL HAVE A GREAT REWARD. Happy day for this poor man and his friends. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *Mutual help*:—"Two," says Solomon, "are better than one; for if one fall he can help the other, but woe unto him that is alone when he falleth!" The cobbler could not paint the picture, but he could tell Apelles that the shoe-latchet was not quite right, and the painter thought it well to take his hint. Two neighbours, one blind and the other lame, were called to a place at a great distance. What was to be done? The blind man could not see, and the lame man could not walk! Why, the blind man carried the lame one; the former assisted by his legs, the other by his eyes. Say to no one, then, "I can do without you;" but be ready to help those who ask your aid, and then, when it is needed, you may ask theirs. (*Smith.*) *A man with a palsy*:—Learn: I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF FAITHFUL FRIENDS. II. THE POWER OF SIN. III. THE RESULT OF PERSEVERANCE. IV. THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION—"Seek ye first," &c. (*Anon.*) *The sick man let down through the roof to Christ*:—I. THOSE WHO WOULD BE HEALED BY CHRIST MUST COME TO HIM. Though in exceptional cases our Lord did cure sick people who were at a distance (*e.g.* Luke vii. 1–10), His general rule was to heal by look, word, and touch—by the giving out of "virtue" from His living presence (v. 30). Thus in the case before us the man was not cured till he reached Christ. 1. It is not enough to hear much of Christ. It is not enough to hear of a surgeon; a cure can be effected only by personal treatment. 2. It is not enough to seek help of those who are near to Christ. The crowd about the door could not heal the sick man. II. THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL NEVER REACH CHRIST UNLESS THEY ARE BROUGHT TO HIM BY OTHERS. The sick man was "borne of four," and could not have reached Jesus without this help. It is the mission of the Church to bring to Christ those who are too helpless in spiritual indifference to seek Him of their own accord (Luke xiv. 21–23). Note—1. The Church cannot cure the world of its sin. 2. Those who cannot do more, may be able to bring others under "the sound of the word," by inducing them to attend places of worship, &c. III. THE SELFISHNESS OF SOME WHO ARE ENJOYING CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES IS ONE OF THE GREATEST IMPEDIMENTS TO THE SPREAD OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL AMONG THOSE WHO ARE AS YET WITHOUT THEM. The selfish crowd would not give place for the sick man. IV. EARNEST PERSEVERANCE IN SEEKING CHRIST WILL OVERCOME THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES. The readiness to give up before difficulties is a sure proof of half-heartedness. It is the sluggard who says, "There is a lion in the path." Christ is always accessible, though not always with ease. V. THOUGH THE WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST MAY BE IRREGULAR, HIS HEALING BLESSING WILL BE CERTAINLY GIVEN WHEN ONCE HE IS TRULY FOUND. There are cases in which the regular methods of the Church fail, and irregular methods seem to succeed. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *Healing the paralytic*:—I. FORGIVENESS is the chief blessing. II. ADOPTION—"Son." III. GLADNESS—"Be of good cheer." IV. FAITH—"When He saw their faith." (*D. Brotchie.*) *Christ's way of dealing with sin*:—I. THE MALADY PRESENTED TO CHRIST. The malady, apparently, was nothing more than palsy. But not as such did Christ treat it. As with their faith, so it was here. He went deeper than perseverance or ingenuity. He goes deeper than the outward evil; down to *the* evil, the root of all evil, properly the only evil—sin. Now sin has a twofold set of consequences. 1. The natural. By the natural, we mean those results which come inevitably in the train of wrong-doing, by what we call the laws of nature visiting themselves on the outward condition of a sinner, by which sin and suffering are linked together. Here, apparently, palsy had been the natural result of sin; for otherwise the address of Christ was meaningless. These natural consequences are often invisible as well as inevitable. Probably not one of the four friends, or even the physician, suspected such a connection. But the conscience of the palsied man and the all-seeing eye of Christ traced the connection. Such an experience is true much oftener than we imagine. The irritable temperament, the lost memory, are connected with sins done long ago. For nothing here stands alone and causeless. The Saviour saw in this palsied man the miserable wreck of an ill-spent life. 2. Now quite distinct from these are the moral consequences of guilt: by which I mean those which tell upon the character and inward being of the man who sins. In one sense, no doubt, it is a natural result, inasmuch as it is by a law, regular and unalterable, a man becomes by sin deteriorated in character, or miserable. Now these are twofold, negative and positive—the loss of some blessing: or the accruing

of some evil to the heart. Loss—as when by sinning we lose the capacity for all higher enjoyments; for none can sin without blunting his sensibilities. He has lost the zest of a pure life, the freshness and the flood of happiness which come to every soul when it is delicate, and pure, and natural. This is no light loss. If any one here congratulates himself that sin has brought to him no positive misery, my brother, I pray you to remember that God's worst curse was pronounced upon the serpent tempter. Apparently it was far less than that pronounced on the woman, but really it was far more terrible. Not pain, not shame—no, these are remedial, and may bring penitence at last—but to sink the angel in the animal—the spirit in the flesh; to be a reptile, and to eat the dust of degradation as if it were natural food. Eternity has no damnation deeper than that. Then, again, a positive result—the dark and dreadful loneliness that comes from doing wrong—a conscious unrest which plunges into business, or pleasure, or society, not for the love of these things, but to hide itself from itself as Adam did in the trees of the garden, because it dare not hear the voice of God, nor believe in His presence. II. CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF THAT MALADY. By the declaration of God's forgiveness. The forgiveness of God acts upon the moral consequences of sin directly. Remorse passes into penitence and love. There is no more loneliness, for God has taken up His abode there. No more self-contempt, for he whom God has forgiven learns to forgive himself. There is no more unrest, for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Upon the natural consequences, not directly, but indirectly and mediately. The forgiveness of Christ did not remove the palsy, that was the result of a separate act of Christ. It is quite conceivable that it might not have been removed at all. Consider too, that without a miracle, they must have remained in this man's case. It is so in every-day life. If the intemperate man repents he will receive forgiveness, but will that penitence give him back the steady hand of youth? Or if the suicide between the moment of draining the poisoned cup and that of death repent of his deed, will that arrest the operation of the poison? A strong constitution or the physician may possibly save life; but penitence has nothing to do with it. Say that the natural penal consequence of crime is the scaffold:—Did the pardon given to the dying thief unnail his hands? Did Christ's forgiveness interfere with the natural consequences of his guilt? And thus, we are brought to a very solemn and awful consideration, awful because of its truth and simplicity. The consequences of past deeds remain. They have become part of the chain of the universe—effects which now are causes, and will work and interweave themselves with the history of the world for ever. You cannot undo your acts. If you have depraved another's will, and injured another's soul, it may be in the grace of God that hereafter you will be personally accepted and the consequences of your guilt inwardly done away, but your penitence cannot undo the evil you have done, and God's worst punishment may be that you may have to gaze half frantic on the ruin you have caused, on the evil you have done. And yet even here the grace of God's forgiveness is not in vain; it may transform the natural consequences of sin into blessings. It would give meekness, patience, and change even the character of death itself. A changed heart will change all things around us. III. THE TRUE AIM AND MEANING OF MIRACLES. It is the outward manifestation of the power of God, in order that we may believe in the power of God in things that are invisible. Miracles were no concession to that infidel spirit which taints our modern Christianity, and which cannot believe in God's presence, except it can see Him in the supernatural. Rather, they were to make us feel that all is marvellous, all wonderful, all pervaded with a Divine presence, and that the simplest occurrences of life are miracles. In conclusion. Let me address those who, like this sufferer, are in any degree conscious either of the natural or moral results of sin, working in them. My Christian brethren, if the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and God succeed in keeping you away, all is lost. Right into His presence you must force your way, with no concealment. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Body and soul cured*:—I. PARDON, AS SUCH, IS NOT A PROGRESSIVE THING. There is no such thing as half a pardon. There are no processes of forgiveness—"Thy sins *are* forgiven thee." The sense of pardon will progress with growing holiness; but not the pardon. II. WE MAY NOTICE FURTHER THAT THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS TOOK THE INITIATIVE OF ALL THE BLESSINGS. It was the first act of grace which led on to all the rest. Remember, we do not work up to our pardon, but from it. We receive it in the free, undeserved, sovereign grace of God. III. And further, we gather from the story, that any temporal blessings that we receive may, to a devout mind, GIVE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S LOVE TO THE SOUL, AND OF HIS POWER TO BESTOW FURTHER SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

IV. IT IS STRENGTHENING AND ASSURING ALSO TO SEE BY WHAT TENURES WE HOLD OUR PARDON—"The Son of man," &c. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The paralytic let down through the roof*:—The scribes were right in their instinctive reflection, that none can forgive sins but God. As an illustration of the whole covenant of our redemption from guilt, and its penal consequences, Christ first forgives the sins of the paralytic, and then throws health into every fibre of his body. Does it not intimate "that all judgment hath been committed unto the Son." Does it not cast a new light upon those passages of Holy Writ, in which the prerogative of giving life is attributed to Jesus, as though He were the original source of vitality. Let us regard this as an instance of Divine faith; it will help us to a view of faith as contrasted with reason, and of faith exercised in its proper department; also an example of the moral necessity of faith to the obtaining of blessings from heaven. I. The consideration of the text will help us to A RIGHT VIEW OF FAITH AS CONTRASTED WITH REASON. It was clearly faith which brought the men to the city where our Lord was; whereas reason might have kept them at home. Let it be assumed that faith and reason are independent processes of the mind, as being exercised on different things; faith "cometh by hearing," and simply accepting testimony; reason, on the other hand, looks rather to the lessons of experience. The four friends of the palsied man having heard of the cures wrought by Jesus, determined at all hazards to carry their friend to Him. Now we call the moral temper which so influenced them—it may be in the twinkling of an eye—faith. They accepted the statements of those who had been at Capernaum. They did not argue concerning the supernatural power of our Lord, or inquire whether it was consonant with the usual course of nature; such would have been the exercise of reason. Reason would have contended that no force of words could restore palsied limbs to health. Faith, so far contrasted with reason, was ready to make the journey. To put the contrast in another view. There are many who would contend, that our last remark goes to depreciate faith, and to say that it is a moral quality, lower than reason; dependent, after all, upon it, and content to make its decisions and pursue its conduct upon a less precise and more vague amount of evidence. Nay, more, that it may be confused with reason, and is but a certain form or process of reason. This is practically the view of all those modern thinkers, who, wanting to get rid of the motive powers of the gospel, seek first to depreciate the very principles of which they are constituted. But it may be replied, that reason is not the origin and source of faith, because it sometimes comes in to test and verify its discoveries, any more than the judge at your tribunals is the origin of the innocence of those whom he righteously acquits; or the critic who decides about the structure and the plot of an epic, is to be confounded with the poet, from the depths of whose abounding genius its rich thoughts have welled forth. From what we have said it may be presumed that we claim for faith something not unlike a separate identity in the breast. We think that we hardly disparage conscience—itself not far apart from reason, as exercised in a high and holy manner, and yet, though near, distinct—if we seat faith by her side, in the banquet of the soul's uppermost chamber: if we claim for faith the prerogatives of a separate instinct and power—a moral temper and standing, apart in the breast; and coming in its brighter forms not merely of ourselves, not as a natural evolution of any ordinary inward powers, but as the special gift of God. Nor is this to confound it with that superstition of fanaticism by which the pretended votaries of faith are sometimes led away, and which renders it so obnoxious to men of the world. But not to continue longer this desultory contrast of faith and reason than the necessity of the times requires, and leaving its development rather to your private meditations, we shall only dwell on one more point, as displayed in the case of the earnest friends of the paralytic. This conduct forms a strong illustration of the truth that faith is a principle of action, as reason of minute investigations. We may, if we will, think that such investigations are of high value; though, in truth, they have a tendency to blunt the practical energy of the mind while they improve its scientific exactness. This remark brings us to the gist of our whole argument. We are surrounded by men who would persuade us that the world is to be regenerated, and all its paralytic prostrations healed, by the careful balancing of certain philosophical truths, by courses of speculative inquiry, by the exercise of the reason alone. Of the height of faith in its higher forms they know nothing. We venture to tell them that whether for the rescue of a pauper or a world their plans and principles are powerless. While reason is speculating and balancing things, and doubts which way to proceed, faith moves rapidly and majestically forward, and sheds blessings at every footstep. While

reason inquires whether the waters can possess any healing power, faith steps in, and is made whole. If, then, reason and faith are to stand opposed, let us stand, with the just, by faith. Reason, set up in denial of faith—in morals, gave men the fictions of Rousseau—in religion, of Thomas Paine—in politics, of the French Revolution. Irreverence, captiousness, the spirit of division, the denial of the divinity of our blessed Lord and all sacramental mysteries, the sneers at prayer—these are the genuine products of reason, attired as a harlot, carried as an idol, and set in antagonism to faith. Of extremes, that of the rationalist is the worst. I had rather be superstitious than sceptical. Wherever I am, oh Jesus Christ, give me the spirit of simplicity, learning, and loving; lest Thou shouldest be near, and I knew it not—lest others should be pressing to hear Thy words and seek Thy face, taking, with holy "violence, the kingdom of heaven by force," and I should linger apart from Thee; lest my soul should be left with its leprous taint of sin uncured, while others came from Thy presence, with souls like that of a little child; lest my spiritual powers should be palsied still, while others, "borne" by the faith of "four," had their sins forgiven, their maladies healed, and took up their bed, and departed to their house. II. Without apologising for the length of the discussion just closed—because it seems necessary to meet the rationalist and utilitarian direction of this iron age—we turn with minds relieved and rejoicing to a few practical reflections immediately suggested by the text. It furnishes, first, an example of earnest industry on the part of the friends and attendants of the poor paralytic, such as we shall do well to imitate as well as admire. Brethren, beloved in the Lord, is your substantiation of things hoped for simple and uncompromising like this? Believing, as we trust you do, in the Lord Jesus Christ, do ye use contrivance as earnest, and labour as hard, in fulfilling that best office of friendship, which places the diseased in the presence of their Saviour? Do you send up their case to the house of God, that it may be borne, as it were, not of "four," but of many, to the throne of heavenly grace? If there be in your families any paralysed by sin and wickedness, men whose moral principles are deadened, and sensibilities benumbed, by the poison of licentiousness, or infidelity, or worldliness, do you try by importunate application, and kind but constant entreaty, to bring them to the living fountain, open for sin and uncleanness? Christ is in His Church; do you try and persuade them to join you in its holy services? Do you ply them with every kind and tender office, bearing them, as it were, in your arms, that your importunity may be successful? Do you take as much pains for their soul's health, as they who carried the palsied cripple, and let him down through the roof of the house? And you cannot but remark the reward which our blessed Lord vouchsafes to their exertions. His omniscient eye followed them as they toiled up the staircase to the roof; He perceived their confidence. It is not, we trust, irreverent to suppose that His spirit rejoiced within Him, and felt serene satisfaction at the flow of faith in the hearts of these people. Mysteriously restrained or free, rapid or slow, plenteous or frugal, in the disbursal of His miraculous blessings, according to the faith of those around Him, grieved as He often was at the hardness of men's hearts, doing here and there "not many mighty works, because of their unbelief;" we may suppose the joyous contrast of emotion, as He perceived the paralytic let down in His presence. Similar, beloved brethren, shall be your reward; if you, with the same quiet constancy and steadfastness, seek to bring souls to Him, who is the good Physician. It may be, that your toil will long appear mere unprofitable waste. You will long wonder at the little result which ensues on your earnest effort. The deeper laws of God's eternal kingdom, the manner in which He subdues minds to Himself, will be entirely hidden from your most searching investigation. Still, with faith, toil on; toil on. Carry your wicked and morally paralysed friends, on the arms of prayer, to Christ; persuade them, if possible, to seek the sacred scenes where the shadows of Christ's mysterious presence fall; "in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not." (*T. Jackson, M.A.*)

Ver. 4.—**They uncovered the roof where He was.**—*Daring faith:*—These roofs are substantially built, as they need to be, since the whole family habitually walked and slept upon them. They broke up and uncovered a part of the roof. But one would have thought that even then they were as far off from Jesus as ever. It must have required a daring faith in those four men to conceive and carry out the course they took. They let down their neighbour in a bed, which they had slung to ropes, into the room where Jesus was talking with rabbis of all the schools, but

they uttered no request. One would like to know the names of these four good men, good neighbours, good friends. The fact that we know not their names suggests to us that Christ cares for men whose names the world has never heard of, and never will hear; for the lowly and inconspicuous, no less than for the famous and the great. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Doing difficult work:*—When you cannot do a good thing, then is the very time to do it. If it cannot be done in one way, do it in another. If there is no way of doing it on the ground-level, get up on to the roof and do it. "Where there is a will, there is a way." The best work done in the world has been work that could not be done; and there is rarely a time when *you* ought not to do something that *cannot* be done—as it seems to you. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The potency of faith in Christian work:*—I. TRUE FAITH IS ALWAYS CONCERNED FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS. These men manifestly worked disinterestedly. So faith always acts; like the sister grace of charity, she "seeketh not her own." II. TRUE FAITH ALWAYS LOOKS TO CHRIST AS THE CENTRE OF ITS OPERATIONS. Not forms or ceremonies, or ministers, or churches, or even the Bible itself, but Christ is the only Saviour of the lost. III. TRUE FAITH IS FERTILE IN EXPEDIENTS FOR OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES. Have we exhausted all ingenuity in seeking souls? IV. TRUE FAITH MEETS WITH ITS APPROPRIATE REWARD. What a reward for their faith! Here is infinitely more than they ever expected (Ephes. iii. 20). LEARN—that faith is essentially practical; that religion is promoted by the exertions of believers; that to bring others to Jesus is the noblest achievement of man. (*W. W. Smith.*) *Faith seen by Christ:*—On none of these qualities did Christ fix as an explanation of the fact. He went deeper. He traced it to the deepest source of power that exists in the mind of man. "When Jesus saw their faith." For as love is deepest in the Being of God, so faith is the mightiest principle in the soul of man. Let us distinguish their several essences. Love is the essence of the Deity—that which makes it Deity. Faith is the essence of Humanity, which constitutes it what it is. And, as here, it is the warring principle of this world which wins in life's battle. No wonder that it is written in Scripture—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." No wonder it is said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." It is that which wrestles with difficulty, removes mountains, tramples upon impossibilities. It is this spirit which in the common affairs of life, known as a "sanguine temperament," never says "impossible" and never believes in failure, leads the men of the world to their most signal successes, making them believe a thing possible because they hope it; and giving substantial reality to that which before was a shadow and a dream. It was this "substance of things hoped for" that gave America to Columbus, when billows, miles deep, rose between him and the land, and the men he commanded well-nigh rose in rebellion against the obstinacy which believed in "things not yet seen." It was this that crowned the Mahommedan arms for seven centuries with victory: so long as they believed themselves the champions of the One God with a mission from Him, they were invincible. And it is this which so often obtains for some new system of medicine the honour of a cure, when the real cause of cure is only the patient's trust in the remedies. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **When Jesus saw their faith.**—*Faith for others:*—The perfect concurrence of the paralytic cannot be doubted, and probably he had already poured out his soul in confession; still, we have no right to ignore what the Holy Spirit has here recorded, viz., that it was the sight of his bearers' faith which drew from Christ's lips the words of forgiveness. It is a fact full of mystery, but full also of consolation, that not a few of the gifts of healing and restoration—on the centurion's servant, on Jairus' child, on the blind man at Bethsaida, on the Syro-Phœnician's daughter—were obtained through the faith and prayers, not so much of the sick and afflicted themselves, as of their relations and friends. Surely this dependence of man upon his fellow-creatures was intended to foreshadow the great mystery of Redemption through Another's Blood. It may well have been placed on record by the Holy Spirit to teach us that whenever we try to bring others to the feet of Jesus to be healed of their soul's sickness—be they friends or enemies—whenever we offer up "the prayer of faith," which we are assured "shall save the sick," we are associating ourselves in deeds of mercy and acts of intercession with the Great High Priest of the world—the One Mediator between God and Man—the Man Christ Jesus, our Lord. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Faith visible:*—Faith is sure to be visible to the naked eye. That which never manifests itself in action

is not the faith which Jesus sees with approval. Faith that cannot be seen is dead faith—dead and buried. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Jesus saw their faith:*—Here was the explanation of their strange conduct, and the secret motive power of their determined action. The crowd saw their eccentricity, Jesus saw their faith. If there be anything good within us Christ will be sure to see it. Here, then, we see the power of faith. I. It deepened their sympathy for this sufferer. If they pitied before, they would have a keener sympathy now they believed that a cure was possible. II. It devised a scheme for bringing him to Christ. III. It carried out that scheme in the most extraordinary way. IV. It attracted the admiration of Christ. *He saw* their faith. V. It obtained a cure for the sufferer. *Their* faith. (*Anon.*) *The faith of a child:*—An evangelist of to-day tells that, after one of his meetings, he observed that a little girl kept her seat after all others had left. Thinking that the child was asleep, he stepped forward to awaken her, but found she was praying that God would send her drunken father to that meeting-house that very night, there to be converted. The evangelist waited, and soon a man came rushing in from the street, and knelt tremblingly at the child's side. He had been brought thither by a sudden impulse which he could not resist, and then and there he found Christ. The child's faith was honoured in the conversion of her father. (*The Sunday School Times.*) *A paralytic healed on the faith of others:*— What I would especially remark in these words, is the benefit which this sick man received from the faith of others. He was healed upon the faith of the men who brought him to Jesus. Several instances of the same kind occur in the history of Christ's miracles. The conduct of the Saviour, in these instances, is agreeable to the general plan of God's moral government. As He has placed mankind in a state of mutual dependence, so it is an essential part of the constitution of His government, that some shall be benefited by the faith and piety, or shall be liable to suffer by the vice and wickedness of others. The bestowment indeed of future and eternal blessings must depend on personal qualifications. Observation shows us that this is no uncommon case. The virtue and happiness of communities greatly depend on the wisdom and integrity of rulers. The advantages which one enjoys by his connection with the virtuous, and the dangers to which another is exposed by his connection with the vicious, are not always owing merely to himself, but often to the immediate providence of God, who allots to each one such trials and such assistances as His wisdom sees fit. From this part of the Divine constitution we may derive some useful instructions. I. We see the reasonableness of INTERCESSION. If God is pleased to employ some men as visible instruments of general good, we may rationally suppose that He often, in a more secret and invisible manner, connects the happiness of many with the fervent prayers of a few, or even one godly soul. Of the Jews, in a corrupt period, the apostle says, "they were beloved for their fathers' sake." Some will ask, perhaps, how is it reasonable that our future happiness should be made to depend on another's prayers? We have not the command of their hearts, we cannot oblige them to pray for us; why should we be exposed to suffer for their neglect? What if, in His good providence, He brings you in the way of some useful warnings and instructions, and grants you some awakened and convincing influences of His kind spirit, when you have not sought them? And what if He does this in answer to the fervent prayers of others? Will you say that all this is wrong? II. We see from this subject that the doctrine of Scripture concerning our being involved IN THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRIMITIVE APOSTASY IS AGREEABLE TO THE ANALOGY OF PROVIDENCE. III. THAT OUR SALVATION THROUGH THE ATONEMENT AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF A REDEEMER APPEARS TO CORRESPOND WITH THE GENERAL CONSTITUTION OF GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT. It is an essential part of the Divine plan that the virtue of some should not only benefit themselves, but extend its kind and salutary influence to others. We see this to be the case among men; and probably it is the case among all moral beings except those who are in a state of punishment. The angels, we are told, are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. IV. OUR SUBJECT REMOVES THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTION URGED AGAINST THE DEDICATION OF INFANTS TO GOD IN THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM. For it shows that some may be benefited by the faith of others. It is often asked, "What advantage is baptism to infants? They have no knowledge of the use and design of it. They have not that faith which is required to baptism. If they are baptized, it cannot be on their own faith, it must be on the faith of their parents; and what benefit can they derive from the faith of another?" But this is no more an objection against the baptism of infants than against intercession for infants

V. OUR SUBJECT TEACHES US THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STATION IN WHICH WE ARE PLACED. We are acting not merely for ourselves, but for others, for many others, how many we cannot tell; for we know not how many are connected with us; nor how extensive may be the influence of our good or bad conduct. A holy and religious life is certainly of vast importance to ourselves; for on this depends the happiness of our existence through all the succeeding ages of eternal duration. But when we consider ourselves as standing in a near connection with our fellow probationers; when we realize how much good a sinner may destroy, or a saint promote; how many souls may be corrupted by the example of the one, and how many may be converted by the influence of the other; the importance of our personal religion rises beyond all conception. VI. WE SEE THAT BENEVOLENCE MUST BE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF TRUE RELIGION. If God has placed us in such a connection with those around us that their virtue and happiness will be affected by our conduct, we are evidently bound to act with a regard to their interest. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) **Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** *Power of these words:*—These words, so it is recorded, saved the life of that zealous minister of God, Donald Cargill. He had been for some time under conviction of sin, and his mind was harassed by Satan's assaults. Being naturally reserved, he could not prevail upon himself to lay his troubles before others. At last, in a paroxysm of despair, he resolved to bring his life on earth to a close. Again and again did he seek the banks of the Clyde, with a steadfast resolution to drown himself; and repeatedly was he interrupted by meeting persons he knew. Not to be frustrated, he rose one morning and walked to an old coal-pit, intending to throw himself into the abyss. At the verge, the words above quoted flashed across his mind; the effect was powerful and instantaneous; he returned to praise God for a free salvation, and to serve Him in a faithful and consistent Christian life.

Ver. 6. **But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts.**—*Reasons in reserve:*—All true religion is located in the heart. Where the human heart goes the human life will go. The New Testament is a revelation addressed to the heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign to be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." This story is remarkable for the exhibition it makes: (1) Of enterprise in bringing a helpless soul to the Saviour: how many ingenuities there are for reaching men when only the friends around them are in earnest; (2) of the intimate connection existing between sin and suffering: our Lord's action in bestowing pardon with the cure was strictly logical; (3) of the great advantage it is to any man to have Christians for companions to become friends in his need: this palsied creature was healed because of the faith other people had; (4) of the force of mean motives in driving men to reject Christ: these scribes were moved by arguments which they cherished, but concealed from sight. Upon this last point it seems worth while to dwell for a little while just by itself. Let us group the illustrations of the narrative around two simple propositions in turn. I. THE WOEST OPPOSITION WHICH CHRISTIANS HAVE TO MEET IN OFFERING THE GOSPEL TO MEN IS FOUND IN THE MENTAL RESERVATIONS OF ITS REJECTORS, and the sullen silence of their hearts. 1. To begin with, there are unspoken objections which influence, if they do not control, one's intellectual views. Men insist that there are discrepancies in the records of the Old and New Testaments which vitiate their truth, and, if generally known, would mock their claim to exact inspiration. Other men make great parade in private over difficulties in doctrine, and challenge attention to the fact that theologians differ in relation to almost all the cardinal points of what is called the evangelical system. Still others cavil at the inconsistencies of Church members, and rail out against them for hypocrisy, if only they can manage to secure a safe and credulous audience that dares not contradict them. Hints and innuendoes are the usual signs of this disturbed and unwholesome state of mind. Where do the young men of the present day obtain so much sceptical information? It is thrust in upon them by the public press. Doubts drop down like loose feathers wherever croaking ravens are wont to fly. But why is it that these reasons are so often held in reserve? Why does the man preserve his sullen demeanour without a word? (1) Because he is not exactly certain he can state them: it is not everybody who can say clearly what he does not believe; (2) because he feels a misgiving that they may not stand when some one a little more scholarly gets hold of them; (3) and because he suspects that if he goes so far in his small infidelity, he really would have to go farther or give it up. 2. There are unconscious

prejudices which arouse one's temper. Some persons conceive a violent spite at what they assert is a continuous rebuke whenever Christian life is praised or commended. This is not a new thing in history. Classic annals tell us that an unlettered countryman gave his vote against Aristides at the ostracism because, as he frankly said, he was tired of hearing him called "The Just." Other persons cherish implacable memories of indiscreet zeal practised upon them by those who supposed they were dutifully obeying the command, "Go, speak to that young man." They recite the grievance of revival extravagances, which they deemed offensive and never to be forgotten. They rehearse the biographies of preachers who bullied the patient congregations, and then ran into immorality and deplorable scandal. They plead rashness as an excuse for reserve. 3. There are unacknowledged sins which sway one's career. Come back to the story here in Mark's narrative. Hear the comments of these scribes accusing Jesus of blasphemy! Violent clamours for moral and theological perfectness are raised by many whose sole aim is to divert attention from some secret indulgences of their own. These people reason in their hearts. Sometimes in modern life a very showy conflict with Satan is kept up before the public in order to conceal the fact of one's friendship with him. It reminds us of plays in which the actors personate the devil fencing with some good antagonist behind the footlights, a knight, perhaps, the pink of virtue, battling fiercely with the demon clad in robe of fire. No one engaged for his soul could appear more bravely in earnest. But we are struck with a certain kind of wariness, which they both show in their hitting. Sparks fly from the weapons, but blood does not seem to be drawn. And if afterwards we were to go behind the scenes, there we should find those high-tempered combatants in a most surprising state of reconciliation; honourable knight and fiery devil seated in a friendly way at the table. 4. There results an unsubdued will sullenly closing one's lips. Many men live a double life; they mean to be courteous, but on religious matters they cultivate a cool, proud reserve. It often surprises us to find our Christian endeavours so ineffective with apparently kind, open, intelligent people. What is the real reason? Because the heart is what governs, and logic is not addressed to the heart. Arguments are made and meant for the intellect, and lose weight in the tenuous atmosphere of the feelings. It shows no difference whether we drop down feathers or dollars through the vacuum of an air-pump. II. Thus we reach our second proposition: ALL THESE REASONS IN RESERVE AVAIL NOTHING TO MEN THE MOMENT THE CONTEST IS SEEN TO BE, AS IT ALWAYS IS, A CONTEST WITH GOD, AND NOT MAN. 1. Look at the facts here; first, see verse 8. Jesus understood those scribes (1) divinely—He "perceived in His spirit." He understood them (2) thoroughly—He saw what was "within themselves." He understood them (3) at once; note that old word "immediately." God knows all our surmises and suspicions. Jesus peremptorily challenged those scribes in their logic. (1) He announced His discovery. They were "amazed;" literally, thunderstruck. (2) He accepted their condition. They looked on while He healed the man by miracle. (3) He defeated them utterly. We read that "they all glorified God." 2. Now let us draw a few final inferences from the whole story. This scene is repeated every day in the full sight of a patient God. Human nature is always the same along the ages. (1) There cannot possibly be any reasoning in one's heart which our omniscient Judge is not able instantly to perceive and to answer. Once a French soldier fell asleep on his post, and was brought up for trial by court martial. The first witness called was the Emperor Napoleon. "I was visiting the sentinels' outposts," he said; "I saw this soldier myself." (2) True prudence consists in outspoken candour. "Come, let us reason together." Sometimes objections vanish with the statement; for they seem so insignificant when expressed. Mere articulation of difficulties often clears them of confusion. (3) Sullen reserve surely runs to swift ruin. The difference between an ignorant prejudice and a wilful conceit is shown in this: ignorance stands with its back to the sun, and so if it advances moves on in the line of its own shadow only a step deeper; but churlish conceit walks straight away into a forest of doubts, till its own shadow is darkened with other shadows gloomier still. Hence, a confessed ignorance is altogether more hopeful for good because all it has to do is to turn to the light. Sullen obstinacy has to retrace its path, and so journey clear back to where it started. It was considerations of this sort which forced the bright remark that "an ingenuous intellect is often better than an ingenious one." (4) Reasons in reserve have really nothing to do with actual life or eternal prospects. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) I. An important aspect of human power. Secrecy and mental reservations. II. A

startling instance of Divine insight. Our silence is as loud as thunder to God! Our heart-talk is overheard! III. A splendid manifestation of Christ's fearlessness. He need not have answered more than was spoken. IV. A solemn example of the confusion which will fall upon all Christ's objectors. Enquiry: What is your unspoken objection? Doctrinal? Disciplinary? Philosophical? Ethical? Grammatical? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Human reasonings about Divine forgiveness*:—I. THAT HUMAN REASONINGS ARE BUSY WITH THE FIAT OF THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS. "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God only?" 1. Some men question the ability of Christ to forgive sin. 2. Some men seek to understand the process by which sin is forgiven. They wish to understand the mental philosophy of forgiveness, and because they cannot they deride it as a delusion. Is it to be expected that men shall be able to trace the Divine action in its method of forgiveness upon the human soul? Can men infallibly submit the subtle influences of heaven to their rude and vulgar tests, as they would the thoughts and mental actions of men? No! Who, by searching, can find out God? And certainly in His forgiving influence upon the human soul He is an unsearchable mystery. 3. Some men repudiate the evidences of the Divine forgiveness. They ask, how do we know that a man is forgiven; and what is the difference between him and any unforgiven individual? The evidence of it is in the hatred of sin, and in the purity of life which it inspires. And this witness is true. The world should receive it as such. II. THAT CHRIST REFUTES THE MENTAL REASONINGS OF MEN IN REFERENCE TO THE FIAT OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS. The reasonings of these men were refuted: 1. By the test of consciousness. The palsied man knew that his sins were forgiven in response to the Divine voice. 2. By the miracle of healing. Forgiveness heals the life. Lessons: 1. Not to cavil at the method of the Divine forgiveness. 2. To receive it with adoring gratitude. 3. To attest it by a holy life.

Vers. 7–11. **But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.**—*The case of Divine power*:—I think it is impossible not to be struck with this narrative. He not only shows His power here, but He shows an unrivalled and infinite ease in the exercise of it. For He lets His enemies themselves, as it were, choose the way in which it should be manifested; signifying that with Him it made no difference. (*J. Miller.*) *An example of Christ's supreme power*:—I. Power to FORGIVE sin. 1. This Christ plainly assumes. 2. This power, without a Mosaic sacrifice, implies that Jesus was already a lamb slain—in the purpose of God. II. Power to HEAL DISEASE. 1. This is a legitimate work of Jesus as Saviour, inasmuch as He undertook to bear our infirmities as well as our sins. 2. The resurrection will be the consummation of this power. III. Power to SILENCE CAVILLERS. 1. These cavillers were conquered. 2. When Jesus sits on His throne of judgment all cavillers will be put to shame. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Christ, the Forgiver of sins*:—A poor cobbler, unable to read, was asked by an Arian how he knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. "Sir," he replied, "you know that when I first became concerned about my soul I called upon you to ask for your advice, and you told me to go into company and spend my time as merrily as I could, but not to join the Christians. Well, I followed your advice for some time, but the more I trifled, the more my misery increased; and at last I was persuaded to hear one of those ministers who came into our neighbourhood and preached Jesus Christ as the Saviour. In the greatest agony of mind I prayed to Him to save me and to forgive my sins; and now I feel that He has freely forgiven them; and by this I know that He is the Son of God!" *Christ and the forgiveness of sin*:—What is the forgiveness of sins? 1. Two words in the New Testament denote this marvellous work. The meaning of the one is literally "to bestow grace—to grant undeserved favour." "Dealing out grace one towards another, as God, for Christ's sake, deals out grace towards you." The other means literally "to send away, to make to depart, to set out of sight by putting away." It fixes attention on the *last* element of the transaction, the release from penalties, the dread sentence of broken law. The other fixes attention on the *first* element of the transaction, that sovereign goodness in which it has its source. But what do we mean by the consequences of sin? Not outward inflictions. But (*a*) Divine deprivations. Loss of spiritual privileges and their resulting benefits. (*b*) Moral results of wrong-doing in its subject. As, for instance, increased disposition to sin; facility in transgression; the imprisonment and torment of evil habit; upbraiding of the guilty conscience; alienation from God; degradation from life; dread. Forgiveness lays an arresting, healing hand on each of these. It is gracious in its

beginnings; free in its bestowment; complete in its influence. This fact reminds us—1. That forgiveness comes to us out of the plenitude of the Divine nature. He is faithful and just to forgive. "I do it for My name's sake." 2. That this forgiveness reaches human hearts through the Son of Man. The phrase designates the Redeemer as having taken humanity into association with Divinity. The God-Man is the forgiving God. Coming to Him, and resting on Him, the chains are loosed. The Incarnate life bruises the serpent's head. 3. Spiritual activity is the manifestation and proof of redemptive forgiveness. Impotence was here visibly changed into strength; helplessness into self-helpful activity. Is the sinner forgiven? Behold he prayeth. Behold he walks. Behold he triumphs. 4. This great boon is freely bestowed. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *Christ's power to forgive:*—No wonder Christ's words made the scribes reason in their hearts, and ask this question. They were astonishing words, and strangely spoken. I. THE SURPRISE OF THE SCRIBES WAS NATURAL. 1. Strange that Christ should speak to this man about his sins. He seemed to need bodily healing more than anything else, and it was for that he had been brought to Jesus. None but Christ could see that his need was deeper than this—that his *moral* powers were palsied, his *soul* in a state of guilt. 2. Christ's assumption of power to forgive sins appeared blasphemous. To pronounce another's sins forgiven, one must have access to his most secret thoughts. Such knowledge only God possesses, and he to whom God may reveal it. II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MIRACLES. They signify the special presence of God, and are warranted only as a seal to a most important Divine message. In this case the miracle established before those present the authority of Jesus to forgive sins. The Divine control over nature which He actually exerted testified to the truth of His claim rightfully to exercise another Divine prerogative, the effect of which cannot be discerned by the bodily senses. III. THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MIRACLES. Important to remember that Christ was always jealously watched by unfriendly critics, who would certainly have exposed Him had His pretensions to miraculous power failed. IV. EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE. The outcasts were encouraged to come to one so powerful, and yet so merciful and kind. V. THE OBJECT OF THE SAVIOUR'S MISSION. It is because our wants are so deep, that He has descended so low. (*G. F. Wright.*) *Power to forgive sins:*—I. It is evident THAT CHRIST CONSIDERED HIS CHIEF CLAIM TO THE REVERENCE OF MEN WAS HIS POWER TO FORGIVE SIN. There is no want of man so central as his need to be rid of the power and guilt of sin. What costly expedients the world has adopted in the endeavour to free itself from the burden and the torture. That sense of unworthiness and ill-desert can neither be cajoled nor hunted out of our being. It may not be an ever-present force. There are times when in the engrossments of business and the excitement of pleasure we forget what we really are. But in the depths of our nature the serpent lies coiled, only silent for a while, not destroyed, and in time we feel the old sting. Men exalt Christianity as the great civilizer, but it is the redemptive power of the gospel that sets it above all other agencies. II. CHRIST EVIDENCES HIS POWER TO FORGIVE SINS BY VISIBLE MIRACLES. The transforming influence of grace is seen in individual character; also in the history of Christian missions. III. If Christ has "power on earth to forgive sins," THEN CHRIST IS DIVINE. No man and no wisdom of men can ever effect the pardon and deliverance of the transgressor. Science has no remedies strong enough to expel the poison from the spiritual nature. By doing this Christ makes good His claim to be Divine. IV. And if Jesus Christ has "power on earth to forgive sins," THEN IT IS OUR DUTY TO URGE MEN TO GO TO CHRIST THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF PARDON. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Sin a deep disease beyond the reach of human remedies:*—One of our modern novelists has written the story of a man who was haunted with remorse for a particular sin, and though sometimes weeks would pass without the thought of it, yet every now and then the ghost of the old transgression would rise before him to his infinite discomfort. It is the story of almost every human life. Sin is not something which a man commits and has done with it. It becomes a part of his being. His moral fibre is changed, his moral stamina is weakened. A traveller soon drives through the malarious air of the Roman Campagna and is out of the poisonous atmosphere; but during his brief transit disease has found its way into his blood, and even though he sits under the cool shadow of the Alps, or on the shore of the blue Mediterranean, the inward fever rages and burns. A man sins, and in sinning introduces disease into his moral nature, and even though he abandons his evil courses the old malady works on. The forgiveness of sin which is so thorough and central that it rids a

man of the power and guilt of sin—who is competent to give us that? No specific of man's devising, no course of moral treatment, can effect that. There is only One, Jesus Christ, who has power on earth to forgive sin in that complete and efficient fashion. And that is His chief glory and constitutes His principal claim upon us. It is to say but little of Him, to say that He is the wisest and purest and best that ever lived; that He is the perfect example; that He is the Teacher who makes no mistakes. I do not know Jesus Christ until I know Him in my experience as the One who has "power on earth to forgive sins." And that also is the glory and the commendation of the religion of Christ's gospel. (*Ibid.*) *Pardon develops manhood*:—Some man who is not only morally corrupt, but also a mere negative quantity in society, experiences the renewing grace of God and comes into the consciousness of redemption and pardon. Vastly more than a transformation of moral character is effected. Numberless dormant powers of manhood are developed. Unsuspected strata of capacity are uncovered. Thrift and intelligence and enterprise are born, and the whole nature experiences a transformation akin to that wrought in the physical world by the coming of the spring-time. There are numbers of such men in every community. So long as they were fettered with the consciousness of sin, all their powers and faculties were cramped; but when Christ spoke deliverance from guilt, their whole affectional and intellectual being felt the thrill and stir of a new life, and widened out and blossomed in most marvellous fashion. There is an infinite breadth to the assurance: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." What the Scripture calls the "liberty" of the children of God is not the little narrow ecclesiastical matter which so many people think it. It means affluence and opulence of life and possibility, and when one who has long been a mere cipher in the community branches out into all manner of healthy and handsome growths under the quickening of the pardoning love of Christ, the greatest of miracles is wrought before our eyes. We count it a stupendous achievement of genius when under the cunning hand of the artist the rough block of marble grows into the perfect statue; but what is that compared to the transfiguration of the living man which is so often effected by the Divine love manifesting itself in full and free and felt forgiveness? It is quite as marvellous as a new creation. (*Ibid.*) *The Divine Maker of man the only Repairer of man*:—The legend runs that there once stood in an old baronial castle a musical instrument upon which nobody could play. It was complicated in its mechanism, and during years of disuse the dust had gathered and clogged it, while dampness and variations of temperature had robbed the strings of their tone. Various experts had tried to repair it, but without success, and when the hand of a player swept over the chords it woke only harsh discords and unlovely sounds. But there came one day to the castle a man of another sort. He was the maker of the instrument, and saw what was amiss and what was needed for its repair, and with loving care and skill he freed the wires from the encumbering dust and adjusted those which were awry and brought the jangling strings into tune, and then the hall rang with bursts of exquisite music. And so with these souls of ours, so disordered by sin that everything is in confusion and at cross purposes: it is not until their Divine Maker comes and attempts the task of repair and re-adjustment that they can be set right and made capable of the harmonies for which they were originally constructed. Men weary themselves in vain with their various expedients for securing peace of mind and riddance from the sense of guilt. Only God can give that, and when Jesus Christ accomplishes that in us we must needs cry out to Him, "My Lord and my God." (*Ibid.*) *Christ's prerogative to forgive sins*:—I. THE ASTOUNDING PREROGATIVE THAT CHRIST JESUS ASSUMED. The despised and rejected man says, "The Son of Man hath power," &c., "Who can forgive sins but God only?" In the nature of things, it is only He against whom the crime is committed, it is only He whose majesty is violated, it is only He whose law is broken, that hath power to remit the penalty that He has imposed on the transgression of His law, the infringement of His majesty and the infraction of His authority. Even amongst the children of men this is held as a sacred and inalienable right; insomuch that mercy is the appropriate and inalienable prerogative of the Crown; and no subject, however exalted he may be in place or power, presumes to arrogate to himself—it would be high treason were he to arrogate to himself—the power to remit the sentence of the law. The judge may commend to mercy, the influential may interpose their interest; but it belongs to the sovereign to exercise the prerogative of the Crown, and to remit the sentence that is passed. But if this prerogative even among the children of men be inalien-

able, how much more must the prerogative of the King of kings and Lord of lords, who "is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent"—how much more must His prerogative be incommunicable, indefeasible, inalienable? "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" II. THE EVIDENCE THAT HE GAVE in demonstration of His claim is clear as the noon-day sun, and as irresistible as the very power of God. Let us, then, see how He could substantiate so stupendous a claim as to forgive sins—all sins; forgive them in His own right, in His own name, of His own authority. The position was laid down, and the argument for its establishment was obvious. It was not intricate and dark, requiring a mighty intellect to grasp it, or a penetrating understanding to enter into its process. It was an appeal to every man, that had an eye to see and a mind to understand. III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST, AND THIS WONDROUS PREROGATIVE THAT HE EXERCISED—"The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." One might have imagined that He would rather have said in this connection, "The Son of God hath power on earth to forgive sins;" for surely it was only as He was "very God of very God," that He could have wielded the sceptre of the eternal Jehovah. But there is a beautiful propriety, there is a touching and exquisite fitness, in thus designating Himself "the Son of Man." Therefore it was not simply or so much as the Son of God alone, that the Saviour had this wondrous prerogative, but as the Son of Man, who became the Surety for sinners, who took the manhood into Godhead that He might be the Daysman between His fallen brethren and His unchangeable Father—that He might put His hand on both and so make peace—that He might bring God and man to one, and yet maintain His law inviolate, His majesty unsullied, His truth unimpeached, His justice uncompromised, and all His attributes invested with a new and nobler lustre than the universe had ever before beheld, or could have entered into created mind to conceive. Therefore, brethren, it was not by a simple act of sovereignty that the Saviour forgave sins. As the Centurion said to Paul, "With a great price bought I this freedom," so with a great price the incarnate God bought the glorious and benign prerogative of forgiving sins. He bought it with His agony and blood. He bought it by His meritorious and spotless obedience—by His glorious resurrection and ascension. By all these He bought this glorious prerogative of forgiving sins. So that "we are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Perceive you, brethren, the momentousness and meaning of this distinction? Let me by a simple illustration make it more clear to the plainest mind. It is conceivable that when a sovereign had arrived at an age to assume the sceptre of a nation, and wished to grace his accession to the throne by some act of regal munificence and clemency, he might proclaim an universal exemption from all debts contracted by any inhabitants of that land in days gone by. It is conceivable that he might do this; but if he did so, to the wrong and robbery of all the creditors of that land, would his clemency, do you think, add to his glory? would it give any pledge of his justice, integrity, or even common honesty towards his subjects? So far from it, his clemency would be lost sight of in the injury and the wrong he had done. But if that prince, being desirous to grace his accession to the throne by an act of clemency, in which justice should likewise shine, were from his own private resources to liquidate all the debts of all those imprisoned for debt throughout the length and breadth of the land, and then throw open the prison doors, all would applaud the deed; all would admire the exercise of sovereign clemency in perfect harmony with unimpeachable justice. So, if we may venture by low and earthly things to illustrate things sublime and heavenly, the blessed Son of God, the Prince and Saviour of mankind, "exalted to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins," did not set the sinful debtors free, that owed to their Father an infinite debt which they had no power to pay—which they would throughout eternity have been paying and yet had throughout eternity to pay—He did not set them free by a simple exercise of His own authority, violating the obligations of law, the demands of justice, and the claims of the unfallen portion of the subjects of an everlasting Father. But He paid the debt; He became Surety, and He met the claim; He paid it to the uttermost farthing, till He could say with His expiring breath, "It is finished"—till He had "finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness." The Father, well pleased in the full expiation accomplished by the Son, delights to forgive through that Saviour's name—"for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Christian brethren, if the Son of Man had "power on earth to

forgive sins," how much more, if it be possible, hath He power in heaven to forgive sins? (*H. Stowell, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **We never saw it on this fashion.**—*The new fashion*:—I. DO NOT DISBELIEVE THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT SURPRISES YOU. 1. Nothing stands in the way of real knowledge so much as prejudice. 2. Many things which we know to be true would not have been believed by our fathers if they had been revealed to them. 3. There are many things which are undoubted facts which certain classes of men find it hard to believe. 4. The fact that a gospel statement seems new and astonishing ought not to create unbelief in the mind. II. THERE ARE VERY SINGULAR AND SURPRISING THINGS IN THE GOSPEL. 1. That the gospel should come to people whom it regards as incapable. 2. That the gospel calls upon men to do what they cannot do. 3. That whilst the gospel bids men do what they cannot of themselves do, they actually do it. 4. This paralyzed man was healed—(*a*) at once, (*b*) without any ceremony, (*c*) perfectly, (*d*) evidently. So is it when the gospel saves the soul. III. IF IT BE SO WITH YOU, THEN GO AND GLORIFY GOD. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prejudice a stumbling block*:—Theories are the nuisances of science: the rubbish that must be swept away that the precious facts may be made bare. If you go to the study of a subject, saying to yourself, "This is how the matter must shape itself," having beforehand made up your mind what the facts ought to be, you will have put in your own way a difficulty more severe than the subject itself could place there. Prejudice is the stumbling-block of advance. (*Ibid.*) *New things may be true things*:—When an observer first discovered that there were spots on the sun he reported it, but he was called before his father confessor and upbraided for having reported anything of the kind. The Jesuit father said that he had read Aristotle through several times, and he had found no mention in Aristotle of any spots in the sun, and therefore there could be no such things. (*Ibid.*) *The inconceivable may be true*:—If our forefathers could have been informed that men would travel at forty or fifty miles an hour, drawn by a steam engine, they would have shaken their heads and laughed the prediction to scorn. (*Ibid.*) *Sense not to limit faith*:—Some time ago a missionary had told his black congregation that in the winter time the water in England became so hard that a man could walk upon it. Now they believed a good deal that he told them, but they did not believe that. One of them was brought over to England. The frost came at length, and the missionary took his black friend down to it; and although he stood upon the ice himself he could not persuade the negro to venture. "No," he said, "but I never saw it so. I have lived fifty years in my own country, and I never saw a man walk on a river before." (*Ibid.*) *God's power not to be limited by human calculation*:—If you are longing for a great salvation you must not sit down and calculate the Godhead by inches, and measure out the merit of Christ by ells, and calculate whether He can do this or do that. (*Ibid.*) *The most senseless limit of evidence is the limit of the senses*:—But there is a great proneness to fix just such limits as these. Said a shrewd pastor in Massachusetts, when a new method of church work was proposed to him by a visiting brother, "No, no, that wouldn't go down with my people; it's too novel. There are two objections which my people raise against any fresh thing which I propose to them; one is, We never tried that thing here: the other is, We tried that here once, and it didn't go. Either of these objections is fatal." Such people as that don't all live in Massachusetts, nor in Palestine. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Ver. 13. **And He went forth again by the seaside.**—*A walk by the sea*:—I. IT WAS NOT A WALK OF ABSENT REVERIE. II. IT WAS NOT A WALK OF SENTIMENTAL ADMIRATION. III. IT WAS A WALK HALLOWED BY SACRED TEACHING. We should endeavour to make our walks subservient to the moral good of men, and in this incidental manner we might do much to enhance the welfare of the Redeemer's cause. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christian work at the seashore*:—Can we not do something for Jesus on the sands? If so, let us not miss such a happiness. What situation and surroundings can be better for earnest, loving conversation with our young friends concerning their souls' best interests? A few words about the sea of eternity and its great deeps, a sentence or two upon the broken shells and our frailty, upon the Rock of Ages and the sands of time, may never be forgotten, especially if they be but few, and those pleasant, solemn, and congruous with the occasion. A good book lent to a lounger may also prove a blessing. A handful of interesting pamphlets scattered discreetly may prove to be fruitful seed. Souls

are to be caught by the seashore and in the boat: gospel fisherman, take your net with you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the receipt of custom.**—*The call of Matthew:*—The story is placed immediately after a miracle, as if to hint that Matthew's conversion was a miracle. There are points of similarity between the miracle and the conversion. Matthew was spiritually palsied by his sins and his money-making; hence he needed the Divine command, "Arise and walk." There may be points of likeness also between Matthew's personal story and our own. These may be profitably considered. I. HIS CALL SEEMED ACCIDENTAL AND UNLIKELY. 1. Jesus had often been at Capernaum, which He had selected to be "His own city;" and yet Matthew remained unsaved. Was it likely he would now be called? Had not his day of grace closed? 2. Jesus was about other business; for we read, "As He passed by." Would He now be likely to call Matthew? 3. Jesus left many other persons uncalled; was it not highly probable that the tax-gatherer would be passed by? Yet Jesus called to Himself, "Levi, the son of Alphæus," while many another man had no such special call. II. HIS CALL WAS ALTOGETHER UNTHOUGHT OF AND UNSOUGHT. 1. He was in a degrading business. None but the lowest of the Jews would care to gather taxes for the Roman conqueror. His discipleship would bring no honour to Christ. 2. He was in an ensnaring business. Money is bird-lime to the soul. 3. He would not have dared to follow Jesus even if he had wished to do so. He felt himself to be too unworthy. 4. He would have been repulsed by the other disciples, had he proposed to come without the Lord's open invitation. 5. He made no sign in the direction of Jesus. No prayer was offered by him, nor wish expressed towards better things. III. HIS CALL WAS GIVEN BY THE LORD, WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. "He saw Levi," and called him. 1. He saw all the evil that had been in him and was yet there. 2. He saw his adaptation for holy service, as a recorder and penman. 3. He saw all that He meant to make of him. 4. He saw in him His chosen, His redeemed, His convert, His disciple, His apostle, His biographer. The Lord calls as He pleases, but He sees what He is doing. Sovereignty is not blind; but acts with boundless wisdom. IV. HIS CALL WAS GRACIOUSLY CONDESCENDING. 1. The Lord called "Levi, the son of Alphæus," or, as he himself says, "a man named Matthew,"—that was his best. 2. He was a publican—that may not have been his worst. 3. He allowed such a sinner to be His personal attendant; yea, called him to that honour, saying, "Follow *Me*." 4. He allowed him to do this immediately, without putting him into quarantine. V. HIS CALL WAS SUBLIMELY SIMPLE. 1. Few were the words—"Follow Me." It is very tersely recorded—"He saw . . . said . . . and he arose and followed Him." 2. Clear was the direction. 3. Personal was the address. 4. Royal was the command. VI. HIS CALL WAS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTUAL. 1. Matthew followed at once. 2. He followed spiritually as well as literally. 3. He followed wholly. 4. He followed growingly. 5. He followed ever after, never deserted his Leader. VII. HIS CALL WAS A DOOR OF HOPE FOR OTHERS. 1. His salvation encouraged other publicans to come to Jesus. 2. His open house gave opportunity to his friends to hear Jesus. 3. His personal ministry brought others to the Saviour. 4. His written Gospel has convinced many, and will always do so. Application: Are *you* up to your neck in business? Are you "sitting at the receipt of custom"? Yet may a call come to you at once. It does come. Hear it attentively; rise earnestly; respond immediately. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Call of Levi:*—Such as sit at the receipt of custom are hard to be converted; but Jesus manifests His power by doing it with one word alone. Grace disengages Matthew from the love of money, to make him an apostle; the love of money will separate Judas from Christ, to make him an apostate: thus our Lord makes Himself amends beforehand. St. Matthew's example had no influence on Judas, though perhaps it was Christ's design to lay it before his eyes. Let us profit by the one as well as the other; and let us, with fear and trembling, adore the different judgments of God in relation to souls. (*Quesnel.*) *Calls to duty joyful:*—When the Saviour calls, follow Him gladly. Never regret a duty, or lament a responsibility, or grieve over a sacrifice required. If we were as wise as Matthew, we should celebrate with festive joy every call to duty. (*R. Glover.*) *The attraction of the Divine call:*—We read in classic story, how the lyre of Orpheus enchanted with its music, not only the wild beasts, but the very trees and rocks upon Olympus, so that they moved from their places to follow him; so Christ, our heavenly Orpheus, with the music of His gracious speech, draws after Him those less susceptible to benign

influences than beasts, and trees, and stones, even poor, hardened, senseless, sinful souls. Let Him but strike His golden harp, and whisper in thy heart, "Come, follow Me," and thou, like another Matthew, shalt be won. *The call of Levi*:—Well might he sit down here; for he had a great weight upon him, the burden of his covetousness, and the desires of gold, bred in him by the often traffic he had with it. Gold is heaviest of all metals; but it is made more heavy by covetousness. For it more oppresses the heart of him that loves it, than the back of him that bears it. And where was he sitting? At the receipt of custom. "If it be more blessed to give than to receive," certainly to be a receiver of extorted oppression from the grudging people must be no happy nor blessed thing. This custom-house was such. The receiving of custom breeds a custom of receiving; and that, a desire still to receive more; which desire worldly men will ever seek to satisfy, though with the oppression of their poor brethren. This made this place and office hateful to the people. "Publicans and sinners" went ever together in their mouths. . . . Christ found him, as he was Levi, the publican; but looked on him, as he was Matthew, the apostle. . . . He called him to an office much more gainful . . . where he should still be a receiver, and a gainer too; but not, as here, ten or fifteen per centum; but where one should "bring forth thirty, one sixty, one an hundred-fold." (*Wm. Austin.*) *God often calls men in strange places*:—Not in the house of prayer, not in the preaching of the Word; but when all these things have been absent, and all surrounding circumstances have seemed most adverse to the work of grace, that grace has put forth its power. The tavern, the theatre, the gaming-house, the race-course, and other similar haunts of worldliness and sin, have sometimes been the scene of God's converting grace. As an old writer says, "Our calling is uncertain in respect of place, for God calls some from their ships, and some from their shops; some from under the hedges, and others from the market; so that, if a man can but make out unto his own soul that he is certainly called, the time when and the place where matter little." *The call of Levi, or Christ's voice to the soul*:—I. THAT CHRIST CALLS MEN TO FOLLOW HIM. 1. That the call of Christ is antecedent to any human endeavour after Him. 2. That it is often effectively addressed to the most unlikely men. 3. That it is addressed to men when they are occupied with the secular duties of life. 4. That it takes men from the lower duties and sends them to the higher. II. THAT CHRIST'S CALL TO MEN MUST BE IMMEDIATELY OBEYED—"And he arose and followed Him." 1. That obedience must be immediate. (1) Not to be hindered by intellectual perplexities. (2) Not to be hindered by commercial or domestic anxieties. 2. That obedience must be self-sacrificing. 3. That it must be willing. 4. That it must be continuous. Learn: 1. To heed the calls of Christ to the soul. 2. To subordinate the secular to the moral. 3. That true religion consists in following Christ. 4. That it is well to speak to men for their moral good. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Matthew the publican*:—Alas! that the son of a devout, God-fearing Israelite should have fallen so low. Even the outcasts, the sons of Belial, hesitated long before they thus sold themselves to work iniquity. But he had gone freely and voluntarily into the service of the heathen. A father's stern commands, a mother's earnest pleadings, the entreaties of a loving sister and the expostulations of manly and pure-hearted brothers, the fair fame of the family, upon whose proud escutcheon no such blot had ever come since the days of their great ancestor, David—all these were of no avail to turn this wayward young man from the evil course he had chosen, and at length his name had been blotted from their record and, to all outward seeming, he was to them as if he had never lived. The neighbours and friends left out his name when they spoke of the children of Klopas (as in Mark vi. 3), and at morning and evening prayer no audible petition went up to heaven for the erring and sinful one. But, hardened as he was, and great as was the distress he had given to his family, Levi was not beyond the free grace of the Redeemer of men. Jesus was his cousin, according to the flesh, and though He knew how the hearts of that dear family at Nazareth were breaking with anguish over him as utterly lost, yet He, the Divine Redeemer, did not despair of his recovery from the depth of his degradation and sin. Having loved him with an everlasting love, He would draw him out of the depths by the power of His loving-kindness. And so it came to pass that when Jesus had left Nazareth and the home of His youth for busy, bustling Capernaum, because there He could accomplish a more comprehensive and effective work in establishing the kingdom of God on the earth, His eye more than once rested on poor Levi, and He saw that, in spite of his bravado, his sins were making him wretched. And when on that bright summer morning He went from Peter's house

to His work of teaching and healing at the shore of the lake, as He passed the stall or booth where Levi was receiving the tolls and taxes, He said only, "Follow me;" and the tax-gatherer, a few moments ago so hardened and brusque, instantly abandoned his books and accounts, his money and receipts, and, rising from his seat, followed Jesus. Nor did he ever return to the base employment he had left. The change of heart and purpose, though apparently instantaneous, was thorough and permanent. One evidence of its thoroughness was manifested in his desire to bring others who had fallen into the same degradation as himself under the gracious influence of Christ's teachings. "And Levi made Him" (*i.e.*, Christ), says the evangelist Luke, "a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them." To these sinful souls our blessed Lord spoke words of forgiveness and pardon, and they became, as St. Mark tells, His followers thenceforward. As for Matthew, he undoubtedly grew in grace, and was restored to the loving favour of his family; for it was, at the farthest, but a very few months later that Jesus chose him as one of the twelve, and with him two, and possibly three of his brothers, the devout and exemplary James the Just being one, and gave him his new name "Matthew," "The gift of God." Matthew's remembrance of his early history and sins seems to have kept him humble, and have prevented him from participating in those unseemly wrangles as to who should be the greatest, in which some of the others indulged; but he was a keen observer, and from the day when he abandoned his publican's stall to his death he must have felt more profoundly than any of the others the certainty that Jesus was the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary. Some practical lessons: I. FAMILY PRIDE IS NOT A SUFFICIENT PRESERVATIVE AGAINST DEEDS OF SHAME. II. HAS DISHONOUR BEEN BROUGHT UPON YOUR FAMILY NAME BY A PRODIGAL? Do not despair of him. You have a great burden of shame and grief to bear; but do not cease to love the prodigal, to pray for him, to hope for him. He, like St. Matthew, may yet hear and obey the voice of Christ. 1. If you did your best to train him in the way in which he should go, be very sure that the healthful influences by which you surrounded him are still with him, fighting mightily against the degrading influence by which he is now encompassed, and they may yet prevail. Not in vain did you do your duty in regard to him. 2. Ah, but it may be that you cannot recall the days of his boyhood without personal shame. You permitted many things to prevent you from training him duly in godliness and true manliness; the example you set before him was not really ennobling. Well, humble yourself before God, and hope in God for your son as well as for yourself. He may yet yield to the persistent drawings of the Divine love. III. NO MAN SHOULD PERMIT HIS BUSINESS OR HIS SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS TO HINDER HIM FROM FOLLOWING CHRIST. IV. ONE OF THE VERY BEST EVIDENCES OF A MAN'S CONVERSION IS A REAL MANIFESTATION OF CARE FOR THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THOSE OF HIS OWN CLASS. (*Anon.*) *The call of Levi*:—I. The PERSON called. A publican, &c. II. The MANNER in which he is called. 1. Externally—by the Word. 2. Internally—by Christ's power and Spirit. 3. These two must ever be combined. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH LEVI TREATED THE CALL. 1. He did not disregard it, as many. 2. He did not promise a compliance like others. 3. He instantly obeyed, and is thus an example to all who are called. IV. THE CALL ITSELF. Christ goes before—1. To prepare Himself for sympathy. 2. To remove doubts as to the way. 3. To free from oppressive responsibility. 4. To show how we are to walk in the way. 5. To remove obstructions. 6. To be a companion. Are you following Christ? (*Expository Discourses.*) *The feast of Levi, or the festival of a renewed soul*:—I. IT WAS A FESTIVAL HELD TO CELEBRATE THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF A SOUL. 1. It was indicative of joy. 2. It was indicative of gratitude. 3. It was indicative of worship. The newly converted soul is characterized by devotion. II. IT WAS HELD TO INTRODUCE TO CHRIST THOSE WHO WERE IN NEED OF HIS LOVING MERCY. 1. It was a time for the introduction of sinful companions to Christ. 2. It was a time of leave-taking between Levi and his former friends. Not to leave the old life in a hostile spirit. III. IT WAS A FESTIVAL TOO LOFTY IN MORAL SIGNIFICANCE TO BE RIGHTLY INTERPRETED BY THE CONVENTIONAL BIGOTS OF THE AGE. IV. IT WAS A FESTIVAL BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF CHRIST'S MISSION TO THE WORLD. 1. We see from this festival that Christ came to save the morally sinful. 2. We see from this festival that Christ came to heal the morally diseased. Lessons: 1. That the life of the renewed soul should be a constant festival of joy. 2. That Christians should endeavour to bring their comrades to the Saviour. 3. That humanity has a Divine Physician. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*

Ver. 16. **And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners.**—*The curse of bigotry*:—The sins society winks at are worse than those it censures. The most alarming sin is the self-delusion that we have no sin. The pride of the Pharisees had made them so callous that a sharp lancet was needed to get at the wound. I. BIGOTRY BESPATTERS WITH MIRE THE FAIREST DEED. According to its creed, better that a tree of fruitful goodness should not grow than that it should depart by a hairbreadth from the prescribed shape. II. BIGOTRY BLINDFOLDS ITS OWN EYES. It can only see sin when sin wears a particular hue. It can see avarice or theft, but not insincerity or pride. III. BIGOTRY SEEKS ITS BAD ENDS BY CROOKED WAYS. These scribes lacked courage, so instead of attacking Christ openly they tried to undermine His authority with His disciples. IV. BIGOTRY CHEATS ITSELF OF LARGEST BLESSING. Christ would have illuminated and enriched these proud Pharisees if they had allowed Him to. But they were too proud to admit their hunger, and so they starved. He who thinks himself already perfect is past improvement. Like hide-bound animals he cannot grow. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *An implied charge set aside*:—Negatively: 1. That Christ did not associate with publicans and sinners because He entertained too humble an opinion of Himself. He knew that He was intellectually and morally superior to them. 2. That Christ did not associate with publicans and sinners because He was not choice as to His society. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." 3. That Christ did not associate with publicans and sinners because of His sympathy with them. It was not their wickedness that drew Him to them; morally He had nothing in common with them. Positively: 1. That to have refused Levi's invitation would not have been courteous. 2. That in accepting Levi's invitation Christ displayed a spirit of condescension. 3. That by eating and drinking with publicans and sinners Christ exhibited a friendly disposition towards them. 4. That attending Levi's feast gave Christ an excellent opportunity of doing Publicans and sinners good. (*G. Cron.*) *Christ's relations with the world*:—To come, then, to the root of the whole matter; the supreme Lover of the universe, God, is in the tenderest relations to everything that is. Not that we are to make no difference between good and evil. We are to make a difference between them. If we have the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ our goodness will make us more lenient, more charitable, more patient with bad men and bad things. And remember one thing—that no human heart is ever cured till you can find another heart to brood it; for the cure of the heart is of the heart, and a loving heart cures an unloving heart; and as God lives by His purity to make more pure, by His love to heal men's selfishness, by His beauty and majesty and power to draw men up out of animal life into spiritual life; so His followers may imitate Him in those respects, and make atonement for those who are ready to perish—the atonement that love is always making—and as far as they carry that out they may redeem men. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ welcoming sinners*:—We are told that in stormy weather it is not unusual for small birds to be blown out of sight of land on to the sea. They are often seen by voyagers out of their reckoning and far from the coast, hovering over the masts on weary wings as if they wanted to alight and rest themselves, but fearing to do so. A traveller tells us that on one occasion a little lark, which followed the ship for a considerable distance, was at last compelled through sheer weariness to alight. He was so worn out as to be easily caught. The warmth of the hand was so agreeable to him that he sat down on it, burying his little cold feet in his feathers, and looking about with his bright eye not in the least afraid, and as if feeling assured that he had been cast amongst good kind people whom he had no occasion to be so backward in trusting. A touching picture of the soul who is aroused by the Spirit of God and blown out of its own reckoning by the winds of conviction; and the warm reception which the weary little bird received at the hands of the passengers conveys but a faint idea of that welcome which will greet the worn-out, sin-sick souls who will commit themselves into the hands of the only Saviour. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ in company with sinners; or, the law of social intercourse in the Christian life*:—We have in this narrative a beautiful illustration of the law of social intercourse in the Christian life, given by Christ, and which, therefore, may be regarded as of authority. We observe—I. THAT THE MORALLY GOOD MUST ASSOCIATE WITH THE SOCIALLY DEPRAVED. "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" 1. That the morally good may take part in the social festivals of the depraved, but not for the mere purpose of social enjoyment or intellectual companionship. Christ did not go to the house of Levi merely to enjoy a sumptuous banquet, or to participate in the festivities of unholy men. 2. The morally good

may associate with the depraved in the commercial enterprise of life. The good must have dealings with the unholy in the commerce of the world. The tares and the wheat must grow together until the harvest. 3. The morally good are sometimes brought into incidental companionship with the depraved. II. THAT THE MORALLY GOOD IN COMPANIONSHIP WITH THE SOCIALLY DEPRAVED MUST BE ANIMATED BY REMEDIAL MOTIVES, AND MUST GIVE FORTH INFLUENCES ENNOBLING TO THE SOUL. "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." 1. The Christian must go into the company of the morally depraved with right views of their sad condition, and with an intense desire for their recovery. 2. The Christian can give forth healing influences to the morally depraved by kindly words, by gentle disposition, by judicious teaching, and by unpretentious example. Lessons: 1. That the morally good must go into the company of the socially depraved. 2. That the morally good are the physicians of the race; they must be careful not to take the infection of sin, and to exercise judiciously their healing art. 3. That society will best be regenerated by individual effort. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. **They that are whole have no need of the physician.**—*For whom is the gospel meant?*—I. Even a superficial glance at our Lord's mission suffices to show that HIS WORK WAS FOR THE SINFUL. His descent into the world implied that men needed deliverance. The bearing of the gospel covenant is towards guilty men. His mission is described as one of mercy and grace. The gospel turns its face always towards sin. The gospel has always found its greatest trophies amongst the most sinful. To whom else could it look? II. THE MORE CLOSELY WE LOOK THE MORE CLEAR THIS FACT BECOMES. Christ came that He might be a sin-bearer. The gifts of the gospel, such as pardon and justification, imply sin. The great deeds of our Lord, such as His death, resurrection, and ascension, all bear upon sinners. III. IT IS OUR WISDOM TO ACCEPT THE SITUATION. The very best thing you can do, since the gospel looks towards sinners, is to get where the gospel looks. You will then be in your right place. This is the safest way to obtain the blessing. This is a place into which you can get directly. IV. THIS DOCTRINE HAS A GREAT SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. It changes the sinner's thoughts of God. It inspires, melts, enlivens, and inflames him. It deals a deadly blow at his self-conceit. It produces a sense of gratitude. It makes him ready to forgive others. It becomes the very soul of enthusiasm. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's treatment of sinners:*—I. SINNERS IN THEIR NATURAL STATE HAVE NEED OF REPENTANCE. This duty is often urged in Scripture (Isaiah lv. 7; Matt. iii. 8; Acts ii. 38). 1. Without repentance none can be saved. 2. Let all, therefore, lay hold on it without delay. II. SINNERS CANNOT REPENT OF THEMSELVES. They must be called to it by Christ. III. ONE MAIN END OF CHRIST'S COMING INTO THE WORLD WAS TO CALL AND CONVERT SINNERS, AND BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE. 1. This should encourage sinners to come to Christ by faith, and by true repentance and humiliation for their sins, in hope of mercy and pardon. Since He came for this purpose, He will not reject any who accept His invitation and hearken to His call. 2. How excellent a work it must be—since Christ Himself came to begin it—to be the means of converting sinners, and drawing them to repentance. This is not merely the duty of ministers: all Christians may take part in it. 3. If Christ came to call sinners to repentance, then He did not come to give liberty to any to live in sin, or to commit sin. Repentance is the beginning of a new life—a life of emancipation from the power as well as the penalty of sin. (*G. Petter.*) All the lessons of this word could not be even named here, but these are certainly in it. I. Sin is sickness of the worst kind. II. Repentance and forgiveness are the healing of the soul. III. Christ is the soul's Physician, skilled to heal all its diseases. IV. The more grave our case is, the more eager Jesus is to cure it. What should we have done had this not been the case? Happily He still stoops to closest, tenderest fellowship with sinners. He pities most the guiltiest, and is ever nearest to the neediest. (*R. Glover.*) *Christ's call:*—I. Christ came not to call the RIGHTEOUS. 1. Because there were no righteous to call. 2. Because if there had been they would not have needed calling. II. He came to call SINNERS. 1. All sinners. 2. Especially those conscious of their sins. III. He came to call to REPENTANCE. His call is not an absolute call to the privileges of the sons of God, but to the fulfilment of a condition—repent, and believe. (*Anon.*) *Wretchedness a plea for salvation:*—On entering a ragged school you see a boy who can spell his way through a Bible—once a sealed book to him; he knows now of a Saviour, of whom once he had never heard the name. Clean, sharp, intelligent, bearing an honest air with him,

he bespeaks your favour. But were these his passport to the asylum? No. He was adopted not for the sake of these, but notwithstanding the want of them. It was his wretchedness that saved him; the clean hands, and the rosy cheeks, and all that won our favour, are the results of that adoption. (*Dr. Guthrie.*) *The spirit in which to seek salvation*:—On one occasion, when the late Duke of Kent expressed some concern about the state of his soul in the prospect of death, his physican endeavoured to soothe his mind by referring to his high respectability and his honourable conduct in the distinguished situation in which Providence had placed him; but he stopped him short, saying, "No; remember, if I am to be saved, it is not as a prince, but as a sinner." *The sinner's hope*:—A Hottentot of immoral character, being under deep conviction of sin, was anxious to know how to pray. He went to his master, a Dutchman, to consult with him; but his master gave him no encouragement. A sense of his wickedness increased, and he had no one near to direct him. Occasionally, however, he was admitted with the family at the time of prayer. The portion of Scripture which was one day read was the parable of the Pharisee and publican. While the prayer of the Pharisee was read, the poor Hottentot thought within himself, "This is a good man; here is nothing for me;" but when his master came to the prayer of the publican—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner"—"This suits me," he cried; "now I know how to pray." With this prayer he immediately retired, and prayed night and day for two days, and then found peace. Full of joy and gratitude he went into the fields, and, as he had no one to whom he could speak, he exclaimed, "Ye hills, ye rocks, ye trees, ye rivers, hear what God has done for my soul! He has been merciful to me, a sinner." *The great Physician and His patients*:—This was Christ's apology for mingling with the publicans and sinners when the Pharisees murmured against Him. He triumphantly cleared Himself by showing that, according to the fitness of things, He was perfectly in order. He was acting according to His official character. A physician should be found where there is work for him to do, &c. I. MERCY GRACIOUSLY REGARDS SIN AS DISEASE. It is more than disease, but mercy leniently and graciously chooses to view it as such. It is justified in such a view, for almost everything that may be said of deadly maladies may be said of sin. 1. Sin is an hereditary disease. The taint is in our blood, &c. 2. Sin, like sickness, is very disabling. It prevents our serving God. We cannot pray or praise God aright, &c. There is not a single moral power of manhood which sin has not stripped of its strength and glory. 3. Sin also, like certain diseases, is a very loathsome thing. 4. Fearfully polluting. Everything we do and think of grows polluted through our corruption. 5. Contagious. A man cannot be a sinner alone. "One sinner destroyeth much good." 6. Very painful; and yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on a deadness, a numbness of soul, preventing pain. Most men are unconscious of the misery of the fall. But when sin is really discerned, then it becomes painful indeed. Oh, what wretchedness was mine before I laid hold on Christ. 7. It is deep-seated, and has its throne in the heart. The skill of physicians can often extract the roots of disease, but no skill can ever reach this. It is in its own nature wholly incurable. Man cannot cure himself. Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord, must manifest His omnipotent power. 8. It is a mortal disease. It kills not just now, but it will kill ere long. II. IT PLEASES DIVINE MERCY TO GIVE TO CHRIST THE CHARACTER OF A PHYSICIAN. Jesus Christ never came into the world merely to explain what sin is, but to inform us how it can be removed. As a Physician Christ is—1. Authorised. 2. Qualified. He is, experimentally as well as by education, qualified in the healing art. 3. Has a wide practice. 4. His cures are speedy, radical, sure. His medicine is Himself. O Blessed Physician for this desperate disease! III. THAT NEED IS THAT ALONE WHICH MOVES OUR GRACIOUS PHYSICIAN TO COME TO OUR AID. His Saviourship is based upon our sinnership. Need, need alone, is that which quickens the Physician's footsteps. IV. It follows therefore, and the text positively asserts it, that THE WHOLE—THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO GREAT NEED, NO NEED AT ALL—WILL BE UNAIDED BY CHRIST. V. It follows, then, that THOSE WHO ARE SICK SHALL BE HELPED BY JESUS. Are you sick, sinful, &c.? He loves to save. He can save the vilest. Trust Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Healer of souls*:—It is one of the most remarkable facts in the life of our Lord that He was obliged repeatedly to defend Himself for loving the sinful. It is a fact by which we may measure the usual progress of the world under the influence of Christian civilization. Now, philanthropy is generally practised and held in high esteem. Yet we do Christ's censors injustice by looking on them as rare monsters of inhumanity. They were simply

men whose thoughts and sympathies were dominated by the spirit of their age. For the love of the sinful was a new thing on the earth, whose appearance marked the beginning of a new era, well called the era of grace. Never was apology more felicitous or successful—Christ was a Physician. The defence is simple and irresistible. I. THAT CHRISTIANITY IS BEFORE ALL THINGS A RELIGION OF REDEMPTION. If such be its character, then to be true to itself Christianity cannot afford to be nice, dainty, disdainful, but must lay its healing hand on the most repulsive. Rabbinism may be exclusive, but not the religion of redemption. It is bound to be a religion for the masses. Christ is not merely an ethical Teacher, or Revealer of Divine mysteries; He is, in the first place, a Redeemer, only in the second the Revealer. II. THAT CHRISTIANITY IS THE RELIGION OF HOPE. It takes a cheerful view of the capabilities and prospects of man even at his worst. It believes that he can be cured. In this hopefulness Christianity stood alone in ancient times. It needed the eye of a more than earthly love, and of a faith that was the evidence of things not seen, to discern possibilities of goodness even in the waste places of society. The Church must have the Physician's confidence in His healing art; she must be inventive. She must have sympathy with people for their good. She must not frown on the zeal of those who would try new experiments. III. CHRISTIANITY IS FIT AND WORTHY TO BE THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *The sickness—the Physician*:—I. THE SICKNESS SPOKEN OF. 1. The likeness between the sickness of the body and that of the soul. As sickness is a disordered body, so is sin a precious soul all in disorder. Sickness of body, not healed, will kill the body. Sin, not healed, not pardoned, will kill the never-dying soul. Or, take any of the particular diseases which Christ healed on the earth, and see the likeness in them. He healed madness. Sin is madness—flying in the face of God. He healed fevers. Sin is a fever—consuming, burning the soul. He healed palsies. Sin is a palsy—laying the soul prostrate. He healed leprosy. Sin is a leprosy—very foul and loathsome. He healed deafness, blindness. The sinner is deaf, blind—deaf to the voice of God and of his own conscience—blind to all it most concerns him to see—to himself, God, Christ. 2. Well, sin is like disease; but see the difference: sickness is usually one disease. Sin is all diseases in one—the madness, the fever, the deafness, all in one! Men wish to be free of sickness of body. Alas! they do not wish to be free of sin, the disease of the soul. Sickness is disease; sin is crime—sin. II. THE GLORIOUS PHYSICIAN. 1. Let me say of Him—there is no other. If you are sick in body you have a choice of physicians. But for the terrible sickness of sin none but Christ—"Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. There needs no other. 2. That He knows our whole case, our whole disease, and so is able to deal with it. Other physicians have often to work in the dark. They are uncertain what the disease is, and, if they know, may be unable to heal. 3. That He is unspeakably tender. What else but love could have brought Him into this leprous world? 4. That He is a mighty, all-skilful Physician. 5. That He is a faithful Physician. He will not skin over your wound and say that it is healed—"A new heart also will I give you." 6. He is a Physician very near at hand—"A very present help in trouble." (*C. J. Brown, D.D.*) *Christ calling sinners to repentance*:—The call of St. Matthew the occasion of these words. I. THE OBSERVATIONS NATURALLY ARISING FROM THE SEVERAL PARTICULAR EXPRESSIONS MADE USE OF IN THE TEXT. 1. That sin is to the soul what disease or sickness is to the body. 2. That repentance is not an original and primary duty of religion, only of secondary intention, and of consequential obligation. The original duty of all rational creatures is to obey the commandments of God, and such as have always lived in obedience are not obliged to the duty of repentance. It applies to those who have sinned. It is a privilege to them to be permitted to perform it (Acts xi. 18). There is a repentance to which even the best of men are continually obliged. But this is not that repentance to which our Saviour came to call sinners. 3. The just and sharp reproof contained in this answer to the hypocritical Pharisees. II. THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE AS HERE LAID DOWN BY OUR LORD. The design of His preaching was to call sinners to repentance. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Moral sickness*:—For as the natural health of the body consists in this: that every part and organ regularly and duly performs its proper function; and, when any of these are disordered or perverted in their operations, there ensues sickness and diseases: so likewise, with regard to the spiritual or moral state of the mind and soul; when every faculty is employed in its natural and proper manner, and with a just direction to the end it was designed for; when the understanding judges of things according to reason and

truth, without partiality and without prejudice; when the will is in its actions directed by this judgment of right, without obstinacy or wilfulness; and when the passions in their due subordinate station, and the appetites under the government of sober intention, serve only to quicken the execution of what reason directs: then is the mind of man sound and whole; fit for all the operations of a rational creature, fit for the employments of a virtuous and religious life. On the contrary, the abuse or misemployment of any of these faculties, is the disease or sickness of the soul. And when they are all of them perverted, totally and habitually, by a general corruption and depravation of manners; then, as the body, by an incapacity of all its organs for the uses of natural life, dies and is dissolved; so the man in his moral capacity, by an habitual neglect and dislike of all virtuous practices, becomes (as the Scripture elegantly expresses it) dead in trespasses and sins. And as, in bodily diseases, some are more dangerous, and more likely to prove mortal, than others; in which sense our Saviour says concerning Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death" (John xi. 4); so, in the spiritual sense, the same apostle St. John, in his First Epistle, speaks of sins, which, according as there be any or no hope of men recovering from them, either are or are not unto death (1 John v. 16). (*Ibid.*) *Christ came to call the sinner:*—Christ came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The schoolmaster does not gather the finest scholars in the country into his school, and try to teach them; he takes those who know little or nothing and educates them. The gardener does not bind up the strong, hardy plants; it is those that are weak and slender, those that have been broken down by the wind, that he trains to the pole or to the wall. It is the sick people, not the well people, who need the physician. No one can be too great a sinner to be beyond the need of Jesus; it was to save sinners that Jesus came. (*The Sunday School Times.*) *The value and capability of sinful man:*—By going to the lowest stratum of human nature, Christ gave a new idea of the value of man. He built a kingdom out of the refuse of society. To compare small things with great, it has been pointed out by Lord Macaulay that in an English cathedral there is an exquisite stained window which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master, and it was so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to tradition, the envious artist killed himself with vexation. All the builders of society had rejected the "sinners," and made the painted window of the "righteous." A new Builder came; His plan was original, startling, revolutionary; His eye was upon the condemned material; He made the first last, and the last first, and the stone which the builders rejected, He made the headstone of the corner. He always especially cared for the rejected stone. Men had always cared for the great, the beautiful, the "righteous"; it was left for Christ to care for "sinners." (*Dr. Parker.*) *Christ an authorised Physician:*—When a physician presents himself, one of the first inquiries is, "Is he a regular practitioner? Has he a right to practise? Has he a diploma?" Very properly, the law requires that a man shall not be allowed to hack our bodies and poison us with drugs at his own pleasure without having at least a show of knowing what he is at. It has been tartly said that "a doctor is a man who pours drugs, of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows still less." I fear that is often the case. Still a diploma is the best safeguard mortals have devised. Christ has the best authority for practising as a Physician. He has a Divine diploma. Would you like to see His diploma? I will read you a few words of it: it comes from the highest authority, not from the College of Physicians, but from the God of Physicians. Here are the words of it in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." He has a diploma for binding up broken hearts. I should not like to trust myself to a physician who was a mere self-dubbed doctor, who could not show any authorization; I must have him know as much as a man can know, little as I believe that will probably be. He must have a diploma; it must be signed and sealed too, and be in a regular manner, for few sensible men will risk their lives with ignorant quacks. Now Jesus Christ has His diploma and there it is—God hath sent Him to bind up the broken-hearted. The next thing you want in a physician is education; you want to know that he is thoroughly qualified; he must have walked the hospitals. And certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has done so. What form of disease did He not meet with? When He was here among men it pleased God to let the devil loose, in order that there might be more than usual venom in the veins of poor diseased manhood; and Christ met the devil at his darkest hour and

fought with the great enemy when he had full liberty to do his worst with Him. Jesus did, indeed, enter into the woes of men. Walked the hospital! Why the whole world was an infirmary, and Christ the one only Physician, going from couch to couch, healing the sons of men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ a competent Physician*:—His cures are very speedy—there is life in a look at Him; His cures are radical—He strikes at the very centre of the disease, and hence His cures are very sure and certain. He never fails, and the disease never returns. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that one of His patients should be but patched up for a season, He makes a new man of him; a new heart also does He give him, and a right spirit does He put within him. He is a Physician, one of a thousand, because He is well-skilled in all diseases. Physicians generally have some *spécialité*. They may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, but there is usually one disease which they have studied the most carefully, one part of the human frame whose anatomy is as well-known to them as the rooms and cupboards of their own house. Jesus Christ has made the whole of human nature His *spécialité*. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another sinner, and never yet did He meet with an out-of-the-way case that was out of the way to Him. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 18–20. **And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast.**—*Fasting useful or baneful, according to circumstances*:—Men of opposing faiths are often united by a common scare. They are more zealous for religious custom than for the interests of truth. Jesus here puts fasting on its true basis. I. FASTING HAS NO MORAL VALUE IN ITSELF. The appetite may have to be denied from prudential motives, and then fasting becomes a duty. But asceticism, *per se*, is not a virtue. It is the negation of a vice, but it may be the seed of twenty others, *e.g.*, pride, self-righteousness. II. PRESCRIBED FASTING MAY BE INJURIOUS, AND ROB THE PRACTICE OF ITS REAL VALUE. III. FASTING IS IMPOSED BY SORROWFUL EVENTS. A natural instinct indicates its fitness. IV. BENEFICIAL FASTING COMES FROM HEAVENLY FEASTING. It is the time for special activities of the soul. The best rule is—so far as fasting helps you in the elevation and improvement of your highest nature, adopt it; so far as it is injurious to this, avoid it. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) I. The envious are more busied in censuring the conduct of others, than in rectifying their own. This is one vice belonging to a Pharisee, and which is very common. II. It is another, to desire that every one should regulate his piety by ours, and embrace our particular customs and devotions. III. It is a third, to speak of others, only that we may have an opportunity to speak of and to distinguish ourselves. It is very dangerous for a man to make himself remarkable by such devout practices as are external and singular, when he is not firmly settled and rooted in internal virtues, and, above all, in humility. (*Quesnel.*) *Fasting*:—Fasting is one of the forgotten virtues, from the neglect of which probably we all suffer. The practice grew from a desire to keep down all grossness of nature; to give the soul a better chance in its conflict with the body. The more the appetite is indulged, the less the soul can act with energy, and the more the man shrinks from self-denial. Gluttony spoils sanctity, while self-denial in food and drink aids it. Accordingly, God ordained fasting, and His people have, in most ages, practised it. But in the nature of things it yielded most advantage when it was (1) occasional, (2) voluntary, and (3) private. (*R. Glover.*) *Fasting determined by inward sentiment*:—Christ's answer to the Pharisees' objection is one of those clear and unanswerable statements of truth which, like a flash, light up the whole dark confused realm of obligation, where so many stumble sadly and hopelessly. Can you not see that what is *within* must determine that which is *without*? The law of appropriateness is supreme in the moral and religious sphere as in the material. (*De Witt S. Clark.*) *Routine fasting formal*:—An aroused, loving, penitent nature will express itself; but a set series of motions will not quicken the torpid spirit. They are like empty shells, in which the life has died, or out of which it has crept. They are curiosities. The hermit-crab may tenant in them; and thence come the useless prayers, the languishing hosannas, the weary exhortations, while the world rallies the Church as to the reality of the God it worships. (*Ibid.*) *Fasting*:—I. ITS NATURE. Fasting in a religious sense is a voluntary abstinence from food for a religious purpose. II. ITS OBLIGATIONS. III. BENEFITS OF FASTING. 1. There is a scriptural, a psychological, a moral and religious ground for fasting. (1) Each act of self-denial, the refusal to gratify the lusts of the flesh, even when natural and proper, is an assertion of the supremacy of the soul over the body, and tends to strengthen its authority. (2) It is a general law of our nature that the outward

should correspond with the inward. No man can maintain any desired state of mind while his bodily condition and acts are not in accordance. He cannot be sorrowful in the midst of laughter. 2. There is also the further ground of experience and the example of God's people. All eminently pious persons have been more or less addicted to this mode of spiritual culture. (1) It must, however, be sincere. The hypocritical fasting of the Pharisees is at once hateful and destructive. (2) It must be regarded as simply a means and not an end. (3) It must be left free. (*C. Hodge.*) *Why the disciples of Christ did not fast*:—Christ went in the face of many Jewish customs and prejudices. I. The Jews, as a nation and church, had many fasts. II. The disciples of John fasted often. III. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted often—twice in the week, the second and fifth day. Their real state of mind contrasted with this exercise. How reason staggers in the things of God. IV. These parties naturally complained of the disciples of Christ for not fasting. 1. Fasting seemed so essential. 2. They attributed the conduct of the disciples of Christ to Christ Himself. 3. In this instance, Christ gave His sanction and defence to the conduct of His disciples. His vindication was:—He was with them—they were joyful, fasting not suited, &c. He would leave them—they would be sorrowful, fasting then suitable. This view enforced by two comparisons. 1. Christ sanctions fasting. 2. The time for fasting should be decided by the fact of Christ's presence or absence. Beware of attaching too much importance to forms. (*Expository Discourses.*) *The ceremonial observances of the Christian life*:—I. THAT THE SAME CEREMONIAL OBSERVANCES MAY BE ADVOCATED BY MEN OF STRANGELY DIFFERENT CREEDS AND CHARACTER, ANIMATED BY VARIED MOTIVES. "And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" 1. That weak, but well-meaning, men may be led astray in their estimate of the ceremonial of the Christian life by proud and crafty religionists. 2. That men of varied creed, character, and conduct may be found contending for the same ceremonial of the Christian life. 3. That even good men are often found in open hostility because of their varied opinions in reference to the mere ceremonial of the Christian life. II. THAT MEN MAY BE SO MINDFUL OF THE CEREMONIAL OBSERVANCES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS TO NEGLECT THE GREATER TRUTHS EMBODIED AND SIGNIFIED. 1. Men are in danger of neglecting the deeper truths of the Christian ceremonial because they are generally lacking in the habit of penetrating its unseen and hidden meanings. 2. Men are in danger of neglecting the deeper truths of the Christian ceremonial because they are lacking in the pure sympathy needful to such discovery. 3. Men are in danger of neglecting the deeper truths of the Christian ceremonial because they are lacking in that diligence needful to such discovery. III. THAT MEN SHOULD REGULATE THE CEREMONIAL OBSERVANCES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ACCORDING TO THE MORAL EXPERIENCES OF THE SOUL. "And Jesus said unto them, can the children of the bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them?" 1. That Christ is the Bridegroom of the soul. Christ had just revealed Himself as the Great Physician of the soul. But this is a more endearing and condescending revelation of Himself. He loves the soul of man. He seeks to be wedded to and to endow it with all His moral wealth. This is a close union. 2. That the absence or presence of Christ the Bridegroom determines largely the emotions of the soul. 3. That the emotions of the soul, as occasioned by the absence or presence of the Divine Bridegroom, must determine the ceremonial of the Christian life. Lessons: 1. That the moral character cannot be infallibly judged by an attention to the outward ceremony of the Christian life. 2. That if we would cultivate true moods of joy, we must seek habitual communion with Christ. 3. That the feeling of the soul must determine the religious ceremony of the hour. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The secret of gladness*:—I. THE BRIDEGROOM. The singular appropriateness in the employment of this name by Christ in the existing circumstances. The Master of these very disciples had said "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," &c. Our Lord reminds them of their own Teacher's words, and so He would say to them, "In your Master's own conception of what I am, and of the joy that comes from My presence, you have an answer to your question." We cannot but connect this name with a whole circle of ideas found in the Old Testament; the union between Israel and Jehovah was represented as a marriage. In Christ all this was fulfilled. See here Christ's self-consciousness; He claims to be the Bridegroom of humanity. II. THE PRESENCE OF THE BRIDEGROOM. Are we in the dreary period when Christ "is taken away"? The time of mourning for an absent Christ was only three days. "Lo, I am with you alway." We have lost the

manifestation of Him to the sense, but have gained the manifestation of Him to the spirit. The presence is of no use unless we daily try to realize it. III. THE JOY OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S PRESENCE. What was it that made these rude lives so glad when Christ was with them? The charm of personal character, the charm of contact with one whose lips were bringing to them fresh revelations of truth. There is no joy in the world like that of companionship, in the freedom of perfect love, with one who ever keeps us at our best, and brings the treasure of ever fresh truth to the mind. He is with us as the source of our joy, because He is the Lord of our lives, and the absolute Commander of our wills. To have one present with us whose loving word it is delight to obey, is peace and gladness. He is with us as the ground of perfect joy because He is the adequate object of all our desires, and the whole of the faculties and powers of a man will find a field of glad activity in leaning upon Him, and realizing His presence. Like the apostle whom the old painters loved to represent lying with his happy head on Christ's heart, and his eyes closed in tranquil rapture of restful satisfaction, so if we have Him with us and feel that He is with us, our spirits may be still, and in the great stillness of fruition of all our wishes and the fulfilment of all our needs, may know a joy that the world can neither give nor take away. He is with us as the source of endless gladness in that He is the defence and protection for our souls. And as men live in a victualled fortress, and care not though the whole surrounding country may be swept bare of all provision, so when we have Christ with us we may feel safe, whatsoever befalls, and "in the days of famine we shall be satisfied." He is with us as the source of our perfect joy because His presence is the kindling of every hope that fills the future with light and glory. Dark or dim at the best, trodden by uncertain shapes, casting many a deep shadow over the present, that future lies, except we see it illumined by Christ, and have Him by our side. But if we possess His companionship, the present is but the parent of a more blessed time to come; and we can look forward and feel that nothing can touch our gladness, because nothing can touch our union with our Lord. So, dear brethren, from all these thoughts and a thousand more which I have no time to dwell upon, comes this one great consideration, that the joy of the presence of the Bridegroom is the victorious antagonist of all sorrow—"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn," &c. The Bridegroom limits our grief. Our joy will often be made sweeter by the very presence of the mourning. Why have so many Christian men so little joy in their lives? They look for it in wrong places. It cannot be squeezed out of worldly ambitions. A religion like that of John's disciples and that of the Pharisees is poor; a religion of laws and restrictions cannot be joyful. There is no way of men being happy except by living near the Master. Joy is a duty. (*Dr. McLaren.*) *The presence of the Bridegroom a solace in grief:*—And we have, over and above them, in the measure in which we are Christians, certain special sources of sorrow and trial, peculiar to ourselves alone; and the deeper and truer our Christianity the more of these shall we have. But notwithstanding all that, what will the felt presence of the Bridegroom do for these griefs that will come? Well, it will limit them for one thing; it will prevent them from absorbing the whole of our nature. There will always be a Goshen in which there is light in the dwelling, however murky may be the darkness that wraps the land. There will always be a little bit of soil above the surface, however weltering and wide may be the inundation that drowns our world. There will always be a dry and warm place in the midst of the winter; a kind of greenhouse into which we may get from out of the tempest and the fog. The joy of the Bridegroom's presence will last through the sorrow, like a spring of fresh water welling up in the midst of the sea. We may have the salt and the sweet waters mingling in our lives, not sent forth by one fountain, but flowing in one channel. (*Ibid.*) *A cheerful type of religion:*—There is a cry amongst us for a more cheerful type of religion. I re-echo the cry, but am afraid that I do not mean by it quite the same thing that some of my friends do. A more cheerful type of Christianity means to many of us a type of Christianity that will interfere less with any amusements; a more indulgent doctor that will prescribe a less rigid diet than the old Puritan type used to do. Well, perhaps they went too far; I do not care to deny that. But the only cheerful Christianity is a Christianity that draws its gladness from deep personal experience of communion with Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Liberty and discipline:*—It is one of the honourable distinctions of Christ's doctrine that He is never taken, as men are, with a half-truth concerning a subject. If there is, for example, a free element in Christian life and experience, and also a restrictive side, He comprehends both and holds them in a true adjustment of

their offices and relations. His answer to John's disciples amounts to this Liberty and discipline, movement from God's centre, and movement from our own sanctified inclination and self-compelling will, are the two great factors of Christian life and experience. It is obvious that both these conceptions may be abused, as they always are when taken apart; but let us find now how to hold with Christ the two sides at once. There is then—I. A RULING CONCEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH IS CALLED HAVING THE BRIDEGROOM PRESENT; A STATE OF RIGHT INCLINATION ESTABLISHED, IN WHICH THE SOUL HAS IMMEDIATE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD, AND IS SWAYED IN LIBERTY BY HIS INSPIRATIONS The whole aim of Christianity is fulfilled in this alone. Discipline, self-regulation, carried on by the will, may be wanted, as I shall presently show. But no possible amount of such doings can make up a Christian virtue. Everything in Christianity goes for the free inclination. Here begins the true nobility of God's sons and daughters—when their inclination is wholly to good and to God. The bridegroom joy is now upon them because their duty is become their festivity with Christ. II. WHAT THEN IS THE PLACE OR VALUE OF THAT WHOLE SIDE OF SELF-DISCIPLINE WHICH CHRIST HIMSELF ASSUMES THE NEED OF, WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM IS TO BE TAKEN AWAY? There is, I undertake to say, one general purpose or office in all doings of will, on the human side of Christian experience, viz., the ordering of the soul in fit position for God, that He may occupy it, have it in His power, sway it by His inspirations. No matter what the kind of doing to which we are called—self-government, self-renunciation, holy resolve, or steadfast waiting—the end is the same, the getting in position for God's occupancy. As the navigator of a ship does nothing for the voyage, save what he does by setting the ship to course and her sails to the wind, so our self-compelling discipline is to set us in the way of receiving the actuating impulse of God's will and character. All that we can do is summed up in self-presentation to God, hence the call to salvation is "Come." And as it is in conversion, so it is of all Christian doings afterward. If, by reason of a still partial subjection to evil, the nuptial day of a soul's liberty be succeeded by a void, dry state, the disciple has it given him to prepare himself for God's help by clearing away his idols, rectifying his misjudgments, staying his resentments and grudges, and mortifying his appetites. There will be a certain violence in the fight of his repentances. Let none object that all such strains of endeavour must be without merit because they are, in one sense, without inclination. Holy Scripture commands us to serve, when we cannot reign. Do we "mortify our members," "pluck out our right eye," by inclination? Let us specify some humbler matters in which it must be done. 1. How great a thing for a Christian to keep life, practice, and business in the terms of order. 2. A responsible way has the same kind of value; a soul that stays fast in concern for the Church, for the salvation of men, for the good of the country, is ready for God's best inspirations. 3. Openness and boldness for God is an absolute requisite for the effective revelation of God in the soul. 4. Honesty, not merely commercial, but honesty engaging to do justice everywhere, every way, every day, and specially to God's high truth and God. I could speak of yet humbler things, such as dress and society. These are commonly put outside the pale of religious responsibility. And yet there is how much in them to fix the soul's position towards God! But what of fasting? The very thing about which my text is concerned. Does it belong to Christianity? I think so. Christ declared that His disciples should fast when He was gone, He began His great ministry by a protracted fast, and He discourses of it just as He does of prayer and alms. A certain half-illuminated declamation against asceticism is a great mistake of our time. An asceticism belonging to Christianity is described when an apostle says: "I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence." If we cannot find how to bear an enemy, if we recoil from sacrifices laid upon us, we shall emulate the example of Cromwell's soldiers, who conquered first in the impassive state, by fasting and prayer, and then, sailing into battle as men iron-clad, conquered their enemies; or those martyrs who could sing in the crisp of their bodies because they had trained them to serve. But none should ever go into a fast when he has the Bridegroom consciously with him, and it must never amount to a maceration of the body—never be more frequent than is necessary to maintain, for the long run of time, the clearest, healthiest condition of mind and body. There ought to be a fascination in the severities of this rugged discipline. Our modern piety, we feel, wants depth and richness, and it cannot be otherwise, unless we consent to endure some hardness. To be merely wooed by grace, and tenderly dewed by sentiment, makes

a Christian mushroom, not a Christian man. So much meaning has our Master, when charging it upon us, again and again, without our once conceiving possibly what depth of meaning He would have us find in His words: "Deny thyself take up thy cross and follow Me." (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*)

Vers. 21, 22. **No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment.**—*New cloth on an old garment*:—God's forces not to be fettered by man. You cannot thrust life into human moulds. I. Every force has a definite mode of action. Spring does not produce the same results as autumn, nor can young converts yield the same fruits as aged saints. II. To coerce these forces into human channels is impossible. No one dress will fit all men. If you want to alter men's habits begin by changing their principles. III. It is only wise and safe to act with God. Learn the methods of the Spirit's working and follow them. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *The new supplanting the old*:—A missionary in India writes of a large tree near his home, in whose branches a second top of entirely different species appeared. The old was the "bitter nim," the other the "sacred fig." And this, on examination, was found to have thrust its root through the decaying heart of the great trunk to the ground. There, like a young giant in the embrace of some huge monster, each was engaged in a struggle for life. If the old could tighten its grasp, the young tree must die. If the young continued to grow it must at last split open and destroy the old. This it seemed already to be doing. So with the good seed of the gospel dropped into the rotten heart of some ancient system or practice. Thrusting its root downward and its branches upward, it is gradually to supplant all else and stand, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding her fruit every month; and the leaves will be for the healing of the nations. (*De W. S. Clark.*) *New things in Christianity*:—Christianity sets up a new kingdom—a kingdom within men—a reign over the spiritual in man. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It publishes a "new law," and gives men "a new commandment." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Christianity introduces us into a "New Jerusalem," "the Jerusalem which is the mother of us all." Everything in the city is new. The Temple is new; it is a spiritual temple; spiritual men "are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." "What! know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" The Altar is new; "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The Sacrifice is new; it is the "offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The Incense is new; "the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." The Priesthood is new; "we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens for us, even Jesus, the Son of God." The Way into the "Holiest" is new; it is "a new and living way consecrated for us." The Worship is new; the hour has come when the character, and not the scene of worship, is everything. The song is new; we sing "a new song." The Ritualism is new; "for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." God sustains a new relation to us; He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come to God and say, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." "Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant." The days have come when God has made a new covenant with man. The Spirit is new; even the Comforter, proceeding from the Father and the Son. The gospel is new; "God hath spoken unto us by His Son." The phraseology is new; "we preach Christ crucified." The symbolism is new; "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Since everything in Christianity is new, we must ourselves be new; we must be "born again." There must be the passage from death to life. The life we live in the flesh must be a new life. "Old things must pass away; all things must become new." (*H. J. Bevis.*) *New things in Christianity*:—I. That the SPIRIT of Christianity is new. It is "new wine." Judaism was the body; Christianity is the soul. The one was materialism; the other is spiritualism. The one was "the letter;" the other is "the spirit." The one was a "ministration of death;" the other a "ministration of life." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." We have got beyond the shadow, we have the substance. "We behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord." II. That the THOUGHTS AND WORDS of Christianity are new. New thoughts require new utterances. The people said of Christ, "Never man spake like this Man." New things want new words. The everlasting Son has taken our nature and become our brother. The gospel calls this "the mystery of godliness." God hath

given His Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might have eternal life. Even the gospel seems to want words here, and can only say, "God so loved." The gospel takes us by the hand and leads us to the cross; and as we look on the Crucified, it unfolds the record, and bids us read, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." We want not old forms. We have *truth* for the understanding; we have *love* for the heart. We have new thoughts and new words, the utterances of which are as the divinest music to the soul that is seeking a Saviour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." III. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY ARE NEW. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Christianity is from heaven. God's work is not to be improved by man. Where there is real religion in man, its own manifestations will not be wanting in a Divine life, in all the graces of the Spirit, in godlikeness. IV. THE RITUALISM OF CHRISTIANITY IS NEW. It has few symbols, but these are most expressive and appropriate. It meets us on the very threshold of life with its washing of water, and water is the universal and undying type of purity. It gives us, as Christians, the memorials of Christ's death. The ritualism of your spirit must be left to the moods and feelings of your own heart. You may content yourselves with mere outward acts of reformation, but these are manifestly insufficient. This is but a new piece of cloth on an old garment. This is the world's attempt to mend human nature. Christianity requires "a new heart and a right spirit." You must be a "partaker of the Divine nature," "a new creature in Christ Jesus," to be a Christian. The "inner man" must have its new attire. You must put off the old garment and put on the new. You must "put on Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in Him." Do not try to mend the old nature. Seek a new one. Old habits will not do for a new spirit, and yet we cling to them, or they cling to us There is often little agreement between our principles and our practice. (*Ibid.*) *Legal ceremonies superseded*:—Paul calls legal ceremonies "beggarly rudiments;" such are the popish—like a beggar's cloak, full of patches. When the debt is paid, it is unjust to keep back the bond: Christ being come, and having discharged all, it is injurious to retain the bond of ceremonies. In the spring we make much of buds and flowers to delight the eye and cheer the sense of smelling; but in autumn, when we receive the fruits to content our taste and appetite, and to nourish us, the other are nothing worth The affianced virgin esteems every token her lover sends her, and solaceth her affections with those earnests of his love in his absence; but when she is married, and enjoys himself, there is no regard of the tokens. It was something to have a ceremony or a sacrifice, representing a Saviour; but this "made nothing perfect:" and all the life which those things had was from that Saviour whom now we have. (*T. Adams.*) *Old bottles and new wine*:—Christ gave his replies to John's disciples and the Pharisees. The first had a temporary application; the other a permanent one. 1. Fasting was a sign of sorrow; but how could these disciples sorrow while Jesus was with them? It was like trying to weep in the midst of a wedding feast. Christians have alternations of experience. Sometimes the Bridegroom is with us; sometimes far away. 2. The other answer sets forth the essential difference between the new dispensation and the impossibility of confining it by the old forms and ceremonies of religion. Now, these bottles represent religious forms, and wine represents religious spirit or life. Consider—I. The SUPERIOR ENERGY of Christianity over Judaism. It is new wine. Judaism was wine; but this is newer, and also better. But this is not the point of comparison. The point is, that the gospel has a freshness, expansiveness, and power, beyond what we find in Judaism, so that it is like new, working and fermenting wine as compared with old acetic wine, now cold and still. See it in a few particulars:—1. Its earnest aggressive spirit and aim. It was meant for the world, to go out to all nations. Judaism was for the Jews, or if for Gentiles, it was by these coming to the Jews as proselytes. Its agency is the same. 2. Its potent and stimulating motives. Christ's love and death constrain us; and the apocalypse of the eternal world is made more impressive and influential. Compare these with Jewish types, &c. 3. The ardour of affection awakened in the followers of Christ. Their whole nature is elevated and vivified by a new love and a new hope. 4. The accompanying energy of the Holy Ghost. II. The UNSUITABLENESS OF OLD JEWISH FORMS to the new Christian spirit. All are too narrow, cold, and cramping. As fastings, sacrifices, priestly exclusiveness, and even the Sabbath. III. Yet CHRISTIANITY HAS ITS OWN FORMS. The wine is not spilt on the ground, but kept in bottles—the Christian Church in its New Testament simplicity, the

ordinances, the Lord's day, spiritual modes of worship. All these naturally come out of the spirit of the gospel. The life makes its own body. Truly, this law has been tampered with most grievously by men, and the energy of the gospel has suffered; its freedom has been trammelled, and its life deadened. Lessons: 1. Our supreme concern should be to get the life of the gospel into our souls. 2. We should avoid a superstitious stickling for mere forms, however old and elegant, if they are but arbitrary and mechanical. 3. We should be willing to endorse and adopt the simple, natural, and living forms of the New Testament—joining the church, engaging in worship, &c. 4. We should apply it to our whole deportment and life—all must be renewed, and new wine put in new bottles. Let all our habits be determined and controlled by the inner spirit of piety. Things once pleasant to us will now be unpleasant and irksome. Many amusements and pleasures will be instantly abandoned, when we have got the right spirit within us; whereas, otherwise, it would be vain to contend and argue against them. (*Congregational Pulpit.*)

Vers. 23, 24. **And it came to pass, that He went through the cornfields on the Sabbath day.**—*A knowledge of the law without the true spirit of the law*:—He who has only the knowledge without the spirit of the law, very often opposes when he thinks he is defending it. Pharisaical pride makes men set themselves up for judges of everything, and require an account of everything to be given them. When a man is once full of himself, he decides confidently, especially when it is to condemn others. Those who love to domineer are not content to exercise their authority upon their own disciples, but would fain bring those of others under their dominion. (*Quesnel.*) *Scrupulosity*:—Scrupulosity is considered by some as identical with conscientiousness. It is not so. It is a tare that resembles the wheat, but is not wheat; a disease of the conscience, not a refinement of it. You must not judge an eye by its sensitiveness to light, but by its power of seeing. When light pains the eye it is because there is inflammation, not because the organ is a fine one. So it is with conscience. The health of conscience is not to be measured by its sensitiveness, its protests, and its objections; but by its power to lead a man into all genial activities and self-denying charities. Conscientiousness is a happy child, whose language is—"What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" Scrupulosity is a slave, whose language is—"What must I do to avoid God's rebuke?" Conscientiousness acts on great principles; scrupulosity on little rules. Conscientiousness serves God, blesses man, and protects him who cherishes it; scrupulosity is often useless to everybody. Conscientiousness makes man an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile; but scrupulosity often makes him an Ishmaelite indeed, in whom there is often a good deal. The Pharisees were full of scrupulosity, and it produced in them all uncharitableness. (*R. Glover.*) *Through the cornfields*:—Looking out upon the cornfields of wheat we see—I. UNITY IN VARIETY. To the unaccustomed eye the wheat seems one, and yet it is various. There is the white wheat, the red wheat, and beneath these, varieties and sub-varieties in great number. Yet what unity in the variety. Variety, too, meets us as we look out upon the vast field of humanity; yet what unity. One hand has made us all; in Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free." In Him "all we are brethren." II. FRUITFULNESS THROUGH DEATH is taught us by the fields of wheat. The field of burial shall become the field of resurrection. III. THE PERMANENCE OF CHARACTER is suggested to us by the ripening fields of wheat—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." IV. The VAST PRODUCTIVENESS OF GOOD is suggested by the fields of wheat—"And bring forth fruit, some an hundredfold." Christianity, truth, work for God, yield "much fruit." V. HUMAN DEPENDENCE is taught us by the cornfields; God giveth the increase. (*G. T. Coster.*)

Vers. 25, 26. **And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did?**—*How to read the Bible*:—I. In order to the true reading of the Scriptures THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEM. The mind must be well awake to it. We must meditate upon it. We must pray about it. We must use all means and helps. II. In reading we ought to SEEK OUT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD. This should be the case in reference to the historical passages, ceremonial precepts, and doctrinal statements. III. Such a reading of Scripture as implies the understanding of, and the entrance into, its spiritual meaning, and the discovery of the Divine Person, who is the spiritual meaning, IS PROFITABLE. It often begets spiritual life. It comforts the soul It nourishes the soul. It guides us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Pedantic Bible readers*:—The scribes and Pharisees were great

readers of the law. They made notes of very little importance, but still very curious notes—as to which was the middle verse of the entire Old Testament, which verse was half-way to the middle, and how many times such a word occurred, and the size of the letter, and its peculiar position. According to Pharisaic interpretation, to rub an ear of corn is a kind of threshing, and, as it is very wrong to thresh on the Sabbath-day, therefore it must be very wrong to rub out an ear or two of wheat when you are hungry on the Sabbath morning. (*Ibid.*) *The grace of Bible doctrine*:—The doctrines of grace are good, but the grace of the doctrines is better. (*Ibid.*) *Living in God's Word*:—As I sat, last year, under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees, which seems to have an intelligence about it which other trees have not. I wondered at, and admired the beech, but I thought to myself, I do not think half as much of this beech-tree as yonder squirrel does. I see him leap from bough to bough, and I feel sure he dearly values the old beech tree, because he has his home somewhere inside it, in a hollow place; these branches are his shelter, and these beech-nuts are his food. He lives upon the tree. It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home; indeed it is everything to him, and it is not so to me, for I find my rest and food elsewhere. With God's Word it is well for us to be like squirrels, living in it, and living on it. (*Ibid.*) *Bible glancing not Bible reading*:—An old preacher used to say: The Word has mighty free course among many nowadays, for it goes in at one of their ears, and out at the other. So it seems to be with some readers—they read a very great deal because they do not read anything. Their eye glances, but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest therein, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot. Such reading is not reading. (*Ibid.*) *An interior reading of Scripture*:—In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer—a praying which is the bowels of the prayer. In praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion, which is the life of the hallelujah. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a kernel reading; and, if it be not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise, and profits nothing. (*Ibid.*) *Illumination necessary to emotion*:—When the high priest went into the holy place he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the incense upon the brazen altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can rise towards God. (*Ibid.*) *Use of the Scriptures*:—The cause of so many gross and foolish opinions which many amongst us hold and maintain, is nothing else but their ignorance of the Scriptures, either because they read them not duly and diligently, or else because they understand them not aright. How many foolish and absurd opinions are held by ignorant people in many places? Such as these for example: That faith is nothing but a man's good meaning: That God is served by rehearsing the Ten Commandments and the Creed instead of prayers: That the Sabbath is kept well enough if men and women come to church, and be present at public prayers and at the sermon, though they spend the rest of the day either idly or profanely: That the Sabbath is well enough sanctified by bare reading of prayers, and so much preaching is needless: That it is lawful to swear in common talk to that which is true: That in religion it is best to do as the most do: That a man may make of his own as much as he can: That such as are not book-learned need have no knowledge of religion. These, and such-like absurd opinions, proceed from nothing but ignorance of the Scriptures. If we would avoid such errors, and be led into all truth of doctrine necessary to salvation, let us (1) be frequent and diligent in hearing the Scriptures explained in church; (2) search them diligently and often in private reading; (3) pray daily to God to open our understanding, that we may perceive their true meaning; (4) confer with others touching those things which we read and hear. (*G. Petter.*) *Mercy better than sacrifice*:—When the Romans had ravaged the province of Azazane, and seven thousand Persians were brought to Armida, where they suffered extreme want, Acases, the bishop of that city, observed that as God said, "I love mercy better than sacrifice," He would certainly be better pleased with the relief of His suffering creatures, than with being served with gold and silver in their churches. The clergy were of the same opinion. The consecrated vessels were sold, and, with the proceeds, the seven thousand Persians were not only maintained during the war, but sent home at its conclusion with money in their pockets. Varenes, the Persian monarch, was so charmed with this humane action, that he invited the bishop to his capital, where he received him with the utmost reverence, and for his sake conferred many favours on the Christians.

Vers. 27, 28. **And He said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man.**—*The Sabbath and its Lord:*—"The Sabbath was made for man"—not for the Jews only—not a mere ceremonial observance for the time; but of universal obligation; made for man when man was made. I. "The Sabbath was made for man" as a WORKING man. It is a simple fact in medical science, that the human frame is not made so as to bear up under constant labour without rest. He can no more do it than he can live under water; it is contrary to nature; and the consequence will be premature decay; the frame will break down and wear out before its time. This is a simple fact in science. Besides, labour is God's appointment, His wholesome and needful law. But did He mean us to bear the drudgery of ceaseless toil? How wretched, how degrading, how brutalizing! And God has not appointed it: "Six days shalt thou labour." But on this head I need say no more; those admirable Essays by Working Men, which ought to be in everybody's hands, and which so vividly portray the experience of those who have kept the Sabbath, exhaust this part of the subject. II. "The Sabbath was made for man," as a SOCIAL being. What is God's great instrument for promoting the temporal good of His creatures? It is the family tie. What is the great stimulant to exertion? What the great safeguard, what the great cordial of life—speaking of mere human things, I mean? It is to be found in the word "home." My experience as a gaol chaplain convinces me that the great cause of crime arises from the breach of the fourth and fifth commandments. Let but the family tie be rent asunder, and society falls to pieces. And how can this be maintained without a Sabbath? The observation of an omnibus conductor the other day sets this in a striking light: "Sir, I am at work every Sunday, all the day, as well as on week-days, and I hardly know the face of my own children." Then what must become of those children? And why should they be deprived of a father's care, and he of his children's love? And how has God provided against such a danger? "The Sabbath was made for man." Then the various members of the family, scattered through the week, are once more united; the mutual feelings of affection are elicited; they are excited to seek each other's welfare, and to value each other's good opinion and esteem; and, short of the power of God's grace, there is no bond half so strong, no security half so certain, that they will fill up their places as good members of society. I constantly meet with those who are lost to every other feeling of shame but this. III. "The Sabbath was made for man," as a SPIRITUAL being. Earthly things must not engross all the time and thought of man. God interposes, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." IV. But it is not enough to offer man the blessing—it is made imperative; it is confirmed by the sanction which is added, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, the Proprietor of it, the Owner of it, the Master of it. It is His. It was made for man, but never given to man. The six days were given to man—the seventh never was. He is "the Lord" of it. It is at His disposal, not at yours, nor any man's, nor any body of men, however great or powerful. "Will a man rob God?" Yes. If he apply to his own purposes that which does not belong to him, what is it? Robbery. You have no right over another's Sabbaths; you have no right over your own. It is the Lord's day. It is for Him to say how the day shall be spent; and man has no more the right to alienate that day from the service of God to his own service than he has to appropriate his neighbour's property or despoil him of his honour for his own behoof. The Sabbath is not man's, but the Lord's, and you can't repeal that law, no more than you can change the laws of motion or reverse the force of gravity. You may arrest it for a time, but it will prevail at last; the laws of God execute themselves, you cannot make them inoperative and null. V. "The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath"—the JUDGE to punish the breach of it. Nothing is more certain than that this is one of the sins which He especially requires at the hands of men. We know it from His dealings with Israel; Jeremiah is full of such declarations; so are many of the other prophets; to refer only to one, Ezekiel xx. 13, 16, 21, 24. He is the Lord—the Judge—to vindicate His own law. And why? First, Sabbath-breaking is a deliberate sin. And then Sabbath-breaking is (if I may coin such an expression) a fundamental sin. It goes to the root of all godliness; an habitual Sabbath breaker cannot have any true religion. It opens the door of his heart wide to Satan. VI. "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"—TO DIRECT THE MODE of its observance. It is the Lord's day—the Lord who died for us. He claims it, to be devoted to His service and consecrated to His honour. VII. And is it not the Lord's day?—the day on which He specially MANIFESTS HIMSELF to His people;

when He invites them to draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation. (*J. Cohen, M.A.*) *The Sabbath a necessity*:—It was "made for man," as man; as a thing necessary, suited, essential for him. Just as the atmosphere was made for man to breathe, just as the earth was made for him to cultivate, just as the seasons were made for him—just as these and such-like things were taken into account, when man was put upon the earth, as necessary to fit it for man's abode physically, so the Sabbath was made for man, as a necessary requisite for man morally—and that, when man was unfallen, a holy being, like unto the angels. And if indispensable for man's moral and spiritual health then, can it be less indispensable now? And in His mercy God spared it to us. It has survived the fall—a remnant of paradise lost, and the best help to paradise regained. (*Ibid.*) *The working man a self sovereign on the Sabbath*:—Now, I say to this large class of men, the Sabbath comes as a boon from God. It is like an island in a stormy sea. There is a way in which poor men, for the most part, own themselves. The man whose horse and dray are imperatively at the command of his employer, on whose favour he depends, who says to him on Monday, "Go," and he goes, and that from daylight to dark—it being the same on Tuesday, on Wednesday, on every day of the week, so that the man cannot go out of Brooklyn without permission of his employer, cannot go to this or that exhibition unless his employer gives his consent—that man has sold out his industry, which carries his person with it, and for six days in the week he is restricted by the will of another; but when the seventh day comes round he says, "Thank God, I have nobody to ask to-day. I am free to come and go. I can rise up or lie down as I please." That is the only day that the poor man has out of the seven in which he has absolute ownership of his body and soul in the thronging industries of modern civilized society. And yet it is this very class of men who are being taught to throw stones at the Sabbath-day. It is precisely the same thing over again which occurred when Moses appeared as the deliverer of his people against the Egyptians, and sought to reconcile the quarrel which had arisen between the two peoples. They turned against him and said, "Who art thou?" And he had to run for his life. The Sabbath comes to men who are tied hand and foot, and need emancipation; and upon this beneficent day of rest for them they turn and say, "It is the priests' day; it is the church's bondage; and we are not going to be tied up to any Sunday." Tied up! It is the only day on which your hands are untied. It is the only day on which the poor man is sovereign. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Sabbath a poetic gift to the mechanical agent*:—Well, how is it about the poor man? His brain is not taxed. He is almost a mechanical agent. That part of a man's brain which has cognisance of the lower functions only is overtaxed, and the rest which is wanted in his case is the transfer of excitement from the lower part of the brain to the higher—to the realm of the moral and spiritual elements. It is needful that a man who is instructed should rise up into the crystal dome of his house. Ordinarily he is working on the ground floor; but there comes a day in which, if he improves the means that are within his reach, a man can cease to be altogether a mechanical agent, can cease to think of physical qualities or things, and rise into the realm of ideas, into the realm of social amenities, into the realm of refined and purified affections, into the great mysterious, poetic realms of the spirit. And is there any class that need that more than poor labouring men? (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath helpful to self-respect*:—On such a day as this it is no small means of grace for millions of men in this world to have a chance to wash themselves clean. You smile; but washing is one of the most important ordinances of God to this human family. It is said that cleanliness is next to godliness; not to men that are godly, but to men that are on their way toward godliness. When Kaffirs are converted, they are called "shirt-men," because when the grace of God enters their heart a shirt goes over their bodies for the first time. Wellington said he found that in his army the men who had the self-respect which is indicated by carefully clothing themselves, were the best men he had. In a report on labour made to the British Parliament by one of the largest employers of men, it was said that a workman who on Sunday did not wash himself and dress in his best could not be depended upon. (*Ibid.*) *Stealing the Lord's day*:—If you give six days to worldly success, and then voluntarily take the seventh day, which God demands for His worship and especial service, and give that to worldly amusements, then you are wrong; you are so wrong that you could not be any more wrong. If I say my child is sick: I think by taking it to the beach it could be helped, but I cannot take it except on the Sabbath day, and therefore I will have to let it die, then I make a miserable misinterpretation of the text in one direction. But if you say,

"Come, let us go down for some fine sport; let us examine the picturesque bathing-dresses; let us have a jolly time with our friends," then you misinterpret my text in the other direction. The fact is that nine out of ten of you—yes, I will go further than that and say that ninety-nine out of a hundred of you—I think I will go one step farther and say that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of you, can go on other days and other nights, instead of the Christian Sabbath. Your work, your business engagement ends at six o'clock; that is true with the most of you. In a flash you get to the sea-shore: in a flash you get back. You can be in your home at six o'clock and ten o'clock the same evening, and in the interregnum have spent three hours in looking at moonlight on the sea. Now, if God gives you during the week opportunity for recreation, is it not mean for you to take Sunday? If I am a poor man, and I come into your store, and beg some socks for my children, and you say, "Yes, I'll give you six pairs of socks," and while you are binding them up in a bundle I steal the seventh pair, you say, "That is mean." If you, the father, have seven oranges, and you give to your child six of them, and he steals the seventh, that is mean. But that is what every one does who, after the Lord gives him six days, steals the seventh. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The secularization of the Sabbath inimical to the spiritual welfare of mankind:*—I also oppose this secularization of the Christian Sabbath because it is war on the spiritual warfare of everybody. Have you a body? Yes. A mind? Yes. A soul? Yes. Do you propose to give them a chance? Yes. Do you believe that all these Sunday night concerts will prepare a single man for the song of the one hundred and forty and four thousand? Have you any idea that all the fifty-two Sundays of secular amusements, operatic singing, concerts, and theatres would prepare in a thousand years one man for heaven? Do you not think that the immortal soul is worth at least one-seventh as much as our perishable body? Here is a jeweller who has three gems—a carnelian, an amethyst, a diamond. He has to cut and set them. Upon which does he put the most care? The diamond. Now, the carnelian is the body, the amethyst is the mind, the diamond is the soul. You give opportunity to these other faculties of your nature, but how many of you give no opportunity to that which is worth as much more than all other interests as a thousand million dollars are more than one cent? (*Ibid.*) *The Lord's right in the Sabbath above that of the people:*—We hear a great deal about the people's rights in selecting their own amusements on Sunday. I would not invade the people's rights, but it seems to me that the Lord has some rights. You are at the head of your family; you have a right to govern the family. The Governor is at the head of the State; he governs the State. The President is at the head of the nation; he governs the nation. The Lord God is at the head of the universe, and He has a right to lay down an enactment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Whether popular or unpopular, I now declare that the people have no rights except those which the Lord God Almighty gives them. (*Ibid.*) *The Lord's Day:*—I. We must consider the Lord's day AS A GIFT, RATHER THAN A COMMAND. So it will come to us in the light of a privilege. No laws are given by Christ or by His apostles concerning the forms of observance. We shall become perplexed if we attempt to rest our case upon simple legal enactment. Our safety in such discussions consists in our fastening attention upon the gracious and benevolent character of the Divine institution. God gives us this one day of the week as His peculiar offering for our bodily and spiritual need; He does not order it nor claim it for any necessities of His own. II. We must consider the Lord's day AS A FREEDOM, rather than a RESTRICTION. So it will seem to us a gracious respite. III. This leads us on to say that Christians should consider the Lord's day as a REST rather than a DISSIPATION. So it will become a recuperation to us from its chance of a change. The original idea of the Sabbath was rest; the word signifies rest; the fourth commandment gives as the basis of the law the fact that God rested and so hallowed the rest-day. We come up to the end of the week worn and excited. Most of us know what the poet Cowper meant when he wrote to his friend John Newton: "The meshes of that fine net-work the brain are composed of such mere spiders' threads in me, that when a long thought finds its way into them, it buzzes, and twangs, and bustles about, at such a rate as seems to threaten the whole structure." At these times we need tranquil hours for change of occupation, as well as for genial and agreeable entertainment. Dr. Addison Alexander used to say he found his recreation in change of toil. He would go from the study of languages to the study of mathematics. He would turn from writing commentaries to writing sermons. He would discuss theology, and refresh himself

after his dry work by composing little poems for children. We all ought to know and recognize this principle. What we need for Sunday rest is not so much sleep as something to do different from what we do during the week; and what we should shun the most is this wear and tear of a crowded excursion. A real rest is found in variety of labour, inside of exhaustion and fatigue. Quiet does not mean stupid slumber on the Lord's day, or on any other. The best relief from worldly cares is discovered oftenest in the gentle industries of religious work. IV. We must consider the Lord's day as a BENEDICTION rather than a FRET. Thus we shall rebut the charge of bigotry. It is sometimes claimed that Sabbath laws exasperate men who make no claim to religion, and this is a free country. It has to be admitted that there are always some people who grow exasperated whenever the subject of law is mentioned. But liberty is not licence, nor is freedom lawlessness. This one day in seven is no less a blessing because some men do not think so; it is not a fret because they are fretted. Even decent people have some rights. God does not engage to commune with His children, and then expect them to allow the interview to be disturbed by the rollicking riot of a beer garden, or the band of target-shooting parades. V. We must consider the Lord's day as a HELP rather than an institution. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath*:—Nothing can show the Divine nature of our Lord more clearly than that He is above such a law of God, so that He should modify it, relax it, change it at His pleasure. He exercised but a small part of this authority when He freed His disciples from the yoke of its burdensome pharisaic observance. He exercised His lordship over the day far more royally when He by His Spirit made the day of His resurrection the weekly religious festival of His Church. By this He gave it altogether a new character. Henceforth it is a day, not of mere rest, but of renewed life, the life of His own resurrection; and so its characteristic ordinance is not the slaying of beasts, but the life-giving celebration of the sacrament of His own risen body. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *The Sabbath was made for man*:—I. As a periodical reprieve from the curse of labour. II. As a stated season for attention to religious truths and interests. III. As a day of holy convocation for the purpose of worship and instruction. IV. As an emblem and an earnest of the saint's everlasting rest (*G. Brooks.*) *The Son of Man Lord of the Sabbath*:—I. It was instituted by Him. II. It is kept on a day which is fixed by His authority. III. It is intended to commemorate His resurrection. IV. It ought to be observed with a special regard to His will, and word, and work. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath for man as a complex creature*:—The question has been revived in our own generation: "In what spirit is that day which has superseded the Sabbath to be kept, especially by the working classes?" This, no less than the other, "was made for man." Now man, it must be remembered, is a complex creature. He has a tripartite nature, consisting of body, soul, and spirit; and it is necessary to provide for him as such, not ignoring either his physical, or his social, or his religious needs. All must be kept in view. It is a manifest duty to furnish the masses with the means of bodily recreation, and to draw them from their squalid homes into the pure air which will invigorate the frame. It is no less a duty to elevate their tastes, to offer them, as far as possible, variety of scene, and that relief from the monotony of labour which the rich man finds in his club or library; but all must be subordinated to the paramount duty of worship. That is due from every creature to the Great Creator. It is that, moreover, in which he may find his highest enjoyment. No scheme, therefore, which ignores this claim can possibly carry out the principle here laid down by Christ. (*H. M. Luckcock, D.D.*) *Man cannot do without the Sabbath*:—A distinguished merchant, who for twenty years did a vast amount of business, remarked to Dr. Edwards, "Had it not been for the weekly day of rest, I have no doubt I should have been a maniac long ago." This was mentioned in a company of merchants, when one remarked, "That is the case exactly with a poor friend of mine. He was one of our greatest importers. He used to say Sunday was the best day in the week to plan successful voyages; showing that his mind had no Sabbath. He has been in the insane hospital for years, and will probably die there." Many men are there, or in the maniac's grave, because they allowed themselves no Sabbath. They broke a law of nature, and of nature's God, and found "the way of the transgressor is hard." *The Sabbath a service to the State*:—The keeping one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment as well as for public worship, is of admirable service to a state, considered merely as a civil institution. (*Sir W. Blackstone.*) *The Sabbath for man's happiness*:—The usages and ordinances of religion ought to be regulated according to their end, which is the honour

of God and the advantage of men. It is the property of the religion of the true God, to contain nothing in it but what is beneficial to man. Hereby God plainly shows that it is neither out of indigence, nor interest, that He requires men to worship and obey Him, but only out of goodness, and on purpose to make them happy. God prohibited work on the Sabbath day, for fear lest servants should be oppressed by the hard-heartedness of their masters, and to the end that men might not be hindered from attending upon God and their own salvation. (*Quesnel.*) *The Sabbath law fibred in the nature of man*:—For as the old masters put their colours upon the fresh, damp plaster of the wall until, hardening together, picture and plaster were one in their witness to the future of the glories of the past, so fibred in the need and future of man is the law of the Sabbath. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The Sabbath a physical necessity*:—The testimony is cumulative, from experience and careful scientific experiment, that in all departments of continuous work—as mines, factories, railroads, mechanic arts, telegraphy, and commercial pursuits—the rest of the night does not restore the vitality lost in the day. The New York Central engineers, who petitioned for their Sundays on the ground that they could do more and better work in six than in seven days, have clearer heads and firmer hands, and that under pressure of constant service age came on prematurely, put on record their own experience. In a paper before the British Association it was stated by an employer of labour that he could work a horse eight miles a day for six days better than he could six miles a day for seven days; so that by not working on Sunday he saved 12 per cent. (*Ibid.*) *Man needs the rest of the Sabbath in addition to the rest of night*:—In the same line of witness is the testimony of medical and scientific experts, that the rest of the night does not restore the powers of mind and body to the same vitality they had twenty-four hours before, and that the natural forces run steadily lower and lower from Monday morning until Saturday night, until these powers can be lifted back to their norma vitality and place only by the relaxation and rest of the seventh day. It is a curiou scientific fact that Proudhon, the great socialistic philosopher of France, attempted to work out mathematically the relative ratio of work to rest, which should secure the greatest efficiency and the largest product. Biased by no religious claim, but rather avowedly hostile to such influence, he found that six days of work and one day of rest was the only right proportion: that is, to shorten the present working week by one day made the rest too much for the labour, while adding a single day to the labouring week made the rest too small for complete recuperation. Humboldt, years before, arrived at the same mathematical conclusion: and when France, loyal to her decimal system, put the tenth day in the place of the seventh, she found that the working-man took two holidays instead of one, and thereby entailed a loss upon the industrial production of the empire. Therefore Chevalier rightly said: "Let us observe Sunday in the name of hygiene, if not in the name of religion." For Sunday is the best friend of the working-man—his defence against decay, disease, and premature death. And every railroad corporation, every steamship line, every factory bell which calls to Sunday labour, every lax law and every lax practice—these are the enemies of the working-man, aye, every poor man! The rich can rest when they will; but the poor man cannot, save as his day of rest is conserved by the law of the land and of God. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath is a social necessity*:—What are the great working factors of society? Why, we say, the family, the church, and the school—law and order. Put neglect upon any of these great fountains and the stream grows muddy and shallow, and yet no agency is more potent in conserving these social factors than the Sabbath. It acts as a brake upon the rush and roar of traffic and self-interest, which for six days engross the mind and busy the hand. It bids men stop and breathe, think of God and cultivate the social amenities of life, and thereby makes them better neighbours and better citizens. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath necessary to the weary man*:—Wherever mind and body are taxed and exhausted by toil—and it is meant in the laws of our being that they shall everywhere be employed—there the Sabbath is destined to come as a day of rest. The ship, indeed, will glide along at sea, for its course cannot be arrested; and the Sabbath of the mariner may often be different from that of a dweller in a palace or a cottage, and different from that which the seaman feels that he needs. The sun and the stars will hold on their way, and the grass will grow, and the flower open its petals to the light, and the streams will roll to the ocean; for there is need that the laws of nature should be uniform, and the fibres of plants, and suns, and planets, and streams experience no exhaustion, and He who directs them all "fainteth not, nor is weary:" but man is weary

and needs rest. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The Sabbath necessary for the higher being of man*:—Man, with these relations, and these high powers to cultivate, the Sabbath meets as a day of leisure, that he may show on such a day of rest that he is distinguished from beasts of burden, and creatures governed by instinct, and those incapable of moral feeling, and those destined to no higher being, and those not knowing how to aspire to fellowship with God. The bird, indeed, will build its nest on the Sabbath, and the beaver its dam, and the bee its cell, and the lion will hunt its prey; for they have no higher nature than is indicated by these things. But man has a higher nature than the fowls of the air and the beasts of the forest, and the world would have been sadly disjo nted and incomplete, if there had been no arrangements to develop it. The Sabbath is among those arrangements. It is, indeed, a simple thing merely to command a man to rest one day in seven; but most of the great results which we see depend on very simple arrangements. The law which controls the falling pebble is a simple law; but all these worlds are kept by it in their places. The law which you see developed in a prism, bending the different rays in a beam of light, is a simple law; but all the beauty of the green lawn, of variegated flowers, of the clouds at evening, of the lips, the cheek, the eye, and all that we admire on the canvass when the pencil of Rubens or Raphael touches it, is to be traced to these simple laws. It is one of the ways in which nature works to bring out most wonderful results from the operation of the simplest laws. (*Ibid.*) *Exertion demands rest*:—This is true, as we all know, of the muscular system, voluntary and involuntary. In breathing, in winking of the eyes, in the beating of the heart, there is a system of alternate action and repose, each brief indeed in their existence, but indispensable to the healthy action of the muscles, and to the continuance of life. Each one of these organs, too, though they seem to be constantly in motion, will have the rest which nature demands, or disease and death will be the result. The same is true of our voluntary muscles. He that should endeavour to labour at the same thing constantly, he that should attempt to run or walk without relaxation, he that should exercise the same class of muscles in writing, in the practice of music, in climbing, or in holding the limb in a fixed position, would soon be sensible that he was violating a law of nature, and would be compelled by a fearful penalty to pay the forfeit. Nay, in doing these very things, in running, or leaping, or climbing, or in the most rapid execution of a piece of music, nature has provided by antagonist muscles that the great law demanding repose shall not be disregarded. A long-continued and uninterrmitted tension of any one of the muscles of the frame would soon bring us into conflict with one of the universal laws of our being; and we should be reminded of the existence of those laws in such a way that we should feel that they must be observed. Yet the operation of this law of our nature is not enough. We need other modes of rest than those which can be obtained by the intermitted action of a muscle which is soon to be resumed. We need longer repose; we need an entire relaxation of the system; we need such a condition that every muscle and nerve shall be laid down, shall be relaxed, shall be composed to rest, and shall be left in an undisturbed position for hours together, where there shall be no danger of its being summoned into action. Nature has provided for this too, and this law must be obeyed: for a few hours only can we be employed on our farms, or in our merchandise, and then the sun refuses us light any longer, and night spreads her sable curtains over all things, and the affairs of a busy world come to a pause. Darkness broods on the path of man, comes into his counting-house and his dwelling, meets him in his travels, interrupts his busiest employments, wraps the world in silence; and he himself sympathizes with the universal stillness of nature, and sinks down into a state of unconsciousness. The heart continues, indeed, still to beat, but more gently than under the excitements of political strife, of avarice and revenge; the lungs heave, though more gently than in the hurry and excitement of the chase, or in the anxious effort for gold. But the eyelid heavy will not suffer the eye to look out on the world, and even its involuntary action entirely ceases, and it sinks to repose. The ear, as if tired of hearing so many jarring and discordant sounds, hears nothing; the eye, as if wearied with seeing, sees nothing; the agitated bosom is as calm as it was in the slumberings of infancy: the stretched and weary muscle is relaxed, the nerve is released from its office of conveying the intimations of the will to the distant members of the exhausted frame. The storm may howl without, or the ocean roll high its billows, or perhaps even the thunder of battle may be near, but nature will have repose. Napoleon, at Leipsic, exhausted by fatigue, reposed at the foot of a tree even when the destiny of his

empire depended on the issue of the battle; and not even the roaring storm at sea can prevent compliance with this necessary law. (*Ibid.*) The mighty mind and the vigorous frame of Napoleon once enabled him to pass four days and nights in the exciting scenes of an active campaign without sleep, and then he fell asleep on his horse. The keenest torture which man has ever invented has been a device to drive sleep from the eyes, and to fix the body in such a position that it cannot find repose; and even this must fail, for the sufferer will find repose on the rack or in death. The same law, demanding rest, exists also in relation to the mind, and is as imperious in regard to the intellectual and moral powers, in order to their permanent and healthful action, as to the muscles of the body. No man can long pursue an intellectual effort without repose. He who attempts to hold his mind long to one train of close thinking, he who pursues far an abstruse proposition, and he who is wrought up into a high state of excitement, must have relaxation and repose. If he does not yield to this law, his mind is unstrung, the mental faculties are thrown from their balance, and the frenzied powers, perhaps yet mighty, move with tremendous but irregular force, like an engine without balance wheel or "governor," and the man of high intellectual powers, like Lear, becomes a raving maniac. So with our moral feelings. The intensest zeal will not always be on fire, the keenest sorrow will find intermission, and even love does not always glow with the same ardour in the soul. This law, contemplating our welfare, cannot be violated without incurring a fearful penalty. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath breaks the monotony of life:*—The mind is not in a condition for its best development when it is under an unbroken influence of any kind, however good in itself. It is not made for one thing, but for many things; not for the contemplation of one object, but of many objects. Life is not all one thing; it is broken up into many interests, many hopes, many anxieties, many modifications of sorrow and joy. On the earth it is not all night or all day, all sunshine or all shade, all hill or all vale, all spring or all winter. No man is made exclusively for any one pursuit, or for the exercise of one class of affections or feelings only, or to touch on society, like a globe on a plain, only on one point. Now look one moment, for illustration, at the effect of unbroken and uninterrupted worldliness on a man's mind. The man referred to may develop, in the highest degree, the powers of mind which constitute the successful merchant; he may have a far-reaching sagacity in business; he may never send out a vessel on an unsuccessful adventure; he may possess the powers of calculation in the highest degree; he may become rich, and build him a palace, and be "clothed in fine linen and purple;" but what is he then? Is he a man in the proper sense of the word man? There is but one single class of his faculties which has ever been developed, and he is not a man: he is but a calculating machine, though the powers of his nature may have been carried as far as possible in that direction. But what is he as a social being? Beyond the circle of the most limited range of topics he has no thoughts, no words. What is he as an intellectual being? Except in one limited department of the intellectual economy, his mind has never been cultivated at all. What is he as a man of sensibility, of refinement, of cultivated tastes? Not one of these things has been cultivated, and in none of them, unless by accident, has he any of the qualities of a man. He is acquainted with the world for commercial purposes only; he knows its geography, its ports of entry, its consuls, its custom-house laws; but he knows not the world as an abode of suffering and of wrong, and, I may add, as dressed up in exquisite beauty by its Maker. Man, in the costume of China or India, he knows as a trafficker: man, as made in the image of God, and as a moral being, he knows not in any costume or land. This unbroken influence on the mind the Sabbath is adapted, without perilling anything good, to break up. (*Ibid.*) *The Sabbath need not be a day of gloom:*—There is enough to be accomplished in every soul by duties appropriate to the day, to rescue every moment from tedium and ennui. If it were as pleasant to man to cultivate his heart as it is his intellectual powers; if he felt it to be as momentous to prepare for the life to come, as for the present world; if he delighted in the service of his Maker, as he does in the society of his friends below—the difficulty would not be that it would be impossible to fill up the day, but that the hours on the Sabbath had taken a more rapid flight than on other days, and that the shades of the evening came around us when our work was but half done. Let this one thought be borne with you to your homes, if no other, that the appropriate work of the Sabbath is the heart, all about the heart, all that can bear upon it, all that can make it better; and, I am persuaded, you will see no want of appropriate employment for one day in seven. See what there is in your heart perma-

nently abiding there that demands correction. See what an accumulation of bad influences there may be during the toils and turmoils of the week, that may require removal. See how in the business of the world, in domestic cares, in professional studies or duties, the heart may be neglected, and there may arise a sad disproportion between the growth of the intellect and the proper affections of the soul. See how, in the gaieties and vanities of life, the pursuits of pleasure, the love of flattery and applause, there may have been a steady growth of bad propensities through the week, not, for one moment, broken or checked. See how there may have been a silent but steady growth of avarice, pride, or ambition, all through the week, riveting the fetters of slavery on the soul, and bringing you into perpetual and ignoble bondage. See the tendency of all these things to harden the heart, to chill the affections, to stifle the voice of conscience, and to make the mind grovelling and worldly. See what an unnatural growth the intellect of man sometimes attains to, while all the finer feelings of his nature, like fragrant shrubs and beautiful flowers under the dense foliage of a far-spreading oak, are overshadowed and stinted. And then see what in nature and in grace is open for the cultivation of the heart—the worship of God adapted to assimilate the soul to the Creator, the Bible full of precepts and promises bearing directly on the heart. (*Ibid.*) I. THE DAY DESIGNED. "The Sabbath was made for man" by Him who also made man. II. THE DAY PERVERTED. It is so, and variously, by different people. 1. These Pharisees made it everything, and regarded the day more than man, and his need (to supply which it was first given). 2. Others pervert it by regarding it as a day for mere physical rest and recreation, as if man were a mere animal. Such are secularists and materialists, &c. 3. Others, again, pervert the day who make it a day for study, as if man were a purely intellectual being. Such would open museums. III. THE DAY CHANGED. Learn—1. Rightly to understand the Sabbath as meeting a human need. 2. To honour the Lord of the Sabbath by preserving His day from innovation, and by services of religion and mercy. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." 3. A practical reverence for the Lord of the day is the best way to keep the day from being stolen from us. (*C. Gray.*) *A world without a Sabbath*:—A world without a Sabbath would be like a man without a smile, like a summer without flowers, and like a homestead without a garden. It is the joyous day of the whole week. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

CHAPTER III.

VER. 1-5. **And there was a man there which had a withered hand.**—*The withered hand*:—I. WHAT THE WITHERED HAND MAY BE SAID TO SYMBOLIZE. 1. It represents capacity for work. By the hand the toiling millions earn their bread. 2. The hand stands as the symbol of fellowship. This is what our custom of shaking hands expresses. 3. There is one more thing symbolized by the hand—generosity. By the hand we convey our gifts. II. THE CAUSES OF THE HAND'S WITHERING. 1. The first suggestion is that, like some forms of blindness and certain deformities, it is sometimes a sad, inexplicable inheritance, possessed from birth. 2. The hand would become withered, I should think, if you fastened tight ligatures or bandages round the arm so as to impede the free circulation of blood. Our narrowness may cause the same result. 3. And then, perhaps, another cause may be cited—disuse of the hand, if long-continued. Nature's gifts are cancelled, if not made use of. III. THE MEANS OF HEALING. 1. The man is made to "stand forth." The healthful effects which flow to a man when he is drawn out of the solitude of a self-shrouded life, and constrained by force of circumstances to come into contact with other human beings. We need to be stored up with all sorts of social agencies. 2. There is another thing in this narrative—obedience to Christ. His obedience evidenced his faith. (*W. S. Houghton.*) *The withered hand*:—I. THE MEANING OF THE WITHERED HAND. The disease was not like the palsy, a type of universal inaction; it was not like some consuming fever, a type of the way in which sin and vice pervert all the faculties of the soul; but there was a vivid picture of that infirmity which destroys a man's power of doing anything well in this world of ours. The hand of man is one of those noble physical features which distinguish him from the brute. "The hand" is but another name for human skill, power, and usefulness, and for the studied adaptation of means to ends. 1.

The bigotry of these Pharisees rendered them useless in the great kingdom of God, and destroyed their power of serving Christ. Christ did not keep the Sabbath in *their* way, and that was enough for their malice. That man with a "withered hand" was an apt picture of the way in which their bigotry had incapacitated them for any holy service. Bigotry ties up men's hands still. 2. Prejudices wither up some of the energies of men. By prejudices I mean opinions taken up without sufficient reasons, and maintained with obstinacy; opinions that rest on feelings rather than on facts. There are many men—and professing Christians, too—who are so full of obstinate prejudices that they invariably find fault with every good work that has to be done, and with every possible way of doing it; but who very seldom do anything themselves. Their hand is withered. 3. Past inconsistencies often wither up the power of service. It is a mournful truth that if a man has once forfeited his character for integrity, or Christian prudence, he may have repented; but still his power for service is crippled. 4. Easily-besetting sins will paralyze the usefulness of any man who does not with earnestness wage war against them. Let a man yield himself indolently to the slavery of an evil habit, idle talk, vain thoughts, he will soon find that his hand is withered, that his power of serving God is gone. Indolence, fear of man, ungoverned temper, paralyze our energies. II. THE HEALING OF THE WITHERED HAND. Christ came into this world not mainly to set men free from the bondage of sin, but to emancipate all his faculties for holy service. There are three lessons we may learn from this narrative. 1. We may gather Christ's willingness to heal us. 2. The way in which we are to make use of Divine strength. When the man willed to stretch forth his hand, God willed *in* him; the communication of Divine strength was granted to him at the very moment when he determined to obey the command of Christ. If we will we may make the Divine strength our own. Verily while we "work out salvation with fear and trembling," God is working "within us both to will and do of His good pleasure." 3. Here is the great rule by which at all times, through the help of God's grace, we may overcome our listlessness and uselessness in His service. It is by our own vigorous effort to overcome the withering up of our faculties that we shall test the worth of Divine promises. (*H. R. Reynolds, B.A.*) *Restoring of the man with the withered hand:*—THE SCENE OF THIS MIRACLE—"He went into their synagogue." We often find our Saviour in the synagogue. 1. To show respect for Divine institutions. Places of worship may be despised by some, but not by Christ who came to do His Father's will. 2. To secure the great objects of His own mission. He appeared as a Divine Teacher, and frequented the synagogue in order to make known the glad tidings of His kingdom. II. THE PERSON ON WHOM THIS MIRACLE WAS WROUGHT. We are first shown—1. The nature of his complaint. He was not affected in his whole body, but in one of his members. 2. Something similar to this was occasionally inflicted as a Divine judgment. Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii.). 3. This case may be regarded as a representation of man's spiritual condition. By sin the powers of his soul have been paralyzed. III. THE DISPUTE BY WHICH THIS MIRACLE WAS PRECEDED. 1. The question proposed—"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" 2. The conclusive reply—"What man shall there be among you, &c." Interest is a very decisive casuist, and removes men's scruples in a moment. It is always soonest consulted and most readily obeyed. 3. The verdict pronounced—"The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath." IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MIRACLE WAS PERFORMED. 1. An authoritative mandate—"Stretch forth thine hand." 2. An instant compliance. 3. A gratifying result—"And it was restored whole, like the other." (*Expository Outlines.*) *Withered hands:*—If there were no withered hearts there would be no withered hands—make the fountain clear, and the stream will be pure. (*Dr. Parker.*) *The human side of a miracle:*—No great stretch of imagination is needed to see in this narrative a picture of man's spiritual state. The gospel of Jesus not merely tells us what we ought to be, but gives the power by which we actually become that which it requires. There have been many teaching gospels, but this is the only transforming gospel. But the strength of grace is bestowed upon conditions, and these seem to be set forth in the text, "Stretch forth thine hand." By the command of the text three conditions were demanded. I. It is easy to see that there was FAITH required. His faith had much to encourage it; yet he would perhaps feel something of that diffidence which makes it hard to realize as possible to oneself the blessings which have come to others. His faith would also be somewhat severely tested by the manner in which the Saviour dealt with him. Moreover, it appears that there was no outward act on the part of our Lord. It was merely by a word that the invisible power was com-

municated. This faith was indispensable. It was a condition invariably demanded. Without it Jesus wrought no miracles. Unbelief hinders His merciful designs. Faith is the mysterious moral force which thrusts out the hand of humanity to take the gift Divine. II. The faith of this man was accompanied by OBEDIENCE. The commands, "Stand forth," "Stretch forth thine hand," were by no means easy to obey. But undaunted he obeyed, and in the very act of obedience he found the blessing that he craved. This obedience was the fruit of his faith, and the faith which does not produce obedience is of little worth. Saving faith is always obedient faith. III. It seems evident that there was needed in the case of this man a STRONG RESOLUTION. This may appear from what has been already said. Still more if we consider the act which was required of him. But he found that the law of Christ is, Obey, and thou hast the power. (*S. S. Bosward.*) *Analogies of faith*:—You say, "I have no faith." We answer, "Believe, and faith is yours." Does it seem a paradox. But paradoxes are often great truths, and are only hard to us because they come to us from a higher region, where our poor logic is of small account. But how many analogies there are of this paradox of faith even in the lower spheres of life! How often is the ability to perform an act, not merely revealed, but actually developed or even created by the very effort to accomplish it! How many works exist to-day as monuments of genius which never would have existed if their authors had waited till they had the necessary power. So it is in the matter of salvation. You can never have it till you take it. You will never have the gift of faith until you believe. Your will is all God waits for. He speaks by His prophet thus: "Hear, ye deaf, that ye may hear; and look, ye blind, that ye may see." And by His incarnate Son He says to every impotent soul, "Stretch forth thine hand!" (*Ibid.*) *Stretch forth thine hand*:—I. Christ sometimes enjoins what seems to be impossible. II. Faith is shown in doing what He commands, even when it seems to be impossible. III. Where there is the "obedience of faith," power will be granted. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Divine kindness amid human opposition*:—The destructive effects of sin are abundantly seen in this life. It destroys men's mental eyesight, making them blind to their own best interests. Notice here—I. THE DIVINE HEALER SEEKING OPPORTUNITY TO DO GOOD. 1. The pathway of filial obedience is the pathway of useful service. Jesus went to the synagogue because there He was sure to meet with human needs. He went to do good as well as to get good. These two things are identical at the root. 2. The comprehensiveness of God's purpose puts to shame the selfish narrowness of man's. No place or day can be too sacred for giving free play to the love of God. II. THE DIVINE HEALER DISCIPLINING THE FAITH OF THE DISTRESSED. The measure of our present strength is not the limit of what we can do. Divine help supplements human endeavour. III. THE DIVINE HEALER PROVOKING THE HOSTILITY OF THE PROUD. 1. It is possible for man's will to resist Divine influence. 2. The choicest blessing can be perverted into the direst curse. 3. Contact with Jesus makes men either better or worse. The ice that is not melted by the midsummer sun is greatly hardened thereby. IV. THE DIVINE HEALER DOING GOOD, HEEDLESS OF HIS OWN INTERESTS. Come what may, Jesus Christ must do good. It was the natural forth-putting of His inexhaustible love. It is as natural for Christ to show unmerited kindness as for the sun to shed its light, the rose to diffuse its fragrance. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *A withered hand*:—We may behold our own weakness in this emblem, which represents that total inability of doing good to which sin has reduced mankind. A withered hand, in the sight of God, and in the eyes of faith, is—(1) a covetous wretch, who bestows on the poor little or no alms at all; (2) a lukewarm and negligent Christian, who performs no good works; (3) a magistrate or person in authority, who takes no care to maintain order and justice; (4) a great man who abandons the innocent when oppressed. None but Thou, O Lord, can heal this withered hand, because its indisposition proceeds from the heart, and Thou alone canst apply Thy healing and almighty hand to that. (*Quesnel.*) *Publicity*:—There is no public action which the world is not ready to scan; there is no action so private which the evil spirits are not witnesses of. I will endeavour so to live, as knowing that I am ever in the eyes of mine enemies. (*Bishop Hall.*) *The good eye and the evil eye*:—"They watched Him." And He watched them. But with what different eyes! The evil eye, like the eye of the serpent, confuses with distress, overcomes by pain; and a good eye, like the eye of man fronting the wild beast of the forest, subdues. But the evil eye makes us a prey; the good eye subdues the beast of prey itself. If we can but gaze calmly on the angry face of the world, we have already half tamed that great foe. Christ went on His daily course surrounded

with evil eyes. He did indeed face the angry world. Men quailed before Him, multitudes hushed, and enemies whose tongue was arrogantly loud, were silenced. But think not that courage can be exerted even by the best without frequent anguish. To be watched by the unkind, even if we can maintain our composure and good will, inflicts a pang; and to be watched in time of festive and unsuspicious pleasure by the enemy, instead of being permitted to utter all with unusual freedom through the presence of kind sympathy—this is indeed distressing. (*T. T. Lynch.*) "*To save life or to kill?*"—The man was not in danger of his life, and he would have survived undoubtedly had no cure been wrought. But that question implied, that not to give health and strength, not to restore the vital power when the restoration lies within your reach, is equivalent to taking it away. To leave a good deed undone is hardly less sinful than doing a bad one. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The sin of neglecting to do good:*—In God's account there is no difference, in regard of simple unlawfulness, between not doing good to the body or life of our neighbour, in the case of necessity, and doing hurt unto them: he that doth not good to the body and life of his neighbour (when his necessity requireth, and when it is in his power) is truly said to do hurt unto them, at least indirectly and by consequence. The rich glutton, *e.g.*, in not relieving poor Lazarus, may be truly said to have murdered him. The reason of which is, because both these, as well the not doing of good to our neighbour's body and life, as the doing of hurt to them, are forbidden in the sixth commandment, as degrees of murder; therefore he that doth not good, he that shows not mercy to his neighbour's body in case of necessity, is truly said to do hurt, and to show cruelty against it. How deceived, then, are those who think it enough if they do no harm to others, if they do not wrong or oppress them, though they take no trouble to relieve or help them. Let us clearly understand this: that not to save life is to destroy it, though not directly, yet indirectly and by consequence. They are both degrees of murder, though the latter is a higher degree than the former. Let this move us not only to forbear hurting our neighbour, but also to make conscience of doing good to him. (*G. Petter.*) *Christ and the Sabbath:*—They watched Him with an evil eye. Not to understand but to bring accusation against Him. I. THE WORLD WATCHED THE SAVIOUR; THE WORLD WATCHES THE SAVIOUR'S DISCIPLES. "No man liveth to himself." The eye of the world is always on the Church, on every disciple, just as it was on the Church's and the disciples' Lord. What a lesson of circumspection this should read! II. THE SAVIOUR DID GOOD ON THE SABBATH DAY; IT IS THE DUTY OF HIS DISCIPLES TO DO GOOD. Did men expect that He would be held within the stone walls of Jewish ceremonialism? (*J. B. Lister.*) *Good lawfully done on the Sabbath: or, love the over-ruling law:*—At other times the defence of the Lord was based on the nature of the works which He had performed. He held and taught that "it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." Nay, He went farther, and maintained that there is a class of duties which we not only may, but *must* perform on that day. It was ordained at first for the benefit of man, and, therefore, it was never intended that it should operate to his detriment. Whenever, therefore, an injury would be inflicted on a fellow-man by our refusing to labour for his assistance on the Sabbath, we are bound to exert ourselves, even on that day, for his relief. Nay, more; in the case of the lower animals, when an emergency shall arise like that which a fire or a flood creates, or when a necessity exists like that which requires that they shall be regularly fed, the higher law of benevolence comes in and suspends, for the moment, the lower law of rest. There are thus degrees of obligation in moral duties. As a general rule children are bound to obey their parents; but when that obedience would interfere with their duty to God, the stronger obligation comes in and requires them to do what is right in the sight of God. In chemistry you may have a substance which, yielding to the law of gravitation, falls to the bottom of the vase; but when you introduce another ingredient, you shall see the particles, whose weight formerly held them down, rising in obedience to the mightier principle of affinity, and combining to produce a new result. Precisely so the new principle of love operates in the interpretation of law. All law is for the good of man and the glory of God; and when the highest welfare of the individual creates a necessity, love is to seek to meet that emergency, even though in doing so it may seem to be violating the Sabbath. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The power of the human hand:*—The hand of a man is one of those noble physical features which distinguish him from the brute. "The hand" is but another name for human skill, power, and usefulness, and for the studied adaptation of means to ends. By his hand, as the

servant of his intellect and his heart, man is put on a physical level with, if not far above, all other living beings, in respect of his power to defend himself against the formidable creatures who are furnished by nature with ponderous and deadly weapons, both of attack and resistance. By the aid of this wonderful instrument, he can cover his nakedness, he can build for himself a home, and make the whole world do his bidding; he can subdue it unto himself, and fill it with the trophies of his mastery. The houses, the roads, the bridges, the fleets, the palaces, the temples, the pyramids, of earth, have all been wrought by the little hands of men. The agriculture and industry by which the whole habitable face of our globe has been fashioned into "the great bright useful thing it is," have been the work of man's hand. While the working-man's hand is his sole capital, the hand of man is constantly used as the symbol of power and the type of developed and practical wisdom. The hand commits thought to paper, and imagination to marble and to canvas. Literature, science, and art are as dependent on its service, as are the toils of the labourer, or the fabric of the artizan. If manual toil is economized by machinery, still man's hand is essential for the construction of the machine, and for its subsequent control, so that the hand is the symbol and the instrument of all the arts of human life. We can, therefore, scarcely refrain from the thought that that "withered hand" in the synagogue was a type of uselessness and feebleness; and that "right hand," as St. Luke describes it, robbed of its nourishment, hanging helplessly in a sling, was a picture of whatever deprives a man of the power of holy work, and renders him an encumbrance, if not a mischief, in God's great kingdom. (*H. R. Reynolds, B.A.*)

Ver. 5. **Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.**—*The anger of Christ:*—I. BUT IS ANGER A PASSION WHICH IT WAS RIGHT FOR CHRIST TO SHOW AND TO FEEL? And if it were right for Christ, is it equally right for us? The answer to the first question is simple enough. As the Holy One, the very presence of evil must be abhorrent to Him. He may be reconciled to the sinner, but He can never be reconciled to sin. His whole nature revolts from the evil thing. It was not then the mere ebullition of passion. It was not a sudden outburst of rage. It was righteous wrath. It was the emotion which stirred His whole being, just because sin is the utterly opposite of Himself. The trained eye is offended with that which is distorted and ugly; the trained ear is pained beyond expression with that which violates the very elements of harmony; and the perfect heart loathes and cannot but be angry with sin. Can there be any doubt that Christ's anger with sin in these men also glanced at their relations with other men? "No man liveth unto himself." He was angry at the blighting influence of the men's lives. Yet there was no sin in Christ's anger, although Christ was angry with sin. While His anger was strong His pity was yet Divine. He was sorrowful at the thought of what it all meant, and would yet Himself rescue them from the snare. Anger and grief were blent together in the same mind, just because in His mind there was perfect holiness, and there was perfect love; for it is not the stirring and agitation of the waters that troubles and defiles them, but the sediment at the bottom. Where there is no sediment, mere agitation will not create impurity. There was none in Christ. His anger was the anger of a holy Being at sin, at the devil's corruption of God's creature. His grief was for man, God's offspring. He hated the thing which alienated the sons from the Father. The anger may well make us tremble, but should not the pity make us trust? II. IF IT WERE RIGHT IN CHRIST TO BE ANGRY WITH SIN, IS IT EQUALLY RIGHT AND BECOMING IN US? We are always right in being angry with sin. But just here is the difficulty. We are angry not so much at sin as at something in it which affects and inconveniences us. It is not that which is opposed to the holy law of God which most commonly makes us angry, but that which brings us some petty discomfort and trouble. We see how sin injures others. Purity will bring its own anger. Remember, however, that anger with sin is not something permitted; it is an emotion demanded. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." But our anger must be interblent with pity. Christ sought to give these hard-hearted men another chance. He did not permit them to hinder His work. He would have won them if only they would have opened their hearts to the truth. It is Christ's great love alone which can fill our souls with unwearied compassion for sinners. Beware, then, of thinking that anger with sin is enough. It is but one-half of our work. Pity is the other half. (*J. J. Goadby.*) *Anger against sin blended with pity:*—It should be so trained in us by our docile obedience to Christ, that sin should always, and upon the instant, fire the righteous indignation

of our hearts. It is not to be like that anger which one of the ancients describes as the fire of straw, quickly blazing up, and as quickly extinguished. It is rather to become an unquenchable fire. The other half of our duty is equally binding—that we pity the sinner, and do our best to free him from his thraldom. It is here that so much yet needs to be done. One may cheaply earn, to our own satisfaction, a passing praise for righteousness, by anger against sin; but the best proof that it is the hateful thing to us which we proclaim it to be, is this, the efforts we make to get rid of it, the sacrifices we cheerfully bear to snatch men from its bondage, and the earnestness and persistence of our endeavours to secure their freedom. (*Ibid.*) *Rules to be observed, that our anger against sin may be good and warrantable:*—1. We must not be too hasty and sudden in giving way to our anger, without duly considering that there is just cause for it. 2. We must distinguish between the offence done against God and any personal indignity we may have suffered. When these two are combined, as often happens, our anger must be directed chiefly against the sin; the offence against ourselves we must forgive. 3. Our anger must be properly proportioned, according to the degree of sin. 4. We must be impartial, being displeased at sin wherever and in whomsoever we find it; as well at our own sins, as at the sins of others; as well at the faults of friends as of enemies. 5. Our anger must be joined with grief for the person against whose sin we are offended. 6. Our anger against the sin must be joined with love to the sinner, making us willing and desirous to do him any good we can. (*G. Petter.*) *Christ's anger not like ours:*—There was in Christ real anger, sorrow, and the rest of the passions and affections as they exist in other men, only subject to reason. Wherefore anger was in Him a whetstone of virtue. In us (says F. Lucas) anger is a passion; in Christ it was, as it were, an action. It arises spontaneously in us; by Christ it was stirred up in Himself. When it has arisen in us it disturbs the other faculties of the body and mind, nor can it be repressed at our own pleasure; but when stirred up in Christ it acts as He wills it to act, it disturbs nothing—in fine, it ceases when He wills it to cease. (*Cornelius à Lapide.*) *Christ's indignation:*—The anger here mentioned was no uneasy passion, but an excess of generous grief occasioned by their obstinate stupidity and blindness. From this passage the following conclusions may be drawn: 1. It is the duty of a Christian to sorrow not only for his own sins, but also to be grieved for the sins of others. 2. All anger is not to be considered sinful. 3. He does not bear the image of Christ, but rather that of Satan, who can either behold with indifference the wickedness of others, or rejoice in it. 4. Nothing is more wretched than an obdurate heart, since it caused Him, who is the source of all true joy, to be filled with grief in beholding it. 5. Our indignation against wickedness must be tempered by compassion for the persons of the wicked. (*T. H. Horne, D.D.*) *The disposition of a wise minister:*—This conduct and these dispositions of Christ ought to be imitated by a wise minister. 1. He ought to have a holy indignation against those who, out of envy, oppose their own conversion. 2. A real affliction of heart on account of their blindness. 3. A charitable and constant application to those whom God sends to him, notwithstanding all contradiction. 4. He must incite them to lift up, and stretch forth, their hands toward God, in order to pray to Him; toward the poor, to relieve them; and toward their enemies, to be reconciled to them. (*Quesnel.*) *Hardness of heart:*—II. Let us show WHAT IS MEANT BY HARDNESS OF HEART. A hard-hearted man, in the current use of language, means a man void of humanity; a man of cruel habits. In the Bible it is a compound of pride, perverseness, presumption, and obstinacy. It is said of Nebuchadnezzar, "that when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took away his glory from him." II. THE CAUSES OF HARDNESS OF HEART. 1. By neglecting the word and ordinances of God. There is a salutary power in Divine truth of which it is not easy to give adequate ideas (Psa. lxxxi. 11, 12). 2. By our slighting and despising the corrective dispensations of Providence. When painful events do not rouse to seriousness, and fiery trials do not melt to tenderness, we generally see increased levity and obstinacy. 3. By cherishing false opinions in religion. 4. By persisting in any known course of sin (Deut. xxix. 19). III. THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCES OF HARDNESS OF HEART. 1. It provokes God to leave men to their own errors, base passions, and inveterate passions. 2. It involves men in utter and irretrievable ruin. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Learn: 1. How much guilt there is in hardness of heart. 2. Take the warnings of Scripture against hardness of heart. 3. Take those measures which are absolutely necessary to guard you against hard-

ness of heart. (*J. Thornton.*) *Hardness of heart*:—I. THE HEART—figuratively the seat of feeling, or affection. II. It is said to be TENDER when it is easily affected by the sufferings of others; by our own sin and danger; by the love and commands of God—when we are easily made to feel on the great subjects pertaining to our interest (Ezek. xi. 19, 20). III. It is HARD when nothing moves it; when a man is alike insensible to the sufferings of others, the dangers of his own condition, and the commands, the love, and the threatenings of God. It is most tender in youth. It is made hard by indulgence in sin; by long resisting the offers of salvation. Hence the most favourable period for securing an interest in Christ, or for becoming a Christian, is in youth—the first, the tenderest, and the best days of life. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Hardness of the heart*:—Stones are charged with the worst species of hardness—"as stubborn as a stone;" and yet the hardest stones submit to be smoothed and rounded under the soft friction of water. Ask the myriads of stones on the seashore what has become of all their angles, once so sharp, and of the roughness and uncouthness of their whole appearance. Their simple reply is, "Water wrought with us; nothing but water, and none of us resisted." If they yield to be fashioned by the water, and you do not yield to be fashioned by God, what wonder if the very stones cry out against you? (*Pulsford's "Quiet Hours."*) *Hardness of heart*:—In that Christ mourned in Himself for this hardness of their hearts, we may learn that it is a most fearful and grievous sin, and to be greatly lamented in whomsoever it is found. It is that sin whereby the heart of man is so rooted and settled in the corruption of sin, that it is hardly or not at all withdrawn or reclaimed from it by any good means that are used to that end. Two kinds are to be distinguished. I. When the obstinacy and perverseness of the heart is in some measure felt and perceived by those in whom it is, and also lamented and bewailed and resisted. This kind of hardness may be, and is, found more or less in the best saints and children of God (Mark vi. 52; xvi. 14). II. That hardness which either is not felt at all, or, if felt, is not resisted. This is found only in wicked men. It is a fearful and dangerous sin; for—1. It keeps out repentance, which is the remedy for sin. 2. God often punishes other heinous sins with this sin (Rom. i. 28). 3. God also punishes this sin with other sins (Eph. iv. 18). 4. In the Bible we find fearful threatenings against this sin (Deut. xxix. 19); Rom. ii. 5). (*G. Petter.*) *Signs whereby men may know whether their hearts are hardened*:—1. If they are not moved to repentance and true humiliation for sin, by seeing or hearing of the judgments of God inflicted on themselves or others; or if they are a little moved for the time, yet afterwards grow as bad or worse than before. 2. If the mercies of God, shown to themselves and others, do not affect them and persuade their hearts to turn to God (Rom. ii. 4). 3. If the word preached fail to humble them in the sight of God; but the more the hammer of the Word beats on their hearts, the harder they become, like the smith's anvil. These are all evident signs of great hardness of heart, in whomsoever they are found. And it is fearful to think how many there are of this rank and number. Let them consider how fearful their case is, and fear to continue in it. Let them be humbled for it, and lament it. (*Ibid.*) *Remedies for hard-heartedness*:—I. Pray earnestly to God to soften our hearts by the work of His Spirit, to take away our stony hearts and to give us hearts of flesh. He only is able to do it, and He has promised to do it if we carefully use the means (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). II. Be diligent and constant in hearing the Word of God. This is the hammer which will break the stone; the fire to melt and thaw the heart frozen in sin. III. Meditate much and often upon God's infinite and unspeakable mercy toward penitent sinners (Exod. xxxiv. 6). IV. Meditate seriously upon the bitter sufferings of Christ. It is said that the blood of a goat, while it is warm, will break the hardest adamant; so the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, and applied to the conscience, will break the hardest heart in pieces, with godly sorrow for sin. V. We are to use Christian admonitions and exhortations one to another: if we see others fall into any sin, point it out to them in a loving manner, and beseech them to repent of it; and if others admonish and exhort us, let us hearken to it. VI. Be careful to avoid the causes of hardness of heart; viz.: 1. Habitual sin; for, as a way or path, the more it is trodden and trampled upon, the harder it gets, so the more we inure ourselves to the practice of any sin, the harder our hearts will grow. It is said of Mithridates, that through the custom of drinking poison, he became so used to it that he drank it without danger; so the wicked, by habitual indulgence in swearing, uncleanness, &c., make these sins so familiar to them, that they can swallow them without any remorse of conscience. 2. Take heed of sinning against knowledge and the light of conscience. 3. Guard against negligence and cold-

ness in religious exercises, such as prayer, hearing and reading the Word, &c. If we either begin to omit, or else carelessly to perform these duties, by which our hearts should be daily softened and kept tender, then by little and little we shall become dangerously hardened. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. **How they might destroy Him.**—*The meanness, evil, and sinfulness of hatred:*—I. THE MEANNESS OF HATRED is exhibited in the conduct of the Pharisees. 1. They professed to be peculiarly holy and righteous men. But here, on the Sabbath, in the synagogue, they watched Jesus, only that they might bring an accusation against Him. 2. They charged the Herodians with being traitors to their country. Yet now, in order to accomplish their murderous purpose on Jesus, they are willing to join hands with them. II. THE EVIL OF HATRED is here seen. 1. Its evil effects upon themselves. They grew more and more bitter towards Jesus, and their hearts and consciences more and more seared. 2. Its evil effects upon society. They ultimately induced the people in a fit of madness to demand the murder of Jesus. III. THE SINFULNESS OF HATRED. 1. The Bible denounces it as murder (1 John iii. 15). 2. It is inconsistent with a state of grace (1 John iii. 14; iv. 8). (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Sin breeds sin:*—The Pharisees having before harboured malice and hatred in their hearts, now show it by seeking Christ's death. From this we may observe the policy of Satan, tempting and drawing men to the practice of sin by certain steps and degrees—first to lesser sins, and then to greater and more heinous ones. First the heart is drawn away and enticed by some sinful object: then lust conceives, *i.e.*, consent is given to the sin in heart: then this inward consent brings forth actual sin: nor does the sinner stay here, but proceeds to the finishing or perfecting of sin, which is done by custom and continuance in it. This should teach us a point of spiritual wisdom, viz., to resist sin in the first beginnings of it, before we proceed far in it. Withstand the first motions of sin arising in the heart, or suggested by Satan; strive and pray against them at first; and labour at the very first to cast them out of the heart and mind, and not to suffer them to lodge or take possession there. Satan and sin are most easily resisted at first; but if either of them get hold in us, it will be very hard afterwards to dispossess them. Be wise, therefore, to resist and keep them out betimes. The only way to be kept from actual committing of gross sins is to withstand the first motions of those sins. The only way to be kept from the fearful sin of actual murder is, to guard against yielding to unadvised anger, and especially to take care not to harbour malice and rancour in our hearts against such as wrong us. These lower degrees of murder do often make way to the highest degree of that bloody sin; therefore, as thou wouldst be prevented from falling into the latter, beware of giving way to the former. Once give way to the first occasions and beginnings of any sin, and it is a thousand to one but thou wilt proceed further in it; and the further thou goest on in it, the worse and the harder thou wilt find the return by repentance; therefore resist it betimes. We must deal with sin, if we would mortify it in ourselves, as we do with venomous creatures such as adders or snakes; we must kill the young brood. If we could practise but this one point of resisting the first beginnings of sin in ourselves, how profitable would it be. How many dangerous sins might we be kept from by this means. And the not practising of this has been the cause of the fearful falls of many into most grievous sins. If our first parents, and David, Peter, Judas, had resisted the beginnings of those sins into which they fell, they had not fallen into them so dangerously as they did. Let us therefore be warned by their harms, and beware of giving way to the first occasions and beginnings of any sin, lest if we yield to them, the devil bring us by degrees to the highest pitch of that sin. (*G. Petter.*) *Hatred of Christ:*—A generous nature would have hoped for some other result than is here described; that on reflection they would mark the love, the omnipotence, the courage and the tenderness of Christ. Marking these things they might have learned some more excellent way than that bondage of scrupulous forms under which they groaned. But, alas! they only feel their discomfiture—not the Saviour's greatness; the wound given to their pride—not the lesson given to their conscience. All His greatness seems to them a reason only for making their efforts to suppress Him more rigorous. And from the gracious teaching and the wondrous works of the Saviour they gather only harm and hatred. How true it is that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." There is in all of us something which, if not checked, will grow into hatred of our Saviour. Our envy will make us dislike His goodness; our pride, His authority; our evil, the purity of His precepts; while our indolence will make us dislike His very love, because of the obligations under which it lays us. (*R. Glover.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **Came unto Him.**—*A powerful reason for coming to Christ*:—I. THE ATTRACTION. They had heard with somewhat of a believing ear. They drew from what they heard an argument of hope. No doubt they were partly urged to come to Him by their own sad condition. They also perceived that Jesus was able to meet their case. II. THE GATHERING. Hearing did not content them. They did not wait until Jesus came to them. These people did not stop at His disciples. These people who came to Jesus in such crowds must have left their business. Many of them came from a great distance. They came with all their ailments about them. III. THE RESULT. Not one was ever repulsed. All were cured. The attraction, therefore, grew. Therefore, sinners should come because—(*a*) Jesus' name invites them: (*b*) His power encourages them; (*c*) His character should allure them; (*d*) His preparations should compel them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ accepted by some if hated by others: Christian effort not all in vain*:—All the world is not bound up in a Pharisee's phylactery, nor held in chains by a philosopher's new fancy. If some will not have the Saviour, others will; God's eternal purpose will stand, and the kingdom of His anointed will come. (*Ibid.*) *Flowers after showers*:—I would have you count upon opposition, and regard it as a token of coming blessing. Dread not the black cloud, it does but prognosticate a shower. March may howl and bluster; April may damp all things with its rains, but the May flowers and the autumn's harvest of varied fruits will come, and come by this very means. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. **A small ship.**—*Christ was always willing to accept service*:—He borrowed a boat, an ass, a grave. He accepted a draught of water from a well, a few fishes from a net, and the money of those women who ministered unto Him. He who loves the Saviour will be surprised to find how many things there are that He can consecrate and that Christ can use. Some persons cannot preach unless they have a proper pulpit, their priestly robe, organ, choir, and other things; but Christ is at home anywhere, and can preach afloat as well as in the synagogue. Note this characteristic of Christ. The late Bishop Selwyn, who was a devoted missionary bishop in New Zealand, said that all a missionary wanted in going about was a blanket and a frying pan. He might have gathered that homely ease from the example of the great Master Himself. (*R. Glover.*)

Ver. 10. **They pressed upon Him for to touch Him.**—*Crowding to touch the Saviour*:—I. THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE PRESENT TIMES AND THOSE OF THE TEXT. Jesus had healed many. These have been thoroughly and effectually restored. So far the parallel exists, but here is the marvel—that those who know this do not throng to Christ to obtain the self-same blessing. II. WHAT ARE THE SINS WHICH PREVENT THE CARRYING OUT OF THIS PARALLEL? Ignorance. Insensibility. Indifference. Procrastination. They really love the disease. III. THE GRACE WHICH INVITES US TO COMPLETE THE PARALLEL OF THE TEXT. You are spared in this world. Spared to hear the gospel. IV. TWO CAUTIONS WHICH SEEM TO BE NEEDFUL. Never be content with merely pressing upon Christ. Do not be content with touching them who are healed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The desire for healing an instinct of humanity*:—As many as had plagues came to Jesus, that they might touch Him and be healed. Tell of the annual pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, where thousands gathered from all parts of England, believing that their needs could be supplied and their diseases healed at the shrine of the saint. It is their needs that to-day take so many to Lourdes and Knock. Two centuries ago—and the superstition is not dead yet—it was believed that the touch of a king could heal a certain painful disorder; how eagerly people sought for that touch is seen in the case of Charles II. of England, who, in his reign, touched over a hundred thousand persons for the healing of the "king's evil." During the recent famines in India and in Turkey, the houses of the missionaries were besieged by crowds of hungry people seeking relief. When a medical missionary first appears in a new district, and his mission is made known to the people, the sick are brought to him from all the country around. It was therefore one of the commonest instincts of humanity that brought the needy to Jesus, in whom only they could find all that they sought.

Ver. 11. **And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him.**—*Christ's supremacy over evil spirits*:—Whence the commotion in the intelligent universe when the Saviour entered on His public ministry? The diseased crowded

around Him to be healed; the teachable to hear the words of celestial wisdom; the curious to witness the stupendous miracles; and the captious that they might entangle Him in His talk. Nor was His audience composed exclusively of men. Heaven and hell waited on His steps. The Father spake of Him from the excellent glory; the Holy Ghost descended upon Him; sinless angels followed in His train; and the demons of the abyss pronounced His eulogium, and deprecated His wrath. Why this mighty congregation streaming from the remotest points of the universe to meet Him? On the principle, doubtless, that where the King is, there is the Court. Every type of moral being surrounded our Lord. I. IMPIETY ABASHED IN THE PRESENCE OF HOLINESS. That devils are conscious of their own character, and that they are correct judges of the character of other beings, must be admitted on the simple ground of their intelligence. The consciousness of their awful degradation remains in unblunted keenness; and it cowers in the presence of moral purity. Why do Ananias and Sapphira fall dead beneath the calm questions of the apostle? It is falsehood slain by the glittering sword of truth. And why does Felix tremble when Paul, the prisoner, reasons of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? No external force is brought to bear upon the governor, no visible sword hangs over his head; and yet he trembles; why? He is shaken like a leaf in the hurricane, by an invisible host of memories more powerful far than a legion of visible foes. Evil confesses the superiority of good; vice crowns virtue with a lasting garland; sin declares holiness to be infinitely above it. II. DIVINE TRUTH MAY BE INTELLECTUALLY RECOGNIZED WITHOUT THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF SALVATION. It is possible for a man to vindicate the truth against all opponents without embracing it; to contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints without adopting it; to construct an elaborate system of divinity without fellowship with the Saviour; and to preach the gospel in eloquent language without either part or lot in the matter. III. HERE ARE DEVILS ACKNOWLEDGING THE SUPREMACY OF THE SON OF GOD OVER THEM. The supremacy of the Son of God, as such, over all creatures, without respect to their moral character, or their position in the scale of being, must, of course, be freely admitted. But this is not the point here; for first, there is the acknowledgment of this supremacy; and second, it is the Son of God in His character of the Messiah, whose supremacy they acknowledge. They had the strongest reasons for not looking on the outward appearance but on the reality. They knew Him, and believed, and confessed, and "trembled!" They worshipped, but it was in demon fashion, the worship of terror. This confession of supremacy, as uttered by evil spirits, means this: "We are intruders and impostors, having no right here. This is Thy world. By falsehood have we gained our position here, afflicting the bodies, maddening the minds, and ruining the souls of men. We know our doom, and that Thou wilt pronounce it; but surely not so soon." It was a confession of defeat. Lying lips speak sublime truth for once. IV. HE WHOSE SUPREMACY IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY EVIL SPIRITS IS YOUR FRIEND AND SAVIOUR, IF YOU WILL ACCEPT HIM AS SUCH. Inferences: 1. In the kingdom of grace, love is a greater thing than knowledge. Fallen spirits believe and tremble; worldly men assent and are indifferent; Christians believe and love. Christ seeks our affection. 2. Laying hold on the Redeemer's strength, you are stronger than evil spirits. They are conquered foes; conquered by your Saviour; on your account. In Christ you have not only righteousness, but strength. 3. Following the Redeemer, you will be shortly where evil spirits cannot follow you. (*W. Leask, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **That they should not make Him known.**—*The art to conceal good deeds:*—It is the art of art to hide art, and the glory of glory to conceal glory. It is only the Christ who can charge the trophies of His healing power that they should not make Him known. (*L. Palmer.*) *Creation's glories concealed:*—Many of the most glorious works of God in creation are concealed from the eye of man. Some of the most beautiful forms in nature are the shells in the deepest depths of the sea. Nowhere is ornament more richly seen than in the insects which the most powerful microscopes enable only a few to see just once in their lives. Neither in nature nor grace does the Lord parade His works before the eyes of men. (*Anon.*)

Vers. 13-21. **And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him.**—*This was the third stage in the preparation of the disciples for the apostolate:*—A certain number had been admitted at the beginning to terms of intimacy and friendship with Jesus. Then they had left their secular calling for a time to attend upon Him. And now the final step must be taken, and a selection made of such as would give

themselves wholly to the work, and go no more back to the world. The twelve apostles are divided by the evangelists into three groups. I. Notice THE MANIFOLD VARIETY REPRESENTED AMONG THEM. 1. In character. Where in the whole world could we find dispositions more diverse than in Peter and John—the one ardent and impulsive, the very embodiment of energy and vehemence; the other quiet and contemplative, fitted for nothing so well as the life of a recluse? 2. In calling. What callings could be more incongruous than those which Simon and Matthew had respectively chosen? The fiery patriot could brook no allegiance to an earthly ruler, but would do and dare anything to resist the Roman claim to impose taxation upon the people of God. But his fellow-apostle had degraded himself, of his own free-will, to exact from his own flesh and blood the obnoxious tribute. Yet such was the comprehensive work which lay before the ministry of the Church, that a sphere was found in it for the "tax-gatherer" no less than the "tax-hater;" for the Jew who had sold his birthright as well as for their reconcilable nationalist. Jew and Greek, bond and free, rich and poor, men of every type and people, were destined to be embraced in the Catholic Church; and Jesus Christ foreshadowed the future when He welded together the most discordant elements in that first society of the Twelve Apostles. II. Another thought of scarcely less importance arises out of THE SOCIAL POSITION FROM WHICH HE MADE HIS CHOICE. The Jewish Rabbis estimated the weight of their influence by the rank or wealth or learning of the pupils who sat at their feet. The first Teacher of Christianity aimed, on the contrary, at attracting the poorest of men. It may be urged that He had no alternative; that men in the position of Joseph and Nicodemus were so reluctant to accept the call that, had He waited for their adherence, the apostolic roll would never have been filled up in His lifetime. But His choice of the poor and despised, the ignorant and unlearned, was based upon a principle which governed the whole of His life on earth; which selected for His birthplace the manger of a wayside khan, for His home a humble cottage, and for His early occupation the trade of an artizan, among a people intellectually of the lowest type in Palestine. It was in perfect consistency with all that had gone before that He should associate with Himself for the work of the ministry men of the humblest rank, who probably knew little more than their letters, and, judged by a human standard, were worthless for that unto which they were called. . . . For the first three centuries the progress of Christianity was a gradual triumph of the lowly over the great, till, by the irresistible might of its weakness, it shook the world and compelled "the master of legions" to cast his crown at the foot of the Cross. Then was the wisdom of His choice demonstrated. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The twelve*:—1. The sons of Jacob were twelve. The princes of the children of Israel were twelve. The fountains of Elim were twelve. The stones in Aaron's breastplate were twelve. The loaves of shewbread were twelve. The spies sent by Moses into Canaan were twelve. The stones of the altar were twelve. The stones taken out of Jordan were twelve. The oxen which supported the brazen Laver in the temple were twelve. The stars on the crown of the woman in the Apocalypse are twelve. The foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem are twelve. The gates of the celestial city are twelve. The twelve tribes of Israel were the beginning of the Old Testament Church: the twelve apostles were the beginning of the New Testament Church. Hence both these numbers joined together describe the four and twenty elders, representing the entire Church in glory. 2. We have four lists of the apostles: in Matthew, in Mark, in Luke, and in the Acts. The order in which the names are given is not the same in all. It has been suggested that in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke they are enrolled chronologically in the order of their calling: whereas in Mark and in Acts the matter of personal influence is made the ground of that order which places Peter always first and Judas always last. I. WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE AS A BODY. 1. They were men of good health. Mr. Talmage says: "Christ did not want twelve invalids hanging about Him, complaining all the time how badly they felt. He leaves the delicate students at Jerusalem and Rome for their mothers and aunts to take care of, and goes down to the sea-shore, and out of the toughest material makes an apostleship. The ministry need more corporeal vigour than any other class. Fine minds and good intentions are important, but there must be physical force to back them. The intellectual mill-wheel may be well built and the grist good, but there must be enough flood in the mill-race to turn the one and to grind the other." And, yet, how many invalids in the pulpit have been stars of the first magnitude? Witness Robert Hall, McCheyne, and Robertson of Brighton, England. 2. They were men without power. They had no social or political rank. 3. They were laymen. This

also is significant. Men of ecclesiastical or philosophical influence, who are committed to the support of a certain system of truth, are not free from prejudice. In the seventeenth century William Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood—a fact which no sane man disputes. And yet no physician forty years of age in that day accepted Harvey's discovery. So great is the power of prejudice! These laymen, chosen by Christ, were unshackled ecclesiastically and philosophically. It appears unfortunate that Martin Luther was an ecclesiastic. His work had been more thorough, but for certain Church shackles which even his great soul was unable to shake off. Witness the Lutheran Creed and the present condition of Germany. 4. They were simple men. Now, Mohammed, for example, was not a simple man. He was a dissembler. Jesus of Nazareth calls no man common or unclean. Æsop was a slave. Protagoras was a porter. Terence was a slave. Horace was the son of a slave. Among the poets, Gay was apprentice to a draper and Prior was a tavern boy. Pope was the son of a draper, Keats of a livery-stable keeper, and Chatterton of a sexton. Ben Jonson worked for his bread as a bricklayer. II. WHY DID THE LORD CHOOSE APOSTLES? 1. In order to crowd into a brief public ministry as much work as possible. His public ministry was so brief, that but for the co-operation of the twelve He could not have spoken all the words of wisdom or done all the acts of mercy which crowned and crowded that eventful life. In the great religious movement of the last century in England, John Wesley evinced a sagacity superior to that of either Whitefield or his brother Charles, in securing co-workers and doing in general the work of an organizer. All great teachers have done the same. Witness Socrates, Peter the Hermit, Luther, Loyola, and Savonarola, of Florence. 2. In order to provide testimony after His death. The apostles were to bear public witness of all they saw and heard whilst remaining with Him. Christianity then is historic, and is a system of doctrines resting upon facts. 3. In order to establish a body of men who should bear the public seal of the Church, viz.: Miracles. 4. To shield, by miraculous power, feeble Churches. (*W. F. Bishop.*) *The ministerial office:*—Bishops and clergy are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ—1. In order to work with Him, extend, complete, and continue His priesthood upon earth. 2. To preach His Word, and make known His truth, and the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. All ecclesiastical functions are denoted by preaching, because this is a principal duty of the clergy, and it is by means of the Word and instruction that the Church is established and perpetuated. 3. To be the physicians of souls, and apply themselves to heal their diseases. 4. To wage war with the devil, and destroy his kingdom. Whoever looks upon the ministerial office as a state of ease, and not of continual labour, understands but very little these words of Christ. (*Quesnel.*) *Christ and His disciples:*—A superhuman worker will have his own superhuman methods. I. CHRIST'S METHODS. No man would have begun in such a way. 1. He wrote nothing. Plato has left us the description of his "Ideal Republic"—so men have always done; but the King of the only enduring kingdom wrote only once—in the sand, and not on parchment. Seneca penned his book on Morals for men to ponder; but the Christ who knew no sin, and whose precepts have been planted in every Christian civilization, simply spoke the precepts which in after years others should write down. The heavenly worker wrought in an unearthly way. 2. He chose unlettered men. When Carlyle speaks and Emerson ponders, the world puts its hand to its ear to catch even the lowest spoken truths; but it may be that some fisherman coasting the shore of Solway Firth, or some sower of seed on the fields of Concord, shall stand higher in God's view than even the rugged Scotchman and the honoured sage of America. The Saviour of mankind, the Revolutionist of the ages, the Son of the Highest committed Himself, His power, His teachings, to twelve plain and hitherto unhonoured men, all of them common people, and all of them unlearned. 3. The character of the twelve. Judged from a human point of view, they were certainly unpromising men—slow of heart, dull of understanding, weak in action, and one false at heart. But time has shown that Christ made no mistake. By so much as His apostles' characters were incomplete, and in so far as the Christian faith has ruled in the earth, even so His mysterious choice is vindicated beyond cavil. Upon them He stamped His own greatness. II. THE PLAN INVOLVED IN CHRIST'S METHODS. Nothing Divine is ever done by chance. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *The twelve:*—I. Christ thought fit to employ human agents in the promulgation of His religion. II. Christ selected His agents by virtue of His own wisdom and authority. III. Christ chose His trusted apostles from a lowly position of society. IV. Christ appointed agents with various gifts, qualifications, and character. V. Christ recognized and employed the special gift-

of His disciples in His own service. VI. Christ qualified these agents by keeping them in His own society and beneath His own influence. VII. Christ Himself commissioned and authorized these agents. 1. To preach the gospel. 2. To cast out devils. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Christ's choice of His helpers*:—The whole instruction of this story for our use now turns upon the word "chose;" for it reveals the fact that the sovereignty of God as well as His wisdom was in the procedure. So our several lessons need only to be stated in their order. I. The earliest matter of notice is this: Our Lord's policy was ONE OF CONTINUOUS RECONSTRUCTION FOR OUR ENTIRE FALLEN HUMANITY, and not merely an expedient for His own convenience. 1. For a purpose, He might have chosen death, instead of which He chose life. He could have taken the best of the race up into the air higher than Ararat, and held them safely, as it were, outside of the world, while He washed the wicked earth beneath them, and then put them back. He did that once; but, with a rainbow for a sign, He said He would never do it again. He evidently planned now to redeem sinners, not to destroy them. 2. For a method, He might have chosen a permanent incarnation; instead of which He chose a book. He was now finding men just to make and perpetuate the New Testament. Ours is a "book religion," as cavillers call it. Christianity is the Bible, and the Bible is Christianity. In this form of procedure our Lord indicated that the chief of all approaches to the human conscience is through the reason, and this He intended to use for His end. 3. For the instruments, He might have chosen angels, instead of which He chose men. We see that He selected ordinary, poor, humble individuals from the lowliest callings. Hence, we admit they are subject to the same laws of estimate and criticism as other men. Not even inspiration changed their peculiar characteristics or their natural temperaments. 4. For a plan, He might have chosen unofficial representatives; instead of which He chose ordained officers, and organized a Church. Here, then, is the inalienable warrant for a fixed ministry in the Christian Church through all time. II. The second matter of notice for us now is, that our Lord's selection of His helpers implied GREAT VARIETIES OF SERVICE IN EVANGELIZING THE WORLD, REQUIRING DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS. 1. Observe the significant number of these men. It was large, to begin with, and exceedingly wide in its representative range. 2. Observe, likewise, the special histories of these men. 3. Observe that one of these men was a treacherous hypocrite, known from the beginning of his career. III. The next matter of notice in this choice is that Jesus Christ fixed the wise order in arrangement THAT DISCIPLESHIP SHOULD IN ALL CASES COME BEFORE APOSTLESHIP. 1. These twelve men needed knowledge of the Divine purposes. That must be the reason why for so many months they were kept patiently wandering alongside of our Lord, as He advanced in His public work. 2. They needed acquaintance also with human nature. They were to deal with men, women, and children. 3. These men needed the practical exercise of their teaching gifts under their Master's eye. So we learn that Jesus arranged that they "should be with Him," before He "might send them forth to preach" (Mark iii. 14). 4. They needed experience in actual dealing with masses of unorganized people. IV. Once more, it is a matter of notice in this choice of helpers, that Jesus showed HOW PREVIOUS GIFTS AND EDUCATION IN OTHER WORK CAN ALL BE UTILIZED UNDER THE GOSPEL PLAN. 1. Recall the former occupations of these men. 2. Bear in mind with what painstaking Christ impressed on them the one principle that all success in evangelical work demands immediate and entire consecration (Luke v. 11, 28). 3. Then see that instantly, and ever afterwards, their training told. V. Finally, it is a matter of notice that in His choice of such helpers OUR LORD GAVE THE BEST OF ALL COUNSEL AND EXAMPLE FOR EVERY MAN WHO SEEKS TO BE USEFUL IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. 1. Let Christian people remember that the Divine purpose, the plan of procedure, the end to be secured, the selection of instruments—all these, so finely illustrated that memorable morning beside the Sea of Galilee, remain exactly the same, unchanged through the ages. The conditions of effective working are quite unaltered. Hence this primitive wisdom is priceless. 2. Let the churches have confidence in their own machinery, and be content with New Testament methods of evangelization. There is no necessity for fresh excitements, and there is no advantage in looking for them. 3. Let those who desire to take up Christian endeavour for a life-work bear in mind that training time is by no means for any one lost time. 4. Let the whole world know that what is wanted first and last and always is a thorough consecration of what one has to the Lord Jesus Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ's workers varied*:—Note the variety of character among the twelve chosen. Every stone in a building is not alike, yet room is found for all—each in its own place. A painting

is made up of many colours. Christ will find room in His temple for all who come to Him. (*Anon.*) *God employs little and lowly apostles* :—Look at yonder sun. God made it, and hung it up there in the sky that it might give light to our world. But the light which this sun gives comes to us in tiny little bits, smaller than the point of the finest needle that ever was made. They are so small that hundreds of them can rush right into our eyes, as they are doing all the time, and not hurt them the least. Here we see how God makes use of little things, and does a great work with them. And then look at yonder ocean. The waves of that ocean are so powerful that they can break in pieces the strongest ships that men have ever built. And yet, when God wishes to keep that mighty ocean in its place, He makes use of little grains of sand for this purpose. Here again we see how God employs little things, and does a great work with them. And we find God working in this way continually. Let us look at one or two illustrations. What a plant did :—A little plant was given to a sick girl. In trying to take care of it the family made changes in their way of living which added greatly to their comfort and happiness. First they cleaned the window, that more light might come in to the leaves of the plant. Then, when not too cold, they opened the window, that fresh air might help the plant to grow; and this did the family good as well as the plant. Next, the clean window made the rest of the room look so untidy, that they washed the floor, and cleaned the walls, and arranged the furniture more neatly. This led the father of the family to mend a broken chair or two, which kept him at home several evenings. After this he took to staying at home with his family in the evenings instead of spending his time at the tavern; and the money thus saved went to buy comforts for them all. And then, as their home grew more pleasant, the whole family loved it better than ever before, and they grew healthier and happier with their flowers. What a little thing that plant was, and yet it was God's apostle to that family! It did a great work for them in blessing them, and making them happy. And that was work that an angel would have been glad to do. (*Dr. Newton.*) *Power to cast out devils* :—In China, both heathen and Christian agree in marking off certain cases, which occur not infrequently, as distinctly cases of "spiritual possession." The Chinese have names for insanity, and for the various forms of nervous and mental disease, and they distinguish sharply between all these and another very different condition in which the patient is said to be "possessed of devils." Miss Cumming tells us "the symptoms are so precisely those which were thus described in Biblical times, that foreigners, after vainly seeking for some medical term to express the condition of the victim, are fain to accept the Chinese solution. They find a being apparently mad, foaming at the mouth, tearing off every shred of raiment, and wildly appealing to God to let her (or him) alone." These poor afflicted ones are brought to the Taouist and Buddhist priests, who perform tedious and expensive exorcisms, which are continued indeed until the paroxysm abates, and are renewed after the same fashion when it returns. Miss Cumming says, "In a considerable number of cases such as these, the native Christians have been appealed to by their heathen neighbours to see whether they could do anything to help them; and these, remembering how of old those who had faith in the Master were enabled to 'cast out the spirits by His word,' have sought to follow in their wake, and, taking up their position beside 'him that was grievously tormented with a devil,' have thus wrestled in prayer with passionate earnestness, pleading that the true God would reveal His power in the presence of the heathen, and concluding with the apostolic words, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command thee to come out.' Again and again their prayer has been granted, the wild tempest has been allayed, and the sufferer lulled to a condition of deep peace, whence, after a while, he has arisen to go forth 'clothed and in his right mind' to tell his heathen brethren of the marvellous way in which he has been cured, and, in short, to become from that hour a faithful worker in the Master's cause." (*See "Wanderings in China," by C. F. Gordon Cumming.*)

Ver. 17. **And He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.**—*The sons of thunder* :—In what sense this name was applicable to the character or teaching of these two brethren is not certain, particularly in the case of St. John, the apostle of gentleness and love. Perhaps, however, if we had heard him preach, we should have discerned in a moment the fitness of the name. If he wrote as he wrote in his epistle, there would be much to vindicate the title, for he wrote such terrible words as, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" "He that committeth sin is of

the devil." "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And respecting a certain troubler of the Church he writes, "If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth." We must remember, too, that this epistle was written in his old age, when years had toned down his decisiveness and vehemence. Respecting the preaching of the other brother we know nothing except this, that when Herod would gratify the Jewish hatred of the gospel, he singled out James as his first victim, which he would hardly have done unless this apostle also had been foremost in aggressive energy of speech. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Gentleness and energy of Christianity*:—I. WE WILL CONSIDER SOME THINGS IN CHRISTIANITY THAT ARE ADAPTED TO GIVE GENTLENESS TO THE CHARACTER. 1. The view which it gives a person of himself. This, you know, is anything but flattering. Christian humility certainly tends to promote gentleness. 2. I mention next the view Christianity gives of God and of eternity. Not only is a person who has felt "the powers of the world to come" apt to feel that the paltry interests of time are not worth contending for, but habitual contemplation of eternal realities, and of Him who "inhabiteth eternity," will so awe and elevate the spirit, that it will have the utmost disrelish for contention. Would it not be strange if two persons should quarrel while gazing together at the cataract of Niagara, listening to its solemn roar, and feeling its solemn tremor? Is it possible to retain anger when you stand at a window, watching the coming up of a storm; or at the foot of cliffs, that lift themselves ruggedly up to the sky; or on the shore of the ocean, stretching away beyond the utmost reach of vision, endlessly rolling in its waves, and ceaselessly lifting up its voice! Christianity, studied, believed, embraced, experienced, causes the soul to dwell habitually in the presence of sublimer objects than these, and under the influence of nobler contemplations. 3. The character of Christ, as it is delineated in the Scriptures, and as the Christian contemplates it, is calculated to promote gentleness. He is exhibited as "the Lamb of God,"—not only a spotless victim, fit for the sacrifice, but dumb and unresisting when led to slaughter. II. SOME THINGS IN CHRISTIANITY THAT ARE ADAPTED TO GIVE ENERGY TO THE CHARACTER. 1. Look at the objects of effort which if presents—all that is involved in one's own eternal salvation, and all that tends to the well-being of mankind and the glory of God. 2. Look at the motives to effort which Christianity supplies. 3. Consider the examples which Christianity exhibits. I hope you see that the energy which Christianity inspires does not mar the gentleness which is so beautiful an ornament of character; and that the gentleness which Christianity cultivates does not soften and enervate the soul. The two elements do most harmoniously blend, balancing and tempering, not at all hindering each other. In all our efforts at self-culture, let us seek for the attainment of both these elements in scriptural proportions and in scriptural combination. (*H. A. Nelson, D.D.*) *Thunder in preaching*:—If we thunder in our preaching we must lighten in our lives. (*Anon.*) *Zeal blended with discretion*:—Barnabas and Boanerges, "the sons of consolation and of thunder" make a good mixture. The good Samaritan pours in wine to search the wounds and oil to supple them. Discretion must hold zeal by the heel. These two must be as the lions that supported Solomon's throne. He that hath them may be a Moses for his meekness and a Phinehas for his fervour. (*Trapp.*) *Be true to a good name*:—Names were given that they might be stirred up to verify the meaning and signification of them. Wherefore let every Obadiah strive to be a servant of God; each Nathanael to be a gift of God; Onesimus, to be profitable; every Roger, quiet and peaceable; Robert, famous for counsel; and William, a help and defence to many . . . that they may be incited to imitate the virtues of those worthy persons who formerly have been owners and bearers of them. Let all Abrahams be faithful; Isaacs, quiet; Jacobs, painful (painstaking); Josephs, chaste; every Louis, pious: Edward, confessor of the new faith; William, conqueror over his own corruptions. Let them also carefully avoid those sins for which the bearers of the names stand branded to posterity. Let every Jonah beware of frowardness; Thomas, of distrustfulness; Martha, of worldliness; Mary, of wantonness; &c., &c.

Ver. 21. **He is beside Himself.**—*The sinner mad, not the saint*:—I find St. Paul in the same chapter confesses and denies madness in himself. Whilst he was mad indeed, then none did suspect or accuse him to be distracted; but when converted, and in his right mind, then Festus taxeth him of madness. (See Acts xxvi. 11). (*Thomas Fuller, D.D.*) *Mad because exceptional*:—There is a country

in Africa wherein all the natives have pendulous lips, hanging down like a dog's ears, always raw and sore. Here only such as are handsome are pointed at for monsters. (*Ibid.*) *Troubled with a good son:*—When the son of Dr. Innes became a missionary, the good old man, who sorely grudged parting with his boy, said, "Some people are troubled with a bad son, but I am troubled with a good one."

Vers. 22–26. **And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub.**—*Scribes—a literal knowledge of Scripture vain:*—These men were learned in the law of Moses, having great knowledge and skill in the letter of it; and yet they were wicked men, and blasphemers of Christ. How vain a thing it is, then, for any to glory in their literal knowledge of the Scriptures, as if this alone could make them good Christians. The Jews boasted of this—that they knew the will of God, and were instructed in the law; and thereupon they thought themselves very religious: yet for all that they were wicked hypocrites, living in manifest breaches of the law. So it is with many nowadays. They think themselves very religious, because they have knowledge in the Scriptures, and can discourse of them in company, and make a great show of acquaintance with God's precepts. To these I say, it is well that they have knowledge, and I wish that many had more than they have. Yet know withal, that if it be but an historical or literal knowledge, without a sanctified heart to embrace what thou knowest, it shall do thee no good; thou mayest, notwithstanding all thy knowledge, be void of all truth of sanctifying grace. Beware, then, of resting in this. Labour not only to know the Word of God, but for a sanctified heart to yield obedience to it. Every one has so much saving knowledge, as he has grace and affection of heart to embrace and act upon what he knows; and without this, all knowledge is ignorance in God's reckoning. The smallest measure of knowledge with a sanctified heart is more pleasing to God, and more available to thy salvation, than all the learning and knowledge of the scribes without sanctifying grace. Look to thy knowledge, therefore, that it he such as not only floats in the head but goes down to the heart, and causes it to yield obedience to the things thou hast learned out of the Word of God. Get this wisdom above all possessions, and thou shalt be rich and learned indeed. (*G. Petter.*) *Interested lying:*—From the accounts of Matthew and Luke we learn that Jesus had been casting out a deaf and dumb devil. The work was one of Divine goodness and mercy. The religious world of the period looked on and called it bad. He cast out devils, they said, through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Let us beware of thus giving the lie to the moral sense, for it is the very sin against the Holy Ghost, and we may be terribly near it without knowing it. The tendency is a common one. If goodness, or truth, or mercy touch my pocket, or my honour, or my interest, my pleasures, or even my prejudices, I will destroy and deny them, when and how I can. That is the tendency. These are spots in our feasts of charity, blots on our professions. I have known medical men deny cures not wrought by the accredited methods. The disease has been cast out by fraud, by quackery, or not cast out at all, say they. When I was in Italy, and the regular Piedmontese army arrived at Naples after Garibaldi and his irregular volunteers had done all the work down south, one heard nothing but abuse of Garibaldi and his men by the king's officers. They hated them, they cheapened their valour, they sneered at their sacrifices, even denied their exploits, attributing all to chance, luck, even to mistake. General Garibaldi had won, well, in spite of his stupidity. Such interested lying is not confined to the doctor or the soldier; it is found in the Church. I have heard clergymen deny the good work and righteous fruits of congregations opposed to them. I have seen in the country war between the orthodox rector, who could not fill his church, and the dissenting baptist, whose church over the way was crowded. The fruits of the Spirit were there, the devils were defeated; but the rector still stood out that it was by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. (*H. R. Hawcis, M.A.*) *Opposition from foes and from friends:*—I. THE OPPOSITION. 1. From friends. 2. From foes. II. How HE MET THE OPPOSITION. 1. The opposition of foes. (1) He shows how unreasonable their words are. (2) He makes them reflect who He must really be. (3) He warns them of the danger of so blaspheming. 2. The opposition from friends (vers. 33–35). Conclusion: On which side are we? For Christ, or against Him? Are we His open enemies? Are we His half-hearted friends? Are we His faithful disciples? FOR AND AGAINST—see what the end of both will be (Matt. x. 32, 33). (*E. Stock.*) *For or against:*—I. THOSE WHO ARE NOT CHRIST'S FRIENDS ARE TO BE ESTEEMED HIS FOES: "He that is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. xii. 30). 1. The issue is

clear. Our Lord begins with saying that even Beelzebub would fall if he suffered his kingdom to be divided against itself. 2. The decision must be clear. 3. If any one refuses this issue, and defers this decision, it must be because he is not Christ's friend, but His foe. One would think that human hearts would welcome such an offer, and would stand to it with a joyous acceptance unfalteringly to the end. Alexander the Great was once asked how it was that he had conquered the world; and he answered, "By not wavering." If men had only held the faith as Jesus has held His covenant, the whole world would have been converted long ago. II. THOSE WHO ARE NOT CHRIST'S FOES ARE HIS FRIENDS; so He says: "He that is not against us is on our part" (Mark ix. 40). III. The enemies of Christ are EVIDENCED BY THEIR ENMITY. At first sight this would seem to be a truism: let us see. 1. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's being. 2. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's character. Holiness is the most unpopular of all the Divine attributes. 3. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's law. It perplexes, restrains, and condemns him. 4. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's plan of redemption. He is not willing to admit his need, and take his pardon as a lost sinner. 5. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's service. 6. An enemy of Christ hates the notion of God's sovereignty. IV. The friends of Christ are EVIDENCED BY THEIR OBEDIENCE—"Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." This wonderful verse (John xv. 14) will bear an analysis. 1. Obedience to Christ will be active in its nature. The word here is not feel, but "do." 2. Obedience to Christ will be universal in its reach. 3. Obedience to Christ will be submissive in its temper. 4. Obedience to Christ will be affectionate in its spirit. An old divine says "the obedience of the heart is the heart of obedience." V. IT IS WISE FOR ALL IMMORTAL BEINGS TO SETTLE AT ONCE WHETHER THEY ARE FRIENDS OR ENEMIES OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. No neutrality is permitted during these war times in the universe. No negative moral state is possible before God. 2. Those who teach truth must urge immediate decision on all around them. 3. Any enemy of Christ can become a friend in an instant, if he will. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Satan not self-destructive*:—When the Netherlanders broke away from the bondage of Spain, they still professed to be loyal subjects of King Philip, and, in the king's name, went out to fight against the king's armies. That was a kind of loyalty which King Philip refused to recognize. The Pharisees professed to believe that the devil was content with loyalty like this—that, in fact, he hugely enjoyed the destruction of his own works by Jesus, and supplied our Lord with all the help he wanted in that line. A sane man does not burn his insurance policy, and then set fire to his house as a means of providing for his family. A loyal soldier will not undermine his own camp and blow it into the air as a means of increasing the strength of that camp. The captain who is anxious for the safety of his ship will not step down into the hold and bore a hole through the ship's bottom. Nor will Satan join in destroying his own kingdom. That Christ came and destroyed the works of the devil shows that He is Satan's enemy and Satan's conqueror.

Ver. 27. **No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods.**—*The devil's strength*:—Christ is showing that He casts out demons by a greater power than Satan's, *viz.*, by the power of His own Godhead. This He illustrates by a comparison taken from one who forcibly enters the house of a strong man, and makes spoil of it by violent seizure of the goods and weapons that he had in his house. Such an one must be stronger than the strong man, else he cannot do it. Even so (says the Saviour) seeing that I have forcibly entered upon Satan's possession, and have bound him and spoiled his goods, *i.e.*, taken from him that power and tyranny which he before exercised over the body of him that was possessed; and seeing I have also cast him out of his own house, *i.e.*, out of the person possessed; hence it may appear that I have done all this by a greater power than the power of Satan is, even by the power of My Godhead. Note that—1. Christ likens Satan to a strong man well armed, and furnished with weapons to defend himself and his house in which he dwells. 2. He likens Himself to One that is stronger than that strong man. 3. He resembles the person that was possessed with the demon to the house of the strong man in which he holds possession. 4. He resembles the power of Satan to the goods and weapons of the strong man. 5. He compares the casting out of Satan by Himself to the entering into the strong man's house, and binding of him, and spoiling of his house, &c. (*G. Petter.*) Satan being likened to the strong man, this teaches us that he is a creature of great strength and power (Luke xi. 21; 1 Pet. v. 8; Eph. vi. 12). I. WHEREIN THIS

POWER OF THE DEVIL IS MANIFESTED—1. In working upon the insensible creatures—air, earth, water, &c. 2. In working upon those sensible creatures that want reason—beasts, birds, fishes, &c. He is able to enter into them and to move and work in them. 3. On the bodies of men; entering into them, hurting and annoying them, vexing and tormenting them with pain and disease. 4. On the minds, hearts, and affections of men, in tempting them inwardly, and soliciting them to sin by inward suggestion. This he does, not directly, but partly by the outward senses representing evil objects to them and so conveying evil thoughts to the mind, and partly by insinuating himself into the fancy or imagination. II. WHAT KIND OF POWER IT IS. Not an absolute power, but limited. III. FROM WHENCE HE DERIVES IT. From God only; and He who gave, controls it. IV. WHY GOD GIVES HIM SUCH POWER. 1. That His own Divine power may the more appear in subduing Satan. 2. For the trial of His own children. 3. For the executing of His heavy vengeance and punishment on the wicked by Satan. (*Ibid.*) "*The strong man armed:*"—First, "the strong man armed keepeth his palace." For indeed it is "a palace"—that soul of yours—made to be a royal habitation; and well did the King of kings furnish it for Himself. He had supplied it marvellously with all that should be for royal use and royal glory, and He had decked it with the most precious ornaments, and He set a throne there. Is it empty? No. Who sits on it? Who is supreme there over the affections? Who is that that is holding his silken reins that are as bands of iron? "The strong one"—none know how "strong" but those who try to escape, and throw off his tyranny; so "strong" that his strength is unseen; while in stillness and in silence he holds his own; so "strong" that the greatest determination of the most strong-minded man, unaided, trying to break any one of those many bonds, would be as if he were to try to uproot a mountain. And well is that strong one "armed." Not in vain has he been reading the human heart for six thousand years; not in vain are all his vast experiences. Of amazing intellect is he—of immense power—a fallen angel of light, and he can wear all aspects, and he can bear all disguises. Awful the thought—that as the Lord Jesus had His "armour" so has that strong one—wherein he rightly trusts. There are the light, glittering "darts" of pleasure, that which has slain many a mighty one. And there is the heavy "sword" of unsanctified intellect to lay low the strong-minded. And there is the "breast-plate" of selfishness, wrapping the heart round in its soft indulgences. And there is "the shield" of uncharitable controversy, which irritates without convincing. And there is "the helmet" of bold presumption, starting high in its false professions; and "the girdle" of infidelity—cramping, binding, girding the very loins of the man; and "the shoes" that walk roughly, and "the spirit" that takes converse only with itself. So, for years and years, "the strong one armed" rules, and so he "keeps" his captives quiet. And it is a weeping sight before the holy angels—those noble courts of man's immortality, so trodden down, and profaned, and desolate. But "the stronger" comes; and now the fighting begins. Go with me a little way; for, thank God! that that gentle One who is so tender with weak and child-like hearts that "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," is yet of such gigantic might that He, stronger than the strongest, can and will trample down all His enemies and ours under His feet, "till He brings forth judgment unto victory." See, then, how He "binds." A little while ago some straitening circumstance happened to you, and you felt strangely circumscribed. Perhaps you were confined to your house; perhaps you were laid on a sick bed—you were shut out from the scenes you loved so well—your spirit felt cramped—your life became as a galling fetter—and you chafed against the restraint which you felt, but could not overcome. You did not know or think at that time that this was the very way by which that "stronger one" was proceeding to "bind" that old, strong, self-willed, impetuous nature in you, which, rampant so many years, had done you such grievous harm—you, who were the slave of your evil passions! Or, a very heavy trial almost crushed you—not you, but the old habit—the old affection—the old man in you—which many a lighter means had been tried, and tried in vain, to subdue and to destroy. Or, a very deep humiliation visited your heart, and many a high thought of your youth was brought low—you felt it very hard; for you did not realize into what pride "the strong one" was lashing you, and what curbing that proud heart of yours needed before it could be broken. And remember, even the knocking off the prisoner's chains will give him pain, and the longer he has worn the chain the greater the pain of loosening. Now mark "the spoil." "He will bind the strong man, and then He will spoil his house." The habit of sin broken, the soul emanci-

pated; Christ is free to claim His own property, which His own blood has purchased, and His own right hand has rescued. He had restored the property to its rightful owner. And wondrously, in His infinite love, He "divides the spoils" which He has taken. You, He gives to yourself, so that that is which was not before, nor ever could be—He has made you your own. Nevertheless, "you are not your own," but His—your own, because you are His. Your heart, which Satan bound, and He looses, He keeps all for Himself. Your fellowships, your sympathies, He allots for the Church. Your time, your talents, your energies, your charities, for the world; your highest exercises of mind, for communion with Himself; your faith for the promises; your ambition for the extension of the truth, and the exalting of His own empire; your awe and love for holy worship; your soul, "bound up in the bundle of life," for heaven, and for eternity; your knees for prayer; your tongue for holy utterances; your ears for truth; your eyes to receive and emit sacred influences; your feet for mission; your whole body for saintly service. So He "divides the spoils;" and yet they are all the more one, because they are divided; for it is all for all; and all for all for Him; and all for all for Him for ever. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 28, 30. **All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men.**—*Great sin not unpardonable, but continuance in it:*—There is great comfort to be derived from this statement, for such as are tempted by Satan to think their sins are too great to be forgiven. Thus thought wicked Cain, and thus many good though weak Christians are tempted to think still. Let such be assured, that there is no sin so great but God's mercy is sufficient to pardon it, and the blood of Christ sufficient to purge away the guilt of it; neither is it the multitude or greatness of sins simply, that hinders from pardon, but impenitency in sins, whether many or few, great or small. Therefore look not only at the greatness of thy sins with one eye, as it were, but look also, with the other, at the greatness of God's mercy and the infinite value of Christ's merits; both which are sufficient to pardon and take away the guilt of thy most heinous sins if truly repented of. Look therefore at this, that there be in this a great measure of godly sorrow and repentance for thy great sins; and labour by faith to apply the blood of Christ to thy conscience for the purging of thy sins, and thou needest not doubt but they shall be pardoned. Whether thy sins be many or few, small or great, this makes nothing for thee or against thee as touching the obtaining of pardon; but it is thy continuing, or not continuing in thy sins impenitently, that shall make against thee or for thee. To the impenitent all sins are unpardonable; to the penitent all sins are pardonable, though never so great and heinous. Yet let none abuse this doctrine to presumption or boldness in sinning, because God's mercy is great and sufficient to pardon all sins, even the greatest, except the sin against the Holy Ghost. Beware of sinning that grace may abound; beware of turning the grace of God into wantonness, for God has said He will not be merciful to such as sin, presuming on His mercy. Besides, we must remember that, although God has mercy enough to pardon great sins, yet great sins require a great and extraordinary measure of repentance. (*G. Petter.*) *Blasphemy:*—In that our Saviour, setting out the riches of God's mercy, in pardoning all sorts of sins, though never so great (except that against the Holy Ghost), doth give instance in blasphemy, as one of the greatest; hence gather, that blasphemy against God is one of the most heinous sins, and very hard to be forgiven. This sin is committed in the following ways. 1. By attributing to God that which is dishonourable to Him, and unbeseeming His Majesty; *e.g.*, to say He is unjust, cruel, or the author of sin, &c. 2. By taking from God, and denying unto Him that which belongs to Him. 3. By attributing the properties of God to creatures. 4. By speaking contemptibly of God. Pharaoh (Ex. v. 2); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iii. 15). (*Ibid.*) *Remedies against this sin of blasphemy:*—1. Consider the fearfulness of the sin. It argues great wickedness in the heart harbouring it. 2. Consider how God has avenged Himself on blasphemers, even by temporal judgments. 3. Our tongues are given us to bless God and man. 4. Labour for a reverent fear of God in our hearts. 5. Take heed of using God's Name irreverently, and of common swearing. (*Ibid.*) *The man who will not be forgiven, cannot be forgiven:*—In one place Jesus seems to speak of this sin as an action, at another time He calls it speaking a word against the Holy Ghost. Is there any one word or action that a man or woman can perpetrate which will for ever cut them off from God's mercy and pardon? Not one! Study this phrase of the scribes, that Jesus cast out devils by Beelzebub, for it was

the phrase which brought them under sentence for sin against the Holy Ghost, and you will understand what that sin of theirs really was. The word spoken is nothing apart from the state of heart which it reveals. It has only power to save or damn, because out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. It bears witness to that. The sin is not a word or an action, then, but a state—a state of heart; the state which sees good and denies it; which turns the light into darkness; which can look on Jesus and still lie. Such a state is the unforgiven and unforgivable sin in this world—in the eternity that now is or in that which is to come. Pardon is between two parties; he who will not be forgiven cannot be forgiven. In the hardened state above described—the state which is sin against the Holy Ghost—you will not, therefore you cannot, be forgiven. As long as you are so, that will be so, but it is nowhere said that you shall never be lifted out of that state; converted—awakened—aroused—saved—just as a man lying down with the snow torpor upon him, which means coming death, may be kept walking about, or lifted out of that torpor and saved; but as long as he is in it he cannot be saved—he must die. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The unpardonable sin indescribable*:—Explanation of this mystery there is probably none. It best explains itself by exciting a holy fear as to trespass. Another step—only one—and we may be over the line. One word more, and we may have passed into the state unpardonable. Do not ask what this sin is; only know that every other sin leads straight up to it; and at best there is but a step between life and death. From what the merciful God does pardon, we can only infer that the sin which hath never forgiveness is something too terrible for full expression in words. He pardons "abundantly." He pardoned Nineveh; He passed by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage; where sin abounded, He sent the mightiest billows of His grace; when the enemy would have stoned the redeemed, by reminding them of sins manifold, and base with exceeding aggravation, behold their sins could not be found, for His merciful hand had cast them into the sea. Yet there is one sin that hath never forgiveness! As it is unpardonable, so it is indescribable. If it be too great for God's mercy, what wonder that it should be too mysterious for our comprehension? My soul, come not thou into that secret. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Irreclaimable*:—Those who make the best things effects of the worst are irreclaimable. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *The unforgivable sin*:—If you poison the spring, the very source, you must die of drinking the water, so long as the poison is there. And if you deny and blaspheme the very essence from which forgiveness springs and flows, forgiveness is killed (for you) by your own hand. There can be no remission, no healing for that, since it is in fact—"Evil, be thou my good; good, thou art evil!" How significant it is that it is the attributing goodness, righteousness of word, life, action, "good works" in short, to an evil source, which is the unpardonable sin—not the converse; not the ascribing unworthy things to the source of good; not the having faulty conceptions of Him. If it were that, who among us would escape? (*Vita.*) *Sin against consciousness greater than against sight*:—Christ taught that a word spoken against the Son of Man would be forgiven, but that a word spoken against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven: by which He probably meant that in His visible form there was so much that contravened the expectations of the people, that they might, under the mistaken guidance of their carnal feelings, speak against One who had claimed kingly position under a servant's form; but that in the course of events He would appear not to the eye but to the consciousness of men; and that when He came by this higher ministry, refusal of His appeal would place man in an unpardonable state. The vital principle would seem to be, that when man denies his own consciousness, or shuts himself up from such influences as would purify and quicken his consciousness, he cuts himself off from God, and becomes a "son of perdition." Speaking against the Holy Ghost is speaking against the higher and final revelation of the Son of Man. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *God will vindicate His honour*:—During the prevalence of infidelity in America after the reign of terror in France, Newbury, New York, was remarkable for its abandonment. Through the influence of "Blind Palmer," there was formed a Druidical Society, so called, which had a high priest, and met at stated times to uproot and destroy all true religion. They descended sometimes to acts the most infamous and blasphemous. Thus, for instance, at one of their meetings they burned the Bible, baptized a cat, partook of a mock sacrament, and one of the number, with the approval of the rest, administered it to a dog. Now, mark the retributive judgments of God, which at once commenced falling on these blasphemers. In the evening he who had administered this mock sacrament was attacked with a

violent inflammatory disease; his inflamed eyeballs were protruded from their sockets, his tongue was swollen, and he died before the following morning in great bodily and mental agony. Another of the party was found dead in his bed the next morning. A third, who had been present, fell in a fit, and died immediately; and three others were drowned a few days afterwards. In short, within five years from the time the Druidical Society was organized, all the original members met their death in some strange or unnatural manner. There were thirty-six of them in all, and of these two were starved to death, seven drowned, eight shot, five committed suicide, seven died on the gallows, one was frozen to death, and three died "accidentally." Of these statements there is good proof; they have been certified before justices of peace in New York. *The unpardonable sin*:—The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of Christianity, both as a system of doctrines and as a religion. We stand in special relation to the several persons of the Trinity. All sin as against the Father or the Son may be forgiven, but the sin against the Holy Ghost can never be forgiven. I. ITS GENERAL CHARACTER. 1. That there is such a sin which is unpardonable. 2. It is an open sin, not a sin merely of the heart. It is blasphemy. It requires to be uttered and carried out in act. 3. It is directed against the Holy Ghost, specifically. It terminates on Him. It consists in blaspheming Him, or doing despite unto Him. II. ITS SPECIFIC CHARACTER. This includes—1. Regarding and pronouncing the Holy Ghost to be evil; ascribing the effect which He produces to Satan or to an evil, impure spirit. 2. The rejection of His testimony as false. He testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. The man guilty of this sin declares Him to be a man only. He testifies that Jesus is holy. The other declares He is a malefactor. He testifies that His blood cleanses from all sin. The other, that it is an unclean thing, and tramples it under foot. 3. The conscious, deliberate, malicious resistance of the Holy Spirit, and the determined opposition of the soul to Him and His gospel, and a turning away from both with abhorence. His sin supposes—1. Knowledge of the gospel. 2. Conviction of its truth. 3. Experience of its power. It is the rejection of the whole testimony of the Spirit, and rejection of Him and His work, with malicious and outspoken blasphemy. It is by a comparison of Matt. xii. 31, and the parallel passages in Mark and Luke, with Heb. vi. 6–10, and x. 26–29 that the true idea of the unpardonable sin is to be obtained. III. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS SIN is reprobation, or a reprobate mind. IV. IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR VIEWS OF THIS SUBJECT. 1. Because erroneous views prevail, as (1) That every deliberate sin is unpardonable, as the apostle says "He who sins wilfully." (2) Any peculiarly atrocious sin, as denying Christ by the lapsed. (3) Post-baptismal sins. 2. Because people of tender conscience often are unnecessarily tormented with the fear that they have committed this sin. It is hard to deal with such persons, for they are generally in a morbid state. 3. Because as there is such a sin, every approach to it should be avoided and dreaded. 4. Because we owe specific reverence to the Holy Ghost on whom our spiritual life depends. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The unpardonable sin*:—I. NOW, WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? It is the remission of the consequences of a violation of law, and of pains and penalties of every kind which arise from having broken a law. It may be considered as, first, organic. In other words, far away from human society the Divine will expresses itself in natural law. Thus a man, by intemperance, by gluttony, by excess of activity, by violation of physical law, may disarrange his whole structure. His head may suffer, his chest may suffer, any part of his body may suffer. Violence may fracture a limb, or some sprain may distort a tendon or a muscle; and everywhere man, as a physical organization, is in contact with God's organic law in the physical world in which we live. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF FORGIVENESS RUNS THROUGH CREATION. That is to say, all violations of law are not fatal. They may inflict more or less pain; they may bring upon a man suffering to a certain extent; but so soon as a man finds that the derangement of his stomach has arisen from eating improper food, although the knowledge and the reformation do not take away the dyspepsia, yet, if he thoroughly turns away from the course he has been pursuing, and pursues wholesome methods, in time he will recover. Nature has forgiven him. Throughout the physical world you may cure fevers, dropsies, fractures, derangements of vital organs; you may violate all the multiplied economies that go to constitute the individual physical man, and rebound will bring forgiveness; but there is a point beyond which if you go it will not, either in youth, in middle life, or in old age. Many a young man who spends himself until he has drained the fountain of vitality dry in youth is an old man at thirty years of age; he creeps and crawls at forty,

and at fifty, if he is alive, he is a wretch. Nature says, "I forgive all manner of iniquity and transgression and sin to a man who does not commit the unpardonable sin." III. FOR THERE IS AN UNPARDONABLE SIN, PHYSICALLY SPEAKING, THAT IS POSSIBLE TO EVERY MAN. If a thousand-pound weight fall upon a man so that it grinds the bones of his leg to powder, like flour, I should like to see any surgeon that could restore it to him. He may give him a substitute in the form of wood or cork, but he cannot give him his leg again. There is an unpardonable sin that may be committed in connection with the lungs, with the heart, or with the head. They are strung with nerves as thick as beads on a string; and up to a certain point of excess or abuse of the nervous system if you rebound there will be remission, and you will be put back, or nearly back, where you were before you transgressed nature's laws; but beyond that point—it differs in different men, and in different parts of the same man—if you go on transgressing, and persist in transgression, you will never get over the effect of it as long as you live. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The unpardonable sin:*—I. What are the SIGNS? This I speak by way of relief to many and many a needlessly tried soul. The inevitable sign of the commission of the unpardonable sin is a condition in which men are past feeling; and if a man has come into that condition in which he is unpardonable—incurable—the sign will be that he does not care. If you find a person who is alarmed lest he is in that condition, his very alarm is a sign that he is not in it. I know not what was the particular case that led to the request that I should preach on the subject; but if there be those that are suffering because they fear that they have committed the unpardonable sin, in the first place, it is not a single act, it is a condition that men come into by education; and, in the second place, that condition is one in which there is a cessation of sensibility. It is a want of spiritual pulse. It is a want of the capacity of spiritual suffering. Therefore, if you do not suffer at all, it may be, it is quite likely, that you are in that condition. Those who are in that condition are never troubled about their spiritual state. But where persons are anxious on the subject of their spiritual state, and are in distress about it, and talk much respecting it, they are the very ones that cannot be in the unpardonable condition. What would you think of a man who should anxiously go around asking every physician if he did not think he was blind, when the reason of his anxiety was that he had such acuteness of vision that he saw everything so very plainly and continuously? Acuteness of vision is not a sign of blindness. What would you think of a man that should go to his physician to ascertain if he was not growing deaf, because his hearing was so good? The symptoms of deafness do not go that way. And how incompatible with the condition in which one has committed the unpardonable sin is fear lest one has committed it. That condition is one in which a person is past all feeling, and is given over to his wickedness. II. This subject will lead us to make an IMPORTANT DISCRIMINATION—one which we may all of us need—whether we are in a sinful state or are beginning to lead a Christian life. There is a tendency to fear great sins, and a tendency to be indifferent to little ones. Now, there are certain great sins that, being committed, may give such a moral shock to a man's constitution as to be fatal in their effects; but these are not usually fallen into. Men are not very much in danger of great sins. They are ten thousand times more in danger of little ones. Men are not in danger of committing perjury as much as they are of telling "white lies," as they are called. Men are not so much in danger of counterfeiting as they are of putting on little minute false appearances. Men are not so much in danger of committing burglary as they are of committing the myriad infinitesimal injustices with which life is filled. Any particular act, to be sure, such as I have alluded to, which of itself is simply as a particle of dust, is not so culpable as a great sin; but what is the effect on the constitution of a series of these offences that are so small as to be almost imperceptible? It is these little sins, continued and multiplied, that by friction take off the enamel of a man's conscience. It is these numberless petty wrongs that mon do not fear, persisted in, that are the most damaging. I should dread the incursion into my garden, in the night time, of rooting swine, or trampling ox, or browsing buffalo; but, after all, aphides are worse than these big brutes. I could kill any one, or half a dozen, or a score of them, if they came in such limited numbers; but when they swarm by the billion I cannot kill one in ten thousand of them—and what *can* I do? Myriads of these insignificant little insects will eat faster than I can work, and they are the pest and danger of the garden, as often my poor asters and roses testify. There is many and many a flower that I would work hard to save, but the fecundity of insect life will quite match and over-

match, any man's industry. Weakness multiplied is stronger than strength. Now, that which does the mischief is these aphides, these myriad infinitesimal worms, these pestiferous little sins, every one of which is called *white*, and is a mere nothing, a small point—a mote, a speck of dust. Why, many a caravan has been overtaken, smothered and destroyed by clouds of dust, the separate particles of which were so minute as to be almost invisible. Many men are afraid that they will be left to some great sin—and they ought to fear that; but they have not the slightest fear of that which is a great deal more likely to bring them to condemnation—the series of petty violations of conscience, and truth, and duty, with which human experience is filled. Here is where every man should most seriously ponder his condition, and ask himself, "What is the effect of the conduct that I am day by day evolving? Am I educating myself toward moral sensibility, or away from moral sensibility?" III. This leads me to say THAT EVERY MAN SHOULD TAKE HEED TO THE WAY IN WHICH HE TREATS HIS CONSCIENCE. If the light in him be darkness, how great is that darkness! When we put a lighthouse on the coast, that in the night mariners may explore the dark and terrible way of the sea, we not only swing glass around it to protect it, but we enclose that glass itself in a network of iron wire, that birds may not dash it in, the summer winds may not swoop it out, and that swarms of insects may not destroy themselves and the light. For if the light in the lighthouse be put out, how great a darkness falls upon the land and upon the sea. And the mariner, waiting for the light, or seeing it not, miscalculates, and perishes. Now, a man's conscience ought to be protected from those influences that would diminish its light, or that would put it out; but there are thousands of men who are every day doing their utmost to destroy this light. When they do wrong, their conscience rebukes them, and they instantly attempt to suppress it and put it down. They undertake to excuse themselves and palliate the wrong. The next day, when they do wrong, the same process goes on, and they make a deliberate war against their conscience; for it is a very painful thing for a man to do wrong and carry the hurt, and he feels that he must overcome this tormentor if he would have any peace. A great many men not only are making war against the light of God in the soul, but are beginning to feel the greatest complacency in their achievements. They come to a state in which they can lie and not feel bad. They come to a state in which they can do a great deal of injustice, and not have it strike them any more as injustice. Men that have got along so far in this moral perversion that their conscience has ceased to trouble them, and they think of wrong-doing merely as a thing that is in the way of business, are sometimes surprised as their mind strikes back to the time when they were more sensitive to right, and they say, "I recollect that, ten or fifteen years ago, when I first began to do such things, I used to be so troubled about them that I lay awake nights; but it is a long time since they have given me any trouble." They muse, and say, "How queer it is. I used to shrink from things that were not just right, and to be afraid to deviate in the least from the strictest rectitude; but I have got over it. Now I do not feel so. How is it? I wonder what has happened to me." Oh, yes; you wonder what has happened to you. There has been death in your house. The cradle is empty. Souls die. The moral element of your soul is dead. Why, many and many a man, who used to be sensitive to purity, whose cheek used to colour at the allusion to impurity, has got so now that the whole literature of impurity is familiar to him. Impure scenes, impure narratives, the whole morbid intercourse of impure minds, they now never feel any shrinking from. Their moral nature is seared as with a hot iron. There are men that come not only to be wicked, but to be struck through and through with wickedness, so that they love men that are wicked, and hate men that are not. They come to have a great contempt for anything that is not wickedness, and to have a great regard, if not respect, for wickedness itself. And this they come to not at a plunge. Men never go down such a moral precipice headlong. They go down by degrees. The decline from a state of moral sensitiveness is very gradual—so gradual that it does not seem to men to be on the downward way. Flowers are round about their feet, the path is shaded and pleasant, and they go far down before they begin to have any sense of an approaching change. The way from right to wrong is a deceptive way, and a fatal way, and on it men go far along toward destruction before their suspicions are awakened. (*Ibid.*) *Warning and encouragement*:—1. There is here a very full proclamation of the grace of the gospel—the efficacy of His blood. 2. A particular sin is nevertheless singled out, and placed beyond the reach of forgiveness. Warned against it rather than charged with it. It seems to belong to the gospel dispensa-

tion. 3. Its characteristics are—It is committed against the Spirit personally, against the clearest demonstration, from malice, without relenting or repentance. Repentance, being a grace of the Spirit, would show that it had not been committed. (*J. Stewart.*) *Despair vanquished by prayer*:—I have read of one in despair whom Satan persuaded it was in vain to pray or serve God, for he must certainly go to hell; he nevertheless still went to prayer, and begged of God that if he must go to hell when he died, yet He would please give him leave to serve Him whilst he lived. Having thus prayed, his terrors vanished, being clearly convinced that none could pray that prayer who had sinned against the Holy Ghost. (*Sheffield.*)

Vers. 31–35. **There came then His brethren and His mother.**—*Spiritual kinship with Christ*:—See the honour and dignity of good Christians that believe in Christ. There is a most near union between Christ and them, even as near as between natural parents and children, or between those that are of nearest kindred by natural birth: therefore He accounts them as His spiritual kindred, as dear and near to Him as His mother and brethren. And what an honour is this, to be of the spiritual kindred of Christ Himself, to be called and accounted His brother or His sister. If it be an honour to be of the blood-royal, or of the kindred of some noble personage, how much more honourable to be the brother or sister of Christ Jesus! Let all believers think of this dignity vouchsafed to them; and let it comfort them (as well it may) against all the contempt they meet with in the world. The grace of faith engrafts the believer into the stock of Christ, and brings him within His pedigree, making him to be of most near kindred with Him in a spiritual manner: it makes Christ and the believer as near to each other as natural parents and children; yea, as husband and wife, for it marries them together, whence it is that Christ is said to be the Husband of the true Church. Let this move us to labour for true faith in Christ. If we had been born and lived about the time when He was upon earth, would we not have been glad to be in the number of His natural brethren and sisters? How much more desirous should we be to be His brethren and sisters by faith? Never rest till thou know thyself a believer in Christ, and one of His kindred spiritually engrafted into Him; without this thou art miserable, though thou hast kinship by natural blood with all the princes and great men in the world. (*G. Petter.*) *The result of relationship with Jesus*:—The tenderest human ties were used by the Son of God as an illustration of our Divine relationship. To be Christ's disciple is to belong to His family. Home, with its deep-rooted sympathies and precious endearments, is to picture our union with the Lord. Religion is as personal in its affections as in its duties. Holiness may seem to the undeveloped saint an almost fearful thing, hard to imagine, impossible to realize. But to live with Jesus and love Him is very real and very glorious. The believer finds a hand to clasp, a face to gaze upon, an ear for whispered confidences. How strange and beautiful the words must have sounded. It is as if a prince had taken by the hand a rude and ignorant slave, and drawn him into the dignity and affection of the royal household. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Doing the will of God*:—One of the household words of the kingdom of God. It emphatically teaches that there are but two divisions of mankind—those who do the will of God, and those who disobey that will; and that not even the closest blood relationships (much less the possession of national, or church, or religious privileges) can in the slightest degree affect the distinctness and permanence of the line between these divisions. Of all relationships, spiritual ones are the closest; and there is but one permanent relationship to God, which is conformity to His will. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Spiritual relationship*:—A poor, but pious, woman called upon two wealthy and refined young ladies, who, regardless of her poverty, received her with Christian affection, and sat down in the drawing-room to converse with her upon religious subjects. While thus employed, a dashing youth by chance entered, and appeared astonished to see his sisters thus engaged. One of them instantly started up and exclaimed, "Brother, don't be surprised; this is a king's daughter, though she has not yet got her fine clothing." *Divine relationships*:—Let us look at this subject in one or two of its important bearings upon some of the relative positions of life. I. As regards our ties of natural relationship one to another. There is a bond stronger even than the strongest bond of nature. We may not say that Christ, as Divine, had an independence of natural affections. Yet these considerations are not to diminish the duty and affection which are to fasten relations together; no book invests our home relationship with such sweetness and power as the Bible. Yet there is a bond stronger. It is of the very last importance that the

ties which fasten us together in blood and kindred should be exceedingly and paramountly strong. What parent does not feel it with his child? What husband does not feel it to his wife? Or what brother and sister do not feel it one to another? See, then, the immense necessity that the spiritual and the natural attachment run in one. Otherwise, there will be a want of sympathy. Otherwise, look at your position, worldly parents, if you have a pious child; or you, worldly children, if you have pious parents; or worldly brothers and sisters, if you have pious ones. With all you love, there is an influence at work in this world—and it may spring up any moment in your family—which may clash with the natural affections and the human obligations. And remember (it is almost awful to say it), remember, it has in it the elements of an infinite separation for ever and ever. Do I say, that if your child is religious he will love you less? God forbid. But this I say, that if a worldly parent has a religious child, that child may be, and indeed sometimes must be, placed in the most difficult and perplexing of all possible relationships—a relationship of which the result may be most disastrous to peace. On the other hand, what and if the tide of grace rolls into the current of nature? What and if the omnipotence of a heavenly love wrap round and bind the human attachment? What and if relations are one in the unity of the mystical body of Christ? What and if we have our natural fathers spiritual fathers, and our natural children spiritual children, and our natural brothers and sisters brothers and sisters in Christ? How exceedingly, how eternally happy the bond! Now then, brethren, if it be so, what an argument there is here! Never voluntarily form any connection which is not "in the Lord!" And what an argument is here for continual, earnest prayer, and efforts for the conversion and salvation of those who are nearest and dearest to us. For then are they fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children indeed when the one Christ in all hearts makes one body and one soul; and the ray from heaven meeting the ray from earth, they blend together, till they glow into a perfect flame of light and love. But there is another relative duty which necessarily grows out of these words. II. And now, God is gathering such a family around Him, and all the feelings and affections which He has planted in these hearts of ours, even the fondest, ARE ONLY THE DIM TYPES AND SHADOWS OF THAT HIGHER LIFE, when before admiring hosts He shall say, "Behold My mother and My brethren." But who are they who are so very dear to Christ? Now mark everywhere Christ's jealousy for the Father's glory, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father." That is the road to the heart of Christ—do God's will. The determining question is, What is the will of God? Am I doing it? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The different phases of the love of Christ*:—And so it is, my brethren. The love of Christ is represented to us in the text as comprising within itself all those affections which endear our homes to us, and which, being all derived from His fulness, are parted in a fragmentary state among the various relationships of human life. Consider the manifoldness of aspect under which this love is represented to us. Christ Himself is represented to us under manifold aspects—each aspect suitable and satisfying to some want of the human mind. There are four portraitures of Christ—four gospels; and why? Because the subject to be apprehended is infinitely grand, and the mind's capabilities of apprehension limited. It is with the mind as with the eye. If an object be real and substantial, the eye does not take it in, in its integrity, by viewing it on one side only. Thus it is with a house or other building. You survey it from a point at which only one side is turned towards you. It presents certain features, a certain arrangement of buttress and arch, doorway and window. This, however, is but a superficial acquaintance with it. Go round, and view another side. You discover there fresh designs of architectural beauty, or fresh adaptations to the convenience of the inmates. And now a third side. It is in shade and frowns—leaving altogether an impression on the mind, totally different from that, upon whose white marble the sunlight was sparkling. When you have seen the fourth side, you have seen all: your impression is complete—it is made up of various elements, but all combine to form one whole. Now the mind resembles the eye. It can only become acquainted with objects—especially with large and comprehensive objects—piecemeal. It cannot gain the whole truth from one survey, without planting itself at different standing-points. Even so it will help us to realize the love of Christ, if we consider one by one its various elements, those bright lines which enter into its composition. I. What is the distinguishing trait of a BROTHER'S LOVE. The idea is not congeniality of tastes in every respect, but active support in all the struggles and difficulties of life. This, then, is the first phase of the love which is in Christ—the love of active support. II. "The

same is My SISTER." A love remarkable for its tenderness and delicacy—different from that entertained towards a brother. This, then, is the second phase of the love which is in Christ—the being sensitive to the feelings of the person loved. III. "The same is My MOTHER." The love entertained for a sister and mother have the one element in common. But superadded is a feeling of reverence, honour, and gratitude (1 Kings ii. 19). "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30). That God and Christ will honour sinful man confers great dignity. Such, then, are the several ingredients of the love of Christ towards all those who come under the terms here specified. Nay, all love and affection, existing among men, in whatever quarter and under whatever circumstances, may be said to be comprised in His love, —to be a mere emanation from the fulness of love which is in Him. Again I recur to my image of the light. Light is one thing, though comprising in itself several hues. All the fair hues of nature inhere in the light—so that where there is no light, there is no colour. Wherever the light travels, it disparts its colours to natural objects—to one after this manner, to another after that—the emerald green to the leaves—to the flowers violet, and yellow, and crimson. And in the same manner all love is in Christ, and is from Him, as its Fountain-head and Centre, disparted among the various relations of human life. A ray from His light struggles forth in the care of the father, in the tenderness of the mother, in the active support of the brother or friend, in the sister's refined sympathy—nay, in the affectionate homage of the son. And this whole love, in all its manifold elements, is brought to converge, with unshorn beams, upon that thrice happy man or boy, who does the will of God. (*E. F. Goulburn, D.C.L.*) *The kinsmen of Christ*:—I. CHRIST DETERMINES THE CLAIMS OF EARTHLY RELATIONSHIP, WHEN COMPARED WITH THE CLAIMS OF GOD AND DUTY. 1. His mother and brethren presumed on their relationship. 2. The multitude concurred. 3. Christ practically declared the superior claims of duty—or of God, to those of earthly relations. Relations and duty often clash. But for this decision, how much difficulty, &c. How much support has it given. II. THE WEAKNESS OF THE TIES OF NATURE, WHEN COMPARED WITH THOSE TIES TO WHICH THE GOSPEL GIVES EXISTENCE. 1. Christ asked who His mother and brethren were, *i.e.*, who stood to Him in nearest relation? 2. He answered the question—His disciples. Tho one temporary, the other eternal. 3. Their comparative strength has been tried. 4. How beautiful when united! III. THE HONOURABLE POSITION OF BELIEVERS—the kinsmen of Christ. 1. He has entered the human family. 2. He has introduced them into the Divine family. 3. As a kinsman He redeemed the inheritance which was lost. 4. He is not ashamed, in heaven, to call them brethren. 5. They take rank from Him, not He from them. IV. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S KINSMEN. 1. It is in respect of the moral nature that man is born again. 2. The Divine nature, which through regeneration is imparted, is holiness. 3. Hence the family likeness, *i.e.*, holiness. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Relationship to Christ*:—I. ITS IMPORTANCE. It is an everlasting relationship. 1. It delivers us from what is earthly and vain. It is only by the formation of a higher kinsmanship that we can be severed from the drag of the carnal. 2. It connects with salvation and eternal life. It is the grafting into the living stem of the vine. 3. It connects us with honour and glory. All that our kinsman has becomes ours. II. ITS FORMATION (John i. 12). This is the first point at which we commence doing the will of God. III. ITS MANIFESTATION. A life of service, of doing the Father's will. 1. Are our hearts doing the Father's will? 2. Are our intellects doing the Father's will? 3. Are our purposes doing the Father's will? 4. Is our life doing the Father's will? 5. Is our family doing the Father's will? 6. Is our business life doing the Father's will? Thus let us test our relationship to Christ. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The test of relationship*:—If you go out into the woods in the summer, you may see, high up on some tree, a branch with dry twigs and withered leaves. It seems to be a part of the tree. Yet when you look closer, you find it has been broken away, and now it is only a piece of dead wood encumbering a living tree. The test of relationship with the tree is life—fruit-bearing. That is also the test of relationship with Christ. The power which binds the iron to the magnet is unseen, but real; the iron so bound becomes itself a magnet: the power that binds believers to Christ and makes them members of Him, is as real, though also unseen.

VERS. 1, 2. **And He began again to teach by the seaside.**—*Christ teaching* :—I. The PLACE where Christ taught. 1. By the seaside. Opposed to a prevailing notion. This example at present imitated. 2. In a ship. The spread of the gospel prefigured. II. Those who formed His AUDIENCE. 1. The general crowd. 2. The apostles and disciples. III. The MANNER in which Christ taught. 1. He taught the multitudes in parables. Remarkable for simplicity when understood. Very apt and likely to be misunderstood. 2. He explained His parables to His disciples, but this was accompanied by reproof. IV. THE REASON WHY HE TAUGHT THE MULTITUDE IN PARABLES. 1. As a fulfilment of prophecy (Psa. lxxviii. 2; Matt. xiii. 34, 35). 2. In consequence of the moral state of the Jewish nation (Isa. vi. 9, 10; Matt. xiii. 14, 15, and elsewhere). 3. Originally, and as quoted, describes a particular moral state, in which—The Word is not understood, not felt, does not convert, is not heard. This state is ascribed to themselves, to the prophet, to God (Matt. xiii. 14, 15; Isa. vi. 9, 10; John xii. 40). Learn: That the ungodly see and hear without understanding; that in order that a people be left in darkness, it is not necessary that the gospel be removed; that when a faithful ministry is sent to a people, it is not always for their conversion; that the means of converting are also the means of hardening. V. THE REASON WHY CHRIST TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES MORE DIRECTLY. 1. A knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom was a gift to them. 2. Instruction was the mode of conveying it. (*Expository Discourses.*) **By parables.**—*The use and abuse of allegorical instruction* :—Lay down some rules to assist in the interpretation of parables. 1. The first and principal one I shall mention is, the carefully attending to the occasion of them. No one, for instance, can be at a loss to explain the parable of the prodigal son, who considers that our Lord had been discoursing with publicans and sinners, and that the proud and self-righteous Pharisees had taken offence at His conduct. With this key we are let into the true secret of this beautiful parable, and cannot mistake in our comment upon it. Understanding thus from the occasion of the parable what is the grand truth or duty meant to be inculcated, 2. Our attention should be steadily fixed to that object. If we suffer ourselves to be diverted from it by dwelling too minutely upon the circumstances of the parable, the end proposed by Him who spake it will be defeated, and the whole involved in obscurity. For it is much the same here as in considering a fine painting; a comprehensive view of the whole will have a happy and striking effect, but that effect will not be felt if the eye is held to detached parts of the picture without regarding the relation they bear to the rest. Were a man to spend a whole hour on the circumstances of the ring and the robe in the parable just referred to, or on the two mites in that of the good Samaritan, it is highly probable both he and his hearers by the time they got to the close of the discourse, would lose all idea of our Saviour's more immediate intent in both those instructive parables. 3. That great caution should be observed in our reasoning from the parables to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. (1) An intemperate use of figures tends to sensualize the mind and deprave the taste. Sensible objects engross the attention of mankind, and have an undue influence on their appetites and passions. They walk by sight, not by faith. (2) The misapplication of figures, whereby false ideas are given the hearer of the things they are made to stand for. It is easy to conceive how men's notions of the other world, invisible spirits, and the blessed God Himself, may in this way be perverted. A licentious imagination has given rise to tenets the most absurd and impious. To this the idolatry of the pagan world may be traced up as its proper source (Rom. i. 21-28). (3) The reasoning injudiciously from types and figures, begets a kind of faith that is precarious and ineffectual. We have clear and positive proofs of the facts the gospel relates, and the important doctrines that are founded thereon. But if, instead of examining these proofs to the bottom, and reasoning with men upon them, we content ourselves with mere analogical evidence, and rest the issue of the question in debate upon fanciful and imaginary grounds, our faith will be continually wavering, and produce no substantial and abiding fruits. An enthusiast, struck with appearances, instantly yields his assent to a proposition, without considering at all the evidence. But as soon as his passions cool, and the false glare upon his imagination subsides, his faith dies away, and the fruit expected from it proves utterly abortive. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **Hearken; behold, there went out a sower to sow.**—*Parable of the sower:*—This parable is both a solemn lesson and warning, and also a description of what is actually taking place in the world. There are calls to lead a holy life perpetually going on; there are either sudden rejections or gradual forgettings of those calls. Such calls may differ in degree, and strength, and strikingness of the impression, but they are all calls; a truth is distinctly embraced by the mind of the person at the time: he sees that something is true which he had not realized to be true before, and had only held in word. That person can never afterwards say he did not know or was not made fully aware of Christian truth; or that it was always brought before him in such a way that he could not recognize it. He has been made to see it, and to recognize it. The point with which this parable deals is the various kinds of treatment accorded by different people to these calls. Let us look at the several classes. I. THE UNSCRUPULOUS. By a bold, proud, sometimes even sudden and impulsive act of sin, they cast out of their hearts something which incommodes and annoys them, and threatens to interfere with their plan of enjoyment. These are they who have made up their minds to get on in life, and they refuse to let anything interfere with the realization of this desire. Judas. Ananias and Sapphira. I do not say that a man may not recover spiritually after having inflicted such a blow upon himself, but it is a dreadful act, which provokes the righteous justice of God, and that worst of punishments, a hardened heart. II. THE LIGHT-MINDED AND CARELESS. These could receive the Word, because that merely implies the capacity of being *acted upon* by solemn and powerful representations of the truth; which they might be, just as they might be impressed by some striking scene or incident. But, being without energy of their own to take hold of the Word and extract its powers, they soon fall away. To begin a thing, and to go on with it, are two totally different affairs. The commencement is in its own nature something fresh; but to go on with an undertaking is to do things over and over again, when all the freshness has disappeared, and no incentive remains but the sense of duty. This is the true test, and under it how many fail! Upon how many do we count for continuing their profession under different circumstances? Is there not a regular expectation formed in us, when we estimate the manifestations which men make, that they will not last; that they have their time, like the seasons or periods of weather, and that they will end as naturally as they have begun? Can there be a greater contrast to the abiding faithfulness of the gospel pattern? III. THE WORLDLY. These are not light-minded men altogether; they are serious as regards this world, calculating, exercising forecast, attentive, persevering; but it is solely in relation to this world that they maintain this gravity and seriousness. They do not give a place in their thoughts to another world. What a common mistake with regard to religion this is! Our Lord says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon;" and yet it would almost appear as if one-half of mankind had determined to prove Him a liar, and to show that that is possible which He declared was not. Each one thinks that in his own particular case there will be a complete agreement in these two great aims and undertakings, the earthly and the spiritual; that others may have missed this union, but that they will fix upon it. They enter upon their course in life with a swing. Feeling no hesitation about themselves, they plunge into the thick of the struggle for the world's possessions, they are carried away with the ardour of the pursuit, and they do not imagine at all that they are injuring or suppressing the religious principle in them. They think that can maintain itself, and therefore they never think of looking after it, to see how it is faring. And so the stream carries them along, being interested in the objects of the world, content with supposition and doing nothing about religion; until that which has thriven by practice has completely driven out the principle which has had no exercise, and the result is a simple man of the world. IV. OPPOSED TO ALL THESE IS THE TREATMENT GIVEN TO THE WORD BY THE HONEST AND GOOD HEART. Not sinning against light; not abandoning what it has undertaken; not captivated by worldly pomp and show: it is faithful to God; it knows the excellence of religion; it is able to count the cost, and make the sacrifice which is necessary for the great end in view. Have we this? We cannot be certain of it until we have continued and persevered to the end. Those who have begun well may boldly cast away the Spirit, or they may fall away from grace because they have no root, or they may be swallowed up by the cares and aims of worldly life. We know not what we are till we have been tried to that extent which God thinks fit. But so far as we have striven, we may feel a comfortable sense that we do possess that heart; and certainly, if we have not striven,

we cannot give ourselves any such hope. Let us strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to be found among the faithful. (*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*) *The effect of Divine truth as conditioned by the state of men's hearts*:—The title with which we are familiar is almost a misnomer. It is not the sower who is most prominent, for the seed of the Word is a more important factor; nor yet is the seed, for it is the four kinds of soil into which it shall fall that determines the seed's future. If preachers and teachers are drawing lessons from the parable, then it may be well called the Parable of the Sower; but if the hearers of the Word are getting their lessons from it, they will find the greater part of the parable telling of the soil and the false growths therein that may render the Word unfruitful. Jesus, standing by the seashore, and surveying the motley company before Him, gives us a prophecy of the future of His truth among men. It cannot win an easy triumph. The seed is God's own, but it does not create its own soil. It drops on what is at hand, and is to be scattered broadcast, to meet varied fortunes. (*E. N. Packard.*) *The sower*:—I. The FUNCTION of the sower, not destructive but constructive; not to root up or remove, but to plant. II. The LONELINESS of the sower. A sower. The reaper may work amidst a company, but the sower is always alone. Thousands reap the fruit of what one man sows. III. The SEASON when he goes forth to sow. No foliage, no verdure, sky cloudy, and air cold. IV. Sowing is a SORROWFUL PROCESS. He goes forth weeping. He must part with a certain amount of present good, in order to obtain a larger amount of future good. V. The NATURE OF THE SEED which he sows. The word of truth must be the word of life. (*Hugh Macmillan.*) *The sower*:—I. THE SOWER. 1. Unity of purpose. His work was seed sowing, not soil culture. 2. Variety of results. II. THE SEED. 1. Its origin. Every seed was originated by Christ. But there is a sense in which every man originates his own seed. This he does when he is true to his individuality. 2. Its vitality. 3. Its growth. Man can sow, God alone can quicken. 4. Its identity. The seed is the same in all ages and climes. III. THE SOIL. 1. Hardness—"Some seeds fell by the wayside," &c. 2. Shallowness—"And some fell upon stony places," &c. 3. Preoccupancy—"And some fell among thorns," &c. 4. Richness—"Other fell into good ground," &c. This soil contained all the qualities essential to fruitfulness. Moisture, depth, cleanness, and quality. (*A. G. Churchill.*) *The leading ideas of the parable explained*:—These are—the sower, the seed, the ground, and the effect of casting the seed into it. I. By THE SOWER is meant our Saviour Himself, and all those whose office it is to instruct men in the truth and duties of religion. The business of the husbandman is, of all others, most important and necessary, requires much skill and attention, is painful and laborious, and yet not without pleasure and profit. A man of this profession ought to be well versed in agriculture, to understand the difference of soils, the various methods of cultivating the ground, the seed proper to be sown, the seasons for every kind of work, and in short how to avail himself of all circumstances that arise for the improvement of his farm. He should be patient of fatigue, inured to disappointment, and unwearied in his exertions. Every day will have its proper business. Now he will manure his ground, then plough it; now cast the seed into it, then harrow it; incessantly watch and weed it; and after many anxious cares, and, if a man of piety, many prayers to heaven, he will earnestly expect the approaching harvest. The time come, with a joyful eye he will behold the ears fully ripe bending to the hands of the reapers, put in the sickle, collect the sheaves, and bring home the precious grain to his garner. Hence we may frame an idea of the character and duty of a Christian minister. He ought to be well-skilled in Divine knowledge, to have a competent acquaintance with the world and the human heart, &c. Of these sowers some have been more skilful, and successful, and laborious than others. Among them the Apostle Paul holds a distinguished rank. But the most skilful and painful of all sowers was our Lord Jesus Christ. II. THE SEED sown, which our Saviour explains of "the Word of the Kingdom," or as St. Luke has it, "the Word of God." The husbandman will be careful to sow his ground with good seed. He goeth forth bearing precious seed. By "the Word of the Kingdom" is meant the gospel. Let us apply it—1. To personal religion. In the heart of every real Christian a kingdom is established. Now the seed sown in the hearts of men is the Word of this kingdom, or that Divine instruction which relates to the foundation, erection, principles, maxims, laws, immunities, government, present happiness, and future glory of this kingdom: all which we have contained in our Bibles. It is the doctrine of Christ. Again, let us apply the idea of a kingdom, 2. To the Christian dispensation, or the whole visible church. In this sense it is used by John the Baptist, "Repent ye:

for the kingdom of heaven," that is, the gospel dispensation, "is at hand." All who profess the doctrine, and submit to the institutions of Christ, compose one body of which He is the head, one kingdom of which He is the sovereign—"a kingdom which," He himself tells us, "is not of this world." Now the gospel is the seed of this kingdom, as it gives us the laws by which it is to be regulated, of worship, ordinances, discipline, protection, increase and final glory. Once more, the term kingdom is to be understood also, 3. Of heaven, and all the happiness and glory to be enjoyed there. The gospel is the Word of this kingdom, as it has assured us upon the most certain grounds of its reality, and given us the amplest description of its glories our present imperfect faculties are capable of receiving. III. To consider THE GROUND into which the seed is cast, by which our Saviour intends the soul of man, that is, the understanding, judgment, memory, will, and affections. The ground, I mean the earth on which we tread, is now in a different state from what it was in the beginning, the curse of God having been denounced upon it. In like manner, the soul of man, in consequence of the apostacy of our first parents, is enervated, polluted, and depraved. It shall suffice at present to observe, that as there is a variety in the soil of different countries, and as the ground in some places is less favourable for cultivation than in others, so it is in regard of the soul. There is a difference in the strength, vigour, and extent of men's natural faculties; nor can it be denied that the moral powers of the soul are corrupted in some, through sinful indulgences, to a greater degree than in others. As to mental abilities, who is not struck with the prodigious disparity observable among mankind in this respect? Here we see one of a clear understanding, a lively imagination, a sound judgment, a retentive memory, and there another, remarkably deficient in each of these excellences, if not wholly destitute of them all. These are gifts distributed among mankind in various portions. But none possess them in that perfection they were enjoyed by our first ancestors in their primeval state. The ground must be first made good, and then it will be fruitful. IV. Consider the general PROCESS of this business, as it is either expressly described or plainly intimated in the parable. The ground, first manured and made good, is laid open by the plough, the seed is cast into it, the earth is thrown over it, in the bosom of the earth it remains awhile, at length, mingling with it, it gradually expands, shoots up through the clods, rises into the stalk and then the ear, so ripens, and at the appointed time brings forth fruit. Such is the wonderful process of vegetation. Nor can we advert thus generally to these particulars, without taking into view at once the exertions of the husbandman, the mutual operation of the seed and the earth on each other, and the seasonable influence of the sun and the rain, under the direction and benediction of Divine providence. So, in regard of the great business of religion, the hearts of men are first disposed to listen to the instructions of God's Word; these instructions are then, like the seed, received into the understanding, will, and affections; and after a while, having had their due operation there, bring forth, in various degrees, the acceptable fruits of love and obedience. And how natural, in this case, as in the former, while we are considering the rise and progress of religion in the soul, to advert, agreeable to the figure in the parable, to the happy concurrence of a Divine influence, with the great truths of the gospel, dispensed by ministers, and with the reasonings of the mind and heart about them. To shut out all idea here of such influence would be as absurd as to exclude the influence of the atmosphere and sun from any concern in culture and vegetation. Let the husbandman lay what manure he will on barren ground, it can produce no change in the temperature of it, unless it thoroughly penetrates it, and kindly mingles with it; and this it cannot do without the assistance of the falling dew and rain, and the genial heat of the sun. In like manner, all attempts, however proper in themselves, to change the hearts of men, and to dispose them to a cordial reception of Divine truths, will be vain without the concurrence of Almighty grace. Reflections: 1. How honourable, important, and laborious is the employment of ministers. 2. What a great blessing is the Word of God. 3. What cause have we for deep humiliation before God, when we reflect on the miserable depravity of human nature. 4. How great are our obligations to Divine grace for the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. Let not the regard which the sower pays to Divine providence, reproach our inattention and insensibility to the more noble and salutary influences of Divine grace. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) *The four kinds of soil:*—The growth of the seed depends always on the quality of the soil. The stress of the story lies not on the character of the sower, or even on the quality of the seed, but on the nature of the soil. The character of the hearer determines the effect of the Word upon him. We should cultivate the habit

of profitable hearing. It is well that our students should be instructed how to preach, but it is equally important that the people should be taught how to hear; for if it be true, as is sometimes cynically said, that good preaching is one of the lost arts, it is to be feared that good hearing also has too largely disappeared; and, wherever the fault may have begun, the two act and re-act on each other. A good hearer makes a lively preacher, just as really as a poor preacher makes a dull hearer; and eloquence is not all in the speaker. To use Mr. Gladstone's illustration, he gets from his hearers in vapour that which he returns to them in flood, and a receptive and responsive audience adds fervour and intensity to his utterance. Eloquent hearing, therefore, is absolutely indispensable to effective preaching; and so it is quite as necessary that listeners should be taught to hear, as it is that preachers should be taught what and how to speak. 1. Taking, then, first, the things to be guarded against, we find foremost among these the danger of preventing the truth from getting any entrance into the soul at all. The seed that fell upon the pathway lay on the outside of the soil. The ground had been so hardened by the tread of many feet, that the grain could not get into it. The soul may be sermon-hardened as well as sin-hardened. But another thing which makes a foot-walk over the soul is evil habit. 2. But a second danger to be avoided is that of shallow impulsiveness. So the man of shallow nature makes a great show at first. He is all enthusiasm. He "never heard such a sermon in all his life." He seems greatly moved, and for a time it looks as if he were really converted; but it does not last. It is but an ague-fever, which is succeeded by a freezing chill; and by and by some new excitement follows, to give place in its turn to another alternation into cold neglect. He lacks depth of character, for he has nothing but rock beneath the surface. He seems to have much feeling, indeed, and his religion is all emotional; but, in reality, he has no proper feeling. It is all superficial. That which is only feeling, will not even be feeling long. Now, the fault in all this lies in a lack of thoughtfulness, or a neglecting to "count the cost." The man of depth looks before he leaps. He will not commit himself until he has carefully examined all that is involved; but when he does thus commit himself, he does so irrevocably. He who signs a document without reading it will be very likely to repudiate it when any trouble comes of it; but the man who knew what he was doing when he appended his name to it, if he be a true man, will stand to his bond at all hazards. Now, the merely impulsive, shallow, flippant hearer acts without deliberation, signs his bond without reading it, and is therefore easily discouraged. When he is called to suffer anything unpleasant for his confession, he breaks down. He had not calculated on such a contingency. He enlisted only for the review, and not for the battle; and so, on the first alarm of war, he disappears from the ranks. He did not stop to consider all that his enlistment involved; he was allured only by the uniform, and the gay accessories of military life: but, when it came to fighting, he deserted. The enthusiastic convert is often preferred to the calm and apparently unimpassioned disciple. The growth in the one seems so much more rapid than in the other, that he is put far above him. But when affliction or persecution arises, what a revelation it makes! for then the enthusiasm of the one *goes* out, and that of the other *comes* out. 3. But we must look to the kind of thing to be guarded against, which we may call the pre-occupation of the heart by other objects than the word heard by the man. II. THE QUALITIES TO BE CULTIVATED BY GOSPEL HEARERS, AS THESE ARE INDICATED IN THE SAVIOUR'S EXPLANATION OF THE SEED WHICH FELL INTO GOOD SOIL. 1. Attention: they hear. 2. Meditation: they keep. 3. Obedience: they bring forth fruit with patience. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Eastern cornfields*:—Our grain-fields are level, and covered with the crop from hedge to hedge. But theirs were broken patches, not unlike the little croft you may see before a Highland cottage. It is not fenced; the footpath to the moor, the well, or the village runs through it; the soil is wavy, and dotted with rocky hillocks; bushes of thorn and thistle are in the corner. As the crofter sows his little plot, some seeds fall on the footpath and its hardened margins, some on the rocky knolls, and some among the thorns, as well as on the best soil. Such uneven seed-fields stretched then along the Lake of Galilee, sloping suddenly up from the shore. The soil was deep at the water's edge, but grew shallower near the foot of the little hills. Very likely Christ's hearers were then standing upon or within sight of such a field. (*J. Wells.*) *Life in the seed*:—Dry and dead as it seems, let a seed be planted with a stone-flashing diamond, or burning ruby; and while that in the richest soil remains a stone, this awakes and, bursting its husky shell, rises from the ground to adorn the earth with beauty, perfume the air with frag-

rance, or enrich men with its fruit. Such life there is in all, but especially in gospel, truth. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Force in the seed:*—Buried in the ground a seed does not remain inert—lie there in a living tomb. It forces its way upward, and with a power quite remarkable in a soft, green, feeble blade, pushes aside the dull clods that cover it. Wafted by winds or dropped by passing bird into the fissure of a crag, from weak beginnings the acorn grows into an oak—growing till, by the forth-putting of a silent but continuous force, it heaves the stony table from its bed, rending the rock in pieces. But what so worthy to be called the power as well as the wisdom of God as that Word which, lodged in the mind, and accompanied by the Divine blessing, fed by showers from heaven, rends hearts, harder than the rocks, in pieces? (*Ibid.*) *Propagation in the seed:*—A single grain of corn would, were the produce of each season sown again, so spread from field to field, from country to country, from continent to continent, as in the course of a few years to cover the whole surface of the earth with one wide harvest, employing all the sickles, filling all the barns, and feeding all the mouths in the world. (*Ibid.*) *Varied soils:*—The wayside hearers do not take in the seed at all; the rocky-ground hearers take in the seed, but do not let it sink deep enough; the thorny-ground hearers take it in, but take in bad seeds also; the good-ground hearers take the seed into their deepest heart, and take in nothing else. In these four sorts of soil you see the beginning and end of spring, summer, and autumn. In the first, the seed does not spring; in the second, it springs, but does not grow up; in the third, it grows up, but does not ripen; in the fourth, it ripens perfectly. (*J. Wells.*) *The duty of the sower:*—A pastor or preacher is a workman hired and sent out to sow the field of God; that is, to instruct souls in the truths of the gospel. This workman sins—1. When, instead of going to the field, he absents himself from it; nothing being more agreeable to nature and Divine law than for a servant to obey his master, for a seedsman to be in the field for which he is hired, and whither he is sent to sow. 2. When he stays in the field, but does not sow. 3. When he changes his master's seed, and sows bad instead of good. 4. When he affects to cast it on the highway, *i.e.*, loves to preach only before people of fashion and influence. 5. When he fixes on stony ground, from whence there is little hope of receiving any fruit. If interest, inclination, the spirit of amusement, or self-satisfaction determine a pastor to attend chiefly on such souls who seek not God, and whose virtue has no depth, he has but little regard to his Master's profit. He must not, indeed, neglect any, but he ought not to base his preference on worldly motives. 6. When he is not careful to pick out the stones, and to pluck up the thorns. The sower complains of the barrenness of the field; and perhaps the field will complain, at the tribunal of God, of the negligence of the sower, in not preparing and cultivating it as he ought. 7. When he does not endeavour to make the seed in the good ground yield fruit in proportion to its goodness. (*Quesnel.*) In framing this parable, our Lord classified the hearers of the Word according to His own experience as a preacher, basing His classification not so much upon generalities as upon well-remembered illustrations. It would not be difficult to exemplify this, by specimens drawn from the records of His dealings with men (Bruce, *e.g.* has found examples of each kind of hearer in St. Luke xii. 11, 13, ix. 57, 61, 62, and in the case of Barnabas). It will suffice at present, however, to give point to His descriptions, by recalling the divers effects produced by His claims to the Messiahship. 1. There were men hardened by Jewish prejudice, and seared with worldliness, who looked only for material advancement by the establishment of a new kingdom, and yet flocked to hear His words, meek and lowly as He was. They might possibly have been impressed, had not the Pharisaic enemies of the Cross, the emissaries of Satan, stepped in with their specious arguments, and caught away the seed before ever it found any lodgment in their hearts. 2. There were others of an emotional temperament, who were carried away in the excitement aroused by His sudden popularity, who, when they witnessed the wonderful works that He did, would have taken Him by force and made Him a king; and yet, staggered by the first check their enthusiasm received, within twenty-four hours "went away backward, and walked no more with Him." 3. There was another class, more limited, no doubt, who saw in Him the beauty they desired, and recognized His goodness; men, too, whom He loved in return for all that was best in their lives; but who failed at last because their heart was not whole. Underneath all this there was "a root of bitterness"—love of riches, or pleasure, or even distracting cares of home; and though for a time these blemishes showed no vitality, not springing up simultaneously with the crop of new desires, yet by the rapidity and rankness of

their growth they just spoiled the life when it was on the eve of bearing fruit. 4. The last class was composed of those whose hearts the Baptist had prepared, and the Lord had opened, who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel:" men like Andrew, John, Nathanael, or women like the devout band who "ministered to Him of their substance," and in varying degrees of productiveness bore fruit in their lives. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Likeness between the Word and seed:*—God's Word has all the hidden life of a seed. Take up a grain of wheat in your hand, and ask yourself where its life lies. Not, surely, upon the surface; not in its inner compartments as a distinct thing. Chemistry will give you every material element it contains, and you will be as far as ever from knowing or seeing the very thing that makes it a seed—that mysterious something we call its life. Within that little mass of matter there lies a force which sun, rain, and soil shall call forth with voices it will hear and obey. God hath given it a body, and to every seed his own body. The hidden life and unwearied force of the wheat-grain furnish analogies to the Word of God. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of Christ shall not pass away. This is not because of any arbitrary fiat of Omnipotence, any mechanically conferred sanctity, but because it is an eternal seed, to which God has given eternal form. But this vitality is not lodged where we can see it. (*E. N. Packard.*)

Vers. 4–15. **Some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.**—Though men be outward hearers of the Word, and do also in some sort understand what is taught, yet if their hearts be so hardened in sin and through Satan's temptations that they are not affected and moved by it, it can never profit them. As seed sown upon a beaten path or highway cannot sink into the earth by reason of the hardness of it, nor take root or fructify; so the doctrine of the Word being preached to those whose hearts are hardened in sin cannot enter into them, and therefore cannot profit them. If the seed of the Word be only sown in their outward ears and in their minds; if it lie above ground, *i.e.*, if it swim and float aloft in their brain and understanding only, and do not enter and sink into their hearts; if their hearts be not affected to love and embrace it, as well as their understandings enlightened by it, it will never take root or bear fruit in them. (*G. Petter.*) *The character of inattentive hearers considered:*—1. These persons hear the Word. They are not deaf, and so utterly incapable of hearing. Nor are they determined that they will not hear (Jer. xxii. 21). 2. They are only occasional hearers of the Word. They are, in regard of the assemblies where the gospel is preached, what the way-side is to the field where the seed is sown, ground without the inclosure, or whereon the seed falls as it were accidentally or by chance. They come by constraint of conscience, or from curiosity. 3. They are not at all prepared for hearing the Word. The ground is beaten, and has received no cultivation. 4. That they hear in a heedless, desultory manner. 5. They remain grossly ignorant. 6. But some in this class do in a sense understand the Word, for the seed is said to be sown in their hearts. They understand speculatively. 7. It makes no abiding impression on the heart. 8. Our Lord's account of the manner in which these impressions are effaced—"the fowls of the air came," &c. I. WHO IS THIS WICKED ONE, AND WHY HE IS SO CALLED. From this short scriptural account of Satan it appears with what propriety he is here, and in many other passages, styled emphatically "the wicked one." He is wicked himself in the highest degree, for as he exceeds all others in subtilty and power, so also in impiety and sin; a spirit the most proud, false, envious, turbulent, and malignant among all the various orders of fallen spirits. He, too, is the author of all wickedness, the contriver and promoter of every species of iniquity. Whence, the infinitely numerous evils that prevail in our world are called "the works of the devil." Such is the character of this first apostate archangel, the grand, avowed enemy of God and man. And thus are we led to our second inquiry—II. WHAT IS MEANT BY HIS "CATCHING AWAY THE SEED," AND HOW IS THIS DONE? For no more is meant by the influence which Satan is supposed in certain cases to exert over the mind, than what is similar to the influence which wicked men are acknowledged to have over others, to allure them by persuasions to sin, and to dissuade them by menaces from their duty. It cannot force them into sin against the consent of their will; or, in other words, so operate on their minds as to deprive them of that freedom which is necessary to constitute them accountable creatures. This mighty adversary watches his opportunity to prevent the salutary effect of the Word upon those that hear it. And considering what is the character of the sort of hearers we are here speaking of, it is not to be wondered at

that he is permitted to catch away the seed sown in their hearts, or that he succeeds in the attempt. For if their motives in attending upon Divine service are base and unworthy, if they address themselves to the duties of religion without any previous preparation, how righteous is it in God to permit Satan to use every possible artifice to defeat the great and good ends to which religious instructions are directed! 1. Satan uses his utmost endeavours to divert men's attention from the Word while they are hearing it. 2. Satan uses every art to excite and inflame men's prejudices against the Word they hear. 3. Another artifice Satan uses to counteract the influence of God's Word on men's hearts is to prevent their recollecting it after they have heard it. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) *Wasted seed*:—We are taught to regard waste of all kinds as a great fault and sin. Wasted food, wasted money, wasted health, wasted time, wasted instruction, wasted opportunities of doing and receiving good; these, in their several ways, are all sins against God and our own souls. While we are young we are punished for them; when we are older we suffer for them; the consummation of them at last is the loss of the soul. But what I wish you to observe is that, sinful as waste of any kind is in us, there is in nature, in providence, in the spiritual world, a constant waste going on, suggesting much of anxious and painful wonder. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The plough needed*:—Nothing is needed but to plough it up. God drives a deep share through many a wayside heart, and the coulter of affliction breaks up many a spirit, that it may afterwards yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." And if He does that for you, bless Him for His mercy; but do not wait, for you can get rid of all this insensibility by the simple effort of your own will. (*Dr. McLaren.*) *The devil is an inveterate enemy to the hearing of the Word, and to the fruit of it*:—He hinders men in sundry ways from profiting by the Word. 1. By keeping them from hearing it; stirring up occasions of worldly business or some other impediments on the Lord's day to keep them away from church. 2. By keeping them from attending to it when they do hear it. 3. By blinding their minds that they may not understand it. 4. By labouring to hold them in infidelity that they may not believe and apply the Word to themselves. 5. By using means to thrust the Word heard out of their minds that they may not remember it. 6. By keeping them from yielding obedience to the Word. See from this what need we have to be watchful over ourselves and against Satan and his practices when we are to hear the Word. How needful to watch before we hear, that he may not lay blocks in our way to hinder us from hearing. How needful in time of hearing to watch against Satan, that he hinder not our attention by suggesting to us roving thoughts. How needful to pray to God not to suffer him to blind our minds or harden our hearts in unbelief, that we may not understand or believe the Word. How needful also to watch against Satan after we have heard, that he do not quickly thrust the Word out of our minds and memories. Look to these things therefore every one that would profit by hearing. The more malicious and politic Satan is to hinder us from profiting, the more wise must we be and careful to disappoint him of his purpose. (*G. Petter.*) *The Satanic hindering of the Word of God*:—The Lord tells us that this indifference to the Word, by which it fails to convince and convert, is brought about, not through natural, but through supernatural, agency. An enemy does this. In our present fallen state he is able to summon up thoughts which may distract the attention from the thoughts which the life-giving Word suggests, and our evil will falls in with the thoughts which he instils. These thoughts may not always be evil by any means, but they do his work, for they distract the attention, and being far more in accordance with the bent of the evil heart the good thought is swallowed up, effaced, and forgotten. I think that no minister who comes closely into contact with the souls of men for their conversion, but must be aware that there is not only an evil principle at work in the heart, but an evil personal agency which is able to suggest doubts and interpose difficulties, and assist the soul in barring out the Word by placing all his cunning at the disposal of the evil will. Satan or his emissary, the evil spirit to whom he has committed the destruction of the man's soul, cometh immediately. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *The devil a great traveller*:—The devil is no idle spirit, but a walker and vagrant runagate walker, like Cain, that cannot rest in a place. I have heard of travellers that have seen many parts of the world, but never any perpetual peripatetic or universal walker but Satan, who hath travelled all coasts and corners of the earth, and would of heaven, too, if he might be admitted. He is not like St. George's statue, ever on horseback and never riding, but, as if he were knight-marshal of the whole world, he is ever walking. His motion is circular, and his unwearied steps know

no rest. He hath a large and endless circuit. His walk is a siege, that goes about the fort to find the weakest place as easiest for battery. His walks are the circumference, and man the centre. The motive, cause, and main intention of his journey is to win man. As he walks through the streets there he throws a short measure, a false balance, into a tradesman's shop. He steps into a drinking-house and kindles a quarrel. He shoulders to the bar and pops in a forged evidence, a counterfeit seal. He dares enter the schools and commence schisms and contentions, nay, climb up into the pulpit and broach sects and divisions. He travels no ground but, like a stinking fox or dying oppressor, he leaves a scent behind him. (*T. Adams.*)

Vers. 5, 16, 17.—**And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth.**—*The seed upon stony ground:*—I. A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN PROFESSORS IN RELIGION. They heard the Word. They received the Word. They received it immediately. They received it with gladness. They made rapid progress. In due time came trial. Immediately they were offended. II. THEIR RADICAL DEFECT. It lay in an unbroken heart. This led to want of depth. They lacked moisture. III. THE LESSONS OF THE TEXT. Be deeply in earnest. Watch the effect of your own daily trials. Constantly examine yourself. Let all this show us how necessary it is that we cast all the stress and burden of our salvation entirely upon the Lord Jesus Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The character of enthusiastic hearers considered:*—I. WITH THE CHARACTER OF THESE HEARERS PREVIOUS TO THEIR HEARING THE WORD. They are compared to stony or rocky ground, which is unfavourable to cultivation; but yet has a little mould or earth cast over it, suited to receive seed, and in which it may lodge awhile, and disseminate itself. So that this ground is partly bad and partly good. And thus are very aptly described, the miserably perverse and depraved state of the will on the one hand, and the warmth and liveliness of the natural passions on the other. These qualities often meet in one and the same person, and bear a different aspect to religion, the one being unfavourable and the other favourable to it. 1. It is true of these hearers that their will is wretchedly depraved. Stone is a figure used in Scripture to signify the obstinate aversion of the mind to what is holy and good. So Ezekiel speaks of a stony heart in opposition to a heart of flesh; and Paul, of the living epistles of Christ being written, not on tables of stone, but fleshly tables of the heart. And yet, with all this depravity of the will, they have—2. Warm and lively passions; a circumstance in itself not a little favourable to religion. This is admirably expressed by the earth or mould said to be cast over the rock, which was of a nature so rich and luxuriant, that the seed instantly mingled with it, and expanding, sprung up, and created a beautiful verdure which promised great fruitfulness. Nothing was wanting to produce the desired effect but a sufficient depth of earth. Had the ground at bottom been properly cultivated this fine mould cast upon it would have assisted and forwarded vegetation; but that remaining hard and rocky, this had only a temporary effect, and served little other purpose than to deceive the expectation of the husbandman. Such is truly the case in the matter before us. The heart, like the stony ground, is indisposed to what is good; and the affections, like the earth cast over it, are warm and lively; wherefore, the Word not entering into the former, and yet mingling with the latter, produces no real fruit, but only the gay and splendid appearance of an external profession. And here it is further to be remarked, that however the passions are of excellent use in religion, if the heart be right with God; yet, this not being the case, their influence is rather pernicious than salutary: indeed, the more eager and impetuous the natural temper, the greater evil is in this case to be apprehended from it, both to the man himself, and to those with whom he is connected. As to himself mistaking the warm efforts of mere passion for real religion, he instantly concludes, that he is without doubt a real Christian, and so is essentially injured by the imposition he puts upon himself. But it will be proper, before we pass on, to examine more particularly the character of the enthusiast. He has a lively imagination, but no judgment to correct it; and warm feelings, but neither wisdom nor resolution to control them. Struck with appearances, he instantly admits the reality of things, without allowing himself time to inquire into their nature, evidence and tendency. And impressions thus received, whether from objects presented to the senses, or representations made to the fancy, produce a mighty and instantaneous effect on his passions. These agitate his whole frame, and precipitate him into action, without any intervening consideration, reflection, or prospect. And his actions, under the impulse of a

heated imagination, are either right or wrong, useful or pernicious, just as the notions he has thus hastily adopted happen to be conformable to truth or error. So we shall see the countenance of a man of this complexion kindling into rapture and ecstasy at the idea of something new and marvellous; a flood of tears streaming down his cheeks at the representation of some moving scene of distress; his face turning pale, and his limbs trembling, at the apprehension of some impending danger; his whole frame distorted with rage at the hearing of some instance of cruelty; and his eye sparkling with joy in the prospect of some fancied bliss. Nor is it to be wondered, that one who is wholly at the mercy of these passions, without the guidance of a sober understanding, and the control of a well-disposed heart, should, as is often the case, break out into loud and clamorous language, assume the most frantic gestures, and be guilty of the most strange and extravagant actions. 1. He receives the Word. *Receiving* is a figurative term, and may here be explained of what is the consequence of admitting any doctrine to be true, that is, the professing it. It is used in Scripture to signify faith itself (John i. 12). Now, as faith has the promise of salvation, and some believe who yet are not saved, a distinction becomes necessary; and the common one of historical and Divine faith is easy and natural. Or if the faith is genuine, yet his notion of the gospel has a great deal of error mingled with it. And then he receives it not upon the Divine testimony, or a clear perception of the internal and external evidence of it; but upon the confident assertions of others, whose eagerness and zeal, expressed by their loud voice and violent gesture, have a mighty effect upon that credulity we spoke of under the former head. Further, his faith is not cordial; it has not the hearty approbation of his judgment and will. Nor does it produce the kindly and acceptable fruits of love and obedience. Yet it is not without its effects, for being of that enthusiastic turn of mind before described, his imagination and passions have a great influence on his profession. Whence those strong appearances of sincerity, earnestness, and zeal, whereby he imposes upon himself and others. Now he loudly affirms he believes, scarcely admitting that man to be a Christian who at all hesitates. Then he treats cool reasoning, and calm reflection, as inimical to religion. 2. He receives the Word immediately. The seed is said in the text to spring up forthwith, and so the idea may respect the quickness of the vegetation. It is true both of the reception and operation of the Word. He receives it not circuitously, but directly. It is no sooner spoken than admitted to be true. He is not embarrassed with doubt, and does not hesitate, reflect, or compare what he has heard with the Scriptures. So without either his judgment being informed, or his will renewed, he is impetuously carried away with a mere sound. 3. His receiving the Word with joy. Joy is a pleasing elevation of the spirits, excited by the possession of some present, or the expectation of some future, good. Now, the gospel is good news, and so adapted to give pleasure to the mind. He therefore who receives it with joy, receives it as it ought to be received. But the man our Saviour here describes is not a real Christian, his joy therefore must have something in it, or in the circumstances accompanying it, distinguishable from that of a genuine believer. Of Herod it is said that "he heard John gladly:" and from the story it clearly appears Herod remained, notwithstanding, the same profligate man he was before. How, then, is the joy of the one to be distinguished from that of the other? 1. Let us consider what precedes it. The real Christian, previous to his enjoying solid peace, is usually much depressed and cast down. Nor is his dejection the effect of bodily disorder, or an ill-temperature of the animal spirits, or of something he can give no rational account of. It is an anxiety occasioned by a sense of sin. But it stands to reason that the joy the heart feels must bear some proportion to the anxiety it has suffered. 2. Let us inquire what it is that excites this joy. The causes of that elevation of the spirits which we commonly call joy are various. In some instances it is the Word itself, the mere sound, without any idea affixed to it, that creates joy. The effect is instantly and mechanically produced by the tone and cadence of the voice, accompanied by an appearance, attitude, and gesture, that happen to please. In other instances, it is not the sound only, but the sense, that affects. We may easily conceive how a pleasing kind of sensation, excited in the breast by a pathetic description of misery, particularly the sufferings of Christ, may be mistaken for religion. We are next to consider (3) what are the effects of it? The joy a real Christian feels, is sober, rational, well-grounded, and will admit of the most pleasing reflections. He possesses himself; he can calmly reason upon the state of his mind, and those great truths and objects, the contemplation of which

makes him happy; and he can recollect the pleasures he has enjoyed on some special occasions with composure and satisfaction. It humbles him. The higher he ascends the mount of communion with God, the less he appears in his own eyes. Those beams of the sun of righteousness which gladden his heart, throw a light upon his follies and sins. With Job, "he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes." And, as the apostle expresses it, "thinks soberly of himself as he ought to think." His joy inspires him with meekness, candour, and benevolence. It allays, if not entirely extinguishes, the rage of violent passion, fans the flame of fervent charity, and puts the soul into a temper, to unite cordially with all good men, to pity the bad, and to forgive its bitterest enemies. His joy, in a word, makes him watchful and holy. He rejoices with trembling, is upon his guard against everything that may disturb the tranquillity of his mind, holds sin at a distance as his greatest enemy, and aspires with growing ardour to the likeness of the ever-blessed God. On the contrary, who that contemplates the character of the credulous, self-deceived enthusiast, but must see what has been said of the real Christian awfully reversed in his temper and conduct? Is he sober, prudent and self-collected? Ah! no. He is little better than a madman, or one drunk with wine wherein is excess. His heaven is a fool's paradise, and his account of it as unintelligible as the frantic talk of one in a delirium. Is he humble? Far from it. The pride of religious frenzy swells him into importance. Imagining himself a favourite of heaven, he looks down upon his fellow-mortals with an air of indifference, if not contempt—"Stand at a distance, I am holier than thou." Is he meek, candid, and benevolent? So much the reverse, that the very names of these virtues sound harshly in his ear, and stand for little else, in his opinion, than pusillanimity, formality, and hypocrisy. Is he conscientious and circumspect in his deportment? No. Boasting of his freedom, he can take liberties that border on immorality, and treat the scruples of a weak believer as indicating a legal spirit. II. To consider THE LAMENTABLE APOSTASY OF THESE DELUDED MEN. The seed that fell upon stony places, and forthwith sprung up, in a little time "withered away." 1. The term of his profession is short. Enthusiastic zeal, like inflammable air, quickly evaporates. The sources of that pleasure which gives existence to a spurious religion, and an equivocal devotion, are soon exhausted. The imagination tires, the senses are palled, and the passions, for want of novelty and variety to keep them alive, sink away into a languid, unfeeling, torpid state. 2. In what manner does he renounce his profession? He either silently quits it, or publicly disavows it. He is offended, stumbles, falls, falls away. III. THE CAUSE OF THESE MEN'S APOSTASY. This our Saviour explains with admirable precision, by teaching us that it is partly owing to the want of something within, essentially important to religion, and partly to a concurrence of circumstances from without unfavourable to the profession of it. 1. Something is wanting within. The parable says: "The seed forthwith sprung up, because it had no deepness of earth;" "and it withered away because it had no root," as Mark has it; "and lacked moisture," as is expressed in Luke. For want of a sufficient quantity of earth the seed did not sink deep enough into the ground, and through the luxuriance of the mould it too quickly disseminated and sprung up. So that having taken root, there was no source whence the tender grass might be supplied with nourishment; and of consequence it must necessarily in a little time wither and die. Agreeably therefore to the figure, our Lord, in His explanation of the parable, speaks of these hearers as "having no root in themselves." And such precisely is the case of the sort of professors we are discoursing of. They have no principle of religion in their hearts. Their notions are not properly digested, they do not disseminate themselves in the mind, take fast hold on the conscience, and incorporate, if I may so express myself, with the practical powers of the soul. "The Word preached does not profit them, not being mixed with faith;" or, as perhaps it might be rendered, because they are not united by faith to the word. 2. To a concurrence of circumstances from without unfavourable to the profession of religion. These, in the parable, are all comprehended under the idea of the sun's scorching the springing grass; and, in our Saviour's exposition of it, are described by the terms tribulation, persecution, affliction, and temptation, all which arise because of the word, or are occasioned by it. Religion, however, is not to be blamed for these evils, of which it is no way the cause, though it may be the occasion; they are to be set down to the account of a fatal, but too frequent combination of a depraved heart, with an impetuous natural temper. 1. What a striking picture has our Saviour here given us of human nature. 2. Of what importance is it to study

ourselves, and to keep a guard upon our passions! 3. We see what kind of preaching is to be coveted, and what avoided. 4. Our Lord, by the instruction given us in our text, has enabled us to reply to an objection often urged against the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance. We are frequently reminded of persons whose profession for a time was fair and splendid, but who in the end renounced it. And no doubt this has been the fact in too many sad instances. Yet what does it prove? No more than that these men were either designing hypocrites, or else hastily took upon them a profession of what they did not rightly understand, truly believe, and cordially approve. 5. And lastly, let not the mournful subject we have been considering create any discouragement in the breast of the truly humble but weak Christian. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) *Rapid growth means rapid decay*:—Precocity and rapid growth are everywhere the forerunners of rapid decay. The oak that is to stand a thousand years does not shoot up like the hop or the creeper. (*M. Dods, D.D.*) *Excited but not converted*:—The short and pathetic history of some who are called revival converts. They are charmed but not changed; much excited, but not truly converted. These are they that "have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time" (Mark iv. 17). Their root is in the crowd, the fine music, the lively stir, the hearty companionships of the gospel-meeting. The Moravians every Sabbath offer up this prayer, "From light-minded swarming, deliver us, good God." (*J. Wells.*) *Perfect too soon*:—Most Christians are perfect too soon, which is the reason they are never perfect. (*A. Farindon.*) *Fair-weather Christians*:—Some fresh-water sailor, standing upon the shore on a fair day, and beholding the ship's top and top-gallant sail in all their bravery, riding safely at anchor, thinks it a brave thing to go to sea, and will by all means aboard; but being out a league or two from the harbour, and feeling by the rocking of the ship his stomach begin to work, and his soul even to abhor all manner of meat—or otherwise a storm to arise, the wind and the sea as it were conspiring the sinking of the vessel—forthwith repents his folly, and makes vows that if he but once be set ashore again he will bid an eternal farewell to all such voyages. And thus there be many faint-hearted Christians to be found amongst us, who, in calm days of peace, when religion is not overclouded by the times, will needs join themselves to the number of the people of God; they will be as earnest and as forward as the best, and who but they? Yet, let but a tempest begin to appear, and the sea to grow rougher than at the first entry, the times alter, troubles rise, many cross winds of opposition and gainsaying begin to blow, they are weary of their course, and will to shore again, resolving never to thrust themselves into any more adventures. Christ they would have by all means, but Christ crucified by no means. If the way to heaven be by the gates of hell, let who will they will not go that way; they rather sit down and be quiet. (*Spencer.*) *Religion genuine in bad times*:—Many men owe their religion, not to grace, but to the favour of the times; 'tis in fashion, they may profess it at a cheap rate, because none contradict it. Indeed, it shows that they are extremely bad when they may be as good without any loss to themselves, but it does not show they are good that they are only good in good times. Dead fish swim with the stream. They do not build upon the rock, but set up a shed leaning to another man's house, which costs them nothing; carried with a multitude, are not able to go alone in a good way; if they be religious, it is for others' sakes. Then is integrity discovered, when persons dare be good in bad times, as Noah was said to be an upright man, because he was perfect in his generation. (*T. Manton.*)

Vers. 7, 18, 19. **And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it.**—*The character of worldly-minded hearers considered*:—1. The treatment the Word meets with from these persons. They hear and receive it. 2. How this salutary operation on his heart is obstructed and defeated. 3. What is the event? These thorns choke the Word. I. WHAT THESE THINGS ARE WHICH OBSTRUCT THE DUE OPERATION OF GOD'S WORD ON THE HEARTS OF THESE MEN? 1. The cares of the world. By the cares of the world He means criminal anxieties about secular concerns. (1) They relate to subsistence. By this we mean the necessaries of life; man cannot be indifferent to these, but must not distrust the providence of God. (2) They relate to competence. This is a relative term, and has respect to capacity and desire. But such as is suited to desires not regulated by religion and reason, is an equivocal competence; all care about it is criminal. A prince requires more than his subject; desires directed to this object are commendable. But even though the object be right, the care about it may exceed, and unduly engross our attention and time. (3) They relate to affluence. This also

right; but pride, ambition, and the gratification of vain passions must be offensive to God. Thus these cares, like thorns in the soil, will stifle every generous sentiment. 2. The deceitfulness of riches. Men are prone to reason mistakenly about riches. Riches are, in a sense, themselves deceitful. They assume an appearance different from their real nature and use, and so the unwary observer is imposed upon. Consider the false reasonings of a depraved heart: (1) As to wealth itself. Riches may be a blessing. The value of them is chiefly to be estimated by their use. Here men mistake it. Money will purchase delicate food, fine mansions, but will it set him beyond the reach of pain, contempt? (2) Of the mode of acquiring wealth men reason very mistakenly. They too often ignore the providence of God, so He blasts their schemes. (3) Men reason deceitfully concerning the term of enjoying the wealth they acquire. 3. The pleasures of this life, or "the lusts of other things." Here we need not be very particular, for as riches are the means of procuring pleasures, and most generally coveted with that view, the same folly and criminality we have charged to the account of the avaricious is, with a little variation of circumstances, to be imputed likewise to the sensualist. Pleasure indeed, abstractedly considered, is a real good; the desire of it is congenial with our nature, and cannot be eradicated without the destruction of our very existence. This is not therefore what our Lord condemns. He well knew that there are passions and appetites proper to men as men, that the moderate gratification of them is necessary to their happiness, and of consequence that the desire of such gratification is not sinful. But the pleasure He prohibits is that which results from the indulgence of irregular desires, I mean such as are directed to wrong objects, and such as are excessive in their degree. II. TO SHOW HOW THEY OBSTRUCT THE DUE OPERATION OF GOD'S WORD ON THE HEART. 1. As to these of the first description, the careful. It involves distrust of the faithfulness and goodness of Divine providence. 2. As to the avaricious. How vain such desires, expectations, and exertions. Will you suffer such noxious weeds to grow in your heart? Wisdom will give you riches and honour. 3. As to the voluptuous. It precipitates into extravavances which often prove fatal to character. There is no profiting by the Word we hear, without duly weighing and considering it. There are three things necessary to this: 1. Leisure. Ground choked with briers and thorns affords not room for the seed cast upon it to expand and grow. In like manner, he whose attention is wholly taken up with secular affairs has not leisure for consideration. Say, you who are oppressed with the cares, or absorbed in the pleasures of life, whether this is not the fact? What is it first catches your imagination when you awake in the morning? What is it engrosses your attention all the day? What is it goes with you to your bed, and follows you through the restless hours of night? What is it you are constantly thinking of at home, abroad, and in the house of God? It is the world. Oh sad! not a day, not an hour, scarce a moment in reserve, for a meditation on God, your soul, and an eternal world! And can religion exist where it is never thought of, or gain ground in a heart where it is but now and then adverted to? As well might a man expect to live without sustenance, or get strong without digesting his food. That then, which deprives men of time for consideration, is essentially injurious to religion. 2. Composure. By composure, I mean that calmness or self-possession, whereby we are enabled to attend soberly and without interruption to the business we are about. Consideration implies this in it; for how is it possible that a man should duly consider a subject, whether civil or religious, coolly reason upon it, and thoroughly enter into the spirit of it, if his mind is all the while occupied with a thousand other things, foreign to the matter before him? In order, therefore, to our doing justice to any question of importance, we must rid our minds of all impertinent thoughts, be self-collected, and fix our attention steadily to the point. How difficult this is I need not say. Studious people feel the difficulty; and in regard of religion, the best of men are sensible of their weakness in this respect, and deeply lament it. But where the world gains the ascendant, this difficulty is increased, and, in some instances, becomes almost insuperable. Let me here describe to you, in a few words, the almost incessant hurry and confusion of their minds, who answer to the three characters in our text of the careful, the covetous, and the voluptuous. So you will clearly see, how impossible it is for persons thus circumstanced to pay the attention to religious subjects which is necessary in order to their being profited by them. 1. The case of him who is swallowed up with the anxious cares of life is truly lamentable. It is not riches the unhappy man aims at, but a competence, or

perhaps a mere subsistence. The dread of being reduced, with his family, to extreme poverty, harrows up his very soul. The horrid spectres of contempt, famine, and a prison, haunt his imagination. And how incapable is a man, thus circumstanced, of coolly thinking on the great things of religion! Does he attempt in his retirement to fix his attention to some Divine subject? he instantly fails in the attempt, cares like a wild deluge rush in upon his soul, and break all the measures he had taken to obtain a little respite from his trouble. 2. The like effect hath an eager desire after riches to disqualify men for consideration. When on his knees he is still in the world: when he is worshipping God in his family he is still pursuing his gain. His closet is an accompting house, and his church an exchange. 3. How an eager attention to worldly pleasures must have the like effect, to render the mind incapable of serious consideration. Scenes of splendour and sensual delight are before the eyes of men of this character. How is it possible for a mind thus hurried, dissipated, intoxicated with vain amusements, to cultivate religion? They not only deprive men of time, composure for serious consideration —3. But of all inclination to it. But what I mean, is to show that an eager attention to the things of this life confirms the habit of inconsideration, and tends, where there is an aptitude to meditation, to weaken and deprave it. A mind wholly occupied with the objects of sense, is not only estranged from the great realities of religion, but averse to them. As it has neither leisure nor calmness for sublime contemplations, so it has no taste or relish for them. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And the more carnal it grows by incessant commerce with the world, the more does that prejudice and enmity increase. What violence are such men obliged to put upon themselves, if at any time, by some extraordinary circumstance, they are prevailed on to think of the concerns of their souls! The business is not only awkward, as they are unaccustomed to it, but it is exceeding irksome and painful. Now if a hearty inclination to any business is necessary to capacity to pursue it with success, whatever tends to abate that inclination, or to confirm the opposite aversion, is essentially injurious to such business. In like manner, cares, riches, and pleasures of the world choke the Word. III. THE SAD EVENT OF SUCH UNDUE COMMERCE WITH THE WORLD. The unhappy man not having leisure, calmness, or inclination to attend to the Word. 1. He understands not the Word of the kingdom. He has a speculative acquaintance with the truths of religion; it cannot be experimental. 2. He does not believe it. He who believes the gospel to the salvation of his soul must enter into the spirit of it. But how can this be the case with a man whose heart is possessed by the god of this world? 3. Not rightly understanding or believing the Word of the kingdom, he is not obedient to it. 4. What is the final issue of all? Why, the man himself, as well as the seed, is choked (Luke viii. 14). Exhortation: 1. Let the professors of religion have no more to do with the world than duty clearly requires. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." 2. If thorns before we are aware get in, let us instantly root them out. Exert all the power of Christian resolution. 3. Receive the good seed. It is not enough that the ground is cleared of noxious weeds, if it be not sown with the proper grain. Neither is it sufficient to guard against the corrupt maxims, customs, and manners of the world, if our hearts are not impregnated with Divine truth. 4. And lastly, look to God for His blessing. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that giveth the increase." We may hear, read, meditate, reflect, watch, and use many good endeavours; but if no regard be had to a superior influence, all will be vain. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) *The Word choked*:—Robert Burns—who had times of serious reflection, in one of which, as recorded by his own pen, he beautifully compares himself, in the review of his past life, to a lonely man walking amid the ruins of a noble temple, where pillars stand dismantled of their capitals, and elaborate works of purest marble lie on the ground, overgrown by tall, foul, rank weeds—was once brought, as I have heard, under deep convictions. He was in great alarm. The seed of the Word had begun to grow. He sought counsel from one called a minister of the gospel. Alas, that in that crisis of his history he should have trusted the helm to the hands of such a pilot! This so-called minister laughed at the poet's fears—bade him dance them away at balls, drown them in bowls of wine, fly from these phantoms to the arms of pleasure. Fatal, too pleasant advice! He followed it: and "the lusts of other things" entering in, choked the word. (*T. Guthrie.*) *The insinuating destruction of truth in the soul*:—In the gardens of Hampton

Court you will see many trees entirely vanquished and well-nigh strangled by huge coils of ivy, which are wound about them like the snakes around the unhappy Laocoon; there is no untwisting the folds, they are too giant-like, and fast fixed, and every hour the rootlets of the climber are sucking the life out of the unhappy tree. Yet there was a day when the ivy was a tiny aspirant, only asking a little aid in climbing; had it been denied then the tree had never become its victim, but by degrees the humble weakling grew in strength and arrogance, and at last it assumed the mastery, and the tall tree became the prey of the creeping, insinuating destroyer. The moral is too obvious. Sorrowfully do we remember many noble characters which have been ruined little by little by insinuating habits. Covetousness, drink, the love of pleasure, and pride, have often been the ivy that has wrought the ruin. (*The Sword and Trowel.*) *The cares of wealth*:—An emperor once said to his courtiers: "You gaze on my purple robe and golden crown, but did you know what cares are under it, you would not take it up from the ground to have it." (*Brooks.*) *Gold a destroyer*:—When Arates threw his gold into the sea, he cried out, "I will destroy you, lest you should destroy me." (*Secker.*) *Prosperity favourable to deception*:—The snow covers many a dunghill, and so doth prosperity many a rotten heart. It is easy to wade in a warm bath, and every bird can sing on a sunshiny day. (*Brooks.*) *Remedies against immoderate care for temporal things*:—1. Consider the nature of these things: they are vain, transitory, perishing; and they only minister to our earthly life which will end we know not how soon. 2. By all our care we cannot help or profit ourselves, without God's blessing on the means we use. 3. It is a heathenish practice thus to vex and trouble ourselves with immoderate cares for earthly things: not fit for Christians, who profess faith in God's Providence. 4. We are commanded to cast our cares upon God; and He has promised to care for us, and to provide for us all things necessary for this life, as well as for that which is to come, if we depend on Him by faith (Psa. lv. 2; 1 Peter v. 7). 5. Consider how God provides for other creatures, of less value and worth than ourselves, without their care. 6. Immoderate cares for this life oppress the heart and mind exceedingly, taking them up so that they cannot be free to meditate on spiritual and heavenly things: hindering men also from daily preparing themselves for death and judgment (Luke xxi. 34). 7. Let our chief care be for heavenly and spiritual things, which concern God's glory and the salvation of our souls. This will moderate and slake our care for temporal things. (*G. Petter.*) *The difficulty of worldly prosperity*:—Great skill is required to the governing of a plentiful and prosperous estate, so as it may be safe and comfortable to the owner, and beneficial to others. Every corporal may know how to order some few files; but to marshal many troops in a regiment, many regiments in a whole body of an army, requires the skill of an experienced general. (*Hall.*) *Prosperity a trial*:—Life is a time for the getting of character, and for the trial and perfecting of it. The world is a moral furnace, in which God searches and tests us. One man He tries by adversity, another by prosperity. And the latter is the severer of the two. 1. A prosperous man has little time to spare for religion. Every effort is needed to ensure the continued success of his worldly enterprises. Accordingly, his spiritual life droops and withers. 2. From want of cultivation his taste for spiritual things abates. 3. Pride is apt to increase. 4. Self-indulgence creeps in, and the lower appetites obtain mastery in the heart. 5. The result is a thoroughly worldly life—a life occupied wholly with transitory things, a life in which religion has no part. These are some of the chief dangers which appertain to a state of prosperity. Beware of them in time. They encroach very gradually; and before you are aware of it, you may be swallowed up. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Ill effects of prosperity*:—Generally speaking, the sunshine of too much worldly favour weakens and relaxes our spiritual nerves; as weather, too intensely hot, relaxes those of the body. A degree of seasonable opposition, like a fine dry frost, strengthens and invigorates and braces up. (*A. M. Toplady.*) *Prosperity causes men to forget God*:—Prosperity most usually makes us proud, insolent, forgetful of God, and of all duties we owe unto Him. It chokes and extinguishes, or at least cools and abates, the heat and vigour of all virtue in us. And as the ivy, whilst it embraces the oak, sucks the sap from the root, and in time makes it rot and perish; so worldly prosperity kills us with kindness whilst it sucks from us the sap of God's graces, and so makes our spiritual growth and strength to decay and languish. Neither do men ever almost suffer an eclipse of their virtues and good parts, but when they are in the full of worldly prosperity. (*Downame.*) *Worldliness defined*:—It is the

spirit of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the "flesh," nor the "eye," nor "life" which are forbidden, but the lust of these. It is not this earth nor the men who inhabit it, nor the sphere of our legitimate activity, that we may not love; but it is the way in which the love is given which constitutes worldliness. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *Worldliness is the spirit of childhood carried on into manhood.* The child lives in the present hour; to-day to him is everything. The holiday promised at a distant interval is no holiday at all—it must be either now or never. Natural in the child, and therefore pardonable, this spirit when carried on into manhood is worldliness. (*Ibid.*) *The deceitfulness of riches: Heathen testimony to this:*—When Cyrus received intelligence that the Lydians had revolted from him, he told a friend, with much emotion, that he had almost determined to make them all slaves. His friend expostulated, begging him to pardon them. "But," he added, "that they may no more rebel or be troublesome to you, command them to lay aside their arms, to wear long vests and buskins, that is, to vie with each other in the elegance and richness of their dress. Order them to drink, and sing, and play, and you will soon see their spirits broken, and themselves changed to the effeminacy of women, so that they will no more rebel, nor give you any further uneasiness." The advice was followed, and the result proved how politic it was. While the advice is such as no good man could consistently follow, the incident shows the deteriorating influence of luxury in a very striking light. *The lusts of other things:*—The love of pleasure, of amusements, and sensual gratifications, and even the cultivation of refined tastes; all which have a tendency to engross the mind, and induce it quietly to take up with a world which yields it so much satisfaction. (*M. F. Sadler.*) "*Entering in:*"—Very suggestive expression; teaching us that these cares of the world, and deceitfulness of riches, may not be present or sensibly felt when the Word first springs up in the heart; but, when opportunity offers, they may make their appearance, and grow far faster and more vigorously than the true religious life, and ultimately destroy it. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 20. **And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased.**—*The character of sincere hearers considered:*—1. That these hearers have honest and good hearts. The ground must be properly manured and prepared, before the seed can so mingle with it as to produce fruit. In like manner, the powers of the soul must be renewed by Divine grace, before the instructions of God's Word can so incorporate with them as to become fruitful. Their understanding is illuminated, and a new bent is given to their will. So, 2. They hear the Word after a different manner, and to a very different purpose from what others do, and from what they themselves formerly did. They hear it with attention, candour, meekness, and simplicity; and then—to go on with our Saviour's account of these hearers—they, 3. Understand the Word. This is not expressly said, as I remember, of either of the former characters. Their knowledge is, in short, experimental and practical. 4. They keep the Word. The seed once lodged in the heart remains there. It is not caught away by the wicked one, it is not destroyed by the scorching beams of persecution, nor is it choked by the thorns of worldly cares and pleasures. It is laid up in the understanding, memory, and affections; and guarded with attention and care, as the most invaluable treasure. And, indeed, how is it imaginable that the man who has received the truth in the love of it, has ventured his everlasting all on it, and has no other ground of hope whatever, should be willing to part with this good Word of the grace of God! sooner would he renounce his dearest temporal enjoyments, yea, even life itself. Again, 5. They bring forth fruit. The seed springs up, looks green, and promises a fair harvest. They profess the Christian name, and live answerable to it. Their external conduct is sober, useful, and honourable; and their temper is pious, benevolent, and holy. The fruit they bear is of the same nature with the seed whence it springs. 6. They bring forth fruit with patience. It is a considerable time before the seed disseminates, rises into the stalk and the ear, and ripens into fruit (James v. 7). 7. And lastly. They bring forth fruit in different degrees, "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold." And now, in order to the fully discussing this argument, we shall—I. SHOW THE NECESSITY OF THE HEART'S BEING MADE HONEST AND GOOD, IN ORDER TO MEN'S DULY RECEIVING THE WORD AND KEEPING IT; THIS WILL CLEARLY APPEAR ON A LITTLE REFLECTION. I suppose it will scarce be denied that the will and affections have a considerable influence on the operations of the understanding and judgment. To a mind,

therefore, under the tyranny of pride and pleasure, positions that are hostile to these passions will not easily gain admission. Their first appearance will create prejudice. And if that prejudice does not instantly preclude all consideration, it will yet throw insuperable obstructions in the way of impartial inquiry. If it does not absolutely put out the eye of reason, it will yet raise such dust before it as will effectually prevent its perceiving the object. What men do not care to believe, they will take pains to persuade themselves is not true. When once a new bias is given to the will and affections, and a man, from a proud, becomes a humble man, from a lover of this world, a lover of God, his prejudices against the gospel will instantly subside. The thick vapours exhaled from a sensual heart, which had obscured his understanding, will disperse; and the light of Divine truth shine in upon him with commanding evidence. He will receive the truth in the love of it. How important, then, is regeneration! This leads us—II. TO DESCRIBE THE KIND OF FRUIT WHICH SUCH PERSONS WILL BEAR. It is good fruit—fruit of the same nature with the seed whence it grows, and the soil with which it is incorporated: of the same nature with the gospel itself which is received in faith, and with those holy principles which are infused by the blessed Spirit. Here let us dwell a little more particularly on the nature and tendency of the gospel. "God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." O how inflexible the justice, how venerable the holiness, and how boundless the goodness of God! And if this be the gospel, who can hesitate a moment upon the question respecting its natural and proper tendency? How can piety languish and die amidst this scene of wonders? How can the heart, occupied with these sentiments, remain unsusceptible to the feelings of justice, truth, humanity, and benevolence? How can a man believe himself to be that guilty, depraved, helpless wretch which this gospel supposes him to be, and not be humble? How can he behold the Creator of the world expiring in agonies on the cross, and follow Him thence a pale, breathless corpse to the tomb, and not feel a sovereign contempt for the pomps and vanities of this transitory state? But to bring the matter more fully home to the point before us, what kind of a man is the real Christian? Let us contemplate his character, and consider what is the general course of his life. Instructed in this Divine doctrine, and having his heart made honest and good, he will be a man of piety, integrity, and purity. "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, will teach him to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Tit. ii. 11, 12). As to piety. A due regard to the authority of the blessed God will have a commanding influence upon his temper and practice. As to social duties. His conduct will be governed by the rule his Divine Master has laid down, of doing to others as he would have them do to him. As to personal duties. He will use the comforts of life, which he enjoys as the fruits of Divine benevolence, with temperance and moderation. Such are the fruits which they bring forth, who hear the Word in the manner our Saviour describes, and who keep it in good and honest hearts (Eph. iv. 1; Phil. i. 27; Gal. v. 22, 23). But it is not meant by this description of the Christian to raise him above the rank of humanity, or to give a colouring to the picture which it will not bear. He is still a man, not an angel. To fix the standard of real religion at a mark to which none can arrive, is to do an injury to religion itself, as well as to discourage the hearts of its best friends. But though perfection, in the strict sense of the term, is not to be admitted, yet the fruit which every real Christian bears is good fruit. 1. How gracious is that influence which the blessed God exerts, to make the heart honest and good, and so dispose it to receive the Word, and profit by it! 2. From the nature and tendency of the gospel, which has been just delineated, we derive a strong presumptive evidence of its truth. 3. Of what importance is it that we converse intimately with the gospel, in order to our bringing forth the fruits of holiness! 4. And lastly, How vain a thing is mere speculation in religion! We have discoursed on the two first heads, and proceed now—III. To CONSIDER THE GREAT VARIETY THERE IS AMONG CHRISTIANS IN REGARD OF DEGREES OF FRUITFULNESS, AND THE REASONS OF IT. First, as to the fact that there are degrees of fruitfulness, a little observation will sufficiently prove it. Fruitfulness may be considered in regard both of the devout affections of the heart, and the external actions of the life; in each of which views it will admit of degrees. The variety is prodigious. What multitudes live harmless, sober, and regular lives. Their obedience is rather negative than positive. They bring no dishonour on their profession, nor yet are they very ornamental and exemplary. Others are strictly conscientious and circumspect in their walk, far

removed from all appearance of gaiety and dissipation, and remarkably serious and constant in their attendance upon religious duties; but, for want of sweetness of temper, or of that sprightliness and freedom which a lively faith inspires, the fruit they bear is but slender, and of an unpleasant flavour. There are those, further, in whom seriousness and cheerfulness are happily united, and whose conduct is amiable in the view of all around them; but then, moving in a narrow sphere, and possessing no great zeal or resolution, their lives are distinguished by few remarkable exertions for the glory of God, and the good of others. And again, there are a number whose bosoms, glowing with flaming zeal and ardent love, are rich in good works, never weary in well-doing, and full of the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and the glory of God. In the garden of God there are trees of different growth. Some newly planted, of slender stature and feeble make, which yet bring forth good, though but little, fruit. And here and there you see one that out-tops all the rest, whose roots spread far and wide, and whose boughs are laden in autumn with rich and large fruit. Such variety is there among Christians. And variety there is, too, in the different species of good works. Some are eminent in this virtue, and some in that; while perhaps a few abound in every good word and work. Whoever consults the history of religion in the Bible will see all that has been said exemplified in the characters and lives of a long scroll of pious men. Not to speak here of the particular excellences that distinguished these men of God from each other, it is enough to observe that some vastly outshone others. The proportions of a hundred, sixty, and thirty fold, might be applied to patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings, apostles, and the Christians of the primitive church. Between, for instance, an Abraham that offered up his only son, and a righteous Lot, that lingered at the call of an angel. Secondly, inquire into the grounds and reasons of this disparity among Christians respecting the fruits of holiness. These are of very different consideration. Many of them will be found to have no connection at all with the inward temper of the mind; a reflection, therefore, upon them will give energy to what has been said in regard of the charity we ought to exercise in judging of others. Let us begin, then— 1. With men's worldly circumstances. The affluent Christian you will see pouring his bounty on all around him. But the poor Christian can render few, if any, of these services to his fellow-creatures. 2. Opportunity is another ground of distinction among Christians in regard of fruitfulness. By opportunity I mean occasions of usefulness, which arise under the particular and immediate direction of Divine Providence. A Daniel shall have such easy access to the presence of a mighty tyrant as shall enable him to whisper the most beneficial counsels in his ear; and an apostle, by being brought in chains before a no less powerful prince, shall have an opportunity of defending the cause of his Divine Master in the most essential manner. 3. Mental abilities have a considerable influence in this matter. What shining talents do some good men possess! They have extensive learning, great knowledge of mankind, much sagacity and penetration, singular fortitude, a happy manner of address, flowing language, and a remarkable sweetness of temper. 4. The different means of religion that good men enjoy are another occasion of their different degrees of fruitfulness. 5. That the comparative different state of religion in one Christian and another is the more immediate and direct cause of their different fruitfulness. But this plain general truth we may affirm, leaving every one to apply it to himself, that, in proportion as religion is on the advance or decline in a man's heart, so will his external conduct be more or less exemplary. 6. And lastly, the greater or less effusion of Divine influences. IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO, HEARING THE WORD, AND KEEPING IT IN HONEST AND GOOD HEARTS, BRING FORTH THE FRUITS OF HOLINESS. 1. As to the pleasure that accompanies ingenuous obedience. "Great peace have they," says David, "who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. cxix. 165). 2. Fruitfulness affords a noble proof of a man's uprightness, and so tends indirectly, as well as directly, to promote his happiness. 3. The esteem, too, in which he is held among his fellow-Christians must contribute not a little to his comfort. 4. How glorious will be the rewards which the fruitful Christian will receive at the hands of the Great Husbandman on the day of harvest! That day is approaching. "Mark the perfect man; behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Going down to death like a shock of corn fully ripe, the precious grain shall lie secure in the bosom of the earth; angels shall keep their vigils about it: while the immortal spirit, acquiring its highest degree of perfection, shall join the company of the blessed above. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) "*Some thirty-fold*":—Every one has observed the

difference between those who may be called good Christians, in the matter of their good works—how some seem to produce twice or thrice the fruit that others do. Some are, compared with others, three times more careful in all the trifling matters which make up so much of life; three times more self-denying, three times more liberal, three times more humble, subdued, and thankful. Does not the Lord recognize this difference in the parable of the pounds—when the nobleman, in leaving, gives a pound to each of his servants; and one servant makes it ten pounds, and another five; and he commends both, but gives to the more industrious worker twice the reward? (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Patience*:—Patience is power. With time and patience the mulberry-leaf becomes satin. (*Eastern Proverb.*) Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out: Patience is genius. (*Buffon.*) *Meditation*:—Meditation is partly a passive, partly an active state. Whoever has pondered long over a plan which he is anxious to accomplish, without distinctly seeing at first the way, knows what meditation is. The subject itself presents itself in leisure moments spontaneously: but then all this sets the mind at work—contriving, imagining, rejecting, modifying. It is in this way that one of the greatest of English engineers, a man uncouth and unaccustomed to regular discipline of mind, is said to have accomplished his most marvellous triumphs. He threw bridges over almost impracticable torrents, and pierced the eternal mountains for his viaducts. Sometimes a difficulty brought all the work to a pause; then he would shut himself up in his room, eat nothing, speak to no one, abandon himself intensely to the contemplation of that on which his heart was set; and at the end of two or three days, would come forth serene and calm, walk to the spot, and quietly give orders which seemed the result of superhuman intuition. This was meditation. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *The numerical relations of good and evil*:—In the parable of the four sorts of ground whereon the seed was sown, the last alone proved fruitful. There the bad were more than the good. But amongst the servants, two improved their talents, or pounds, and one only buried them. Here the good were more than the bad. Again, amongst the ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish. There the good and bad were equal. I see, that concerning the number of the saints in comparison to the reprobates, no certainty can be collected from these parables. Good reason, for it is not their principal purpose to meddle with that point. Grant that I may never rack a Scripture simile beyond the true intent thereof. (*Thomas Fuller.*) *Favourable moral conditions*:—A great deal of fire falleth upon a stone and it burneth not, but a dry chip soon taketh fire. (*T. Manton.*)

Ver. 9. **He that hath ears to hear.**—*The duty of consideration explained and enforced*:—1. Our Lord evidently meant, by the language of the text, to remind His hearers that it was an apologue, fable, or parable He had been delivering. 2. By this mode of expression they were further reminded that the several truths veiled under this parable were most interesting and important. 3. The direct purport of the exhortation was, to persuade them to consider what they had heard. 4. He in effect tells them that if they were not benefited by what they heard the fault was rather in their will than their understanding. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." I. LET US CONSIDER THE DUTY OUR SAVIOUR INCULCATES ON THOSE TO WHOM THE WORD IS PREACHED. 1. Let us take care to digest properly in our own minds the subject on which we mean to discourse to others. 2. Care also is to be taken about the manner, as well as the matter, of our discourse. 3. That we should look well to our aims and views in discoursing of the great things of God. 4. That our dependence should be firmly placed on the gracious and seasonable influences of the Holy Spirit. And now, thus prepared, we have a right, be our audience who they may, to adopt the language of our Master, and with authority to say, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Upon the grounds of common sense as well as religion, we may demand their most serious attention. First, some kind of preparation previous to our hearing the Word. Secondly, how we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God. Thirdly, a duty lying upon us after we have heard the Word. Recollection is what I mean, together with self-application and prayer. 1. Avoid as much as possible everything that may tend to dissipate the mind, and render it incapable of consideration and recollection. 2. Be not fond of hearing more than you can retain and digest. There is such a thing as intemperance in regard of the mind as well as the body: and if excessive eating may be as hurtful to the constitution as excessive abstinence, it is also true of the mind, that tho hearing more than is fit may be very nearly as injurious as the not hearing at all. A great abundance

of instruction poured into the ear, without sufficient intermission for reflection and practice, is extremely prejudicial: it confounds the judgment, overburdens the memory, and so jades the mind as to render it incapable of recollecting afterwards what it had heard, and of calmly deliberating thereon. 3. The making a point of retiring at the close of the day, for the purpose of recollection and prayer. II. To ENFORCE WHAT HAS BEEN SAID WITH SUITABLE MOTIVES. And our first argument shall be taken, First, from the decency and fitness of the thing itself. Secondly, let me remind you of the particular obligations you owe to those whose ministrations you attend. Thirdly, it is to be remembered that preaching is a Divine institution; and that they who are called to dispense the gospel, have, by virtue of that call, a claim to the attention of those to whom they are sent. Fourthly, from the momentous nature of the business itself on which we are sent to you. Fifthly, the necessity of consideration in order to our profiting by the Word. Sixthly, there are many obstructions in the way of this duty, the recollection of which ought to have the force of an argument to excite and animate us to it. Seventhly, the authority that enjoins this duty upon us adds infinite weight to all that has been said. Eighthly, and lastly, from the advantage to be expected from consideration. (*S. Stennett, D.D.*) *A man who did not wish to hear the sermon*:—An innkeeper, addicted to intemperance, on hearing of the particularly pleasing mode of singing at a church some miles distant, went one Sunday to gratify his curiosity, but with a resolution not to hear a word of the sermon. Having with difficulty found admission into a narrow, open pew, as soon as the hymn before sermon was sung, which he heard with great attention, he secured both his ears against the sermon with his fore-fingers. He had not been in this position many minutes, before the prayer finished, and the sermon commenced with a powerful appeal to the consciences of his hearers, of the necessity of attending to the things which belonged to their eternal peace; and the minister, addressing them solemnly, said: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Just the moment before these words were pronounced, a fly having fastened on the face of the innkeeper, and stung him sharply, he drew one of his fingers from his ear and struck off the painful visitant. At that very moment the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," pronounced with great solemnity, entered the ear that was opened, like a clap of thunder. It struck him with irresistible force: he kept his hand from returning to his ear, and, feeling an impression he had never known before, he presently withdrew the other finger, and listened with deep attention to the discourse which followed. A salutary change was produced on him. He abandoned his former evil ways, became truly serious, and for many years went, in all weather, six miles to the church where his soul was awakened from its spiritual slumber. After about eighteen years' faithful and close walk with God, he died, rejoicing in the hope of that glory which he now enjoys. *Hearing the gospel not to be vitiated by a faulty faculty*:—The eye, indeed, is seldom blinded to exclude the most trifling object that might afford us pleasure, and the ear is never shut to anything that might contribute to our amusement; yet reason is often hoodwinked to the precepts of virtue, and our consciences are suffered to slumber and to sleep, while we follow the gratifications of appetite and passion. Thus it was that many, fettered with prejudice and superstition, blinded by ignorance and pride, or enslaved to the world, could hear the Son of God Himself inculcate the sublimest truths, and teach the most important duties, with insulting scorn or listless indifference. Against such dreadful perversion and abuse of the talent entrusted to our care let us be ever on our guard. Let us consider that, on the due improvement of our faculties, from the benefits of experience, and the discipline of religion, every real blessing is founded. (*J. Howlett, B.D.*) *Hearing the gospel not to be vitiated by moral insensibility*:—Perhaps you hear with comfort and satisfaction those vices forbidden of which you are in no danger, from inclination, from your natural constitution, or from some peculiar circumstance of life. When you are old, you might with pleasure listen to such admonitions as chiefly regard the errors of the young; and while in the full enjoyment of happiness and prosperity, you might, with a degree of self-approbation, join in the condemnation of such wickedness and disorder as relate only to the wretched and the poor. On such occasions, perhaps, you will allow the Word of God to resemble "a two-edged sword," and to speak "with power." But say, are you so willing to hear it, when it calls aloud against some darling vice? when it arraigns your favourite indulgences, or curtails you of sinful pleasures? (*Ibid.*) *Hearing the gospel constant*:—Farther, if we are really interested in "those things which belong unto our peace," we should endeavour to make that interest uniform

and constant. It should extend to all our actions; it should be the rule and measure of our conduct; and its influence should be felt as a gentle, but powerful, corrective throughout the whole system of life. As for those casual emotions which arise only during the moments of exhortation, or those frail resolutions which are formed only when no temptation is near, and which, in the conflux of worldly passions and pleasures, are as soon lost as the brook that mingles with the ocean, of what avail are they? (*Ibid.*) *Heedful hearing*:—I. Let us seek, in the beginning, to discriminate and classify the ordinary hearers of the Word AS THEY SHOW THEMSELVES IN THE SIGHT OF THE PREACHER. 1. For one class, he would be sure to see the listless hearers. He might discover in various parts of the audience-room those whose countenances would defy all study. They are perfect blanks. No more life appears than there would be discovered in a gallery of statuary. Some will be asleep. Some there will be who hear the sound of the words, but so inattentively and unintelligently that nothing is regarded as it passes their ears. The sentences fall on their organs like the ordinary ticking of a clock; they disturb no sensibility whatsoever. We should judge that they attracted no attention of any sort if it were not that the eyes flash up suddenly with an eager curiosity if, for some reason, the sound happens to stop. 2. Next, this visitor in the pulpit would notice the criticising hearers. 3. Yet a third class might be singled out: the suspicious hearers. These are continually on the look-out, not exactly, in our times, for heterodoxy, but for eccentricities. They are afraid the preacher will say something inconsistent with the established views they cherish. 4. Then there is a fourth class: the distributing hearers. Some most devout people always listen for the sake of the rest of the congregation. II. Let us seek now, in the second place, to discriminate and classify the ordinary hearers of the Word AS THEY APPEAR IN THE SIGHT OF THE WORLD AT LARGE. Here comes in the question as to results rather than mere behaviour. We fall back upon the parable of the sower; it was given as our Saviour's illustration of the effect of the truth as it is thrown upon human hearts like seed upon different soils. 1. To begin with, there are the wayside hearers. Let us read over the old story, and lay alongside of the description at once our Lord's interpretation. (*See* Mark iv. 4, 15.) King Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 28) is instanced to us as an example. He went with great pomp to hear the Apostle Paul preach. That earnest and powerful pleader laid the truth on his heart, as if he would plough and harrow it into his life. But the devil's birds were near to pick up the seed. Pride came with her glittering pinions, and chirped in his ear, "Thou art a king, but who is this tent-maker?" Lust croaked behind Pride, and had something to say about giving up Berenice. So they came one after another, picked up the grain, and flew away. 2. Then our Lord mentions the stony-ground hearers, and afterwards tells His disciples what He means. (*See* Mark iv. 5, 15.) Paul had some of these hearers among his converts in Galatia (Gal. v. 7). Christ had some among His followers in Galilee: their earth was only surface soil (John vi. 66). 3. Next, our Lord classifies the thorn-choked hearers. A peculiar kind of thorn in that country grows suddenly and rankly, and seems to love the borders of wheat-fields (Mark iv. 7, 18). Demas's history has been offered us for an illustration of this short-lived sort of emotion, in one melancholy sentence of Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (iv. 10). Perhaps the saddest of all experiences we have to meet is found in this watching of people who promise so much but who come to so little. 4. Then our Saviour speaks of the good-ground hearers in the parable. But for such, seed-sowing would be a failure. (*See* Mark iv. 8, 20.) The great source of comfort to a preacher of the gospel is found here; the principal field of his labour is good ground. He is sustained by two promises, one about the seed (Isa. lv. 10, 11), and one about the sower (Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6). III. Let us now, in the third place, look upon those who hear the Word AS THEY APPEAR IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God.** *Parables for two multitudes*:—As for the multitude, if you strain Christ's language respecting them, you might say they were punished for their blindness by His making dark to them things which He made clear to others. This has been said. You have heard of judicial blindness—blindness, that is to say, inflicted by God as the punishment of unbelief or other sin. But if this was the case, why did He speak to them at all? Did He wish only a dozen men, or a few dozens, to understand what He said? If then it was not to hide His meaning from the multitude that Christ taught them in parables, how do you account for His choosing to teach them

in that way? To answer this question we have to consider for a moment—I. WHAT A PARABLE IS. Now there is one thing certain as to these stories, that whatever might be His intention in using them, they do clear up things wonderfully. It would have taken a long discourse on true piety to show the distinction between it and false piety, which is shown in the Publican and the Pharisee; and what long discourse would have shown it so well? Remember this also, in regard to parables like Christ's—they keep close to reality, they reproduce nature and life. Now if we take all this into consideration as to the nature of parables, it is possible, I think, to account for Christ's speaking to the multitude in parables, and parables alone. In the first place, possibly there were what we may call considerations of prudence and policy in favour of this way of teaching. Look at the whole set of parables in this chapter; they all relate to the kingdom of God; and one thing they all more or less distinctly intimate, and it is that the establishment of that kingdom must be a work of time. It is like a sower who goes forth to sow; it is like the tares and the wheat which must grow up together until the harvest. As all these parables here suggest to us, time was needed for truth to prevail against error. Direct attack upon it was useless. Christ had tried that and found it unprofitable. And here the parables came in to serve the purpose. They did not assail error or assert truth controversially. Every one could take from them and make of them what he pleased. But there was one thing certain with regard to them, and it was that they were certain to be remembered. They were sure to pass from mouth to mouth, and travel where doctrine however clear, or precept however just, would not reach. The meaning in them now open to the few would remain, and by and by might be perceived by the many. Time would ripen them for the purpose of instructing the multitude as well as the disciples. And this was their special virtue, that while they were thus fitted to preserve truth from being forgotten, they were above all fitted to preserve truth from being corrupted. Those whose minds were filled with the Pharisees' ideas of religion could hardly help misunderstanding and misrepresenting the doctrinal sayings of Jesus. But it is impossible to corrupt, or sophisticate, or distort the story of the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan. A parable cannot be qualified like a saying or a body of doctrine. It is a bit of fact, and cannot be qualified by words. It keeps its meaning pure in spite of every effort to corrupt it. It is of kin with nature, which, whatever you may say of it or of any part of it, remains nature still, and is the truth. And thus it was for one thing Christ spoke to the multitude in parables. His purpose was to teach them truth, but their minds being filled with error, they had to unlearn that first. He spoke in parables, knowing that parables would last, and that while they lasted and were working their work, they would not, because they could not, be corrupted. But the great thing was that which distinguishes parables from other figures of speech—that they keep close to reality, to nature, and to life. It was the special vice of the religion of the multitude in Christ's day, that it was wholly artificial, all sacrifice and no mercy. Their teachers taught them for doctrine the commandments of men, the thousand and one arbitrary rules about eating and drinking, about fasts and feasts, about offerings, about days, about intercourse with Gentiles, and touching the dead. The scope of Christ's teaching was exactly the opposite of this. He was for mercy, and not sacrifice; for righteousness, and not mint and anise and cummin. It suited His doctrine, therefore, to be taught in parables. The world itself, if your doctrine is mercy, is one great parable ready for your use. Reality of any kind is truth, and all truth, from the lowest to the highest, is one; so that there are books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. The truth of things, begin with it where you will, if you follow it out will lead you up to God. You can make birds and beasts, and virtues and vices talk what you please; but you cannot, if you go to nature and human life find a parable to fit a lie. Christ chose that form of teaching which brought men face to face with nature and human life, because the men He had to teach, in the matter of their religion had departed as far as was possible from the truth of things, and had lost themselves in sayings and commandments and traditions, questions and strifes of words. He put truth into a form in which it could not perish or be corrupted; He turned his hearers' minds in the direction in which they could soonest unlearn their errors and be prepared to receive His truth. II. Now, consider THE DIFFERENT EFFECT OF HIS PARABLES UPON THE MULTITUDE AND THE DISCIPLES. As for the multitude, they had first to begin and unlearn everything they believed, before they could perceive the truth which His parables contained. Before anything in this particular set of parables

here as to the kingdom of God could reach their minds, they had to unlearn all that they had learned from their teachers as to the kingdom of God being a Jewish commonwealth. The sower going forth to sow, the tares and the wheat growing up together until the harvest, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven hid in meal, the net dropped into the sea—what had these to tell them of their ideal Jewish commonwealth? They would find no meaning in these, as far as that kingdom of heaven was concerned. This, to be sure, was not to be the final effect of Christ's parables, even upon the multitude. From being brought into this school of nature and life some of them at least would begin to feel its influence in turning them away from strifes of words about rites and ceremonies. Contact with reality could scarcely fail in many cases to engender suspicion, and then distrust, of all that was fictitious; and so in the decline of error truth would have its day. But, while, in course of time this might be the effect of the parables upon the multitude, the immediate effect, no doubt, was to confuse and darken their minds. Turn, on the other hand, to the disciples. They had, at least in part, unlearned the false. They had begun to appreciate the true. To the minds of the disciples, alive already to the value of righteousness and the worthlessness of ceremonial sanctity, how rich in instruction and in comfort the story of the Prodigal Son!—how true and how glorious its representation of the great Father as one who is never so happy as when He has to welcome back to the home of eternal goodness and eternal blessedness the erring and miserable of His children! To their minds again how full of meaning and of comfort, the parable of the Lost Sheep!—the suggestion of the Eternal Righteousness engrossed, to the neglect of suns and solar systems, in the recovery of one soul which has strayed into the damnation of evil. Think that these disciples, like the multitude, were Jews, and held, till Christ began to teach, the religious notions of the multitude. Then consider all the certainty and breadth and fulness which these parables of their Master could not but give to their new faith,—faith in God as good, in goodness as man's true life, in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Consider under what a different aspect the world now presented itself to their minds. He said to His disciples in reference to these parables, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear;" and also when he added, "For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." I conclude with two remarks, the first of which is, that not one religion, but every religion, that of Christ included, is apt, in the common mind, to degenerate into ceremonialism and strifes of words. And, in that case, what professes to be light becomes the grossest of darkness. It was not for an age, therefore, but for all time, that Christ spoke in parables to the multitude. These parables of His, bringing us into contact with nature and human life, furnish us with a resource of inestimable value against the prevalence of irreligion, error, infidelity, not only in the world, but in the church. Thus the parables are the salt of Christianity to preserve it from corruption and extinction; they recall us from all this barren or disgraceful war of words to the sterling virtue of the Good Samaritan, and the substantial goodness of the Prodigal's Father. Again, I remark, the blessedness of Christian belief is that it is a vision of the universe as undivided. What did the disciples, who were blessed in their seeing, see? When it was given to them, as it was not given to the multitude, to understand these parables, what did they hear and comprehend? It was not that their own souls were to be saved; it was not that the Jews were to be converted, or the Gentiles to be visited by Christian missionaries. It was, that the kingdom of God, the Father and Saviour of all men, is eternal; that evil here and everywhere is temporary, and good alone is for ever and ever. (*J. Service, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **That seeing, they may see, and not perceive.**—*The derelict:*—Terrible, but just and adorable, is this conduct of God towards those who have deserved to be left to themselves. This dereliction has several degrees—1. Their being abandoned to their own darkness. 2. Their not being able to understand the truths of salvation. 3. Their not obeying them. 4. Their remaining in their sins. 5. Their being condemned. God is pleased to give examples of this, that the children of promise may know how much they owe to grace. It is a mistake to imagine that whatever appears most severe and rigorous in the conduct of God ought to be concealed from Christians. He Himself instructs us in it, on purpose that we should take great notice of it on proper occasions, and glorify Him on the account of all the good we do, and of all the evil which we avoid. (*Quesnel.*)

Ver. 21. **Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?**—*The extension of the kingdom*:—The kingdom, as it appeared in its beginning, is like the little grains of wheat cast into the damp soil in the chilly days of spring. To the mature Christian of to-day it is like the city which John saw, filling all his vision, let down out of heaven from God, glowing with strange opaline light, so that neither sun nor moon were longer needed, with jasper walls and pavements of transparent gold, and great gates, each a single pearl, and at each gate a glorious angel. This parable teaches us that one of the agencies bringing about this result is man's work in the kingdom. 1. To make known its character and the conditions of entrance into it. Even the smallest taper is lighted in order that it may give light. The youngest disciple is to shine for the guidance of others. The rays of one little lamp, piercing through miles of gloom, have saved noble ships from destruction, with all their precious living freight. It may have been only such a lamp as lights one little room; but it was surrounded by powerful reflectors, which sent its rays afar, and multiplied its influence a hundredfold. 2. To give his mind and heart to increase his knowledge and experience of the truth by which the kingdom grows. The lighted lamp must have oil to feed upon. We cannot be making known the character of the kingdom unless our knowledge of it is growing. Alas for him before whose eyes the vision of the heavenly city, once seen, is allowed to fade and disappear! On the other hand, the more brightly we shine, the more eagerly we seek and the more fully we receive that which keeps the light burning. The more generously we give to others what we know of the gospel, the more clearly it will be revealed to us. (*A. E. Dunning.*) *The Word not to be hidden*:—This reproves those who hide their knowledge of the Word, and keep it to themselves only, shutting up this light within their own breast, as it were, as in a close and private place, that it cannot be seen of others, and so as others have no benefit by it. They do not shine to others by the light of that knowledge which is in them; they show forth no fruits of it in a holy conversation; neither are they careful to communicate their knowledge to others by instruction of them in the ways of God. What is this but hiding the candle under a bushel, or setting it under a bed, when it should be set upon a candlestick, that the light of it might be plainly seen by those in the house? Let such consider how great a sin it is to hide the spiritual gifts bestowed on us by God, and not to employ them well to the glory of God and the good of our brethren. If thou hast never so much knowledge in the Word, and yet dost hide it only in thine own breast, and in thine own head, and dost not shine to others by the light of it, then thy knowledge is no sanctified and saving knowledge; for if it were, it could not thus lie hid and buried in thee, but it would manifest itself toward others for their good: it would not only enlighten thy mind, but also thy whole outward life and conversation, causing thee to shine as a light or candle unto others. (*G. Petter.*) *Sharing our light*:—It might seem a superfluous thing to urge the communication of gospel hopes and comforts, but there is none more needed. For one person who puts the candle on a candlestick, there are twenty that put it under a bushel—a dull wooden measure that keeps in all the light. There are many sorts of bushels. 1. One very bad one, and much employed to cover the light, is modesty (falsely so called). Modesty pretends to be not good enough or wise enough to speak, and turns the soul into a dark lantern. 2. Selfishness is another bushel for the light; forbidding men to take the trouble to shed it. 3. Indolence. 4. Fearfulness. 5. Despair of people heeding. 6. A narrow doctrine of salvation. 7. Sometimes a little scientific knowledge, creating conceit, makes a bushel; men being so anxious to mix the earthly with the heavenly light that the grave, sweet light of godly knowledge cannot get though the mistiness of the earthly mixture. (*R. Glover.*)

Ver. 22. **For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested.**—*Immediate revelation not always desirable*:—Here our Lord is justifying the parabolic form of teaching, which often serves to veil the truth, on the ground that immediate revelation is not always desirable. Many things are concealed, both in nature and by art, though the concealment is by no means designed to be permanent. What striking illustrations of this principle are furnished in geology! Look at the almost measureless beds of coal, hidden for ages in the bowels of the earth, but designed by Providence to be revealed when necessity should arise. The precise time for the unveiling it is not always easy to decide, because man's knowledge is finite, but we rest assured that it will coincide with the need for its use. It is a principle worth bearing in mind when human efforts fail; for it is encouraging to

know that such a result may be due simply to the fact that we have tried unconsciously to anticipate the fore-appointed time. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Things brought to light sooner or later*:—The doctrine of Jesus Christ has nothing in it which fears the light; it is itself the light which must enlighten the world. Everything is brought to light sooner or later. The humble person conceals his virtue in this life, but God will disclose it at the day of eternity. The hypocrite hides his wickedness here, but he shall suffer an eternal confusion for it in the sight of heaven and earth. (*Quesnel.*) *Secret sin comes out at the judgment*:—One day Thomas Edwards, the Scottish naturalist, went out on one of his expeditions to search for insects. He had on, as usual on such occasions, an old coat with many pockets, and each pocket held a goodly store of chip boxes wherein to place the various specimens of the insect-tribe which he might find. He had a most successful day; met with many curious and rare insects, all of which he duly deposited each in its own little box. And now he was returning home laden with the spoils, every box and every pocket full, when suddenly he was overtaken by a tremendous storm. The thunder roared, the lightning blazed around him, the rain came down in torrents, like water from a bucket, and he was soon drenched and wet to the skin. Espying a farmhouse at a short distance, he made for it, and begged leave to shelter himself from the storm. To this the gudewife readily assented, made up a blazing fire, threw on a log, and told him to draw near and dry himself, whilst she went on with her household duties. Accordingly he did so, and soon his benumbed limbs began to feel the pleasant warmth of the fire. Presently the housewife returned, uttered a loud cry of horror and disgust, caught up a broomstick, and, deaf to all entreaties, drove him forth again into the pitiless storm. He now looked at himself, and soon perceived the cause of this strange treatment, for he was covered from head to foot with his beloved insects, so abhorred by others. The soaking rain had loosed and destroyed the boxes, and set their inhabitants at liberty, and they remained unseen in his pockets till the warmth of the fire brought them out. So will it be in the day of judgment: men's darling sins will come forth to light, and cover the sinner with horror and confusion as with a cloak. The fire of that day will bring them forth, and then the sinner will be driven out by the Judge into the fierce tempest of God's wrath.

Vers. 23, 24. **Take heed what ye hear.**—*Instruction from the Lord to hearers*:—In these days we have many instructions as to preaching; but our Lord principally gave directions as to hearing. The art of attention is quite as difficult as that of homiletics. The text may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Hear the truth, and the truth only. Be not indifferent as to your spiritual meat, but use discernment. We shall use it as a note of arousing. When you do hear the truth, give it such attention as it deserves. Give good heed to it. I. HERE IS A PRECEPT: "Take heed what ye hear." 1. Hear with discrimination, shunning false doctrine (John x. 5). 2. Hear with attention; really and earnestly hearing (Matt. xiii. 23). 3. Hear for yourself, with personal application (1 Sam. iii. 9). 4. Hear retentively, endeavouring to remember the truth. 5. Hear desiringly, praying that the Word may be blessed to you. 6. Hear practically, obeying the exhortation which has come to you. Note—this hearing is to be given, not to a favourite set of doctrines, but to the whole of the Word of God (Psa. cxix. 128). II. HERE IS A PROVERB: "with what measure," &c. In proportion as you give yourself to hearing, you shall gain by hearing. 1. Those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting. 2. Those who desire to find fault, find faults enough. 3. Those who seek solid truth, learn it from any faithful ministry. 4. Those who hunger find food. 5. Those who bring faith, receive assurance. 6. Those who come joyfully are made glad. But no man finds blessing by hearing error; nor by careless, forgetful, cavilling hearing of the truth. III. HERE IS A PROMISE: "Unto you that hear," &c. You that hear shall have—1. More desire to hear. 2. More understanding of what ye hear. 3. More convincement of its truth. 4. More personal possession of the blessings of which you hear. 5. More delight in hearing. 6. More practical benefit from it. God gives more to those who value what they have. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gospel demands and deserves attention*:—I. HERE IS IMPLIED THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPEAKER. 1. He had all the authority which is derived from knowledge. Religion was the subject He came to teach. He knew the whole perfectly. 2. He had the authority which is derived from unimpeachable rectitude. 3. He had the authority flowing from "miracles, and wonders, and signs." 4. Consider His uncalculable dominion. There is no

place where His voice does not reach. 5. Consider the dignity of His character—"Where the word of a king is there is power." 6. And does He not stand in relations the most intimate and affecting? Shall such an authority be despised? II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. Jesus Christ is not afraid to awaken attention; He knows that He can more than repay it. His instructions are important. But in order to this, they must be true. How pleasing is truth. Whether we consider the gospel with regard to man in his individual or social existence, it demands attention. III. IT IS AN APPEAL TO IMPARTIAL CONSIDERATION. The demand supposes the subject to be accessible. In heathenism there were many mysteries from a knowledge of which the common people were excluded. Error needs disguise. Truth glories in exposure. Be sure that it is the gospel you are conveying, and not any corruptions which have blended with it. Nothing is more adverse to this demand than dissipation. Attention is necessary. But it is of little use to apply a mind already biassed. Impatience disqualifies us from religious investigation. So does pride. Examine the character given by the sacred writers of God. IV. HE DEMANDS A PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF HIS WORD. 1. The danger of delusion. 2. The precarious tenure of the privileges. 3. The happiness of those who receive the gospel in power. 4. These means unimproved will be found injurious. (*W. Jay.*) *Light by hearing*:—The increase of spiritual knowledge is dependent upon the temper in which we approach the study of Christian truth. According to the measure of our faithfulness and diligence as hearers and students we shall receive illumination. 1. There must be intellectual preparedness. This is often wanting in those who listen to the teachings of Christianity. (1) Sometimes the world and its cares fill the mind and prevent illumination (Luke xii. 13). (2) Sometimes our intellectual tastes unfit us for the reception of spiritual truth. This is an age of study and reading; but much of our reading unfits us for the reception of Divine light. Thousands cannot get at the truth because of the fiction, the heresy, the jest-book, which is so constantly in their hand. Amid the "Vanity Fair" of the mind, with its leerings, jesters, and scorners, the voice of love, truth, purity, cannot be heard. To "him that hath" seriousness, sympathy, expectation, "it shall be given." 2. There must be moral preparedness. Men fail to receive truth because of the impurity of their hearts. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *A worldly spirit hinders the saving power of the gospel*:—Preachers are often blamed because their discourse fails to impress, but the great Preacher Himself failed to impress secularized minds! A lay preacher, some short time ago, dreamed a dream, which was much more than a dream. He fancied himself in the pulpit before a large congregation, and, opening the Bible to give out his text, found, to his dismay, that it was not the Bible, but his ledger, that he had brought with him in mistake; in confusion, he looked round, and seized what seemed the genuine book, but it was his stock-book; once more he found another book on the desk, but on opening it, to his horror, found it was his cash-book, and awoke to find it was not altogether a dream. Is it not often true that we cannot get at the gospel, and its saving truths, because of worldly thoughts and sympathies? The Hebrews are rebuked because they "were dull of hearing;" and the apostle indicates that they had become worldly in heart and practice, and so were the less able to comprehend and receive the highest truth. (*Ibid.*) *A spirit susceptible to saving truth*:—The grace and light of God come where there is a preparedness for them. In nature the dew only distils where it is useful—the stones are dry, the plants are wet; and so He, "who is as the dew unto Israel," grants His truth and love to susceptible minds and hearts—to those only which are ripe to profit. (*Ibid.*) *The pure heart the hearing heart*:—There is an old church in Germany with which a singular legend is connected. In this church, at certain times, a mighty treasure is said to become visible to mortal eyes. Gold and silver vessels, of great magnificence and in great abundance, are disclosed; but only he who is free from sin can hope to secure the precious vessels. This legend shadows a great truth. In the temple of God, in the Word of God, are riches beyond gem or gold; but only the sincere, the pure in purpose, can hope to realize the Divine treasure. There must be in the truth-seeker a moral susceptibility and passion for the light. Some one has said that when he goes to church he "lies back and thinks of nothing," and this saying has been eulogized as representing the true attitude of a hearer. It is not the true attitude. He who lies back and thinks of nothing would most probably go to sleep if Jesus Christ were in the pulpit. John vii. 16, 17, teaches us that he who is willing, desirous, anxious to do God's will, shall know the doctrine that is Divine. Whosoever "willeth to do the will of God, shall know the doctrine that it is of God.'

The bent of the will, the purity of the purpose, are the conditions of illumination. To the determined lover of sin, to the indifferent, the truth is hidden from their eyes. *Feel the vast obligation of hearing*:—It is a serious thing to preach. Robertson said that "he would rather lead a forlorn hope than mount the pulpit stairs." Is it not a solemn thing to hear? Is not the pew as terrible as the pulpit? The scientist tells us that no substance can be subjected to the sun's rays without undergoing an entire chemical change; and it is equally true that no heart can be subjected to the action of the truth without undergoing a profound moral change. It is, indeed, the "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." *Take heed what ye hear*:—Listen for the voice of God. In many places we are chiefly interested in the form and expression of things, the subject is quite secondary. If we listen to a great orator, the subject is comparatively immaterial; the voice, the elocution, the rhetoric, the presentment of the subject is everything. So, in music, we are chiefly occupied with the style, composition, execution, giving hardly a thought to the theme. So, in painting, it is the drawing, colouring, grouping which monopolize attention. The æsthetical form, sound, colour, engage attention in the music hall or chamber of arts. But not thus should it be in the temple. There the subject is everything, modes of presentment little indeed. Ceremonies, preachers, buildings, stay not with these; listen for the undertone of God, and however dull your senses, however dull the preacher, you shall hear that still small whisper which is the light and life of all who hear it. *Take heed how ye hear*:—Upon the how depends the what. Listen for God's voice in Christ; listen with meekness, with sincerity of purpose, with practical designs to do as you gain in knowledge, and you shall hear the voice which is full alike of majesty and mercy. Light shall enter into your soul; that light shall ever brighten, until all the darkness is gone, and we find ourselves in that land of which God Himself is sun and moon. (*Ibid.*) *Light by obeying*:—THE INCREASE OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIGHT IS DEPENDENT UPON THE MEASURE OF OUR PRACTICAL FAITHFULNESS. If we consider the world about us, we discover the importance of action as a source of knowledge. Men do not expect a fulness of light before they proceed to action; but, with a little knowledge, they apply themselves to action, and with action light increases and problems are solved. And it is this testing and developing ideas by action which distinguishes between the grand benefactors of our race, and the mere dreamers of dreams of progress. Such men as Arkwright, Watt, Stephenson, applied their knowledge; ever verified, corrected, developed it by actual experiment and use, and so became light-centres to their own and after generations. Action kept pace with speculation in these great discoverers, and so they pushed out the borders of science, and enriched society with a thousand blessings; whilst men of large speculation and little or no action pass away, their splendid dreamings being as barren as splendid. The world of knowledge has become wider, clearer, richer beyond all precedent, in these modern times, because men have learned that knowledge must be applied if it is to be increased. And this is the order in the moral universe. The Scriptures associate knowledge with action (Col. i. 9, 10; Psa. xxxiv. 8; Prov. i. 7; John vii. 17). The examples of Scripture are to the same effect. Men acted on the little light they had and received more (Acts xviii. 24–28). Observe: 1. It is only through obedience that we get knowledge. It is only in obedience that light passes into knowledge; otherwise our light is opinion, imagination, speculation, sentiment. In action—perception, contemplation, speculation—become that real, solid, influential treasure we call knowledge. Any one can easily realize the truth of this who passes from the circle of speculative and controversial writers to listen to the confessions of the members of the Christian Church. In the merely literary world what universal uncertainty! Philosophers and speculative theologians are as men "who beat the air." It is cloudland, and any breath of wind changes the entire aspect of the misty imagery; there is no fixity, no solidity, no assurance. Listen to the sincere, earnest, practical members of the Church, and they speak that which "they do know." There is a definitiveness, depth, certainty, and power in their convictions. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded," &c. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved," &c. This depth, and fulness, and blessedness of persuasion can only be realized through obedience. Do, and you shall know. 2. It is only through obedience that we retain knowledge. Not to act out what we know is to lose it, as men forget a language they cease to speak. The Apostle recognizes this: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered (to be comprehended),

seeing ye are (have become) dull of hearing." They were deficient in quickness of spiritual apprehension, and lost their hold upon high spiritual truth, and this was the result of their backsliding life. We hold the light on the condition of using it; and neglecting to use it, the "light within us becomes darkness," and of all darkness that darkness is the most intense and hopeless. 3. It is only through obedience that we increase spiritual knowledge. The dawn of truth will pass to the noon, only whilst we do the work God gives us to do. Do you wish to comprehend more clearly the love of God in dying for men? You will not gain the light you covet by merely studying the various theories of the Atonement. Believe in God's love as declared in the cross; imitate the principle in your own life, and you "shall comprehend with all saints the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and know the love of God which passeth knowledge." Do you wish for more light on the question of the Divine element in the Scriptures? Commune with their doctrines in your heart, act out their precepts, and you shall find what you seek better than by reading a thousand philosophical treatises on inspiration. Do you wish to understand more fully the essential nature of morality? Be moral. Be truthful, honest, just, pure, and your practical goodness will shed most light on the true theory of virtue. (*Ibid.*) *Light by Evangelizing*:—Some of the old philosophers taught that from the earth continually ascended invisible exhalations, and these vapours, they affirmed, fed the sun and stars, and kept them ever bright and burning. According to this theory, what the earth gave to the sky, the sky gave back again to the earth in light and beauty. Wrong in science, but a beautiful parable of the law of life—what we give to the world around us comes back to our own bosom again in sevenfold brightness and preciousness. To this law Christ refers in the text: "Give, and it shall be given unto you again." According to your bounty in communicating light shall be the measure of light shed on your own path. Teach, instruct, give forth illumination, and as you do so your own brain shall be the clearer, your own knowledge the more full and certain. Light comes through evangelistic work. Evangelistic work is necessary—I. To THE PRESERVATION OF THE TRUTH. If we do not communicate the light we lose it. If we seek to keep the truth to ourselves we lose our perception of it, our hold upon it—our candle goes out in the confined air. Thus Moses to Israel: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons" (Deut. iv. 9). If you are not to forget—if you are not to lose the truth—you must teach it. Truth unspoken "spoils, like bales unopened to the sun." To seek light in intellectual pursuits to the neglect of evangelistic work is to commit a vital error. The Church needs thinkers and scholars, but it needs, with a more imperative necessity, preachers, teachers, visitors, missionaries, otherwise the intellectualists would soon ruin it. A merely speculative, literary, philosophizing Church would soon lose the truth as it is in Jesus, and substitute the unsubstantial and fantastic shapes of dreamland. If a Church thinks and works, it shall be well with it; its actions shall correct and chasten its thinking, and thus it shall be saved from rationalism on the one side, and mysticism on the other. Unduly exalt intellectual work, and the Church is forthwith afflicted with all kinds of theological vagaries; give the first and largest place to the practical work of saving the souls of men in the field of the world, and the pure gospel shall be conserved, a light and a salvation. We only keep the light whilst we spread it, and this is true alike of Churches and of individuals. Evangelistic work is necessary—II. To THE REALIZATION OF THE TRUTH. In active service the truth is defined and realized. Earnestly striving to save the souls of men, the haziness of mere opinion passes into well-defined and strongly-held knowledge and conviction. Some scientific men say that the sun is a dark body, and that it is only when its dark radiations touch our atmosphere that it realizes itself—only then that it flashes out a globe of glory, only then that its beams become luminous and vital. So it is when the thinker leaves his solitude and speculation, and comes into contact with society, seeking to profit and bless, that his knowledge realizes itself, that it becomes defined, and bright, and vital. A working Church knows, as no merely literary Church can know. A working Christian knows as no mere idealist can know. The "full assurance" for which we cry, comes through the constant application of gospel truth to the world's wants and woes, through constantly beholding the practical triumphs of the gospel in the hearts, lives, and homes of the people. Livingstone having recorded in his diary how vividly and powerfully he had recognized some commonplace truth, the

editor of his "Last Journals" justly observes: "Men, in the midst of their hard, earnest toil, perceive great truths with a sharpness of outline and a depth of conviction which is denied to the mere idle theorist." Evangelistic work is necessary—III. To THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRUTH. Working for God in the salvation of men, we shall see the truth more clearly, and further discoveries of it shall be granted. Luther, speaking of the truth, declared that he would not "have the eagle put in a sack." And ever since he gave freedom to the truth, and insisted on its being freely and fully enforced the world over, the "Eagle" has spread a more majestic wing, its golden feathers have shone with a rarer glory, and its eye has kindled into a sublimer fire. The truth spoken, enforced, has grown. More light has shone from God's holy Word. If we wish to know more we must teach more, work more. The men who gave us the Epistles were not students, but workers and preachers, and light came from their work as the wheel kindles as it turns. Our missionaries teach the same lesson. What light they have poured on many great and obscure questions! The missionaries diffusing the light, working to compass the salvation of men, have poured far more light on a score dark problems than they could possibly have done had they remained to ponder in studies and cloisters. Teaching the pagan, we have in turn been taught. The light we communicated to them comes back to us as from a polished reflector. "We are debtors both to the wise and the unwise, to the Greek and to the barbarian." There are abounding proofs that love to others, leading us to instruct and serve them, is a precious but much neglected source of illumination. A heart full of pure and practical charity is the east window in the temple of human life, whilst dim and uncertain is the light which filters through a cold and selfish brain. You will not find truth through thinking for thinking's sake; nay, you will not find truth through seeking for it directly. Truth, like happiness, is "found of them that seek it not" directly and selfishly, but who find it, when scarcely thinking of it, in the paths of charity and duty. Stirred by a glorious discontent we seek to know more, and ever more. Plants turn toward the light, and stretch their branches to reach it; the migration of birds, naturalists tell us, is the result of an intense longing for the light. And so the same instinct, in its highest manifestation, works in man, and he yearns towards the "Day-spring." Hear, with a true heart; do, with a sincere and loyal heart; give, with a loving heart as you have freely received; and the "light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." (*Ibid.*) *Hearing but not heeding*:—What care I to see a man run after a sermon, if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home? (*John Selden.*) *Heart-memory needed*:—A heart-memory is better than a head-memory. It were better to carry away a little of the life of God in our souls, than if we were able to repeat every word of every sermon we ever heard. (*De Sales.*) *Attention given more to worldly than spiritual things*:—Alas, the place of hearing is the place of sleeping with many a fine professor! I have often observed that those who keep shops can briskly attend upon a twopenny customer, but when they come themselves to God's market, they spend their time too much in letting their thoughts wander from God's commandments, or in a nasty, drowsy way. The head, also, and heart of most hearers are to the Word as the sieve is to water; they can hold no sermons, remember no texts, bring home no proof, produce none of the sermon to the edification and profit of others. (*John Bunyan.*) *Eclectic hearers*:—Some can be content to hear all pleasant things, as the promises and mercies of God, but judgments and reproofs, threats and checks, these they cannot brook; like unto those who, in medicine, care only for a pleasant smell or appearance in the remedy, as pills rolled in gold, but have no regard for the efficacy of the physic. Some can willingly hear that which concerns other men and their sins, their lives and manners, but nothing touching themselves or their own sins; as men can willingly abide to hear of other men's deaths, but cannot abide to think of their own. (*R. Stock.*) *Whom to hear*:—Ebenezer Blackwell was a rich banker, a zealous Methodist, and a great friend of the Wesleys. "Are you going to hear Mr. Wesley preach?" he was asked one day. "No," he replied, "I am going to hear God; I listen to Him, whoever preaches; otherwise I lose all my labour." *Take heed what ye hear*:—I. FAITH COMETH BY HEARING. This means—1. Faith comes from knowledge, *i.e.*, there can be no faith without knowledge. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" 2. It means that the living preacher, as opposed to mere instruction out of books, is the great means of producing faith. This does not mean (1) That God does not employ His written Word, &c; (2) Nor that the proclamation of the gospel is the only method of

making the gospel heard, and thus of producing faith. 3. It means that the instruction by the ear, as coming from a living preacher, is the ordinary method of salvation. Proof from Scripture and experience. II. WHY IS HEARING OR THE LIVING PREACHER NECESSARY? Why may not books and Bibles answer for the conversion of men? 1. The sufficient answer to the question is the Divine appointment. 2. Because from the constitution of our nature, what is addressed to the ear has more power in arousing attention, in producing conviction, and exciting feeling, than what is addressed to the eye. 3. There is a law of propagation of Divine life analogous to the propagation of vegetable and animal life. So in the Church it is the general law that the spiritual life is communicated through and by living members of the Church. III. TWO INFERENCES FLOW FROM THIS TRUTH. 1. That we should hear for ourselves, and cause others to hear, the gospel, not being content in either case with books, to the neglect of the living teacher. 2. That we should be careful what we hear and how we hear. (1) The object of hearing, viz., salvation, spiritual edification must be kept in view, and be our governing motive, not pleasure, not criticism. (2) The mind must be prepared for the reception of the truth. The Scripture tells us how (1 Peter ii. 1; James i. 21). This with prayer includes our duty as to hearing. With this will be connected laying the truth up in our hearts, and practising it in our lives. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

Ver. 25. **For he that hath, to him shall be given.**—*The law of increase:*—The good use of knowledge and grace draws down more: the ill use leads to blindness and hardness of heart. The one is an effect of grace itself; the other, an effect of a depraved will. A faithful soul has a great treasure. The riches which it heaps up have scarce any bounds, because it puts none to its fidelity. A base and slothful soul grows poorer every day, until it is stripped of all. Who can tell the prodigious stock which is acquired by an evangelical labourer, a zealous missionary, who crosses the seas on purpose to seek souls whom he may convert, and is intent on nothing but the salvation of sinners! The greater his grace is, the more it increases by labour. O how happy and holy is this usury of a faithful soul! (*Quesnel.*) "*Having*" *helps the* "*getting*":—Having one language helps the gaining of another. Having mathematics helps the getting of science. Capital tends to gather more wealth. "Nothing succeeds like success." One victory leads the way to another. The knowledge of one truth ever opens the mind for perception of another. Grace to do one good act opens the heart to admit grace to do another. If but a beginning is made, it is an immense assistance to attainment. If converted, do not undervalue the infinite importance of the beginning thus made. But remember, at the same time, that none can keep grace except on the condition that he employs it. Whatever knowledge of truth, whatever feeling, whatever power of obedience you possess, you will lose unless you employ it. (*R. Glover.*) *The duty of faithfully hearing the Word of God:*—What ye hear heed. Not without purpose our Lord spoke of hearing. All success on the part of the teacher depends upon attention on the part of the hearer. Though Noah, Moses, Paul, or even Jesus speak, no benefit to careless hearer. Whoso has a great truth to impart has a right to claim a hearing—how much more He who is the Truth. Consider—I. THE ESPECIAL EVILS AGAINST WHICH MEN MUST GUARD IN HEARING THE WORD ARE THREE:—1. Losing the Word before faith has made it fruitful (Luke viii. 11). The peril is, it may be lost before it is fruitful. (1) It may be taken out of the heart. 2. A merely temporary faith. 3. Fruitlessness of Word through cares, deceit of riches, lust of other things (vers. 18, 19; Luke viii. 14). II. THE REWARD OF FAITHFUL HEARING (vers. 20–25; Luke viii. 15). The lot of the seed describes the lot of him who receives it. "Let him that hath"—as the fruit of his using—this his own increase; "shall more be given"—this the Lord's increase (cf. parable of talents). Every attainment of truth a condition of meetness to gain other and deeper truth. So in all study and acquisition. Truth grows to its "perfection" in the "good" "honest." III. CONDEMNATION OF HIM WHO HEARETH NOT TO PROFIT. "Him that hath not"—hath nothing more than was first given to him. From him shall even that be taken. Any one can "have" what is given; only the diligent have more. 1. The condemnation assumes the form of a removal of truth (Matt. xiii. 13–15). It is naturally forgotten by him who does not use his understanding upon it. Disregarded truth (and duty) becomes disliked truth. 2. In carelessness he puts it away from him. His measure is small; he metes it to himself. The eye not trained to see beauties and harmonies of form fails to see them: so the ear music, and the hand skilfulness. 3. To hear is a duty; to

neglect duty brings God's condemnation. 4. He who does not receive the kingdom of heaven is *ipso facto* in the kingdom of evil. Continued departures from truth and duty leave the man farther from God, truth, heaven. 5. All truth is in parables. History the parable of Providence. Ordinances the parables of grace. The attentive see not only the parable, but the "things" also; the inattentive see only the parable, not the "things" (John x. 6). 6. Even Christ and His work and His gospel may be mere parables, outward things. Men seeing see not, their hearts being gross, their ears dull of hearing, and their eyes closed. We see—1. The terrible and to be dreaded consequence of not *heeding* the Word: it becomes a parable, a dark saying, a riddle. 2. But the mercifulness of Him who would hide truth in a beautiful parable, to tempt if possible the careless to inquire, that they may be saved. (*Studies.*) *The law and the gospel*:—The tendency of gifts, powers, possessions to accumulate in some hands and dwindle in others is a common fact of observation. And it often appears, too, that when accumulation begins it goes on by a momentum of its own; that the farther it goes the faster it goes; and on the other hand that losses follow the same law; disaster breeds disaster, and misfortune multiplies by a geometrical law. I. WE SEE THE WORKINGS OF THIS LAW IN THE CONDITIONS OF OUR PHYSICAL LIVES. Health and vigour have a tendency to increase. The food we eat builds up the body; active exercise confirms its strength; the cold increases its power of endurance; the summer heat nourishes its vitality. Nature brings constant revenues to the healthy man; all things work together for his good. On the other hand disease and physical feebleness have a tendency to increase. The food that ought to nourish the system irritates and oppresses it; exertion brings to the body fatigue and enervation; cold benumbs it; heat debilitates it; nature seems to be the foe of feebleness; all things work together to prevent the recovery of health when once it is lost; often it is only by the greatest vigilance and patience that it can be regained. II. THE LAW THAT WE ARE CONSIDERING IS FULFILLED IN THE FACTS OF THE SOCIAL ORDER. The man who has station or influence or wealth or reputation finds the current flowing in his favour; the man who has none of these things soon learns that he must stem the current. Popularity always follows this law. It is often remarkable how small a saying will awaken the enthusiasm of the crowd when spoken by a man who is a recognized favourite: and how many great and wise utterances fail of producing any effect whatever when he who speaks them is comparatively unknown. It is almost impossible for one who has gained the reputation of being a wit to say anything at which his auditory will not laugh. His most sober and commonplace speeches will often be greeted as great witticisms. On the other hand the purest wit and the choicest humour, if it happen to fall from the lips of a plain, matter-of-fact individual, will often be received with funereal gravity by all who hear it. Men are apt to bestow their help as well as their applause most freely on those who need it least. Those who have gifts to bestow often give them to those who do not want them, passing by those who are suffering for the lack of them. "The destruction of the poor," the wise man says, "is his poverty." Because he is poor he cannot get the credit, the privilege, the favour that he could get if he were rich. The narrowness of his resources cramps him. The church that has the rich people is likely to attract the rich people; the weak churches are often left to their own destruction, while those that are strong financially are strengthened by constant accessions. What is this law that we are studying? It is nothing else than what some philosophers call the law of natural selection—the law of the survival of the fittest; that is, in most cases, the strongest. When a tree is cut down in the forest a number of sprouts frequently spring up from the stump, and these grow together for a while until they begin to crowd one another. There is not room for a dozen trees on the ground where one tree stood; there is only room for one. But it is generally the case that one of these shoots growing from the root of the old tree is a little larger than the rest, and this one gradually overshadows the rest, takes from the air and the light more nourishment than they can get—takes that which belongs to them, so that they dwindle and die beneath its shadow, while its roots reach out for a firmer footing in the soil and its branches stretch forth with loftier pride and ampler shade. Nature selects the strongest shoot for preservation, and destroys the others that it may live. We know that man adopts this method of selection in all his agricultural operations; in the corn-field and in the fruit nursery it is the likeliest growths that are chosen and cultivated; the others are weeded out to make room for them. But some of you are asking, "Is this law of natural selection God's law?" To this question there is but one answer. If the law of natural selection is the law of nature, then it is God's

law. This law of natural selection is a natural law, and not a moral law. We speak of it as a law in the sense in which we speak of the law of heredity, or the law of gravitation, or the law of supply and demand. This law is announced by Christ but it is not enjoined by Him. "This," He says, "is the way things are: this is the course things uniformly take." This law of natural selection is a law of nature, ordained by God. It is the law under which rewards and penalties are administered; it is a retributive law, for the sanctions of the moral law are found in the natural order. But some of you are protesting that this cannot be true. "How is it," you ask, "that the natural law of the survival of the strongest tends to the rewarding of the good or the punishing of the bad? By this law it is the strong, rather than the good that are rewarded. It is to those that have, rather than to those that deserve, that abundance is given." True; but this is only an illustration of the fact that a dispensation of law always works hardship. Law makes nothing perfect; it hurts some that need help and it helps some that do not deserve it. Law must be uniform and inflexible; it cannot adapt itself to differing conditions and abilities. Gravitation is a good law, but it kills thousands of innocent people every year. Yet it would not do to have it less uniform and inflexible than it is. The universe is built on the basis of universal righteousness and health: its laws are all adapted to that condition of things, and they ought to be. If all men were good and wise and strong, then this law would only tend to increase the virtue and the wisdom and the vigour of all men. It would be seen, then, that this is a good law. But sin has entered to enfeeble and deprave many, and the result is that the law which ought to be a savour of life unto life to them becomes a savour of death unto death. The same forces that ought to build them up tend to destroy them. So it often is that when the law enters offences abound, and hardships are suffered; under its severe and inflexible rule more is given to those who have abundance already, while those who have but little are stripped of what they have. Thus we see that the natural law, which is the instrument of retribution, inflicts suffering and loss not only upon the sinful, but upon the weak, the unfortunate, the helpless; upon those who have fallen behind in the race of life. That is the way the law works. But remember also that there is something better and diviner than law in the tidings that He has brought us. What the law could not do He came to do. It was for the deliverance and the relief of those who are being pushed to the wall by the operation of these retributive forces that He came. His life proves this. He did not fall into that social order that we have seen prevailing. He did not bestow His praise upon the famous, nor His friendship on the popular, nor His benefactions on the rich. His words of applause greeted the saints who in obscurity tried to live virtuously; He was the Friend of publicans and sinners; He was the constant helper of the poor. It was not to those who had abundance that He gave, but to those who had nothing. "They that be whole," He says, "need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Nature is against them; their own natures are infirm and corrupt; their appetites entice them; their selfish desires mislead them; but He assures them that by faith in Him they may be made partakers of the Divine nature, and thus be reinforced and invigorated for conflict with the evil. And, mark you, in doing all this He does not destroy but fulfils the law. And what Christ does is to give the real good of life, the moral strength and soundness which are the source of all life's real good, to those who have nothing—who are so reduced in moral vigour that they are practically destitute; to restore to them that which they have lost, so that they shall have; and then this law is a minister of good to them as God meant it to be to all. Here is a vine that has fallen from its trellis, and that is being choked by the weeds that have overgrown it, as it lies prostrate on the earth. The law of nature, the law of vegetable growth, is only operating to destroy it so long as it remains in this condition; for the sun and the showers nourish the weeds, and they overshadow the vine more and more, preventing its growth, and drawing away the strength from the soil. But the gardener lifts up the vine and fastens it to the trellis, and pulls up the weeds that are stealing its nutriment, and than the laws of nature promote the growth of the vine; the same laws under which its life was being destroyed now confirm its life and increase its growth. Some such service as this Christ renders to all those who are morally weak and helpless; by the communication to them of His own life He lifts them out of their helplessness into a condition in which all things that were working together against them shall work together for their good. It will be well for us all to remember that if we are Christians, we are

co-workers with Christ, and that our business, therefore, is not to add force to the law whose severities bear so heavily upon many of our fellow-men, but to counteract the severities of the law by ministries of sympathy and tenderness and help. (*W. Gladden.*) *Addition easy*:—And it is always easier to get the addition than it was to get the unit. When the current is fairly turned in our direction, the stream keeps running. It has been said that it is harder for a man to get his first thousand dollars, than any subsequent thousand. The more wealth a man has, the easier it is for him to increase it. So of knowledge; so of influence; so of affection. So also of spiritual gifts.

Vers. 26, 29. **So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.**—*The religion of Christ*:—I. The religion of Christ is a REIGN. It is not a creed, or a sentiment, or a ritualism, but a regal force, a power that holds sway over intellect, heart, and will. As a reign it is—1. Spiritual. Its throne is within. 2. Free. 3. Constant. II. It is a DIVINE reign. This is proved by—1. Its congruity with human nature. It accords with reason, conscience, and the profoundest cravings of the soul. 2. Its influence on human life. It makes men righteous, loving, peaceful, godlike. III. It is a GROWING reign. It grows in the individual soul, and in the increase of its subjects. 1. This growth is silent. It does not advance as the reign of human monarchs, by noise and bluster, by social convulsion and bloody wars. It works in the mind and spreads through society, silent as the distilling dew or the morning beam. 2. Gradual. 3. Secret. IV. Christ's religion may be PROMOTED BY HUMAN AGENCY. Whilst man cannot in nature create the crop, no crop would come without his agency; so Christ has left the extension of His religion to depend in some measure on man. V. Human effort is founded on CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE LAWS. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The kingdom in the heart*:—I. The first lesson taught us here is, that progress in personal religion is VITAL and not MECHANICAL (Mark iv. 26). 1. The "seed" contains in itself the germ of all the future growth. Hence, all expectation must actually begin and end with the grain which is sown. If the initial impartation of Divine grace in the truth through the Holy Ghost be not received, it will do no good whatsoever to watch and hope and encourage ourselves. (*See* John vi. 65.) 2. The "ground" develops the germ. The human life and experience which the seed falls into has to be prepared, and, of course, needs to be cultivated; then God sends His celestial benediction of the sunshine and the showers. But the fruit "the earth bringeth forth of herself." This union of human fidelity with Divine grace constitutes the co-operation with which the mysterious work goes on. We are to "add" to our attainments, "giving all diligence" (2 Pet. i. 5). We are to "work out" our own salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). 3. The "man" casts the seed. God gives it, and the germ of salvation is in what God gives. But a free-willed man must let it sink into his heart and life. There are "means of grace;" human beings must put themselves in the way of them. The first step in the new life is displayed in the willingness to take every other step. (*See* 2 Cor. iii. 18, in the New Revision.) II. Our next lesson from the figure which Christ uses is this: progress in personal religion is CONSTANT and not SPASMODIC. (*See* verses 26, 27.) 1. Observe here that the growth of the seed is continued through the "night and day." One little brilliant touch of imagination does great service in this picture. The man rests; he has done his duty. God, the unseen, is silently keeping His promise. And while we rejoice in the sweet helpful sunshine, and thank Him for it, we ought to thank Him too for these heavy moist nights of gloom, which surprise us often with their darkness, and then surprise us more afterwards with the extraordinary progress they have brought. (*See* Heb. xii. 11.) 2. Hence also we observe that even hindrances help sometimes. Those are the hardiest plants which have been oftenest shadowed; and those are the most stable trees which have been oftenest writhed and tossed by the blasts as they blustered around them. 3. So, above everything else, we observe that here we are taught the necessity of trust. No one thing in nature is more pathetically beautiful than the behaviour of certain sensitive plants we all are acquainted with, as the nightfall approaches. They tranquilly fold up their leaves, as if they were living beings, and now knew that from the evening to the morning again they would have to live just by faith in the Supreme Hand which made them. We must make up our minds that there can be never any healthy growth which undertakes to move forward by frantic leaps or spasms of progress. We must trust God; and He neither dwarfs nor forces. Hothouse shoots are proverbially feeble, and almost always it has been found that

conservatory oranges are the bitterest sort of fruit. III. Once more: let us learn from the figure which our Lord uses, that progress in personal religion is SPIRITUAL and not CONSPICUOUS. The seed grows, but the man "knows not how." 1. The man cannot possibly "know how." Our Saviour, in another place, gives the full reason for that (Luke xvii. 20, 21). When He declares "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," He adds at once His sufficient explanation; "for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." We are unable to become in any case thoroughly acquainted with each other. We are often mistaken about ourselves. The most we can hope to understand is to be found in grand results, and not in the processes. 2. The man does not need to "know how." He needs only to keep growing, and all will be right in the end. Christians are not called knowers, but "believers." The old promise is that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree." And the singularity of the palm-tree is that it is an inside grower; it is always adding its woody layers underneath the bark, and enlarging itself from the centre out of sight. Botanically speaking, man is "endogenous." Our best attainments, like Moses' shining face, are always gained unconsciously, and others see them first. 3. Many men make mistakes in trying to "know how." The religious life of a genuine Christian cannot be dealt with from the outside without injury. It is harmed when we attempt to make it showy. You will kill the strongest trees if you seek to keep them varnished. All penances and pilgrimages, all mere rituals and rubrics, all legislations and reforms, are as powerless to save the soul as so many carvings and statues and cornices on the exterior of a house would be to give health to a sick man within. Time is wasted in efforts to help men savingly in any other way than by teaching them to "grow up in all things into Christ, which is the head" (Eph. iv. 14–16). IV. Let us learn, in the fourth place, from the figure our Lord uses, that progress in personal religion is NATURAL and not ARTISTIC. (*See* ver. 28.) 1. Our Lord Himself was entirely unconventional. 2. Hence, a conventional religion cannot be Christian. For it is not possible that "a man in Christ" should be artistic. Fancy forms of devoteeism are simply grotesque. 3. The "beauty of holiness" will not stand much millinery of adornment. Naturalness is the first element of loveliness. 4. Meantime, let us remember that all Christ seems to desire of His followers is just themselves. Timothy was not set to find some extraordinary attainment, but to "stir up the gift" which was "in him." Jesus praised the misjudged woman because she had "done what she could." V. Finally, we may learn from the figure which our Lord uses, that progress in personal religion is GARNERED at last, and not LOST. (*See* ver. 29.) 1. The "fruit" is what is wanted. And the gains of the growth are all conserved in the fruit. Growth is for the sake of more fruit. Some might say, "The seed that we cast into the ground is quite lost." No; the seed will be found inside of every fruit. Others might say, "The increase in size and strength is certainly all lost." No; the increase is ten or a hundred-fold inside of the fruit. There is a whole field-full of living germs in the matured fruit of each honest life for God. 2. The "harvest" fixes the final date of the ingathering. There does not appear to be anything like caprice in God's plan. "He hath made everything beautiful in His time." And in the harvest-time, surely, the fields of ripened grain are loveliest. 3. For it is the ripeness of the fruit which announces the harvest. That must be the force here of the fine and welcome word "immediately." When the believer is ready to go to his home, the Lord is ready to receive him. (*C. S. Robinson.*) *God's work in the kingdom:*—I. IN ITS BEGINNINGS. God permits us to co-operate with Him; but the great work is His. We learn the truth by prayer, and study, and obedience. We make it known. He gives its life. As the farmer can only sow the seed he has obtained, and must depend on the life within it, and the earth which brings forth fruit of herself, so we can only make known the truth we have received, and must trust entirely to God to make it effective. II. IN ITS GROWTH. God advances this new life according to its own laws. We need not be impatient, nor attempt to force unnatural growth, nor dig it up to see if it is growing. But we must make the utmost of our own powers to aid those that are beyond us. As it requires a whole man to make a successful farmer, so all the energies of character, study, and devotion are needed to make a successful sower of the seed of the kingdom. III. IN ITS PERFECTION. There is a harvest-time. God completes the work He has begun in each soul; but He has made us so interdependent that its completion calls for our watchful activity. We are not responsible for the laws of spiritual growth; but we are commanded to be at hand to watch the blade as it appears, to welcome the ear and the full fruit.

(*A. E. Dunning.*) *Human agency likened to a growing plant*:—I. Man's knowledge and power, in matter and in mind, are small, yet requisite. II. Natural powers are made to do much for him, but secretly and slowly. III. He has to wait in patience, and then to take possession. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *The growth of the spiritual life*:—I. SPIRITUAL GOODNESS IS A GROWTH. It springs and grows up. Cut the stone and carve it, so it remains; cut the tree, lop off its branches, and then it will sprout. Man can impart motion, and make automata, but he cannot give life. The test of real life is growth. II. Spiritual goodness is an INDEPENDENT GROWTH. Not a hot-house plant. Needs no petting. Ministers need not torment themselves about the issue of the work: God gives the increase. III. Spiritual goodness is a MYSTERIOUS GROWTH. The law of development is hidden, though real. IV. Spiritual goodness is a CONSTANT GROWTH. Our souls do not rest. V. Spiritual goodness is a PROGRESSIVE GROWTH. The blade is the mark of tenderness; the ear is the mark of full vigour; the full corn in the ear is the mark of maturity. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The power of growth inherent in things divine*:—The husbandman has only two functions with regard to the seed—to sow it, and to reap. All the rest the seed can manage for itself. So in spiritual things, we need only take care that we sow good seed—seed of truth, seed of good example, seed of loving sympathy. We need not too curiously inquire as to the exact attitude of the hearts on which we scatter the seed, nor ask every hour as to the appreciation which the seed receives, nor use a microscope to measure its daily growth, nor keep piling on the simple seed undue efforts to secure its fruitfulness. (*R. Glover.*) *The seed growing mysteriously*:—Remarkable correspondence between history of Church and spiritual life of individual Christians. Consider in this connection: I. THE GROWTH AND FRUITFULNESS OF THE DIVINE WORD IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. 1. The certain growth of the truth through this dispensation. Christianity is always spreading. 2. The orderly development of the truth. Providence continually brings into view long-hidden meanings and applications of the gospel. 3. The mystery of the gospel's extension and development. Even the wisest are far from understanding the true reason and mode of its growth. II. THE GROWTH AND FRUITFULNESS OF THE DIVINE WORD IN INDIVIDUAL LIVES. 1. They who hear the gospel should consider the consequences of their conduct in relation to it. The honest reception of it is the beginning of a life of holy fruitfulness to the glory of God. The rejection involves a state worse than barrenness. 2. This parable should teach cheerful confidence to all who sow the good seed—ministers, teachers—all who speak a word for Christ. The result is beyond their power or knowledge, but it is sure. 3. It should produce joy in all Christian hearts by the prospect which it opens. The glorious issue of each Christian life. The blessed consummation of the world's history. The final rejoicing of all who labour in the gospel. Above all, the harvest-gladness of the Lord. (*E. Heath.*) *The kingdoms of grace and glory*:—These two kingdoms differ not specifically, but gradually; they differ not in nature, but only in degree. The kingdom of grace is nothing but the inchoation or beginning of the kingdom of glory; the kingdom of grace is glory in the seed, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the flower; the kingdom of grace is glory in the daybreak, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the full meridian; the kingdom of grace is glory militant, and the kingdom of glory is grace triumphant. There is such an inseparable connection between these two kingdoms, that there is no passing into the one but by the other. At Athens there were two temples—a temple of virtue and a temple of honour; and there was no going into the temple of honour but through the temple of virtue. So the kingdoms of grace and glory are so joined together, that we cannot go into the kingdom of glory but through the kingdom of grace. Many people aspire after the kingdom of glory, but never look after grace; but these two, which God hath joined together, may not be put asunder. The kingdom of grace leads to the kingdom of glory. (*T. Watson.*) *The seed in the heart*:—The ascendency and growth of true religion. 1. External agencies. We are not passive and powerless recipients of heavenly influences; we are required to use diligently all the appliances of the husbandman, leaving the rest to Him who disposes all things. The eye of God marks what becomes of each grain of seed: how one lies disregarded on the surface of the worldly heart, and another sinks no deeper than the first stratum of fitful impulse piety; how the young choke the seed with pleasures, the middle-aged destroy it with worldly ambitions, and the old stifle it with corroding cares; yet, dead as this seed may seem, it springeth up, ay, and will spring up in another world, if not in this, and bear its testimony against all who neglect or despise the message of God. 2. The

invisible methods of its succeeding processes. There is no discovering of the subtle law, by which the preaching of the self-same Word becomes powerless here, and effectual there. An unperceived influence is brought to bear on a man's heart, constraining but not compelling him, causing principles and desires and feelings to spring up "he knows not how." It is for him to yield to this influence. 3. The certain progressiveness of true religion. No standing still. All religion is a spreading and an advancing thing. God leads on the converted soul step by step; He restores the features of our lost spiritual image little by little; He destroys the dominant passions of the old man one by one; and so leads us on from strength to strength, till in the perfect righteousness of Christ we appear before Him in Zion. To continue babes in Christ, would be like saying that we have the leaven of God within us, and yet that it is not affecting the surrounding mass; that the fire of God is within our hearts, without burning up the dross and stubble; that, aged trees as we are, we put forth nothing but the tender shoot, and patriarchs as we should be in spiritual things, we are but as infants of a day old. 4. The end: the final gathering of the ripe sheaves into the garner of life. Here our progress may be slow; there is an infinitude of holy attainment beyond. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The soul's restoration is gradual:*—It is one of the severest trials of our faith, to go on day after day in the same struggle against sin and self; and it is a sore temptation to many—because they do not see any striking proofs of restoration, any rapid growth in grace, any marked progress in the heavenward journey—to doubt whether progress has been made. It is Satan who makes this suggestion to them, to daunt and to destroy; but it is a lie which can deceive those only who forget or distrust their God. The farmer who goes every day to his fields, though he knows that in due season he shall reap, does not notice the development which is going on in his wheat; but they who pass by at longer intervals observe and admire. It is so with the true Christian: he does not see his character change, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation unto him; but, slowly and surely, silently as the sap rises in the trees, as the leaves unroll and the blossom bursts, and lo! the fruit is there; so goes on the restoration of grace—imperceptibly, as the light will soon fade into darkness, or rather, as the morning shineth more and more unto the perfect day. A soul can no more be restored and sanctified for heaven at once, than a tree can bear fruit without the blossom, or a church be restored without cost and toil. Only they who learn to labour and to wait, will have wages from the Lord of the vineyard, when the even of the world is come, and to him that overcometh He shall give the beautiful crown. (*S. R. Hole, M.A.*) *The patience of hope:*—I. Do not worry yourself about the growth of grace in others. Do not press too hardly for evidence of growth in your children. Confine your care to the seed you sow, and, calm and hopeful, leave the rest to God. II. Be not too anxious about the work of grace in your own soul. It grows like the corn; like the corn you cannot see it growing. Take care of your action, and your nature will take care of itself. Harbour no thoughts of despair. III. Be patient with yourself. Plants that are meant to live long grow slowly. A mushroom grows swiftly, and passes away swiftly. The oak grows slow to stand long. Grace is meant to live for ever, and grows, therefore, slowly. Each good act helps it a little, but you cannot trace the help. If God has patience with you, have patience with yourself; and make not your grace less by worrying because it is not more. (*R. Glover.*) *Spiritual growth:*—In form and imagery this parable is exquisitely simple; in principle and meaning it is very profound. To be able to put great truths in simple language is a note of true power. Christ was a master of this art. His disciples do not seem to have ever attempted it. The parable was too Divine a thing for them to touch. The idea in this parable is distinct and beautiful. The seed once sown, grows according to its own nature; it has life in itself; and when once fairly deposited in congenial soil, and subjected to the quickening influences of heavenly sunshine and shower, it silently and mysteriously develops the life that is in it, according to the ordinary principles of growth. It has an inherent vitality, a growth-power, which springs up "we know not how;" we only see that it grows. The brown clod of the field is first tinged with virgin green; then covered as with a carpet; then waves, in yielding beauty to the wind, like a summer sea, and rustles in ripening music, like a forest. So is the kingdom of God; the field of the heart, the field of the world, are thus covered with gracious fruit. I. THIS GREAT LAW OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS NOT ALWAYS RECOGNIZED, NOR ARE MEN ALWAYS CONTENTED WITH IT. We are eager for quick results; we have not the patience to wait for the slow development from seed to fruit. II. BUT THIS IS GOD'S PLAN IN ALL THINGS. He

produces nothing by great leaps and transitions; all His great works are quiet processes. Light and darkness melt into each other; the seasons change by gradual transition; all life, vegetable and animal, grows from a germ; and the higher and nobler the type of life, the slower and more gradual is the process of growth. The oak attains to maturity more slowly than the flower; man than the lower animals; the mind than the body; the soul than the mind. III. APPLICATION TO THE CHARACTER AND COURSE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. Its beginning. Only a blade, hardly to be discerned above the soil, or distinguished from common grass. We may often confound the real beginnings of religion with ordinary human virtues. 2. Its progress. We look for the formation of the ear, and for the full corn in the ear. A child of God, always a babe, is a deformity. 3. Its consummation. How fruitful and beautiful it should be, not with the verdant beauty of the blade, but with the golden beauty of the ripe corn. (*Henry Allon.*)

The blade, the ear, the full corn :—The seed in the ground. The kingdom of God, or religion in the heart, is secret in its beginnings. This is suggested by the parable. A man casts seed into the ground, and then leaves it to Nature—that is, to God. Such is the silence and secrecy of the Divine life in the heart. We have the truth of God as seed. Compared with natural or scientific truth (which yet we would not disparage) it may well be called, as in one of the Psalms, "precious seed," and the sowers of it may well go forth "weeping"—*i.e.* with intensity of will, with all their sensibilities stirred to the sowing of it; and yet let them know—it is well for us all to know—that a sower can only sow. He cannot decompose the grain. He cannot vitalize the inward germ. He must leave the seed with God. Attempts are made, sometimes, in times of religious revival and excitement, to force the living process, and even to have essential power and action in it; to make it begin at certain times and in certain ways; but the success of these efforts is but small. Very often the result of such intrusive violence is simply this, that Nature is made to look like grace for a little while, only to sink back into Nature again. We are only sowers. We "cast the seed into the ground," we "sleep and rise night and day." We go about our customary avocations and know nothing for certain of what has become of the seed for a time. By and by we shall know by the appearing of the blade above the soil, by the growing and by the ripening; but at first we know nothing. The blade.—Not only is there secrecy at the beginning, but even after life is begun the manifestations of it are very slender and even dubious. Life must appear in some way, else we cannot apprehend it. We know life, not in its very substance, but only in its attributes and fruits. The first appearance of life is therefore a time of great interest; we watch it as the farmer watches the blade when it first shows above the soil. It does not then look at all like the corn it ultimately becomes. "First the blade." Take it when it is just visible above the soil—tender, pale, hardly green as yet—and compare that with the treasures of the threshing floor. What a difference! and how wonderful it seems that those should come from that! Not only is the first appearance small and slender, but to the unskilled eye it is very dubious and uncertain. Even so! The springing of the precious seed of Divine truth out of the secret soul into the visible life, is known at first often by manifestations very slender and sensitive. The begun life is so feeble that you can hardly say "It is there." A flush on the cheek or a gleam of the eye betokens some unusual inward feeling. Something is done, or something is left undone, and that is all! A Bible is kept in the room, and sometimes read in the morning or the evening. A new walk is taken that a certain person may be met, or missed. A letter has a sentence or two with the slightest touch of a new tone in it. Or there is some other faint suggestion of a change of mind and view. And if one should come with a high standard and a strict measuring line he might, of course, say, "Is that all?" Do you expect *that* to endure the conflicts and tests of life, and overcome its difficulties? Do you look for golden harvest only out of that? And yet that young, tender, trembling soul will grow in grace, and will be at last as ripe and mellow and ready for the garner as the other. "Then the ear."—God's day of revelation. Every one knows corn in the ear—all dubiety is over when we look on the ear of corn. In the spike that holds the grain, as in a protective loving embrace, we know, although we do not see it, that the corn is enfolded. And when the spike expands with the force of vegetation, and the seeds of corn appear, no one can deny or doubt their existence. So there is a revealing or declaring time in the spiritual life. Life, hidden beyond the proper time of manifestation, will die. The corn in the ear cannot be preserved; it must grow on, or perish. 'The full corn in the ear."—The work of grace perfected. As the result of the

growing comes the ripening, or what is here called "the full corn in the ear." How little there is of man! How much of God! Man throws the seed into the ground, as one might throw a handful of pebbles into the sea! and months afterwards he comes, and carries away, by reaping and harvesting, thirty-fold or sixty-fold. He throws in one and carries away thirty, as it were direct from the hand of God. It is God who has been working during all these silent months. He never leaves the field. Down beneath the red mould He has His laboratory. He kindles there ten thousand invisible fires. He carries on and completes in unreckonable instances that process of transmutation which is the most wonderful that takes place beneath the sun. He opens in every field ten thousand times ten thousand fountains of life, and out of these living fountains spring the visible forms, blade, and sheath, and ear, and ripened corn. And after God has been thus working, then again comes the man, with his baskets, with his empty garners, and God fills them. Now the chief lesson—the very teaching of the parable—is this: that the human agency is no more in proportion and degree within the "kingdom of God" than it is in the field of corn. "So is the kingdom of God." The spiritual life is as much and as constantly under God's care as, in the natural world, is the field of growing corn. Indeed, we may say the spiritual life has more of His care. For, while the man has the sowing and the reaping in the natural field, in the spiritual field he has the sowing but not the reaping. "The angels are the reapers." Souls ripened for heaven are not reaped by men on the earth. The practical uses of the great truth taught in the parable are such as these. It teaches us a lesson of diligence. We can only sow, therefore let us sow. A lesson of reverence. What wonders are being wrought very near to us in silence! The Spirit of God is striving with human spirits! A lesson of abstinence. Having sown the seed, leave it with God. Think—"It has passed now from my care into a more sacred department, and into far higher hands. With Him let me leave it." Finally, a lesson of trust. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

The different stages in the growth of Christian life:—I. Let us attend to the words before us, by observing BRIEFLY THE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AS PRESENTED TO US BY THEM. A thing of events must have stages; a thing of time must also have its stages; so must all things of growth and advancement. Christian life is a thing of events, of time, and of growth; as such, it has its stages of development and maturity. 1. There is the blade stage. Human life, in all its forms, has its blade form and condition, as well as the plant. (1) It is the first expression of life to human sense. It is not the first stage of life in fact, but it is so in appearance and visible evidence. (2) The blade is a result of some unseen power behind what appears to sense. The blade is a production, produced by some unseen power of vitality outside itself as to origin and law. Christian life, as well as the blade, is the result of vital power higher and apart from itself. (3) The blade form is a stage of tenderness. As yet it is not hardened in its fibre, and consolidated in its root. The smallest force can crush it, the faintest blight can destroy it. Its slenderness may have one advantage—there is only a small quantity of the storm that can be brought to bear upon it compared with what would be if it were broader, taller, and more massive. (4) It is hopeful as to future prospects. As days and nights revolve it will take deeper root, and spread its offshoots on every hand. Its appearance is a promise, and its feebleness, with careful attention to the order of its life, will gain strength and tallness. Take care of the convictions, the aspirations, the promises, and the small expressions of goodness and godliness in life; they are the blades of true and Christian life. 2. Then the ear. This is the middle stage of Christian life. (1) This shows a life partially developed. It has not reached its intended ultimate end, but has made considerable progress towards it. The dangers which surround the beginning of life are overcome. (2) It is a life partly consolidated in strength and maturity. It is not so strong as to be out of danger, it is not so complete as to be perfect; yet it is beyond the reach of many of the smaller forces which once threatened its life and growth, and is also in a fair way of reaching the higher perfection which it aspires after. (3) It is a life of greater testedness than that of the blade. It has stood the test of storms and frosty nights; and in the midst and through them all it has grown, and stands fair for a brighter and richer future still. (4) It is a life in active progress. It is a life of history. It is a life of experience. 3. The full corn in the ear. (1) It is a condition of substantial possession. It is not a life of uncertain promise, which may never be fulfilled, but of reality and substance. It is not a matter of outward form, but one of precious value—the ear is full of corn. It is a life of weight, of value, and of fitness. (2) It is a stage of maturity. The organs are fully developed, and

the end is fully obtained. It comes up to the expectation of the proprietor. (3) It is a state of triumph. All inherent weakness has been conquered, and a mature life has been gained. Such a life is worth the aim and effort; it is the end of all agents and means of God's grace and providence. 4. It is intended to show us a life having answered its right end. The end of all toil and culture was to make it full and rich in the ear; that period has arrived without a failure, and all rejoice in the fact. Such a life is the highest thing possible, for there is nothing better for us than to answer the end of the Divine plan of wisdom and goodness. II. THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. Divine order is one of progress. Among finite imperfect beings, this is a necessity in law, and a kindness in provision. We are born infants, and we gain strength and knowledge by gradual progression. 1. It is a progress by events. Sometimes there is a discovery made which reveals more in an hour than otherwise in an age. We on a sudden rise to the top of some sunny mountain, and see more by that event than all the travel in the valley below would have shown us all our life—the haziness is removed from the vision in one moment by the revelation of events, and we become truer, stronger, and happier, as by the magic of lightning. The peeping of the blade through the earth, the forming of the ear, and the filling of the ear, are events in the plant which show its advancement, as well as being the means of its progress. Birth, in our natural life, is an event of amazing progress; so is the quickening of our moral sentiments in our religious life; and often the reading of a book, the intercourse with a superior friend, or entrance into a school, become the greatest possible events in our mental life. Nature is full of events, so is religion. They break the monotony of life, and give freshness and force to the general and common in existence, so as to make them varied and attractive. Let us not think that they are not of Divine ordination by reason that they are only rare and occasional; they have their class, laws, and work, as much as the common in every day's transaction. 2. It is a progress of law and order. Progress is only possible by law; the thing that does not advance by law is a retrogression. We may not be able to understand all in the law of life, but we can follow it, for that is both our duty and privilege alike. The law of progress is within the reach of the babe; by submitting to it he advances into true manhood. It is the fixing of the soul upon high objects, using all means given us for that end, and unyielding perseverance in the application. 3. It is a progress through opposing forces and difficulties. Nothing escapes the opposing powers of life. If the little blade could give us the history of days and nights, oh! what a story of difficulties and dangers would it tell us! Can sinful man expect to advance more easily than the beautiful flower or the innocent blade? Human nature is weedy and thorny, a very uncongenial soil for the seed of life. 4. It is a progress in itself imperceivable in its actual process. The growth of the blade is not seen in itself, it is only seen at different epochs. 5. It is a progress hidden in mystery. We speak of things as if we knew them, whereas we know very little more than their existence and their names. No physiologist can explain all the laws of life and growth in the plant; and it can be no amazement if we know as little in the greater thing of spiritual life in the soul. 6. It is a progress of gradual, slow development. The plant does not reach its maturity in one hour, but it is the growth of different seasons, treatment night and day, weeks and months. Good culture can only bring it forward more rapidly, and produce a better quality; it cannot alter the law of gradual advancement. Slow and gradual development of Christian life in our heart and practice corresponds with our powers to bear and to do. If it were all at once, we could not bear it; also its educational power over our patience and hope would be of little value, as well as the perpetual enjoyment which it throws over the whole period of gradual growth. It is dependent upon our activity, and if we acted more earnestly it would be much faster in growth than it is; but if we acted to the top of our strength, used all means, and failed in nothing, it would be still an advancement by degrees. If we are slow in the climbing, we have time to reflect and gain wisdom as we proceed; if it is gradual and tedious, we get more consolidated in the growth and soil. Let us not be discouraged; this is not an exception in our spiritual life, it is the law in other matters much the same. The organs of our bodies, the powers of our minds, reach their full height and maturity little by little. The great building is reared by slow and gradual advancement, and the tall and broad oak reaches its climax maturity through very slow degrees. We have no reason to be discouraged; law is safe and sure; it is as faithful in the slow process as it is in the event of the faster advancement. We have nothing to fear apart from ourselves; enough for us to know that it will be finished in due time if we fail not to give all diligence to

secure the happy result. III. THE CONDITIONAL LAWS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, REQUIRED IN EVERY STAGE OF ITS ADVANCEMENT, AND INVOLVED EVEN IN THE FACT OF ITS EXISTENCE. 1. One condition in the life and growth of the plant is, there must be vital seed. No one with experience thinks of planting lifeless particles, for experience and reason unite to proclaim it hopeless and useless. A mere form or appearance of life is not sufficient; it must be real in the heart of the seed to give life to the plant. Christian truth in its right relation is life, and thus planted and cultivated, produces life in the believing mind and heart that receives it. 2. Another condition in the order of law is, there must be a proper soil to receive the seed. To receive the seed of life, there is a fit soil required in our mind, heart, and conscience. 3. Another law in the growth of the plant is the one of means. The plant you must cultivate, or it will decline into feebleness, and will die. You must water its root, remove destructive weeds from communion with it, take away the thing that shades it, and sometimes you must prop it; these are the means of law and life, and you never say they are hard and unreasonable; you think yourself sufficiently rewarded for all in being able to preserve the life of the plant. Think not that spiritual life requires less at your hands than that of the plant. 4. Another law in the advancement of life, both of the plant and Christian, is variety in unity of operation. Before a little plant can live and grow, you must have combination of elements operating in beautiful harmony for the purpose. The wind must blow, the rain must fall; light, heat, and gases must meet in nice equality and harmonious activity. The absence of one would make the process imperfect; even an inequality would impair the total result of the whole. The law applicable to the plant is analogically the same in Christian life. As in the life of the plant, so there are various elements and agencies required to sustain and carry on the process of Christian life to its full beauty and perfection. Light, faith, love, hope, patience, action, communion, perseverance, and sacrifice, must be united in the delicate and important work of the building up of Christian life. 5. Another law in the economy of life is active exercise. Life is an active thing; it is preserved and advanced by unceasing activity. To preserve Christian life in full and healthy vigour, the whole soul must be in full exercise. 6. Another condition I shall just name—something supernatural, and above and behind life, is required for its existence and growth. Life in the plant, as well as in the heart, is incapable of producing itself, and the source of it must be above and independent of the means which produce and sustain it. (*T. Hughes.*) *What the farm labourers can do and what they cannot do*:—I. We shall, first, learn from our text WHAT WE CAN DO AND WHAT WE CANNOT DO. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground:" this the gracious worker can do. "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how:" this is what he cannot do: seed once sown is beyond human jurisdiction, and man can neither make it spring nor grow. Notice, then, that we can sow. Any man who has received the knowledge of the grace of God in his heart can teach others. We need never quarrel with God because we cannot do everything, if He only permits us to do this one thing; for sowing the good seed is a work which will need all our wit, our strength, our love, our care. Still, wise sowers discover favourable opportunities for sowing, and gladly seize upon them. This seed should be sown often, for many are the foes of the wheat, and if you repeat not your sowing you may never see a harvest. The seed must be sown everywhere, too, for there are no choice corners of the world that you can afford to let alone, in the hope that they will be self-productive. You may not leave the rich and intelligent under the notion that surely the gospel will be found among them, for it is not so: the pride of life leads them away from God. You may not leave the poor and illiterate, and say, "Surely they will of themselves feel their need of Christ." I have heard that Captain Cook, the celebrated circumnavigator, in whatever part of the earth he landed, took with him a little packet of English seeds, and scattered them in suitable places. He would leave the boat and wander up from the shore. He said nothing, but quietly scattered the seeds wherever he went, so that he belted the world with the flowers and herbs of his native land. Imitate him wherever you go; sow spiritual seed in every place that your foot shall tread upon. Let us now think of what you cannot do. You cannot, after the seed has left your hand, cause it to put forth life. I am sure you cannot make it grow, for you do not know how it grows. The text saith, "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." That which is beyond the range of our knowledge is certainly beyond the reach of our power. Can you make a seed germinate? Certainly this is true of the rise and progress of the life of God in the heart. It enters the soul, and

roots itself we know not how. Naturally men hate the Word, but it enters and it changes their hearts, so that they come to love it; yet we know not how. Their whole nature is renewed, so that instead of producing sin it yields repentance, faith, and love; but we know not how. How the Spirit of God deals with the mind of man, how He creates the new heart and the right spirit, how we are begotten again unto a lively hope, we cannot tell. II. Our second head is like unto the first, and consists of WHAT WE CAN KNOW AND WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW. First, what we can know. We can know when we have sown the good seed of the Word that it will grow; for God has promised that it shall do so. Moreover, the earth, which is here the type of the man, "bringeth forth fruit of herself." We must mind what we are at in expounding this, for human hearts do not produce faith of themselves; they are as hard rock on which the seed perishes. But it means this—that as the earth under the blessing of the dew and the rain is, by God's secret working upon it, made to take up and embrace the seed, so the heart of man is made ready to receive and enfold the gospel of Jesus Christ within itself. Man's awakened heart wants exactly what the Word of God supplies. Moved by a divine influence the soul embraces the truth, and is embraced by it, and so the truth lives in the heart, and is quickened by it. Man's love accepts the love of God; man's faith wrought in him by the Spirit of God believes the truth of God; man's hope wrought in him by the Holy Ghost lays hold upon the things revealed, and so the heavenly seed grows in the soil of the soul. The life comes not from you who preach the Word, but it is placed within the Word which you preach by the Holy Spirit. The life is not in your hand, but in the heart which is led to take hold upon the truth by the Spirit of God. Salvation comes not from the personal authority of the preacher, but through the personal conviction, personal faith, and personal love of the hearer. So much as this we may know, and is it not enough for all practical purposes? Still, there is a something which we cannot know, a secret into which we cannot pry. I repeat what I have said before: you cannot look into men's inward parts and see exactly how the truth takes hold upon the heart, or the heart takes hold upon the truth. Many have watched their own feelings till they have become blind with despondency, and others have watched the feelings of the young till they have done them rather harm than good by their rigorous supervision. In God's work there is more room for faith than for sight. The heavenly seed grows secretly. III. Thirdly, our text tells us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE WORK FOR GOD, AND WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT. According to this parable we may expect to see fruit. But we may not expect to see all the seed which we sow spring up the moment we sow it. We are also to expect to see the good seed grow, but not always after our fashion. Like children we are apt to be impatient. Your little boy sowed mustard and cress yesterday in his garden. This afternoon Johnny will be turning over the ground to see if the seed is growing. There is no probability that his mustard and cress will come to anything, for he will not let it alone long enough for it to grow. So is it with hasty workers; they must see the result of the gospel directly, or else they distrust the blessed Word. Certain preachers are in such a hurry that they will allow no time for thought, no space for counting the cost, no opportunity for men to consider their ways and turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart. All other seeds take time to grow, but the seed of the Word must grow before the speaker's eyes like magic, or he thinks nothing has been done. Such good brethren are so eager to produce blade and ear there and then, that they roast their seed in the fire of fanaticism, and it perishes. We may expect also to see the seed ripen. Our works will by God's grace lead up to real faith in those He hath wrought upon by his Word and Spirit; but we must not expect to see it perfect at first. How many mistakes have been made here. Here is a young person under impression, and some good, sound brother talks with the trembling beginner, and asks profound questions. He shakes his experienced head, and knits his furrowed brows. He goes into the corn-field to see how the crops are prospering, and though it is early in the year, he laments that he cannot see an ear of corn; indeed, he perceives nothing but mere grass. "I cannot see a trace of corn," says he. No, brother, of course you cannot; for you will not be satisfied with the blade as an evidence of life, but must insist upon seeing everything at full growth at once. If you had looked for the blade you would have found it; and it would have encouraged you. For my own part, I am glad even to perceive a faint desire, a feeble longing, a degree of uneasiness, or a measure of weariness of sin, or a craving after mercy. Will it not be wise for you, also, to allow things to begin at the beginning, and to be satisfied with their being small at the first? See the blade of desire, and then

watch for more. Soon you shall see a little more than desire; for there shall be conviction and resolve, and after that a feeble faith, small as a mustard seed, but bound to grow. Do not despise the day of small things. IV. Under the last head we shall consider WHAT SLEEP WORKERS MAY TAKE, AND WHAT THEY MAY NOT TAKE; for it is said of this sowing man, that he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how. But how may a good workman for Christ lawfully go to sleep? I answer, first, he may sleep the sleep of restfulness born of confidence. Also take that sleep of joyful expectancy which leads to a happy waking. Take your rest because you have consciously resigned your work into God's hands. But do not sleep the sleep of unwatchfulness. A farmer sows his seed, but he does not therefore forget it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On the analogies which obtain between the natural and the spiritual husbandry:*—A man may be qualified for practically carrying forward a process, of whose hidden steps and of whose internal workings he is most profoundly ignorant. This is true in manufactures. It is true in the business of agriculture. And it holds eminently true in the business of education. How many are the efficient artizans, for example, in whose hands you may at all times count on a right and prosperous result; but who are utterly in the dark as to the principles of that chemistry in their respective arts by the operation of which the result is arrived at. And how many a ploughman, who knows best how to prepare the ground, and who knows best how to deposit the seed for the object of a coming harvest; and yet, if questioned upon the arcana of physiology, or of those secret and intermediate changes by which the grain in the progress of vegetable growth is transformed into a complete plant ripened and ready for the use of man, would reply, in the language of my text, that he knoweth not how. And, in like manner, there is many a vigorous and successful educationist, who does come at the result of good scholarship, whether in Christianity or in common learning—and that without ever theorizing on the latent and elementary principles of the subject upon which he operates—without so much as casting one glance at the science of metaphysics—a science more inscrutable still than that of physiology; and which, by probing into the mysteries of the human spirit, would fain discover how it is that a truth is first deposited there by communication, and then takes root in the memory, and then warms into an impression, and then forms into a sentiment, and then ripens into a purpose, and then comes out to visible observation in an effect or a deed or a habit of actual performance. There are thousands who, in the language of our text, know not how all this comes about, and yet have, in point of fact and of real business, set the process of it effectively agoing. We cannot afford at present to trace all the analogies which obtain between a plant from the germination of its seed, and a Christian from the infancy of his first principles. We shall, in the first place, confine ourselves to one or two of these analogies; and, secondly, endeavour to show how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy admit of having a certain measure of light thrown upon them, by the comparison which is laid before us in this parable between the work of a teacher and the work of a husbandman. I. IN THE AGRICULTURAL PROCESS THERE IS MUCH THAT IS LEFT TO BE DONE BY NATURE, AND IN A WAY THAT THE WORKMAN KNOWETH NOT HOW; NOR IS IT AT ALL NECESSARY THAT HE SHOULD. He puts forth his hand and sets a mechanism agoing—the principles of which he, with his head, is wholly unable to comprehend. The doing of his part is indispensable, but his knowledge of the way in which Nature doeth her part is not indispensable. Now, it is even so in the work of spiritual husbandry. There is an obvious part of it that is done by the agency of man; and there is a hidden part of it which is independent of that agency. What more settled and reposing than the faith which a husbandman has in the constancy of Nature. He knows not how it is; but, on the strength of a gross and general experience, he knows that so it is. And it were well in a Christian teacher to imitate this confidence. There is in it both the wisdom of experience and the sublime wisdom of piety. But, again, it is the work of the husbandman to cast the seed into the ground. It is not his work to manufacture the seed. This were wholly above him and beyond him. In like manner, to excogitate and to systematize the truths which we are afterwards to deposit in the minds of those who are submitted to our instruction, were a task beyond the faculties of man. These truths, therefore, are provided to his hand. What his eye could not see, nor his ear hear, has been brought within his reach by a communication from heaven; and to him nothing is left but a simple acquiescence in his Bible, and a faithful exposition of it. Our writers upon education may have done something. They may have scattered a few superficial elegancies over the

face of society, and taught the lovely daughters of accomplishment how to walk in gracefulness their little hour over a paltry and perishable scene. But it is only in as far as they deal in the truths and lessons of the Bible that they rear any plants for heaven, or can carry forward a single pupil to the bloom and the vigour of immortality. And as we have not to manufacture a seed for the operations of our spiritual husbandry, so neither have we to mend it. It is not fit that the wisdom of God should thus be intermeddled with by the wisdom of man. But again—we do not lose sight of the analogy which there is between the work of a spiritual and that of a natural husbandman—when, after having affirmed the indispensableness of casting into the ground of the human heart the pure and the simple Word, we further affirm the indispensableness and the efficacy of prayer. Even after that, in the business of agriculture, man hath performed his handiwork by depositing the seed in the earth—he should acknowledge the handiwork of God, in those high and hidden processes, whether of the atmosphere above or of the vegetable kingdom below, which he can neither control nor comprehend. By the work of diligence which he does with his hand, he fulfils man's parts of the operation. By the prayer of dependence which arises from his heart, he does homage and recognition to God's part of it. And we are not to imagine that prayer is without effect, even in the processes of the natural economy. The same God who framed and who organized our great mundane system has never so left it to the play and the impulses of its own mechanism as to have resigned even for one moment that mastery over it which belongs to Him; but He knows when to give that mysterious touch, by which He both answers prayer, and disturbs not the harmony of the universe which He has formed. It is when man aspires upwards after fellowship with God, and looks and longs for the communications of light and of power from the sanctuary—it is then that God looks with fondest complacency upon man, and lets willingly downward all the treasures of grace upon his soul. It is said of Elijah that, when he prayed, the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. II. We now come to the second thing proposed, which was to show HOW SOME OF WHAT MAY BE CALLED THE LARGER OPERATIONS OF CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY ADMIT OF A CERTAIN MEASURE OF LIGHT BEING THROWN UPON THEM BY THE COMPARISON MADE IN THIS PARABLE BETWEEN THE WORK OF A CHRISTIAN TEACHER AND THE WORK OF A HUSBANDMAN. And first, it may evince to us the efficacy of that Christian teaching, which is sometimes undertaken by men in humble life and of the most ordinary scholarship. Let them have but understanding enough for the great and obvious simplicities of the Bible, and let them have grace enough for devout and depending prayer; and, on the strength of these two properties, they are both wise unto salvation for themselves, and may become the instruments of winning the souls of others also. It is well for the families of our land that the lessons of eternity can fall with effect even from the lips of the cottage patriarch. But this brings us to the last of those analogies between the natural and the spiritual husbandry which we shall at present be able to overtake—an analogy not certainly suggested by the text, but still close enough for the illustration of all which we can now afford to say in defence of those parochial establishments which have done so much, we think, both for the Christianity and the scholarship of our people. A territorial division of the country into parishes, each of which is assigned to at least one minister as the distinct and definite field of his spiritual cultivation—this we have long thought does for Christianity what is often done in agriculture by a system of irrigation. You are aware what is meant by this. Its use is for the conveyance and the distribution of water, that indispensable aliment to all vegetation over the surface of the land. It is thus, for example, that by the establishment of ducts of conveyance the waters of the Nile are made to overspread the farms of Egypt—the country through which it passes. This irrigation, you will observe, does not supply the water. It only conveys it. It does not bring down the liquid nourishment from heaven. It only spreads it abroad upon the earth. Were there no descent of water from above, causing the river to overflow its banks, there is nothing in the irrigation, with its then dry and deserted furrows, which could avail the earth that is below. On the other hand, were there no irrigation, many would be the tracts of country that should have no agriculture and could bring no produce. Let not, therefore, our dependence on the Spirit lead us to despise the machinery of a territorial establishment, and neither let our confidence in machinery lead us to neglect prayer for the descent of living water from on high. (*Dr. Chalmers.*)

Mysterious growth:—We little think how much is always going on in what we may call the underground of life; and how much more we have to do with those secret processes

which underlie everything, than might, at first sight, appear. We are all casting live seeds. Every word, act, look, goes down into somebody's mind, and lives there. You said something—it was false. You said it lightly. But some one heard it, and it lodged in his mind; it was a seed to him. It found something in that man's mind that was congenial to it; and so it struck a root; it ramified; it fructified. It led on to other thoughts; then it became a word or an action in that man's life; and his word and act did to another heart just what yours did to him. This is the dark side of a grand truth. Now read the bright side. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed," &c. The sower of this seed is properly the Lord Jesus Christ; but He uses men. The truth in a man's heart propagates—but secretly. We are to believe in the independent power that there is in God's Word to do its own work in a man's heart. There is something kindred between a particular word and some affection or thought in a man's mind before it can take effect. Perhaps the word will incline a man to give up some sin he has previously indulged; may awaken a sense of dissatisfaction with the world; may beget a painful sense of sin. However it be, there will be a great deal passing in the mind which does not meet the eye. Fathers and mothers, who have cast the early seed, you have slept for very sorrow. You see nothing. Wait on. The springing and the growing will be you know not where, and you know not how. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The seed growing secretly*:—1. God does His work silently. 2. God does His work slowly. 3. God does His work surely. Underneath all apparent disasters His kingdom comes. I. In expounding this parable observe that this law of God supposes HUMAN EFFORT. II. It supposes HUMAN CONFIDENCE quite as much as human effort. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Progressive religion*:—I. God carries on His work of grace by THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF MEN—"As if a man should cast seed." II. This work of grace is often for some time UNPERCEIVED. Thus the seed of Divine grace sown in the heart is frequently there when not discerned. It is often concealed owing to the gradual and imperceptible manner in which it is produced; by the privacy of a man's situation, and because of the natural timidity of his temper. It should excite the prayer, "Let Thy work *appear* unto Thy servant," &c. III. Where this work of grace exists it must sooner or later APPEAR—"Springeth and groweth up." IV. It is GRADUAL in its growth—"First the blade," &c. For some time knowledge, faith, love, hope, joy, are small and feeble. But gradually the believer gathers strength. He grows in knowledge and hatred of sin. But let not the weakest be discouraged; the tenderness of Jesus is a strong consolation. V. The work of grace is BENEFICIAL IN ITS PRESENT EFFECTS—"When the fruit is brought forth." The fruit of piety towards God and of usefulness to men. VI. This work of grace is glorious in its FINAL RESULT—"Immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." The gathering of saints to heaven is God's harvest. The value which God attaches to His own people, and the tender care which He exercises over them. When this work is done they are gathered into heaven. 1. Has the Word of God been sown in your hearts? You have it in your Bibles, but have you received it? 2. You that seem to receive the Word, what evidence have you of its growth? 3. What prospect have you of this glorious result? (*T. Kidd.*) *Changes incident to Christian growth*:—1. The law of growth is one of the necessary laws of life. All life must be actually growing. 2. That growth in Christian life involves changes. Our views of God may be expected to change and grow; of the relationship between God and Christ; of the relative importance and the proportions of different doctrines; our views of God's Word will change. But as these changes pass over the growing Christian he is often greatly distressed. Be humble, but do not fear. Some of the changes incident to Christian growth will affect our views of religious duties and the religious life. As we grow we form a different estimate of the active and passive, of the working and waiting. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *Growth through change*:—And this is the peculiarity of growth in animal life—it is growth through change. Think of the silkworm. It is first a little egg; within it life is developing; presently the worm comes creeping forth; again and again it casts its skin, changing until it passes into a state like death, changing once more into a winged form, full of beauty. These growings by change have been illustrated from the peculiarities of the ride by railway into the City of Edinburgh. Sometimes the train passes through flat, well-populated country. Sometimes it hurries through the busy towns, over which the dark smoke hangs. Sometimes it passes amid the hills, up winding valleys, and along the murmuring shores, and the travellers are enchanted with varying scenes of natural beauty. Presently it nears its destination, and rushes screaming

into the dark tunnel, which shuts out all light and beauty. That is the last change, and soon it comes forth into the North Loch, and all the full glory of that city of monuments and mansions breaks upon the view. Ever advancing, through changings and growings, we, too, shall come through the valley of the shadow to the city of the great King, and the full glory of holiness and the smile of God. (*Ibid.*) *Soul life and growth imperceptible* :—When a man is building a house he can see it as it goes on. That is an outside matter. There is seam after seam, row after row of stone or brick. Gradually the form of the window or the door rises. The second story, the third story, the building up to the roof appears. He can see it day by day. A man goes into his garden and plants, for spring, the early lettuce, or radish, or whatever it may be. He may sit up all night with spectacles and a lantern, but he will not see anything going on; and yet there is something going on which is vitally connected with the whole operation of vegetable development. The seed has not been in the ground an hour before it feels its outward husk swelling by imbibing moisture. It has not been for ten hours in the warm soil before it begins to feel that the material in the seed itself is chemically affected, changed. Many a seed has not been twenty-four hours in the ground before there is an impulse in it at one end to thrust down a root, and at the other end to thrust up a plumule, or the beginning of a visible stalk; but it makes no noise. It is like Solomon's Temple; it is a structure that is built without the sound of a hammer; and whatever it may come to, all the earlier processes of germination and development are invisible and are silent; for if you take it out into the light it will not grow. The seed needs warmth, moisture, and luminous darkness—that is to say, considerable darkness, and yet a little invisible light. So it is with the spiritual life. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christian life long invisible* :—I knew a young man in Boston, whose father was rich. He had genius, particularly in the formative, sculptural art; and his amusement was in making busts and little clay statues. One lucky day, the father lost all his property, and the young man was thrown out of business, and had to work for his own livelihood. He had already made the busts of friends, and when the motives to indolence were taken away from him, when the golden chair was broken, and he had to get up and go to work, he said to himself, "What can I do for a living better than this?" Well, he has come to the artist state already, unconsciously, not expecting to be a professional artist, simply following his taste; but the moment he puts out his sign, showing that he would like to have custom for the sake of self-support, then everybody says, "He has become an artist." He has been an artist a good while, but it is just being developed before the public. The roots of the thing were in him long ago. (*Ibid.*) *Moral changes sometimes unconsciously wrought* :—When I travelled in Italy I knew the line between Italy and Austria. We all had to go out and have our trunks examined and our passports *viséd*. We were all of us hurried out suspiciously, as if we were contrabands. Then we went over, and I knew I was in Austria. But in America you can go from one State to another, as there is no Custom House, thank God, on the lines; as there are no passports required; as there is nothing to interrupt the journey. You glide into the State of New York from Connecticut, from New York into Pennsylvania, and from Pennsylvania into Ohio, and you do not think you have made any change in the State, though you have really. You bring a person up in Christian nurture, and in the admonition of the Lord, in the household, and he is gaining more light; he is adapting the light which he has; and he comes into that state of mind in which all he wants in order to realize that he is a Christian is to wake up into consciousness. (*Ibid.*) *The helplessness of the spiritual husbandman* :—We have in this a most simple, yet striking, representation of the business and, at the same time, of the helplessness of the spiritual husbandman. Unto the ministers of the gospel, who are the great moral labourers in the field of the world, there is entrusted the task of preparing the soil and of casting in the seed. And if they bring to this task all the fidelity and all the diligence of intent and single-eyed labourers; if they strive to make ready the ground by leading men to clear away the weeds of an unrighteous practice, and to apply the spade and ploughshare of a resistance to evil, and a striving after good; and if, then, by a faithful publication of the grand truths of the gospel, they throw in the seed of the Word, they have reached the boundary of their office and also of their strength; and are to the full as powerless to the making the seed germinate, and send forth a harvest, as the husbandman to the causing the valleys to stand thick with corn. And, indeed, in the spiritual agriculture, the power of the husbandman is even more circumscribed than in the natural. With all the pains with which a minister

of Christ may ply at the duties of his office, he can never be sure that the ground is fit for receiving the grain: he must just do always, what the tiller of the natural soil is never reduced to do, run the risk of casting the seed upon the rock, or of leaving it to be devoured by the fowls of the air. (*H. Melvill.*) *Seed growing though unrecognized:*—Ministers require to be very cautious in judging as to the influence of the truth among their hearers. Amidst much that is externally unfavourable, and even hostile, that truth may be operating, producing conviction, checking long-cherished sins, and subduing the pride of the corrupt heart. It is a very agreeable and self-flattering thing for a man to say that because religion does not manifest itself in other men in the same way it does in him, therefore these people have no religion. This is very common, and is in reality but a branch of that master sin of intolerance, which has so often been crushing all the charities of our nature; and even amidst the solemnity of devotional exercises, despising and invading the conventional decencies of life. Often, when we do not see it, religion is at work; often, when we never suspected it, it has made considerable progress. Its influence is sweet, makes no noise, and has no ostentatious signs. We must not forget the mistake of Elijah, a mistake into which ministers and others have not unfrequently fallen. When he supposed himself to stand alone the defender of the truth, there were seven thousand in Israel doing daily homage to it. If he had been told seventy, it would have been remarkable—if seven hundred, more so; but seven thousand was altogether astonishing. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." In obscure places, in noiseless retirements, and without one arresting sign, the truth takes effect. The minister is not thinking of it. The very members of the family are not thinking of it. Daily companions and friends are not thinking of it. There is no profession, no controversy, no street-shouts, no exclusiveness, no badges of partizanship; but nevertheless, on the unseen arena of thought, the truth is establishing its power, achieving its triumphs, subduing desire after desire, purpose after purpose, and will at last yield peace and joy unspeakable. (*Archibald Bennie.*) *Growth unexplained:*—Who shall scrutinize the agency by which the Word is applied to the conscience? Who shall explain how, after weeks, it may be, or months, or years, during which the seed has been buried, there will often unexpectedly come a moment when the preached Word shall rise up in the memory, and a single text, long ago heard, and to all appearance forgotten, overspread the soul with the big thoughts of eternity? It is a mystery which far transcends all our powers of investigation, how spirit acts upon spirit, so that whilst there are no outward tokens of an applied machinery, there is going on a mighty operation, even the effecting a moral achievement which far surpasses the stretch of all finite ability. We are so accustomed to that change which takes place in a sinner's conversion that we do not ascribe to it in right measure its characteristic of wonderful. Yet wonderful, most wonderful it is—wonderful in the secrecy of the process, wonderful in the nature of the result! I can understand a change wrought on matter; I have no difficulty in perceiving that the same substance may be presented in quite a different aspect, and that mechanical and chemical power may make it pass through a long series of transformations; but where is the mechanism which shall root from the heart the love of sin? where the chemistry which shall so sublimate the affections, that they will mount towards God? It is the eternal revolution which I have no power of scrutinizing, except in its effect. (*H. Melvill.*) *Seed never idle:*—Though it is very slow and imperceptible in its growth, still the seed never really lies idle. From the moment of its first start to its final ripening, it is always on its way; it never once stops, far less does it ever go backward. It can never return into the blade out of which it originally sprang; it cannot even stand for long together without exhibiting decided signs of its growth. Now and then, perhaps, the weather may be very much against it, still it keeps waiting for the first favourable change; and as soon as ever this appears, it takes immediate advantage of it, and starts forward again on its way. And so, too, it is with the good seed in the heart. Trials and temptations may check its growth there for a while; but it is only for a while; and at the first removal, or lessening of these, it again goes on its way as before. It never goes back any more than the ear goes back into the blade out of which it has sprung. It has but one way of growing, and that is heavenwards. (*H. Harris.*) *Growth of seed mysterious:*—In saying that the seed groweth up we "know not how," the mysterious nature and working of grace is hinted at. It is not regulated by natural laws, though they afford many illustrative analogies. It cannot be reduced to a science, like agriculture or mechanics.

There is no philosophy of the Holy Ghost. Regeneration is not the result of any forces which human reason defines and gauges, much less controls; and the Divine life which is breathed into the soul by the mysterious visitation of the Spirit, blowing like the wind, of which we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth, is afterwards maintained by supernatural supplies from the same invisible source, and is "hid with Christ in God." (*Josiah D. Smith.*) *The truth is God's seed:*—The one great consideration to be kept in view is, that the truth is God's seed. It is no theory or set of maxims of man's devising—adapted in the short-sighted calculations of human reason to certain ends; but it is God's selected instrument, and in that very fact we have at once obligation and encouragement to use it. That moral world where its effects are produced is His, as well as the firmament of heaven, or the green fields of the earth—naked to His eye, and subject to His control. He has adapted it to the end which He has in view—He who poised the stars in their spheres, and so skilfully adjusted the exquisite mechanism of man, beast, and bird. Besides, he has annexed a Divine, ever-active, ever-present agency to the use of it. It is not left to force its way amidst obstructions; but, while Providence often appears to pioneer its way into the hearts of men, that gracious Spirit which moved of old on the face of the waters, goes forth with it, gives to its brief sentences the power of thunder, and to its appeals the withering force of the lightning flash, and makes it to revolutionize and transform the whole inner world of thought and desire. Hence the rapid and extraordinary triumphs with which it has glorified the annals of the Church; the temples of idolatry shaken to their foundations; ancient prejudices melted like wax; proud passions crushed and eradicated; superstition, pleasure, philosophy, all put to flight. The power of opinion is not unfrequently greatly extolled, and it is wonderful. A single truth, clearly announced, troubles a continent. A small thought goes forth from one man's breast, and achieves victories denied to armed hosts and costly expeditions. But all the triumphs of opinion are a mere trifle compared with the triumphs of the truth of God; truth, whose banners have been planted upon the domes of heathen temples, have waved above the ruins of thrones, and have been borne in bloodless fame to the ends of the earth. This is the true seed, of which the harvest is eternal life. (*Archibald Bennie.*) *Conversion gradual:*—Is there not a great deal too much anxiety to recognize in conversion something sudden and surprising, some word or thing arresting or transfixing the soul? It is possible by electricity to make seeds suddenly germinate and prematurely grow, but this is not healthy, fruitful life. People want something like this in conversion; they can hardly believe in a new life unless it begins thus. Conviction must come like lightning—a blaze in the midst of a great darkness. Is it not better to come like sunlight—a gradual, illuminating, diffusive thing? If it do come like lightning, let us be thankful that God does so break in upon the darkness of our day. Hardened, immoral men are sometimes thus smitten to the earth. More commonly and more naturally it comes like light "shining more and more unto the perfect day." The pious nurture of infancy and childhood deepening the religious heart, and developing the religious life—"first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." But let it begin as it may, the process is one of continuous growth, innocence maturing into holiness, passion deepening into principle, struggle developing strength, laborious act becomes easy habit; a gracious mellowing influence permeating and glorifying the entire life; the life of the soul growing, not as a fragile succulent gourd, but as a close-grained tree, every day and every experience adding growth and strength. (*H. Allon.*) *The order of growth:*—Not only does the corn always go on growing, but it always observes the same order and succession in its growth; "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is an order which is never reversed or altered; it is always the full corn in the ear which is the last to show itself. And so it is with the heart. First, it is always repentance and sorrow for sin; then, faith in Jesus Christ; then, without losing these, any more than the grain loses the protection of the blade and the ear, it goes on to holiness of life, and a sure hope in God's promises; and last of all to love, love the ripened corn, the fulfilling of the ear. (*H. Harris.*) *Hope in spite of sight:*—This is a parable of hope. It teaches us to be hopeful when nothing hopeful is seen. The earth which seems the grave is really the cradle of the seed, and its death is its life. Except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. It is God's seed, it suits the soil, the sunshine and the shower favour it, ever so many mysteries too great for me to grasp are on its side, and God has promised the harvest. Why lose heart then? The reaping time shall come by

and by. What though it seems unlikely? Look at that bare, brown field in spring. What more unlikely than that it shall wave with golden grain? Every harvest is a perfect miracle. You see a foolish, wicked boy, into whose heart a praying mother has dropped the good seed. All seems lost; but wait, and he becomes a great Christian like John Newton, like thousands whose biographies are the best commentaries upon this parable. (*J. Wells, M.A.*) *The young convert*:—There is first the convert in the young days of his godliness—the green blades just breaking through the soil, and giving witness to the germination of the seed. This is ordinarily a season of great promise. We have not, and we look not for the rich fruit of a matured, well-disciplined piety, but we have the glow of verdant profession —everything looks fresh. The young believer scarcely calculates on any interruption, and as though there were no blighting winds, and no nipping frosts, and no sweeping hail to be expected, in the spiritual agriculture, the tender shoot rises from the ground, and glistens in the sunshine. (*H. Melvill.*) *The anxieties of growth in the ear*:—Next comes the ear; and this is a season of weariness and of watching. Sometimes there will be long intervals without any perceptible growth; sometimes the corn will look sickly, as though blasted by the mildew; sometimes the storm will rush over it, and almost level it with the earth. All this takes place in the experience of the Christian. The spiritual husbandman and the natural know the like anxieties in observing the ear of which they have sown the seed. How slow is sometimes the growth in grace! how slight are the tokens of life! how yellow and how drooping the corn! The sudden gust of temptation, the fatal blight of worldly association, the corroding worm of indwelling corruption,—all these may tell powerfully and perniciously on the rising crop, and cause that often there shall scarcely seem reason to hope that any fruit will eventually be yielded. Who would recognize in the lukewarm, the half-and-half professor, the ardent, the active, and resolute convert? Who would know, in the stunted shrivelled ear, the green blade which had come up like an emerald shoot? We do not indeed say, that in every case there will be these various interruptions and declensions. You may find instances wherein godliness grows uniformly, and piety advances steadily, and even rapidly, towards perfection. The Christian will sometimes ripen for heaven, as though, in place of being exposed to cold air, and wind, and rain, he had been treated as an exotic, and had always been kept under shelter. But, generally, even with those who maintain the most consistent profession, the Christian life is the scene of anxiety and uncertainty; and if it were not that there are gracious promises assuring them that "the bruised reed shall not be broken, nor the smoking flax quenched," often must the spiritual husbandman mourn bitterly over the apparent disappointment of all his best hopes, and surrender himself to the fear, that when the great day of harvest breaks on this creation, the field which had once worn that lovely enamel which gave such promise of an abundant ingathering, will yield nothing to the reaper but the dry and parched stalks, fit only to be bound in bundles for the burning. (*Ibid.*) *Suffering Christians spared*: "*Immediately he putteth in the sickle*":—We must dwell a moment longer upon this; it is a matter full of interest and instruction. It seems often, as we have said, to excite surprise both in the sufferer himself and in others, when a Christian, who has long been eminent for piety, and whose faith had been conspicuous in his works, lingers for months, perhaps even years, in wearisome sickness, as though, notwithstanding the preparation of a righteous life, he needed protracted trial to fit him for the presence of God. But there is, we believe, altogether a mistake in the view which is commonly taken of old age and lingering sickness. Because a man is confined to his room or his bed, the idea seems to be that he is altogether useless. In the ordinary phrase, he is "quite laid by," as though he had no duties to perform when he could no longer perform those of more active life. Was there ever a greater mistake? The sick room, the sick bed, has its special, its appropriate duties, duties to the full as difficult, as honourable, as remunerative, as any which devolve on the Christian whilst yet in his unbroken strength. They are not precisely the same duties as belong to him in health, but they differ only by such difference as a change in outward circumstances and position will always introduce. The piety which he has to cultivate, the resignation which he has to exhibit, the faith which he has to exercise, the example which he has to set—oh, talk not of the sick man as of a man laid by! Harder duties, it may be, ay, deeds of more extensive usefulness, are required from him who lingers on the couch, than from the man of health in the highest and most laborious of Christian undertakings. Is there, then, any cause for surprise if a Christian be left to linger in sickness, to wear away tedious months in racking

pain and slow decay? Is it at all in contradiction to the saying that "so soon as the fruit is ripe, immediately he putteth in the sickle"? Not so! The fruit is not necessarily ripe; the man's work is not necessarily done, because he is what you call "laid by," and can take no part in the weightier bustle of life. It is they who turn many to righteousness that are "to shine as stars in the firmament;" and is there no sermon from the sick bed? Has the sick bed nothing to do with publishing and adorning the gospel? Yea, I think, then, an awful and perilous trust is committed to the sick Christian—friends, children, neighbours, the church at large, look to him for some practical exhibition of the worth of Christianity. If he be fretful, or impatient, or full of doubts and fears, they will say—Is this all that the gospel can do for a man in a season of extremity? If, on the other hand, he be meek and resigned, and able to testify to God's faithfulness to his word, they will be taught—and nothing teaches like example—that Christianity can make good its pretensions; that it is a sustaining, an elevating, a death-conquering religion. And who shall calculate what may be wrought through such practical exhibitions of the power and preciousness of the gospel? I, for one, will not dare to affirm that more is done towards converting the careless, confirming the wavering, and comforting the desponding, by the bold champions who labour publicly in the making Christ known; than by many a worn-down invalid, who preaches to a household or a neighbourhood by simple unquestioning dependence on God: I, for one, can believe that he who dies the death of trial, passing almost visibly, whilst yet in the exercise of every energy, from a high post of usefulness to the kingdom of glory, may have fewer at the judgment to witness to the success of his labours, than many a bedridden Christian, who, by a beautiful submission, waited, year after year, his summons to depart. (*Ibid.*) *Originality in character*:—We observe the sacredness of individual character—of originality. It bears fruit of itself in its own individual development. The process is never exactly repeated. Life is no mechanical thing. It is everywhere alike, yet different. Count the leaves and grains, measure the height of the trees, examine the leaves of an oak. So in the Christian life. No two men think the same, or believe the same. It is always so in the highest life, and in national character. There is ever a beautiful diversity. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *Life expansion:*—Real life is that which has in it a principle of expansion. It "springs and grows up." Moreover, it is not only growth, but tendency ever towards a higher life. Life has innate energy, and will unfold itself according to the law of its own being. Its law is progress towards its own possible completeness: such completeness as its nature admits of. By this we distinguish real life from seeming life. As you cut the stone and carve it, so it remains. But cut a tree; lop off its branches, strip it; it will shoot and sprout. Only deadness remains unaltered. Trees in winter all seem alike. Spring detects life. Man can impart motion, and make automatons. Growth and power he cannot give. This is the principle of all life. And in the higher life especially there is not only expansion but progress. The limpet on the rock only increases in volume. The plant develops into the flower. The insect develops from the egg into the caterpillar, grows, spins itself a coffin, and becomes hard and shelly. But the life goes on, and it emerges a brilliant butterfly. (*Ibid.*) *Hardihood of character*:—Real life is that which has individual, independent energy: it "bears fruit of itself." Observe its hardihood. It needs no petting. It is no hot-house plant. Let the wild winds of heaven blow upon it, with frost, scorching sun, and storms. Religion is not for a cloister, but for life, real hardy life. Observe Christ's religion, and compare it with the fanciful religion of cloistered men. Religious books which speak of fastidious, retiring, feeble delicacy. The best Christianity grows up in exposure. The life of Christ Himself is an illustration of this. So too that of the apostles in the world, and that of a Christian in the army. Again, it can be left to itself safely. It will grow. Ministers need not torment themselves about the issue of their work, for God gives the increase. It can be left: for it is God in the soul. When once the farmer has sown, he can do little more except weed. (*Ibid.*) *The ear*:—The ear. Marked by vigour and beauty. Vigour: erect, with decision, fixed principles, and views. Beauty. Describe the flowering petals, &c. Solemn season. What promise! What thoughtfulness. Yet blight is more frequent now—prostration. (*Ibid.*) *Moral ripeness*:—Full corn in the ear. Marked by maturity and ripeness. It has no further stage of development on earth. It must die and sprout again. But its present work is done. What is ripeness? Completeness, all powers equally cultivated. It is the completion of the principles, feelings, and tempers. This period is also marked by humility and by joy. By humility; the head hangs gracefully

down in token of ripeness; always so with men of great attainments. "I am but a little child," said Newton, "picking up pebbles on the shore of the vast ocean of truth." By joy; the happy aspect of waving corn! But its beauty is chiefly felt by the thoughtful man. It is the calm deep joy of the harvest being safe, and famine impossible. The food of a nation waves before him. (*Ibid.*) *Growth in the natural and in the spiritual world*:—The analogy between growth in the natural world and growth in the spiritual world must be maintained in its integrity, with regard at once to spontaneity, slowness, and gradation. Growth in the spiritual world as in the natural is spontaneous, in the sense that it is subject to definite laws of the spirit over which man's will has small control. The fact is one to be recognized with humility and thankfulness. With humility, for it teaches dependence on God; a habit of mind which brings along with it prayerfulness, and which, as honouring to God, is more likely to insure ultimate success than a self-reliant zeal. With thankfulness, for it relieves the heart of the too heavy burden of an undefined, unlimited responsibility, and makes it possible for the minister of the Word to do his work cheerfully, in the morning sowing the seed, in the evening withholding not his hand; then retiring to rest to enjoy the sound sleep of the labouring man, while the seed sown springs and grows apace, he knoweth not how. Growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is, further, a process which demands time and gives ample occasion for the exercise of patience. Time must elapse even between the sowing and the brairding; a fact to be laid to heart by parents and teachers, lest they commit the folly of insisting on seeing the blade at once, to the probable spiritual hurt of the young intrusted to their care. Much longer time must elapse between the brairding and the ripening. That a speedy sanctification is impossible we do not affirm; but it is, we believe, so exceptional that it may be left altogether out of account in discussing the theory of Christian experience. Once more, growth in the spiritual world, as in the natural, is graduated; in that region as in this there is a blade, a green ear, and a ripe ear. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Imperceptible growth*:—You tell your child that this pine-tree out here in the sandy field is one day going to be as large as that great sonorous pine that sings to every wind in the wood. The child, incredulous, determines to watch and see whether the field-pine really does grow and become as large as you say it will. So, the next morning, he goes out and takes a look at it, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a bit." The next week he goes out and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown yet. Father said it would be as large as the pine-tree in the wood, but I do not see any likelihood of its becoming so." How long did it take the pine-tree in the wood to grow? Two hundred years. Then men who lived when it began to grow have been buried, and generations besides have come and gone since then. And do you suppose that God's kingdom is going to grow so that you can look at it, and see that it has grown during any particular day? You cannot see it grow. All around you are things that are growing, but that you cannot see grow. And if it is so with trees, and things that spring out of the ground, how much more is it so with the kingdom of God? That kingdom is advancing surely, though it advances slowly, and though it is invisible to us. . . . You cannot see it, even if you watch for it; but there it is; and if, after a while, you go and look at it, you will be convinced that it has been advancing, by the results produced. You will find that things have been done, though you could not see them done. Men are becoming better the world over, though you cannot trace the process by which they are becoming better. Christ's kingdom goes forward from age to age, though you cannot discern the steps by which it is going forward. While men, as individuals, pass off from the stage of life, God's work does not stop. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The law of growth in the kingdom of God*:—I. In the first place, we shall see that we ought never to be discouraged in a true Christian work, of whatever kind, by what seems a slow growth. II. We may see that we are never to be discouraged in our efforts for Christ's kingdom by adverse circumstances; nor by any unexpected combination of these, and their prolonged operation. III. Let us remember that good influences are linked to good issues in this world, as the seed to its fruitage; and that so every effort for the good of mankind, through the kingdom of Christ, shall have its meet result. IV. Let us remember, too, as a thing which illustrates all the rest, that God is within and behind all forces that tend to enlarge and perfect His kingdom, as He is beneath the physical forces which bring harvest in its season, and set on the springing seed its coronal. He never forsakes a true work for Himself, and is certain to carry it to ultimate success. V. Let us remember what the glory of the harvest shall be in this developing kingdom

of God; and in view of that let us constantly labour with more than fidelity, with an eager enthusiasm that surpasses all obstacles, makes duty a privilege, and transmutes toil into joy! (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *The unfolding seed*:—What a wonderful thing is the germination of a seed! What scalpel so keen as to lay bare, what microscope so searching as to detect, that subtle force hidden in the elementary initial cell, which we vaguely call the principle of life? Yet there it is, lying in solemn mystery, ready to burst forth into vigour whenever the conditions of life are fulfilled. To the thoughtful man there is something inexpressively marvellous in this quickening of the seed. This is why botany is a more wonderful science than astronomy, the violet a sublimer thing than Alcyone. All that the scientist can do is to trace sequences; he cannot explain the initial force. He can describe the plant; he cannot expound the plant. The seed springeth up and groweth, he knoweth not how. If he could explain it, he would be a philosopher indeed. In this particular, at least, the parable in Mark iv. 26-29 is fitly styled, "The parable of the seed growing secretly." Again: Not the least wonderful of the phenomena of plant growth is this: it is, at least apparently, automatic. "The earth yieldeth fruit of herself." It is the echo of the divine *dixit* on the third day of the creative week: "Let the earth bring forth plants; and the earth brought forth plants." Not that the soil is the source of vegetation—it is only the sphere of vegetation; not that the soil is the sire of the plant—it is only, so to speak, the matrix of the plant. Nevertheless, so far as appearances go, it does seem as though the soil were a thing of life, bringing forth fruit of herself. There lies the seed buried in the ground. It needs no one to come and touch its pent-up potentialities. It springs up independently of man. True, it is for man to plant the seed, and supply conditions of growth. But it is not for man to cause the seed to germinate or to fructify. The process, so far as man is concerned, is strictly automatic. Verily, the plant does seem to be a living person, self-conscious and self-regulating. But the processes of vegetation are not only mysterious and automatic, they are also gradual. The kernel does not become the full corn in the ear in an instant. In the case of cereals, months intervene between the sowing and the reaping; in the case of fruit trees, years intervene between the planting and the gathering. Nature, at least in the sphere of life and growth, does nothing by leaps. The processes of vegetation are also as orderly as they are gradual. They follow each other in due and regular succession: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The kernel does not become the plump golden corn except by way of the blade. And all these processes issue in fruit. The harvest is but the unfolded seed, unfolding in orderly succession along the axis of growth; and the axis has as its purpose fruit. It is the very nature of the growth, the very law of the seed, to unfold and culminate in crop. And now our farmer comes again into view. Having sown the seed, he went away, confidently leaving it to its own inherent forces. But now that the fruit has ripened, he reappears, and, putting in his sickle, he shouts: "Harvest home!" Such is the parable of the unfolding seed. And now let us ponder the meaning of the parable. In other words, let us trace some of the analogies between the unfolding seed and the unfolding kingdom of God and Christianity. I. The growth of Christianity is MYSTERIOUS. As the seed springs up and grows, we know not how, so it is with the kingdom of God. Take, for example, the very beginning of Christianity, the miraculous conception in Nazareth. Who is there that can understand it? Incomparably more mysterious is it than the germination of any seed. Or take the problem of the growth of Christianity—I mean the genuine, original Christianity, truth as it is in Jesus. Once, like a grain of mustard seed, it was the smallest of seeds; but now it has become the largest of herbs, overshadowing with its blessed canopy that fairest portion of the world which we fondly call Christendom. But how came it thus to spread? Because the doctrine of the cross has been preached. And the doctrine of the cross is to the wise men of this world, in an eminent sense, foolishness. Who will explain this mystery, namely, that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man, the weakness of God stronger than the strength of men? How elaborately the solution of this problem has been undertaken, and how wretched the failure, is strikingly seen in the famous fifteenth chapter of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Or take the growth of Christianity in the case of any individual soul. How secret and underground is the process! How subtle the workings of the Divine life within! The Christian is a mystery even to himself. His life is a life hid with Christ in God. II. Again: AS THE SEED GROWS AUTOMATICALLY, the earth yielding fruit of herself, SO GROWS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Christianity is in its own inherent nature self-vital and self-evolving. See how like a thing of life it is. Behold its wondrously absorbing power, subsidizing to its own purposes, and assimilating into its own growing structure, whatever there is of worth in learning, or wealth or influence, or statesmanship, or sect, or providences. III. The kingdom of God, like the seed which GROWS GRADUALLY, stage by stage, does not burst forth full-grown, like panoplied Minerva from the cloven brow of Jove. See how slow has been the growth of Christendom, taken as a matter of geography. Nearly two millenniums have rolled away since the heavenly Sower declared that His field was the world; and yet by far the larger part of that field is still heathen, never as yet sown with the heavenly seed. Again: See how gradual has been the growth in respect to the moral character of Christendom. More than eighteen centuries have swept away since the Lord of the kingdom pronounced His Beatitudes, and yet there are still in His Church the proud, and the censorious, and the avaricious, and the quarrelsome, and the revengeful. Nevertheless, for let us be just, there has been real growth. We have seen idolatry shaken, slavery abolished, intemperance checked, monopoly curbed, woman emancipated, brotherhood asserted, war preparing to go into perpetual exile. But how tedious has been the growth. In like manner, how slow is the growth in the case of each individual Christian. How slow this unfolding along the axis of Christ's character! In this is seen the immense advantage of early piety, for it takes a long, long time to unfold into the full-grown man, even the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. IV. Just as the seed does not leap instantly or whimsically into the fruit, but unfolds itself in ORDERLY SUCCESSION—first the tender blade, then the swelling ear, then the ripe grain in the ear—so it is with the seed of the kingdom, or God's truth. This is true in respect to doctrine. First Athanasius, the exponent of the doctrine of Christ; then Augustine, the exponent of the doctrine of Man; then Anselm, the exponent of the doctrine of Grace; then Luther, the exponent of the doctrine of Faith; even faith in that Divine Christ whose grace saves sinful man. Nor has the growth, or advancing order of due succession, ceased. The problem of this present age is the doctrine of the Church, or what constitutes the true body of Christ. And even now we see faint glimmers of the final doctrine—the parousia, or the doctrine of last things. And all this is in due succession; advancing from the Christ who saves to the heaven which is the issue of His saving. And this law of orderly unfolding is equally true in respect to personal character. Do not be so unphilosophical, then, as to look for the full-bearded grain of saintliness preceding the blade of youthful piety; the ripe fruits of the Spirit clustered around the subterranean root. First little children; then young men; then fathers. But there is one more likeness of the kingdom of God to the seed. V. As the unfolding seed has FRUIT FOR ITS ISSUE, so it is with the seed of the kingdom, or truth as it is in Jesus. When the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come. Christianity means something more than sowing: it also means reaping. Do not be over-anxious. Christian responsibility does have its limits. Beware of Uzziah's sin of distrust. Plant faithfully the seed, and then go trustfully away. (*G. D. Boardman, D.D.*)

Vers. 30, 32. **It is like a grain of mustard seed.**—*The parable of the mustard seed:*—In the parable before us, the unity of the kingdom becomes conspicuous, the individuality of its members subordinate. The figure is changed accordingly. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree." The kingdom is a tree; its subjects are as birds sheltering under its shadow. As it grows and spreads out its branches, it is shown that it has been planted by God for the spiritual good of men. The kingdom here appears as an organic whole, a source of blessing for all who come under its shade. Taking the illustration in its earliest stages, we must have regard not only to the "grain of mustard seed," but also to the presence and action of the man who "took it and sowed it in his field." That the agent in sowing this grain of seed is the Son of Man, admits of no doubt. The Saviour is not here represented by the tree; for then would His disciples be the branches, as in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel. He is the Man who sowed His seed in His field. Our Lord having thus a distinct place in the parable, we are precluded from thinking of the tree as a symbol for Christ Himself, and afterwards for His people collectively as His representatives on the earth. Further, we are prevented from seeing here any allusion to the lowliness of the Saviour's birth, or the feebleness of His infancy, understood

by some to be implied in the image of the little seed. The incongruity of the description, "the least of all seeds," as attributed to the Divine Redeemer, is so glaring as to warn us against such methods of interpretation. The kingdom is here represented as something to which men come, and in coming to which they receive shelter and comfort. At first sight this might seem to point to the Church, as the outward manifestation of the kingdom—a view which might have been accepted, had the branches of the tree represented the members of the Church. But when the members are not the branches, but are sheltered among the branches, something distinct from the Church seems intended. Both in this parable, and in that of the leaven, the reference is clearly to the truth of the kingdom, as in the parable of the sower the seed is the Word of the kingdom. This parable is concerned with the outward exhibition of the truth; the leaven, with the inward and hidden application of it. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of truth; this truth is displayed to the world in outward manifestation, and also applied to the souls of men as an unseen influence. We have accordingly two parables: the one representing the visible, the other the hidden, operation of the truth revealed in Jesus. The truth of the gospel —the truth as to the pardoning mercy and renewing grace provided in Jesus, was as a very little seed, planted in the earth by the Messiah, and that so quietly that the act hardly attracted the attention of the world. The significance of the act was not understood even by those who observed it. To the future was entrusted the discovery of the importance for the world of this little seed. It was destined to spring up and attain a great stature, spreading itself forth on every side, attracting attention all around. (*Dr. Calderwood.*) *An encouraging parable*:—No doubt other figures might have been chosen in abundance, more suggestive of the great after-development of the kingdom of Christ—such forest-trees, *e.g.*, as the oak of Bashan or cedar of Lebanon; but the acorn and cone were both far less adapted to represent the littleness of its initial state. The mustard was probably the smallest seed from which so large a shrub or tree was known to grow. . . . It is not without a purpose that the contrast between the first beginning of His kingdom and its expected future should have been put before the apostles in such a striking form. The parables which had preceded it must have had a most depressing effect upon their minds. They showed that of the seed sown in men's hearts, three parts would be lost to one saved; and that the field carefully planted with the best of seeds too often mocked all the husbandman's hopes of a goodly crop by a simultaneous growth of noxious weeds. Well then might this parable be spoken to encourage them in their despondency. No doubt the main object of the parable was simply to predict the future increase of the kingdom; but there is surely a side-lesson to be learned from the natural properties of the mustard-seed—from its internal heat and pungency, and from the fact that it must be bruised ere it yield its best virtues. Its inherent stimulating force finds its parallel in the quickening vitality and vigour derived from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and the necessity of crushing it is no inapt figure of the principle which has been embodied in the familiar proverb, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The mustard plant*:—As I was riding across the plain of Akka, on the way to Carmel, I perceived, at some distance from the path, what seemed to be a little forest or nursery of trees. I turned aside to examine them. On coming nearer, they proved to be an extensive field of the plant (mustard) I was so anxious to see. It was then in blossom, full grown, in some cases six, seven, and nine feet high, with a stem or trunk an inch or more in thickness, throwing out branches on every side. I was now satisfied in part. I felt that such a plant might well be called a tree, and, in comparison with the seed producing it, a great tree. But still the branches, or stems of the branches, were not very large, nor, apparently, very strong. Can the birds, I said to myself, rest upon them? Are they not too slight and flexible? Will they not bend or break beneath the superadded weight? At that very instant, as I stood and revolved the thought, lo! one of the fowls of heaven stopped in its flight through the air, alighted down on one of the branches, which hardly moved beneath the shock, and then began, perched there before my eyes, to warble forth a strain of the richest music. All my doubts were now charmed away. I was delighted at the incident. It seemed to me at the moment as if I enjoyed enough to repay me for all the trouble of the whole journey. (*H. B. Hackett, D.D.*) *Small beginnings*:—Some few monks came into Brittany in ages past, when that country was heathen. They built a rude shed in which to dwell, and a chapel of moor stones, and then prepared to till the soil. But, alas! they had not any wheat. Then one spied a robin redbreast sitting on a cross they had set up, and from his beak dangled an ear of wheat.

They drove the bird away, and secured the grain, sowed it, and next year had more; sowed again, and so by degrees were able to sow large fields, and gather abundant harvests. If you go now into Brittany, and wonder at the waving fields of golden grain, the peasants will tell you all came from robin redbreast's ear of corn. And they have turned the redbreast's ear of corn into a proverb. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The Church as an organization* :—A prophecy which has been fulfilled to the letter. In the course of little more than one century after it was uttered, there was not a city of any size in the Roman Empire which had not its bishop, with his priests and deacons preaching the Word of God, baptizing (and so admitting men into the new kingdom), celebrating the Eucharist, and exercising discipline over the faithful. It was not the spread of a philosophy, or of a system of opinions, or even of a gospel only. It was the spread of an organization for purposes of rule and discipline, of exclusion of the unworthy, and of pastoral care over the worthy. And it went on progressing and prospering till it became a great power *in* the world, though not *of* it. For centuries emperors, kings, and people had to take it into account in every department of government and civil policy. Its present weakness is a reaction against its former abuse of its power when it had become secular, and failed to fulfil some of the chief purposes of its institution. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *The Church giving rest and shelter* :—In all ages the Church has afforded to men what the Lord foretold, rest and shelter. No human philosophy has afforded any rest or refuge for the wandering spirit. Only the Church has done this, and the Church has been able to do this because the foundation of all her doctrine has been the Incarnation of her Lord. She teaches the soul to look for the foundation of her hope, not into herself, her frames and feelings, but to the historical facts of the Incarnation, Death, and consequent Resurrection and Ascension of the eternal Son, together with the Church system and sacramental means which are the logical outcome of that Incarnation; and because of this, and this only, she is an abiding refuge. (*Ibid.*) *The seedling of Iona* :—Far out in the western main, is a little island round which for nearly half the year the Atlantic clangs his angry billows, keeping the handful of inhabitants close prisoners. Most of it is bleak and barren; but there is one little bay rimmed round with silvery sand, and reflecting in its waters a slope of verdure. Towards this bay one autumn evening, 1,300 years ago, a rude vessel steered its course. It was a flimsy bark, no better than a huge basket of osiers covered over with the skins of beasts; but the tide was tranquil, and as the boatmen plied their oars, they raised the voice of psalms. Skimming across the bay they beached their coracle and stepped on shore—about thirteen in number. On the green slope they built a few hasty huts and a tiny Christian temple. The freight of that little ship was the gospel, and the errand of the saintly strangers was to tell benighted heathen about Jesus and His love. From the favoured soil of Ireland they had brought a grain of mustard seed, and now they sowed it in Iona. In the conservatory of their little church it throve, till it was fit to be planted out on the neighbouring mainland. To the Picts with their tattoed faces, to the Druids peeping and muttering in their dismal groves, the missionaries preached the gospel. That gospel triumphed. The groves were felled, and where once they stood rose the house of prayer. Planted out on the bleak moorland, the little seed became a mighty tree, so that the hills of Caledonia were covered with the shade; nor must Scotland ever forget the seedling of Iona, and the labours of Columba with his meek Culdees. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *The growth of the little seed* :—This suggests the treatment we ourselves should give the truths of God. An acorn on the mantelpiece, a dry bulb in a dark cupboard, a mustard-seed in your pocket or in a pill-box, won't grow. So texts or truths in the memory are acorns on the shelf, seeds in the pill-box. It is good to have them, but don't leave them there. Ponder over it till it grows wonderful—till its meaning comes out, and you feel some amazement at its unsurmised significance. Ponder it till, like the phosphorescent forms of vegetation, the light of its expanding falls on other passages, and revelation is itself revealed. (*Ibid.*) *The small germ expanded* :—This is a great encouragement for those who are trying to find favour for any useful plan or good idea. As long as it remains in your own mind it is the seed in the mustard-pod; but cast it into the field, the garden, it will grow. Thus John Pound's little scapegrace, bribed by a hot potato to come for his daily lesson, has multiplied into our Ragged Schools, with their thousands of teachers and myriads of scholars. Thus David Nasmith's notion of a house-to-house visitation of the London poor has grown into those Town and City Missions which are the salt, the saving element, in our overcrowded centres. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual growth* :—Impressions growing into resolutions constitute conversion, or

the beginning of the Divine life in man. These impressions may appear insignificant, but when they produce thought, and thought produces action, the result is so great that it creates attention. I. VITALITY. The small seed of the mustard is brimful of life. This we discover not by microscopical analysis, but by observing the changes that are wrought, and the growth which follows. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Divine thoughts are full of life because the Spirit of God is in them. II. ASSIMILATION. The seed was sown, and when life reappeared, the properties of the soil, the rain, the light, and the air, were assimilated to build up the herb. III. EXPANSION. The statue does not grow. The mountain does not expand. Growth is a quality of life only. The process is hidden, but expansion is manifest. The roots spread in the earth, the branches in the air. The growth of devotion is God-ward, that of usefulness man-ward. The power of the gospel creates intellectual, moral, and social expansion. Christ in the heart enlarges its capacity for purity, love, and goodness. "Be ye also enlarged." IV. MATURITY. There are ends to piety; it is not a cycle eternally revolving in the same way, but a definite action with definite results. The life of the believer steps forward, by slow degrees, until it reaches the measure of the stature of Christ. There are initial conditions of faith, but these make way for the stronger stages of entire consecration to God. (*Anon.*) *The growth of the kingdom*:—I. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WAS SMALL AT ITS ESTABLISHMENT. 1. Its numbers were limited. 2. Its subjects were destitute of resources of a visible kind. 3. Its smallness only disguised its real resources. The Church's strength is not to be judged of by sense. II. IN THE END IT SHALL BE VERY GREAT. It soon grew among the Jews—was enlarged to embrace the Gentiles—was soon spread into all the world—is destined to a great enlargement—its magnitude will appear at the last day. (*Expository Discourses.*) The design of the parable is obvious; the underlying thought is simple and single. A little germ and a large result, a small commencement and a conspicuous growth, an obscure and tiny granule followed by a vigorous vegetation, the "least of all seeds," and "the greatest of all herbs," such is the avowed contrast of the parable. Is it not so when we glance at the history of real religion? I. In the WORLD. II. In COMMUNITIES. III. In the individual SOUL. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *The gospel originally small and ultimately great*:—The gist of the representation lies in the largeness of the produce as compared with the smallness of the original. Of course, had our Lord merely wished to show that the gospel, in its maturity and efflorescence, would overtop other systems and overshadow the creation, he might have led His hearers into the forests of the earth, and selected some monarch of the woods. Even in Eastern countries the mustard plant, though it reaches a size and strength unknown in our own land, would not be used as a symbol by a speaker whose object was to shadow stateliness and dominion. But, when you compare the size of the seed with the size of the shrub—and wish to illustrate the production of great things from small—it would seem probable that in the whole range of the vegetable kingdom there is not to be found a more apposite image. The degree in which the shrub expands in size as compared with the seed, is, perhaps, greater in the case of the mustard plant than in any other instance. And in this, we again say, must be thought to lie the gist of the parable—the chief object of Christ being to show that there never had been so mighty a consummation following on so inconsiderable a beginning; that never had there been so vast a disproportion between a thing at its outset, and that same thing at its conclusion, as was to be exhibited in the case of that kingdom of heaven, the setting up of which was His business on earth. (*H. Melvill.*) *Little seeds soul saving*:—But to pass from these general observations on the imagery drawn from the vegetable world to that particular figure which Christ employs in our text. Observe, we pray you, the minuteness of the seed, which is ordinarily first deposited by God's Spirit in man's heart. If you examine the records of Christian biography, you will find, so far as it is possible to search out such facts, that conversion is commonly to be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. We believe, for example, that proceeding on the principle that He will honour what He has instituted, God ordinarily uses the preaching of the gospel as His engine for gathering in His people. But then it is perhaps a single sentence in a sermon, a text which is quoted, a remark to which, probably, if you had asked the preacher himself, he attached less consequence than to any other part of his sermon—this is the seed, the inconsiderable grain, which makes its way into the heart of the unconverted hearer. We just wish that a book could be compiled, registering the sayings, the words, which, falling from the lips of preachers in different ages, have penetrated that thick coating of indifference and prejudice which

lies naturally on every man's heart, and reached the soil in which vegetation is possible. We are quite persuaded that you would not find many whole sermons in such a book, not many long pieces of elaborate reasoning, not many protracted demonstrations of human danger and human need; we have a thorough belief that the volume would be a volume of little fragments, that it would be made up of simple sentiments and brief statements; and that, in the majority of instances, a few syllables would constitute that element of Christianity which gained a lodgment in the soul. (*Ibid.*) *The maxims of human philosophy not so productive as Divine truth:*—We shall not enlarge further on the parable as sketching Christ's religion in its dominion over the individual. We can only remark, in passing, that none of the maxims of human philosophy have shown themselves capable of yielding such produce as we thus trace to the seed of a solitary text. There is much truth and beauty in many of those sayings with which writers on ethics have adorned their pages; but the most weighty proverbs that ever issued from the porch of the academy, and the most sententious maxims which lecturers on morals ever delivered to their people, have always failed to work anything approaching to that renovation of nature which can distinctly be traced to some gospel truth quoted with authority from God. Take the result of a hiding in the heart a sentence which asserts the excellence of virtue, and one which sets forth God's love in the gift of His Son. Now sentences may be likened unto seeds, not only because both are small, but because, if rightly planted and watered, and developed, they are capable of producing fruit in the life and conversation. But who, unless ignorant of facts, or determined to be deceived, would assert the holiness of the best heathenism to be comparable to the holiness of Christianity, or who that has ever tried theory, by the touchstone of experience, would declare, that a man who was a cultivator of virtue, because excellent in its nature, will ever reach as high a standard of morality as one who, having hope in Christ, seeks to "purify himself even as Christ is pure?" We give it as a truth, which the history of the world presses forward to substantiate, that no maxims, except Scriptural maxims, have been long efficacious in withholding man from vice, or have ever nerved him to the striving after a high-toned and elevated morality. And if, then, we must admit that the sayings of a sound moral philosophy may be figured by seeds, because they contain elements which, under due culture, may be expanded into something like righteousness of deportment, we still contend that when the amount even of possible produce is contrasted with the original grain, the tree which, under the most favourable circumstances, can spring from the seed, and that seed itself—there are no sayings, but those of Christianity, just as there are no particles, but those of Divine grace, which deserve to be compared with the grain of mustard seed; for in no case but that, we must believe, would there be such disproportion between what was cast into the soil of the heart, and that spreading over of the whole district of the life, as to warrant the employment of the imagery whose design it has been our effort to delineate. (*Ibid.*) *The visible growth of the gospel:*—Christ's kingdom also grows outwardly and visibly as the hidden mustard seed grows into a great tree. Christ not only taught new truth, but He also founded a new society, which is to be like a living, growing tree. That society is sometimes called the Visible Church, and it is very visible in our day, quite as visible as the biggest garden tree is among garden plants. (*J. Wells.*) *Christ's religion a refuge for all:*—As the tree is for every bird from any quarter of heaven that wishes its shelter, so Christ's religion is for all sorts of people. The religion of the Chinese is only for the Chinese; the religion of Mahomed is only for those who live in warm countries; a Hindoo loses his religion by crossing the seas; but the religion of Jesus of Nazareth is for people of every class, clime, and nation. It is like the tree that offers lodging to all the birds of the air. (*Ibid.*) *Fiery energy:*—Darius sent to Alexander the Great a bag of sesame seed, symbolizing the number of his army. In return, Alexander sent a sack of mustard seed, showing not only the numbers but the fiery energy of his soldiers. (*D'Herbelot.*) *Building and growing:*—To see the stateliest pile of building filling the space which before was empty, makes an appeal to the imagination: that kind of increase we seem to understand; stone is added to stone by the will and toil of man. But when we look at the deeply-rooted and wide-branching tree, and think of the tiny seed from which all this sprang without human will or toil, but by an internal vitality of its own, we are confronted by the most mysterious and fascinating of all things, the life that lies unseen in nature. (*Marcus Dods.*) *The mustard seed and leaven:*—The parable of the grain of mustard seed must be taken in close connection with that of the leaven, and both are meant to illustrate the small beginnings, the silent

growth, and the final victory of the grace of God in the human soul. But they belong to different points of view. The one is extensive, the other intensive. The parable of the grain of mustard seed shows us the origin and the development of the kingdom of God, in communities and in the world: the parable of the leaven shadows forth its unimpeded influence in the soul of each separate man. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *All great movements have had trivial commencements:*—Look at history, and see how true the doctrine is, not only of the kingdom of heaven, but of every other power that has really held sway among men. In almost all cases the great, the permanent work has been done, not by those who seemed to do very much, but by those who seemed to do very little. Our Lord's founding of the Church was but the most striking instance of a universal rule. He seemed to all outside spectators to do almost nothing. The Roman rulers hardly knew of His name. What was He doing? He was sowing the seed; the seed whose fruit was not yet, whose perfect fruit was not to be gathered, as it has since turned out, for many centuries; the seed which seemed small and perishable, but was certain to grow into a great tree. All the greatest work has been done both before and after, not often by producing immediate results, but by sowing seeds. So have sciences all grown, not from brilliant declarations to the world, but from patient labour, and quiet thought, and language addressed to the few who think. So has all growth in politics always begun in the secret thoughts of men who have found the truth, and have committed it to books or to chosen learners. The true powers of human life are contained in those seeds, out of which alone comes any real and permanent good. (*Bp. Temple.*)

Vers. 33, 34. **But without a parable spake He not unto them.**—*Christ's economy of teaching:*—Not as He was able to have spoken; He could have expressed Himself at a higher rate than any mortal can; He could have soared to the clouds; He could have knit such knots they could never untie. But He would not. He delighted to speak to His hearers' shallow capacities (John xvi. 12). (*T. Brooks.*) *Christ's method of teaching:*—With matter Divine and manner human, our Lord descended to the level of the humblest of the crowd, lowering Himself to their understandings, and winning His way into their hearts by borrowng His topics from familiar circumstances and the scenes around Him. Be it a boat, a plank, a rope, a beggar's rags, an imperial robe, we would seize on anything to save a drowning man; and in His anxiety to save poor sinners, to rouse their fears, their love, their interest, to make them understand and feel the truth, our Lord pressed everything—art and nature, earth and heaven—into His service. Creatures of habit, the servants if not the slaves of form, we invariably select our text from some book of the Sacred Scriptures. He took a wider, freer range; and, instead of keeping to the unvarying routine of text and sermon with formal divisions, it were well, perhaps, that we sometimes ventured to follow His example; for may it not be that to the naturalness of their addresses and their striking out from the beaten paths of texts and sermons, to their plain speaking and home-thrusts, to their direct appeals and homespun arguments, our street and lay preachers owe perhaps not a little of their power? Our Lord found many a topic of discourse in the scenes around Him; even the humblest objects shone in His hands, as I have seen a fragment of broken glass or earthenware, as it caught the sunbeam, light up, flashing like a diamond. With the stone of Jacob's Well for a pulpit, and its water for a text, He preached salvation to the Samaritan woman. A little child, which He takes from its mother's side, and holds up blushing in His arms before the astonished audience, is His text for a sermon on humility. A husbandman on a neighbouring height between Him and the sky, who strides with long and measured steps over the field he sows, supplies a text from which He discourses on the gospel and its effects on different classes of hearers. In a woman baking; in two women who sit by some cottage door grinding at the mill; in an old, strong fortalice perched on a rock, whence it looks across the brawling torrent to the ruined and roofless gable of a house swept away by mountain floods—Jesus found texts. From the birds that sung above His head, and the lilies that blossomed at His feet, He discoursed on the care of God—these His text, and Providence His theme. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Illustrating:*—I have generally found that the most intellectual auditors prefer to hear a simple scriptural and spiritual preaching. The late Judge McLean, of the United States Supreme Court once said to me, "I was glad to hear you give that solemn personal incident in your discourse last night Ministers now-a-days are getting above telling a story in a sermon; but I like it.

(*T. L. Cuyler.*) "*Likes*" *in a sermon* :—"You have no 'likes' in your sermons," said Robert Hall to a brother minister; "Christ taught that the kingdom of heaven was 'like leaven,' &c. You tell us what things are, but never what they are like." Parables are more ancient than arguments. (*Lord Bacon.*) **And when they were alone.** *Christ alone with His disciples; or, the parable expounded* :—I. THE PARABLES A PUZZLE. It is very striking that the very means of instruction should have hid the truth, and even from His followers. The parables of Christ were sometimes obscure and confounding to His foes; that is not strange. Where there is no taste or desire for instruction, the clearest and simplest lessons may be vain. It was a judgment, but not an arbitrary and cruel one. It was a punishment which the blinded deserved, and it was one which they inflicted upon themselves. Parables were among the easiest and most interesting methods of instruction. They addressed a variety of powers; and thus were suited to a variety of minds, and a variety of faculties in the same mind. But if the eye was at fault, and could not see, or could not see aright, then the windows had no use; and the means of light conveyed no image, or a false one. There is often, and especially in moral matters, more in the learner than the lessons. Parables would have been no judgment, if there had been no obtuseness and perverseness in the hearers. It is harder to understand how "the disciples," who had some insight and sympathy, should have been perplexed. But why did Christ employ a method which had the effect of concealing what, if stated without a parable, they must have seen and appreciated at once? We are here, my brethren, right upon a great and blessed truth. The parable taught minds by taxing them. It made truth plain to the thoughtful; but required sometimes more, sometimes less thought for its comprehension. It was a way of teaching, but by calling out the desire and effort to learn. If a man only heard it, the truth was hidden; if he were bent on getting at its sense, the truth became more plain and powerful by its means. To look at it was to see nothing; to look through it was to behold most beautiful and glorious things. When it fell upon a passive nature, it left no impression; when it fell on one quick and active, and in quest of truth, it realized a blessed end. As soon as the disciples, failing to apprehend Christ's sense, came to the prayer, "Declare unto us the parable," they had reached the highest end of teaching: they not only were in the way to know, they were exercising the powers of knowledge. All things He does as well as says, in this sense, are parables: they are intended to teach, but they teach in the way of training; they have in them an element of difficulty mercifully fitted to make easy, an element of obscurity mercifully fitted to make clear. He wishes to excite, to awaken the dormant and stimulate the sluggish; to call out our powers; not only to bless us, but to bless us by quickening us; not only to impart knowledge, but make us knowing; not only to enrich us with goodness and happiness, but to enlarge our capacity for both. And a heaven on lighter terms would be a heaven of smaller joy. II. THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH THE PARABLES WERE TREATED. Some gaze upon the mystery scornfully or listlessly, others seek with deep anxiety to have it solved. Difficulty offends or disheartens these, but stirs up those to activity and zeal. Truth is often difficult. What is needful to salvation is within the reach of all, for an inaccessible boon cannot be an indispensable blessing. But truth of most sorts, as well as religious, is not unavoidable, and frequently it is hard to get. And if we pass from what is to be known to what is to be done, from the difficulty of apprehension to the difficulty of the performance, the same kind of remark applies, "Is there not a warfare to man upon the earth?" Is any promise of good in other than the apocalyptic form, "To him that overcometh will I give"? III. THE PRIVATE SOLUTION OF THE PARABLES. When the multitude were sent away, Matthew says that the disciples came to Jesus, requesting an explanation of His teaching. This is not the only occasion mentioned (Matt. xv. 15), and we may be sure there were many. They had the right, and availed themselves of it. And there are now those who have access, so to speak, to the solitude of the Saviour. Many only know Him in the world, and the face of day; in His written word, in His general providence; as the Teacher of crowds, as the Worker of wonders. They might know Him otherwise. Had this multitude cared for His intimacy, they might have had it. We, like the disciples, may be "alone," and alone with Jesus. It is not necessary, in order to this, that we should be absent from men. There is a solitude of the flesh, and a solitude of the spirit. Christ is the best revelation of spiritual truth, its strongest evidence, and its only quickening force; and we may say of Him and Christianity, what Cowper says of God and Providence—

"He is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain."

Perhaps your parable is evil, the evil in the world, in yourselves. Christ has this explanation. And the same remark applies to duties. More faith in Him will lighten the burden and ease the yoke, however hard and heavy. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He is model, motive, might of all obedience; and the life we live is His life, and we follow Him, and all we do is from His love constraining us. There is a lesson for all. Some are painfully exercised with doubts and difficulties "great upon" them. They "walk in darkness," "a darkness that may be felt." Let me entreat such to "come to Jesus in the house;" to seek the secret Saviour. (*A. J. Morris.*)

Vers. 35–41. **And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.**—*In the storm*:—I. THE INFLUENCE OF DANGER. It caused the disciples to doubt the care of Christ. Why is it we doubt the Lord in seasons of danger? 1. Imperfect knowledge of the Lord. 2. Natural impatience. 3. Satanic temptations. II. THE FOLLY OF SUSPICION. It is groundless. The truth is ratified, that God will not leave us to perish. Were it not stated in such plain terms, we might infer as much from—1. God's former dealings with ourselves and others. 2. The known character of the Lord. 3. The relationship in which we stand to Him. III. THE SECRET OF TRANQUILLITY. 1. Meditation. 2. Prayer. 3. Resignation. IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF HOLY CONFIDENCE. 1. It honours God. 2. It blesses our own souls afterward. If the record had run thus, "And there arose a great storm, &c., but the disciples, believing their Master would not suffer them to perish, watched Him until He awoke. And when Jesus arose, He said, Great is your faith; and He saved them," what joy would the memory have brought to their hearts in later years! 3. Hereby we obtain more speedy relief. Unbelief causes God to delay or deny (Matt. xiii. 58). (*R. A. Griffin.*) *A great storm and a great calm*:—I. The first aspect of Christ's life presented to us in this wonderful passage of Scripture is HIS WEARINESS. 1. It arose from incessant labour. 2. It arose from laborious work. II. The second aspect of Christ's life brought before us is HIS REST. We regard this sleeping of Christ—1. As an evidence of His humanity. 2. As an evidence of His trustfulness. He cast Himself upon His Father's care, and was not afraid of Galilee's stormy lake. 3. As an evidence of His goodness. He slept like one who had a good conscience. III. But all too soon was THE REST OF CHRIST DISTURBED. "And they awoke Him." How often was Christ's repose disturbed! Three things led to the disturbance of Christ's rest: 1. A sudden and violent storm. 2. The danger of the disciples. 3. The fears of the disciples. IV. Then followed A GLORIOUS MANIFESTATION OF THE POWER OF CHRIST. 1. It was manifested in His authority over nature. 2. It was manifested in His rebuke of the disciples. 3. It was manifested in His evident superiority of character. "What manner of man is this?" He is the God-Man, who stands equal with God on the high level of Deity, and equal with man on the low level of humanity. "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." (*Joseph Hughes.*) *A picture of the Christian life*:—This narrative is a touching picture of the Christian life. Following its leadings, we contemplate the Christian life in its beginning, in its progress, in its issue. I. The BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. We go out on the waves of life and have Christ for our leader in the days of our childhood; that is, where we have the blessing of Christian parents and teachers, &c. Oh happy years of childlike faith! How merciless they who could rob us of this faith. What have they to offer in its place? No; we will not be robbed of it. In its nature and essence this childlike faith is true and unchangeable; but the garment by which it is covered, the veil it carries over it, must be torn off. The childlike faith receives the Saviour in the only vessel in which the child can receive the Divine—in the vessel of the feelings. In manhood we have another vessel in which we can receive Him—the vessel of the understanding. Not that we should loose Him from the vessel of the feelings as we become men, but that our manhood should receive Him into the understanding as well as into the heart. Our childlike faith has seen the Saviour as the little ship of life glided over the smooth waters; it has not yet learnt to know Him in the storm and the tempest. It has known Him in His kindness and love; He is not yet revealed in His wisdom and power. II. The beginning of life passes by, and in the progress of life Christ slumbers in the soul, and is AWAKENED BY THE STORM. That beautiful childlike sense of faith slumbers—not universally, for there have been favoured souls in whom Christ has never slumbered, who have retained their childish faith to their ripe manhood. It is otherwise in times of conflict like these.

It seems that in these troubled times, this childlike faith must apparently die, *i.e.*, must throw off its veil when the storm rages, and rises in a new form. Even on the sacred floor of the church the young Christian finds doubt, strife, and disunion, and he doubts. The Lord awakes, and says, ". . . Canst thou believe?" and we answer, ". . . Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." There is faith still, though doubt may be ever so strong; there is still an anchor firmly fastened in the sanctuary of the breast. Faith slumbers, but is not dead. III. That will be the issue if, instead of yielding, you wrestle. As you have known the Saviour earlier in His kindness and love, you will come to know Him in His wisdom and power. Life is a conflict. Some trifle with life; with them it is like playing with soap bubbles. They have never looked the doubt earnestly in the face, to say nothing of the truth. God will not send the noblest of His gifts to laggards: the door of truth closed against those who would willingly enter is a solemn thought (Matt. xxv. 10, 11). (*Dr. Tholuch.*) *The disciples in the storm:*—I. IN THE STORM WHILE PROSECUTING THE SAVIOUR'S COMMAND—teaching. 1. Implicit obedience does not exempt from trials. Joseph, David, Daniel, St. Paul, &c. 2. Trials are not always punitive, but always disciplinary. This trial was a test both in respect to faith and works. (*a*) Will they believe that they will be saved? (*b*) Will they go on in their line of duty? II. IN THE STORM WHILE JESUS WAS WITH THEM. 1. Jesus was exposed to the same fury of the tempest, and to the same upheavals of the angry waves. (*a*) Was there ever a storm in which Jesus was absent from His disciples? 2. Though with His disciples, He was fast asleep. (*a*) A symbol of what frequently occurs. Let every disciple remember that a sleeping Christ is not a dead Christ. (*b*) Though asleep, He has not forgotten His disciples. III. IN THE STORM WHILE JESUS WAS WITH THEM, AND YET THEY HAD TO CRY TO HIM FOR DELIVERANCE. 1. Prayer is the disciples' privilege and duty at all times, especially in times of trial and peril. 2. The prayer that arises from a believing heart can never go unanswered. IV. IN THE STORM DELIVERED FROM THE STORM IN ANSWER TO PRAYER. 1. Christ's Divine power was not affected by physical fatigue. 2. Jesus, touched by the cry of His disciples, wields a power before which nothing can stand. V. DELIVERANCE FROM THE STORM A GRAND MORAL POWER. 1. It exercised a moral power, awakening deeper reverence for Christ as Messiah. 2. Awakening greater awe for Christ as the Son of God. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *God's storms:*—They only measure Christ aright, who are forced to carry to Him some great grief, and find by experience He is great enough to save them. It is when men have weighed Him in the balances of some great necessity, and found Him not wanting, that they believe in Him. So the disciples are sent to school. Storm and danger are for the night to be their schoolmasters, bringing them to Christ, not with wonder or service merely, but with suppliant prayers. So starting, they get on their journey a little way, hoping, I suppose, that an hour and a half will see them comfortably across; when lo! this gale breaks on them with the fury of a wild beast. They are stunned with its suddenness. Doubtless in an instant the sail is lowered, oars are shipped, and carefully keeping head to wind or giving way before it, they seek to avoid getting broadside on to the waves in the dangerous trough of the sea. It is touching to see how they shrink from waking Him. Pitiful for His weariness, reverent to His dignity, they run every risk they dare before presuming to disturb Him. Yet how confused they must have felt. A sleeping Christ seems a contradiction. If Saviour of men, why does He not rise to save Himself and them? If He is ignorant of the storm, and about to be drowned, how came His mighty works? Such is life! The sea calm—gleam of setting sun or rising stars reflected on the limpid surface; no occasion of solicitude disturbs the heart, and you are making good progress to some haven of rest, when suddenly a storm of cares overwhelms the soul, and so batters and agitates it that it is like to be drowned beneath their weight; or a storm of grief rises from some bereavement, and threatens to overwhelm all faith or hope in God; or a storm of temptation assails and seems to make goodness impossible, and ruin inevitable. And still Christ seems asleep. It seems as if He must be either ignorant or indifferent, and you do not know which of the two conclusions is sadder to come to. Murmur not. Others have been in storms, and thought the Saviour listless; but He is never beyond the call of faith. (*R. Glover.*) *Christ in the storm:*—It is, then, no freak of fancy to see in this narrative an acted parable, if you will, an acted prophecy. Again and again the Church of Christ has been all but engulfed, as men might have deemed, in the billows; again and again the storm has been calmed by the Master, who had seemed for awhile to sleep. L. OFTEN HAS CHRISTIANITY PASSED THROUGH THE TROUBLED WATERS OF POLITICAL OPPOSI-

TION. During the first three centuries, and finally under Julian, the heathen State made repeated and desperate attempts to suppress it by force. Statesmen and philosophers undertook the task of eradicating it, not passionately, but in the same temper of calm resolution with which they would have approached any other well-considered social problem. More than once they drove it from the army, from the professions, from the public thoroughfares, into secrecy; they pursued it into the vaults beneath the palaces of Rome, into the catacombs, into the deserts. It seemed as if the faith would be trodden out with the life of so many of the faithful: but he who would persecute with effect must leave none alive. The Church passed through these fearful storms into the calm of an ascertained supremacy; but she had scarcely done so, when the vast political and social system which had so long oppressed her, and which by her persistent suffering she had at length made in some sense her own, itself began to break up beneath and around her. The barbarian invasions followed one upon another with merciless rapidity; and St. Augustine's lamentations upon the sack of Rome express the feelings with which the higher minds in the Church must have beheld the completed humiliation of the Empire. Christianity had now to face, not merely a change of civil rulers, but a fundamental reconstruction of society. It might have been predicted with great appearance of probability that a religious system which had suited the enervated provincials of the decaying empire would never make its way among the free and strong races that, amid scenes of fire and blood, were laying the foundations of feudalism. In the event it was otherwise. The hordes which shattered the work of the Cæsars learnt to repeat the Catholic Creed, and a new order of things had formed itself, when the tempest of Mahomedanism broke upon Christendom. Politically speaking, this was perhaps the most threatening storm through which the Christian Church has passed. There was a time when the soldiers of that stunted and immoral caricature of the Revelation of the One True God, which was set forth by the false prophet, had already expelled the very Name of Christ from the country of Cyprian and Augustine; they were masters of the Mediterranean; they had desolated Spain, were encamped in the heart of France, were ravaging the sea-board of Italy. It was as if the knell of Christendom had sounded. But Christ, "if asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship," was not insensible to the terrors of His servants. He rose to rebuke those winds and waves, as by Charles Martel in one age, and by Sobieski in another; it is now more than two centuries since Islam inspired its ancient dread. The last like trial of the Church was the first French Revolution. In that vast convulsion Christianity had to encounter forces which for awhile seemed to threaten its total suppression. Yet the men of the Terror have passed, as the Cæsars had passed before them; and like the Cæsars, they have only proved to the world that the Church carries within her One who rules the fierce tempests in which human institutions are wont to perish. II. Political dangers, however, do but touch the Church of Christ outwardly; but she rests upon the intelligent assent of her children, AND SHE HAS PASSED AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGH THE STORMS OF INTELLECTUAL OPPOSITION OR REVOLT. Scarcely had she steered forth from the comparatively still waters of Galilean and Hellenistic devotion than she had to encounter the pitiless dialectic, the subtle solvents, of the Alexandrian philosophy. It was as if in anticipation of this danger that St. John had already baptized the Alexandrian modification of the Platonic Logos, moulding it so as to express the sublimest and most central truth of the Christian Creed; while, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Alexandrian methods of interpretation had been adopted in vindication of the gospel. But to many a timid believer it may well have seemed that Alexandrianism would prove the grave of Christianity, when, combining the Platonic dialectics with an Eclectic Philosophy, it endeavoured in the form of Arianism to break up the Unity of the Godhead by making Christ a separate and inferior Deity. There was a day when Arianism seemed to be triumphant; but even Arianism was a less formidable foe than the subtle strain of infidel speculation which penetrated the Christian intellect in the very heart of the Middle Ages, that is to say, at a time when the sense of the supernatural had diffused itself throughout the whole atmosphere of human thought. This unbelief was the product sometimes of a rude sensuality rebelling against the precepts of the gospel; sometimes of the culture divorced from faith which made its appearance in the twelfth century; sometimes, specifically, of the influence of the Arabian philosophy from Spain; sometimes of the vast and penetrating activity of the Jewish teachers. It revealed itself constantly under the most unexpected circumstances. We need not suppose that the great Order of the Templars was guilty of the infidelity that, along with crimes

of the gravest character, was laid to their charge; a study of their processes is their best acquittal, while it is the condemnation of their persecutors. But unbelief must have been widespread in days when a prominent soldier, John of Soissons, could declare that "all that was preached concerning Christ's Passion and Resurrection was a mere farce;" when a pious bishop of Paris left it on record that he "died believing in the Resurrection, with the hope that some of his educated but sceptical friends would reconsider their doubts;" when that keen observer, as Neander terms him, Hugh of St. Victor, remarks the existence of a large class of men whose faith consisted in nothing else than merely taking care not to contradict the faith—"quibus credere est solum fidei non contradicere, qui consuetudine vivendi magis, quam virtute credendi fideles nominantur." The prevalance of such unbelief is attested at once by the fundamental nature of many of the questions discussed at the greatest length by the Schoolmen, and by the unconcealed anxieties of the great spiritual leaders of the time. After the Middle Ages came the Renaissance. This is not the time or place to deny the services which the Renaissance has rendered to the cause of human education, and indirectly, it may be, to that of Christianity. But the Renaissance was at first, as it appeared in Italy, a pure enthusiasm for Paganism, for Pagan thought, as well as for Pagan art and Pagan literature. And the Reformation, viewed on its positive and devotional side, was, at least in the South of Europe, a reaction against the spirit of the Renaissance: it was the Paganism, even more than the indulgences of Leo X., which alienated the Germans. The reaction against this Paganism was not less vigorous within the Church of Rome than without it; Ranke has told us the story of its disappearance. Lastly, there was the rise of Deism in England, and of the Encyclopedist School in France, followed by the pure Atheism which preceded the Revolution. It might well have seemed to fearful men of that day that Christ was indeed asleep to wake no more, that the surging waters of an infidel philosophy had well-nigh filled the ship, and that the Church had only to sink with dignity. III. Worse than the storms of political violence or of intellectual rebellion, have been THE TEMPESTS OF INSURGENT IMMORALITY THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH HAS PASSED. In the ages of persecution there was less risk of this, although even then there were scandals. The Epistles to the Corinthians reveal beneath the very eyes of the Apostle a state of moral corruption, which, in one respect at least, he himself tells us, had fallen below the Pagan standard. But when entire populations pressed within the fold, and social or political motives for conformity took the place of serious and strong conviction in the minds of multitudes, these dangers became formidable. What must have been the agony of devout Christians in the tenth century, when appointments to the Roman Chair itself were in the hands of three unprincipled and licentious women; and when the life of the first Christian bishop was accounted such that a pilgrimage to Rome involved a loss of character. Well might the austere Bruno exclaim of that age that "Simon Magus lorded it over a Church in which bishops and priests were given to luxury and fornication:" well might Cardinal Baronius suspend the generally laudatory or apologetic tone of his Annals, to observe that Christ must have in this age been asleep in the ship of the Church to permit such enormities. It was a dark time in the moral life of Christendom: but there have been dark times since. Such was that when St. Bernard could allow himself to describe the Roman Curia as he does in addressing Pope Eugenius III.; such again was the epoch which provoked the work of Nicholas de Cleargis, "On the Ruin of the Church." The passions, the ambitions, the worldly and political interests which surged around the Papal throne, had at length issued in the schism of Avignon; and the writer passionately exclaims that the Church had fallen proportionately to her corruptions, which he enumerates with an unsparing precision. During the century which preceded the Reformation, the state of clerical discipline in London was such as to explain the vehemence of popular reaction; and if in the last century there was an absence of grossness, such as had prevailed in previous ages, there was a greater absence of spirituality. Says Bishop Butler, charging the clergy of the Diocese of Durham in 1751—"As different ages have been distinguished by different sorts of particular errors and vices, the deplorable distinction of ours is an avowed scorn of religion in some, and a growing disregard to it in the generality." That disregard, being in its essence moral, would hardly have been arrested by the cultivated reasoners, who were obliged to content themselves with deistic premises in their defences of Christianity: it did yield to the fervid appeals of Whitefield and of Wesley. With an imperfect idea of the real contents and genius of the Christian Creed, and with almost no idea at all of its majestic relations to history and to

thought, these men struck a chord for which we may well be grateful. They awoke Christ, sleeping in the conscience of England; they were the real harbingers of a day brighter than their own. IV. For if the question be asked, how the Church of Christ has surmounted these successive dangers, the answer is, BY THE APPEAL OF PRAYER. She has cried to her Master, who is ever in the ship, though, as it may seem, asleep upon a pillow. The appeal has often been made impatiently, even violently, as on the waves of Gennesaret, but it has not been made in vain. It has not been by policy, or good sense, or considerations of worldly prudence, but by a renewal in very various ways of the first fresh Christian enthusiasm which flows from the felt presence of Christ, that political enemies have been baffled, and intellectual difficulties reduced to their true dimensions, and moral sores extirpated or healed. Christianity does thus contain within itself the secret of its perpetual youth, the certificate of its indestructible vitality; because it centres in, it is inseparable from, devotion to a living Person. No ideal lacking a counterpart in fact could have guided the Church across the centuries. Imagination may do much in quiet and prosperous times; but amid the storms of hostile prejudice and passion, in presence of political vicissitudes or of intellectual onslaughts, or of moral rebellion or decay, an unreal Saviour must be found out. A Christ upon paper, though it were the sacred pages of the gospel, would have been as powerless to save Christendom as a Christ in fresco; not less feeble than the Countenance which, in the last stages of its decay, may be traced on the wall of the Refectory at Milan. A living Christ is the key to the phenomenon of Christian history. The subject suggests, among others, two reflections in particular. And, first, it is a duty to be on our guard against panics. Panics are the last infirmity of believing souls. But panics are to be deprecated, not because they imply a keen interest in the fortunes of religion, but because they betray a certain distrust of the power and living presence of our Lord. Science may for the moment be hostile; in the long run it cannot but befriend us. And He who is with us in the storm is most assuredly beyond the reach of harm: to be panic-stricken is to dishonour Him. A second reflection is this: a time of trouble and danger is the natural season for generous devotion. To generous minds a time of trouble has its own attractions. It enables a man to hope, with less risk of presumption, that his motives are sincere; it fortifies courage; it suggests self-distrust; it enriches character; it invigorates faith. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Ruler of the waves*:—I. THAT FOLLOWING CHRIST WILL NOT PREVENT OUR HAVING EARTHLY SORROWS AND TROUBLES. II. THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY AND REALLY MAN. III. THAT THERE MAY BE MUCH WEAKNESS AND INFIRMITY IN A TRUE CHRISTIAN. "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" 1. There was impatience. 2. There was distrust. 3. There was unbelief. Many of God's children go on very well so long as they have no trials. IV. THE POWER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. His power in creation. 2. In the works of providence. 3. In His miracles. Christ is "able to save to the uttermost" (Heb. vii. 25). V. HOW TENDERLY AND PATIENTLY THE LORD JESUS DEALS WITH WEAK BELIEVERS. The Lord Jesus is of tender mercy. He will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings. (*J. C. Ryle, M.A.*) *The hurricane*:—I. THAT WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE A VOYAGE OF ANY KIND YOU OUGHT TO HAVE CHRIST IN THE SHIP. These boats would all have gone to the bottom if Christ had not been there. You are about to voyage out into some new enterprise; you are bound to do the best you can for yourself; be sure to take Christ in the ship. Here are men largely prospered. They are not puffed up. They acknowledge God who gives them their prosperity. When disaster comes that destroys others, they are only helped into higher experiences. Christ is in the ship. Here are other men, the prey of uncertainties. In the storm of sickness you will want Christ. II. THAT PEOPLE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST MUST NOT ALWAYS EXPECT SMOOTH SAILING. If there are any people who you would think ought to have a good time in getting out of this world, the apostles of Jesus Christ ought to have been the men. Have you ever noticed how they got out of the world? St. James lost his head. St. Philip was hung to death against a pillar. Matthew was struck to death by a halberd. Mark was dragged to death through the streets. St. James the Less had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club. St. Matthias was stoned to death. St. Thomas was struck through with a spear. John Huss in the fire, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Scotch Covenanters—did they always find smooth sailing? Why go so far? There is a young man in a store in New York who has a hard time to maintain his Christian character. All the clerks laugh at him, the employers in that store laugh at him, and when he loses his patience they say: "You are a pretty Christian." Not so easy is it for

that young man to follow Christ. If the Lord did not help him hour by hour he would fail. III. THAT GOOD PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET VERY MUCH FRIGHTENED And so it is now that you often find good people wildly agitated. "Oh!" says some Christian man, "the infidel magazines, the bad newspapers, the spiritualistic societies, the importation of so many foreign errors, the Church of God is going to be lost, the ship is going to founder! The ship is going down!" What are you frightened about? An old lion goes into his cavern to take a sleep, and he lies down until his shaggy mane covers his paws. Meanwhile, the spiders outside begin to spin webs over the mouth of his cavern, and say: "That lion cannot break out through this web," and they keep on spinning the gossamer threads until they get the mouth of the cavern covered over. "Now," they say, "the lion's done, the lion's done." After awhile the lion awakes and shakes himself, and he walks out from the cavern, never knowing there were any spiders' webs, and with his voice he shakes the mountain. Let the infidels and the sceptics of this day go on spinning their webs, spinning their infidel gossamer theories, spinning them all over the place where Christ seems to be sleeping. They say: "Christ can never again come out; the work is done; He can never get through this logical web we have been spinning." The day will come when the Lion of Judah's tribe will rouse Himself and come forth and shake mightily the nations. What then all your gossamer threads? What is a spider's web to an aroused lion? Do not fret, then, about the world's going backward. It is going forward. IV. THAT CHRIST CAN HUSH THE TEMPEST. Christ can hush the tempest of bereavement, loss and death. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The toiling Christ*:—I. Point out some of the significant hints which the gospel records give us of THE TOILSOMENESS OF CHRIST'S SERVICE. In St. Matthew's Gospel the idea of the king is prominent; in St. Mark's, Christ as a servant. Notice the traits of His service which it brings out. 1. How distinctly it gives the impression of swift, strenuous work. Mark's favourite word is "straightway," "immediately," "forthwith," "anon." His whole story is a picture of rapid acts of mercy and love. 2. We see in Christ's service, toil prolonged to the point of actual physical exhaustion. So in this story. He had had a long wearying day of work. He had spoken the whole of the parables concerning the kingdom of God. No wonder He slept. 3. We see in Christ toil that puts aside the claims of physical wants. "The multitude cometh together again so that they could not so much as eat bread." 4. We see in Christ's service a love which is at every man's beck and call, a toil cheerfully rendered at the most unreasonable and unseasonable times. II. THE SPRINGS OF THIS WONDERFUL ACTIVITY. There are three points which come out in the Gospels as His motives for such unresting toil. The first is conveyed in such words as these: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." This motive made the service homogeneous—in all the variety of service one spirit was expressed, and therefore the service was one. The second motive of His toil is expressed in such words as these: "While I am in the world I am the light of the world." There is a final motive expressed in such words as these: "And Jesus, moved with compassion," &c. The constant pity of that beating heart moved the diligent hand. III. THE WORTH OF THIS TOIL FOR US. How precious a proof it is of Christ's humanity. Labour is a curse till made a blessing by communion with God in it. 1. Task all your capacity and use every minute in doing the thing that is plainly set before you. 2. The possible harmony of communion and service. The labour did not break His fellowship with God. 3. The cheerful, constant postponement of our own ease, wishes, or pleasure, to the call of the Father's voice. 4. It is an appeal to our grateful hearts. (*Dr. McLaren.*) *The great calm*:—"He maketh the storm a calm." The "calm" then is the voice of God. 1. Of power. 2. Of love. 3. Of peace. 4. Of warning. No earthly calm lasts. I. THE INNER CALM. In every soul there has been storm. It rages through the whole being. But Jesus is the stiller of this storm in man. 1. In his conscience. 2. In his heart. 3. In his intellect. II. THE FUTURE CALM FOR EARTH. In every aspect ours is a stormy world. But its day of calm is coming. Jesus will say to it, Peace, be still. 1. As a Prophet. 2. As a Priest. 3. As a King, to give the calm of heaven. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) "*Peace, be still!*":—No words can exaggerate the value and importance of a calm mind. It is the basis of almost everything which is good. Well-ordered reflections, meditation, influence, wise speech—all embosom themselves in a calm mind. Yet a state of agitation is with many the rule of life. Consider Jesus as the stiller of the heart. He was most eminently a still character. The greatest force of energy and the largest activity of mind and body are not only compatible with stillness, but they go to make it. The persons of the largest power

and the most telling action are generally the quietest. They may owe it to discipline and drill—and perhaps Christ Himself did—but they show themselves reined in and well-ordered. Just as it was in the lake: the wind and the waves went before, and, so to speak, subdued and made the calm. The placidity of a fiery and passionate nature is the best of foundations for all quietness. And this may be a thought of strength and encouragement to some. The more resolute the will, and the more violent the passion, the more complete may be the victory, and the more imperturbable the temper, if only grace do its proper work. Want of religious peace lies at the root of all that is trouble to the mind. A man at peace with God will be at peace with his own conscience, with the world; he will not have his feelings greatly aggravated by external things. You won't be much disturbed by anything if you feel and when you feel—"My Father! My Father! Jesus is mine, and I am His!" Next, if you will be calm, make pictures to yourself of all calm things—in nature, in history, in people you know, and above all, in Christ. Take care that you do this at the moment when you begin to feel the temptation to disturbance. But still more realize at such times Christ's presence. Is not He with you?—is not He in you?—and can restless, miserable, burning feelings dare to live in such a tenement? Let the fiercest thought touch Him, and by a strange fascination, it will clothe itself, and lie at His feet. And, fourthly, recognize it as the very office and prerogative of Christ to give quietness. And if He gives this, who then can make trouble! The disciples were more amazed at this triumph of Christ over the elements, with which they were so familiar in their sea life, than at all His other miracles. And it is not too much for me to say that you will never know what Jesus is, or what that word Saviour means, until you have felt in that heart of yours—which was once so troubled, so heaving, so tossed, and so ill at ease—all the depth and the calm, and all the beauty and the hush which He has given you. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Consult the chart in fine as well as in stormy weather*:—Let us not be like that captain of whom we lately heard, who having a true and correct chart in his cabin, failed to consult it while the weather was calm, but went below to look for it only when the wind and tide had drifted his barque upon the bar, and so, with his eyes upon the course he should have steered, felt the shock which in a few moments sent them down into the abyss. Our souls are like a ship upon the deep, and as we sail over the waves of life, we must, like wary mariners, take the hints given us in our nature. If we see on the horizon a cloud of some possible temptation no bigger than a man's hand, though all else be bright and clear—if we hear but the first blast of some probable sin hurtling in the farthest caverns of our life — we must beware, for in that speck, in that distant howl may couch a tempest ready to spring up and leap down upon our souls. Above all we should always have Christ aboard with us; we should have Him formed within us as our hope of glory; under His ensign we should sail, as our only hope of reaching that haven for which we are making. (*W. B. Philpot, M.A.*) *Utilizing Christ's presence*:—Too many Christians—nay, almost all of us at too many times, though we have Christ with us, do not profit by His presence nor enjoy Him as we ought. We should not only have Christ, but, having Him, ah why have we not that faith, that assurance of faith, that full assurance of faith, which can realize and utilize His presence? (*Ibid.*) *Christ and His disciples in the storm*:—I. The apostles were not exempted from danger because they were the attendants of Christ. Believers, look for storms! II. While the apostles were exposed to the storm, they had Christ along with them in the vessel. III. The conduct of Christ during the storm was remarkable and instructive. He was asleep. IV. The feelings and conduct of the disciples during the storm are strongly illustrative of human character. Their faith was tried. They were afraid. They apply to Christ. Prayer not always the language of faith. V. The effect of this application of the disciples to Christ. He answered their prayer, though their faith was weak. He thus revealed His Divine power. He unveiled His ordinary agency. VI. Christ, with the blessing, administers a rebuke. Mark your conduct under trials. VII. The disciples came out of the trial with increased admiration of Christ. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Christ asleep in the vessel*:—I. The apparent indifference of the Lord to His people. II. It is only apparent. III. He has a real care for them at times when He seems indifferent. IV. They shall see this to be the case by and by. (*C. H. Spurgeon*). *Trust in God often the last extremity*:—While a small steam-packet was crossing a stormy bay, the engine suddenly stopped, and for a few minutes the situation was one of real peril. One old lady rushed to the captain with the anxious inquiry

whether there was any danger. "Madam," was the uncompromising reply, "we must trust in God." "O sir!" wailed the inquirer, "has it come to that?" A good many Christians feel like that in times of peril; they are willing to trust in everything—except God. There are some children who are afraid that a thunder-storm is about to burst over them every time a cloud gathers in the sky; and if the sky is cloudless, they are certain that it is only the calm before the storm. They can always see the coming storms, but cannot trust the goodness that sends them. *Help in answer to prayer:*—A fishing-boat was struggling for life out on the sea, and the skipper had lost all knowledge of where the land was, and whither his boat was driving. In his despair, the strong man cried to God for help. Just then a little beam from a window-light shone over the waters; the boat's prow was turned, and after a little more manful fighting, she reached the haven. Was not that gleam of light God's answer to the skipper's prayer? A missionary was returning home, and just as he was nearing the coasts of his country, a terrible storm came on, and threatened to break the ship in pieces. The missionary went below, and prayed to God earnestly for the safety of the ship. Presently he came up and told the captain with quiet confidence that the ship would live through the storm. Captain and crew jeered at him; they did not believe it. Yet the ship came safely to port. Was the missionary wrong when he saw in this an instance of God's readiness to give the help His children ask? *Distrust rebuked by God's constant care:*—Every miracle of God's grace is a standing rebuke of distrust. What if your child, whom you had fed and clothed and housed for years, should begin to be anxious as to where his next meal or his next suit of clothes was to come from, and whether he could be sure of having a roof over his head for another night? What if he still persisted in his distrust, although you told him that you would take care of all these things? If you can imagine your child acting in so foolish a way, you have a picture of how most of us, day after day, treat the God who cares for us, and who has promised to supply us with all things. "*Other little ships*":—Those "other little ships" gained a great deal that day from Christ's saying, "Peace be still!" which we do not discover that any body was candid enough to acknowledge. The whole sea became tranquil, and they were saved. The world receives many unappreciated benefits from Jesus Christ's presence in the Church. Men are just so many little ships, taking entire benefit of the miracle brought from God's great love for His own. Start with the commonest gain that comes to the world through the Church. 1. See how property values are lifted by every kind of Christian effort. 2. See what the gospel does towards lifting a low and depraved neighbourhood into respectability. 3. See how it enriches education. 4. See how it elevates woman. 5. See how it alleviates sickness. There is no need of pursuing the illustration any farther. But there are just three lessons which will take force from the figure, perhaps; and these might as well be stated. 1. Why do not men of the world recognize what the Church of Christ is doing daily and yearly for them, their wives, and their children? 2. Why do not men of the world see that the men in the "other little ships" were the safer from the storm the nearer their boats were to that Jesus was in? 3. Why do not men of the world perceive that the disciples were better off than anybody else during that awful night upon Gennesareth? Oh, that is the safest place in the universe for any troubled soul to be in—among the chosen friends of Jesus Christ the Lord, and keeping the very closest to His side! (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ the Lord of nature:*—Nature, in the sense in which we now use it, means the world of matter, and the laws of its working. If Holy Scripture be listened to, He is so of right. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." "God created all things by Jesus Christ." There is no lordship like that of creation. Christ in the days of His flesh actually gave proof of His lordship on earth. 1. There is a class of miracles which had their place in what we may call productive nature; in those processes which have to do with the supply of food for man's life. Wine made at Cana; feeding of the five thousand; feeding of the four thousand. 2. There is a class of miracles proving the dominion of Christ over animated nature. The draught of fishes on the sea of Tiberias; the piece of money in the fish's mouth. 3. We have examples of the sovereignty of Christ over elemental nature, air, and sea. 4. We have an example of Christ's sovereignty in the domain of morbid nature, disease and decay—"the fig-tree dried up from the roots." Christ the Lord of nature. 1. It was necessary that the Son of God coming down from heaven for the redemption of men should prove Himself to be very God by many infallible and irresistible signs. It was in mercy as

well as in wisdom that He gave this demonstration. 2. It could scarcely be but that He should as Son of God assert below His dominion over God's creation, and over the processes of God's providence. 3. Let us be careful how we speak of miracles, such as these, as if they were contradictions of God's natural laws, or contradictions of God's providential operations. When Christ wrought a miracle upon nature it was to give a glimpse of some good thing lost, of some perfect thing deteriorated, of some joyous thing spoilt, by reason of the Fall, and to be given back to man by virtue of redemption. 4. In these miracles which attest the sovereignty of Christ over nature we have one of the surest grounds of comfort for Christian souls. (1) In their literal sense, to regard Him as sovereign of the universe in which they dwell. (2) In their parabolic significance as stilling the inward storm. 5. There is also warning for the careless and sinful. Upon His blessing or curse depends all that makes existence a happiness or misery. The agencies of nature as of grace are in the hands of Christ. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *Christ asleep*:—There is a very great spiritual importance in the fact that Jesus sleeps. In this sleep of Jesus, A VERY GREAT MISTAKE INTO WHICH WE ARE APT TO FALL IS CORRECTED OR PREVENTED; the mistake, I mean, of silently assuming that Christ, being Divine, takes nothing as we do, and is really not under our human conditions far enough to suffer exhaustions of nature by work or by feeling, by hunger, the want of sleep, dejections or recoils of wounded sensibility. Able to do even miracles—to heal the sick, or cure the blind, or raise the dead, or still the sea—we fall into the impression that His works really cost Him nothing, and that while His lot appears to be outwardly dejected, He has, in fact, an easy time of it. Exactly contrary to this, He feels it, even when virtue goes out only from the hem of His garment. And when He gives the word of healing, it is a draft, we know not how great, upon His powers. In the same way every sympathy requires an expenditure of strength proportioned to the measure of that sympathy. Every sort of tension, or attention, every argument, teaching, restraint of patience, concern of charity, is a putting forth with cost to Him, as it is to us. Notice also more particularly THE CONDITIONS OR BESTOWMENTS OF THE SLEEP OF JESUS, AND ESPECIALLY THEIR CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS REDEMPTIVE UNDERTAKING. Saying nothing of infants, who in a certain proper sense are called innocent, there have been two examples of full-grown innocent sleep in our world: that of Adam in the garden, and that of Christ the second Adam, whose nights overtook Him with no place where to bestow Himself. And the sleep of both, different as far as possible in the manner, is yet more exactly appropriate, in each, to his peculiar work and office. One is laid to sleep in a paradise of beauty, lulled by the music of birds and running brooks, shaded and sheltered by the over-hanging trees, shortly to wake and look upon a kindred nature standing by, offered him to be the partner and second life of his life. The other, as pure and spotless as he, and ripe, as he is not, in the unassailable righteousness of character, tears Himself away from clamorous multitudes that crowd upon Him suing piteously for His care, and drops, even out of miracle itself, on the hard plank deck, or bottom, of a fisherman's boat, and there, in lightning and thunder and tempest, sheeted as it were in the general wrath of the waters and the air, He sleeps—only to wake at the supplicating touch of fear and distress. One is the sleep of the world's Father; the other that of the world's Redeemer. One has never known as yet the way of sin, the other has come into the tainted blood and ruin of it, to bear and suffer under it, and drink the cup it mixes; so to still the storm and be a reconciling peace. Both sleep in character. Were the question raised which of the two will be crucified, we should have no doubt. Visibly, the toil-worn Jesus, He that takes the storm, curtained in it as by the curse—He is the Redeemer. His sleep agrees with His manger birth, His poverty, His agony, His cross; and what is more, as the cross that is maddening in His enemies is the retributive disorder of God's just penalty following their sin, so the fury of that night shadows it all the more fitly, that what He encounters in it is the wrathful cast of Providence. (*Dr. Bushnell.*) *The ship of the world*:—In one of the prophets we have the picture of a stately ship which is a type of the world. She is all splendour and magnificence; she walks the waters like a thing of life. The fir-trees of Senir and the cedars of Lebanon have contributed to her beauty; her oars are wrought from the oaks of Bashan, her sails are of fine linen and broidered work. She has a gay and gallant crew; the multitudes who throng her decks are full of joy and thoughtless of danger. Out they sail into the great waters; her rowers bring her into the midst of the sea; and when the east wind rises she is broken in the midst, and lies a helpless wreck upon the great ocean of eternity. There was no Christ in the ship to say, "Peace,

be still;" no pitying Jesus to answer the bitter cry of "Lord, save us, we perish." But not so was it with the little fisher-boat. It had no pomp and vanities of which to boast, no tinselled splendour; but it carried Jesus and His fortunes—One who could rebuke the waves of sin. The world, wanting Christ, wanted all things else and was lost; the Church, with Christ in the ship, had nothing more to ask; it was sure to be saved with His "Peace, be still." (*G. F. Cushman, D.D.*) *The strange inquiry concerning fear:*—What we could understand well enough was a mystery to Christ. In our glibness we could have explained their fear clearly. The lake was sixty fathoms deep; stoutest swimmer could not have saved his life in such a sea; some were married men; life is sweet; a storm is more terrible by night than day; and so on. But what is all plain to every one was a mystery Christ could not solve. How a doubt of the love of God could enter a soul passed His comprehension. Why men should be afraid of the Divine ordinance called death, He could not understand. What fear was, He knew not. What a proof of Divine sanctity lies in the fact that all fear and doubt were mysteries to Him! (*R. Glover.*) *From one fear to another:*—I. They escaped one fear, only to get into another; losing the fear of the tempest, they get a greater fear, that of the Lord of the tempest. II. They lose a bad fear to get a good one—a fear which is reverent, and one which has as much trust as awe in it. Such fear is the beginning of faith in Christ's Godhead. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1–20. **Into the country of the Gadarenes.**—*The country of the Gadarenes:*—I spent a night and part of two days in the vicinity of the Lake of Tiberias. My tent was pitched near the Hot Baths, about a mile south of the town of Tiberias, and, consequently, near the south end of the lake. In looking across the water to the other side, I had before me the country of the Gadarenes, where the swine, impelled by an evil spirit, plunged into the sea. I was struck with a mark of accuracy in the sacred writers which had never occurred to me till then. They state that "the swine ran violently down *the* steep place, or precipice" (the article being required by the Greek), "and were choked in the sea." It is implied here, first, that the hills in that region approach near the water; and, secondly, that they fall off so abruptly along the shore that it would be natural for a writer familiar with that fact to refer to it as well known. Both these implications are correct. A mass of rocky hills overlook the sea on that side, so near the water that one sees their dark outline reflected from its surface, while their sides are in general so steep that a person familiar with the scenery would hardly think of speaking of *a* steep place or precipice, where so much of the coast forms but one continuous precipice. Our translators omit the definite article, and show, by this inadvertence, how naturally the more exact knowledge of the evangelists influenced their language. (*H. B. Hackett, D.D.*) *The tombs:*—These tombs were caverns, natural or artificial, in the sides of the rocks, containing cells in which the dead bodies were placed and closed up. The entrance to the cave itself was not closed, and thus it might be used as a habitation. Such ancient tombs still exist in the hills above Gerasa, as well as at Gadara, indeed the whole region, as Mr. Tristram remarks, is so perforated with these rock-chambers, that a home for the demoniac might be found, whatever locality be assigned as the scene of the miracle. (*Dean Mansel.*) *Eastern tombs:*—In the East the receptacles of the dead are always situated at some distance from the abodes of the living; and if belonging to kings or men of rank, are spacious vaults and magnificent structures, containing, besides the crypt that contains the ashes of their solitary tenants, several chambers or recesses which are open and accessible at the sides. In these the benighted traveller often finds a welcome asylum; in these the dervishes and santons, wandering mendicants that infest the towns of Persia and other eastern countries, generally establish themselves, and they are often, too, made the haunts of robbers and lawless people, who hide themselves there to avoid the consequences of their crimes. Nor are they occupied only by such casual and dangerous tenants. When passing through a desolate village near the Lake of Tiberias, Giovanni Finati saw the few inhabitants living in the tombs as their usual place of residence; and at Thebes the same traveller, when he was introduced to Mr. Beechy, the British Consul, found

that gentleman had established himself, while prosecuting his researches among the ruins of that celebrated place, in the vestibule of one of the tombs of the ancient kings. Captain Light, who travelled over the scene of our Lord's interview with the demoniac, describes the tombs as still existing in the form of caverns cut in the live rock, like those at Petra—as wild and sequestered solitudes, divided into a number of bare and open niches, well suited to be places of refuge to those unhappy lunatics for whom the benevolence of antiquity had not provided a better asylum. (*R. Jamieson, D.D.*) *Power of evil spirits, and power over them*:—I. THE POWER OF EVIL SPIRITS. 1. As seen in its extensiveness. Their field is the world. 2. As seen in its effects. (1) In institutions: paganism; pseudo-Christian forms; governments. (2) In society: amusements; sentiments; prejudices; practices; vices; crimes; results. II. CHRIST'S POWER OVER EVIL SPIRITS. 1. Feared by them—"I adjure Thee by God, torment me not." 2. Hated of them—"What have we," &c. 3. Absolute over them—"Come out of him, thou unclean spirit," &c. (1) This exercise of Christ's power over evil spirits a prophecy of their ultimate subjection to Him. (2) Christ only can deliver us from the power of Satan. (3) The contrast between Satan's power and Christ's is here graphically and historically delineated. (4) The power of worldliness to dry up human sympathy exemplified in the Gergesenes sending Jesus away from their coasts. (5) The power of Christ in delivering us from the power of evil involves grateful obligations—"Go home to thy friends," &c. This is the true method of spreading the gospel. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Demoniacal possession*:—The four evangelists give themselves very little concern about pathology and diagnosis, although one of them was a physician. But taking the Gospels as an honest and not unintelligent record of the phenomena, we make out two points very clearly concerning this demonism. I. IT WAS NOT MERE LUNACY OR EPILEPSY, for these diseases are recognized and clearly distinguished from the work of the evil spirits. There are patients in whom the work of the infesting spirit produces symptoms like epilepsy, and other patients in whom it produces symptoms of dumbness, and there are still other manifestations, but beneath these symptoms they detect indications, which the sufferer himself confirms, of something different from the mere physical diseases of like symptoms by which these cases were surrounded. II. As this demonism was not mere disease, so, on the other hand, IT WAS NOT MERE WICKEDNESS—the wilful giving up of one's self to the instigation of the devil—a mistake to which we are inclined by the unhappy mistranslation of *demon* into *devil*. It is always spoken of and dealt with as an involuntary affliction, looked upon by the Lord with pity rather than censure. Neither is it treated as if it were in any special sense a visitation for sin. Doubtless these sufferers were sinners, and doubtless their sufferings stood in some relation to their sins, but it was not this relation, that they were "sinners above all others." The truth seems to be this: that sin, unbelief, opened the way for this awful curse, and that when the alien spirit had taken hold of body and mind and will, it had the power of plaguing with various disorders—with wild, moping, melancholic madness, or with epileptic convulsions, or blindness, or dumbness. Both the disciples and the evangelists, and even the popular apprehension of the Jews, distinguished clearly between such of these maladies as were merely physical, and such as were inflicted by malign spirits. (*L. W. Bacon.*) *Christ and the demoniac*:—From this strange but suggestive incident we may learn—I. THE IMMEDIATE CONNECTION OF THE WORLD OF DARKNESS WITH THE EVIL HEART. To-day men break through moral and social restraints, and with else unaccountable recklessness destroy their every interest; suffer disgrace, lose their situations, break up their homes, and for a mess of pottage sacrifice all their hopes in life. Human passion, or even selfishness, is no explanation of such follies. They have a demon; they are possessed. II. THE GREAT POWER OF THE INHABITANTS OF DARKNESS OVER THE EVIL HEART. To drive men from the comforts of an honourable life, and to lead them to seek happiness in vagrancy; to make them think they are all right, though daubed with dirt and pollution; to cause men who are sane in the ordinary affairs of life to frequent such places and cherish such companions as reveal to others their moral madness. III. THE UTTER IMPOTENCY OF MAN TO DELIVER THE POSSESSED FROM THE POWER OF THE INHABITANTS OF DARKNESS. IV. THE WEAKNESS OF THE POWERS OF DARKNESS IN CONFLICT WITH CHRIST. A legion of demons expelled by a word! V. CONCLUSION. 1. Beware of tampering with evil. The "little sin" may open the door of the heart for the entrance of a whole legion of demons. 2. The wish of evil will ever be self-destructive. 3. If Jesus has cured you, show it by causing joy and gladness where you have caused so much misery—

in your home. (*F. Wallace.*) *The demoniac of Gadara*:—I. The MISERY of the man. II. The MAJESTY of Christ. III. The MISCHIEF of the devils. (*J. B.*) *The Gadarene demoniac*:—1. That there are other intelligent and finite creatures beside men. 2. Some of these are wholly wicked, while others are wholly good. 3. Wicked spirits can tempt men to sin. 4. Yet it is conceivable that in some instances they should acquire an absolute physical control over a human being, so as to coerce him irresistibly and make him act against his own will. 5. Cases of possession were peculiarly numerous at the time of Christ's ministry upon earth. Lessons: 1. See the exceeding terribleness of sin, in ruining two orders of creatures and making one the means of ruin to the other. 2. Be thankful to be saved from the physical tyranny of the devil. He would make us all howling demoniacs if he could: but he is restrained by the power and interference of Jesus Christ. 3. Consider the dreadful doom of sinners who hereafter will be absolutely under the power of evil spirits. Hell is a pandemonium of devils, and a bedlam of demoniacs. 4. As still subject to the moral temptations of the evil one, look stedfastly to Jesus, who has power to bring you off more than conqueror in every conflict with the powers of darkness. (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Sin and salvation*:—I. SOME ASPECTS OF SIN. 1. Its contagiousness. The man was "possessed." Evil is always reaching beyond itself for something of which it may lay hold, and which it may drag downwards. 2. Its anti-social tendency. "Neither abode in any house, but in the tombs." Iniquity isolates men, as ferocity does the wolf, the tiger, the eagle. 3. Its embrutalization of character. (1) Evidenced in the man; naked, dwelling like a beast amongst the caves: "about two thousand" demons dwelling in one man! (2) Evidenced in the evil spirits. Spirits, who had been inhabitants of heaven, fallen so low that they desire to take up their abode in the swine! 4. Its dread of righteousness. The devils cry out when Christ draws near. Always vice fears and hates virtue. II. SOME ASPECTS OF SALVATION. 1. It is begun in the expulsion (not repression) of evil principles and desires. 2. God accounts as nothing whatever material loss may be incurred in its effectuation. Souls are more to Him than swine. 3. Its moral and spiritual results have a counterpart, and external evidence in improved material and social condition. "Clothed," &c. 4. The surest proof of the reality of its accomplishment is renunciation of personal preferences in obedience to Christ's command. "Not my will, but Thine be done." (*The Pulpit Analyst.*) *The evil spirits:*—I. The PERSONALITY OF EVIL SPIRITS: or, in other words, that they are distinct personal beings. For every feature of the narrative bespeaks their true personality. Their first meeting with our Lord; their direct perception that He was their great antagonist; that He was man, and yet that in some way He was the Son of the most high God: that He was of the race over whom they had of old triumphed, and yet that He was their judge; their trembling entreaty that the appointed time of their full sorrow might not be forestalled:—all of these bespeak the manifest meeting of the person of the Christ with the person of the evil one. For all parts of this narrative are equally incompatible with the supposed solution of imaginative language; and all equally agree with the simple meaning of the declaration, that these spirits were separate, lost, personal beings, under whose strange and cruel power the demoniac had been brought. But, above all, this is so clearly established by their entering into the swine, that it furnishes us with the most probable reason for that permission. II. And as their personality, so, further, THEIR GREAT NUMBER is established by this history. Their name was Legion, for many devils had entered into this single victim: a clear intimation of the exhaustless multitude of these hosts of darkness. III. Again, concerning THEIR CONDITION we may gather much. For their meeting with Christ, as it called forth their name, so did it compel the disclosure of their state. We see them wandering restlessly over the earth, held even now in the strong chain of an ever present despair, and looking on to the full accomplishment of their appointed punishment. So that their present condition is plainly one of active, unresting, sinful misery; their hell is already within them, though its outer bars close not utterly around them until the accomplishment of all things. IV. And in this condition THEIR POWER IS MANIFESTLY GREAT. The strength which they administered to this their victim, by which "chains had been plucked asunder by him, and fetters broken in pieces," was but the outward exhibition of the awful might with which he was himself subdued to their will. For what is meant by their "entering into him," save that they had the mastery over him; that his spirit was controlled by theirs, so that his outer actions were now the coming forth of an evil power within him? In this sense they had "entered into him." But it is as plain that this power,

great as it was, was limited; for they could do no more than they were suffered. V. And but for this gracious help of the Almighty, surely man would be swept away before the flood of their bitter hatred; for we may see here THEIR MALIGNITY as plainly as their power. These wretched men, with their foul haunt amidst the pollutions of the tomb, who wore no clothes, but were "always night and day crying out and cutting themselves with stones;" how plainly do they bear their witness to the character of Satan's rule! What else was all this their proclaimed misery but the evident display, in those given over utterly to him, of the true working of that will of his which is now making men sensual, and brutish, and violent, and fierce, and dark in spirit! The pleasant baits of sin are cast aside as soon as they have served their turn, and an absolute malignity seeks to overwhelm his prey with unmixed misery. Surely the tender mercies of that wicked one are cruel; he hates God without measure, and therefore hates in man even the obscured image of his heavenly Father. What a fearful intimation is all this of what hell shall be, where there shall be no limitation to his power of tormenting those who heretofore have joined him in rebellion, and thereby made him master over them! Lessons: And, first, we may see here the greatness of our redeemed life. Every one of us, how narrow soever be his sphere, is, as it were the champion of the great King. There is a mighty warfare raging throughout all His wide dominions. The hosts are gathered for the battle. An expectant world is looking on. Not men only, but all the armies of heaven, are ranged on this side and on that. Our common temptations, they are these times of trial. In them we either maintain God's truth, or go basely over to His enemies. And if there be this greatness in our redeemed life, let us see next its fearfulness. For who are we that we should have to face these mighty ones, thus armed with power, thus inevitable in presence, thus skilled in the arts of the destroyer, thus malignant, numerous, nimble, and daring from the blackness of despair and the bitterness of hatred? Surely, then, our life, which leads us into the midst of them, must be fearful. Can it be safe for such men as we are to be sleepy and careless; to be ungirded, as those who live for pleasure; unarmed, as those who loll idly, courting ease or slumber? But once more; see not only the greatness and the fearfulness of the life which, in this view, we are leading, but see also its blessedness and true security. There is, indeed, this enemy to meet; our temptations to common sins involve this mighty struggle as coming from him; but there is also great joy even in this very thought; for as we cannot doubt the presence of evil, surely it is a blessed thing to know that it is thus a temptation cast in from without; that it is not necessarily part of us. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). We are Christ's soldiers, will He suffer us to perish? let us look at His cross, that we may deem better of His love. We know not how greatly we are every day protected by His present might; we know not how He has already succoured us; how He has curbed the power of the enemy; we know not how to measure aright the common blessing of being in His Church, amongst His saints, where the power of Satan even now is manifestly bound and straitened; we cannot tell from what bodily inflictions, from what mental struggles, from what fearful falls He has actually kept us. (*Bishop Wilberforce.*) *Nature sitting at the feet of Jesus:*—I. THE DIFFICULTY FELT BY SOME, AND EXPRESSED BY NOT A FEW, AS TO THERE BEING OR NOT BEING ANY REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT ARE CALLED DEMONIACAL POSSESSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND MANIA, OR MALADIES OF VARIOUS SORTS AND DEGREES OF INTENSITY. 1. They are distinct and separate things (Matt. iv. 24, viii. 16; Mark i. 32). 2. The language of our Lord on the occasion of His casting out devils is such as to warrant us in concluding that it was an actual or literal demoniacal possession. The theory of Strauss and the Rationalistic school. 3. These demoniacs were not necessarily, or in every instance, the guiltiest of men, but they were in all instances the unhappiest of men. There was a groaning under the tyranny they endured. 4. There seemed to have been two wills in the person—the will of the victim, and the will of the spirit driving him wherever he would. II. A FEW REASONS FOR SUPPOSING THAT DEMONIAC POSSESSIONS MAY HAVE CEASED, AND SOME REASONS FOR BELIEVING IT MAY STILL CONTINUE. 1. If demoniac possessions were in those days, how is it that demoniac possessions are not now? How is it that epidemics that existed once do not exist now? &c. 2. Why does God suffer it to be so? The answer to that difficulty is, that we know very little why evil was introduced, we know not why evil is continued, &c. Evil is not unripe good, as Emerson and others of his school allege. 3. Another reason

why demoniac possessions may have ceased is, that Satan, beyond all dispute, at our Redeemer's birth, and at our Redeemer's atonement, received a blow from which he has never recovered. 4. And there remains this fact, too—whatever God does in the world, Satan always gets up something very like it, because his hope of progress is by deception. III. THE SPECIAL AND INDIVIDUAL PORTRAIT SKETCHED IN THE TEXT. 1. The most awful specimen of demoniacal possession that we can well imagine. 2. It is very remarkable to notice the contrast in his character—the human in its agony, groaning to be delivered, and the fiendish in its depravity, imploring to be let alone. 3. It appears that when Jesus drew near to the man he was not delivered of the demons instantly, but underwent a tremendous paroxysm of suffering and distress. 4. The prayer of the demons occasion a great deal of difficulty and of scoffing (confer Luke viii. 31). It seems to us a mystery that Christ should answer the prayer of the demons at all. If there is any other way of disposing of them, why let the demons take possession of the swine, and why let the swine be thus destroyed? 5. The Gadarenes also presented a petition to Christ; and what is that petition? (ver. 17.) Strange, startling, painful fact! And yet it is possible for us to imitate their example. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *The Gadarene demoniac*:—I. HUMAN EFFORTS EXERTED. Picture his state. He was a pest to his family and the city. So are great sinners, who are the devil's instruments for disturbing society. Something must be done. But what? Men can think only of fetters, &c. They did all that they had the wit to devise, or the power to accomplish. Perhaps congratulated themselves on having done so much. Notice modern human restraints. Law, prisons, reformatories, policemen, and punishments. Besides these there are public opinion, fashion, custom. These are often used to keep the unruly in check. Suitable efforts employed among children. Parental restraints (Psa. xxxii. 9) hence (Lam. iii. 27). II. HUMAN EFFORTS FRUSTRATED. No restraints could be found that were strong enough. Apply this and the personal injuries received to the case of those, especially children and young people, who break through restraints. He cut himself with the rocks; they are injured by contact with evil companions, bad habits, &c. Liberty only good for those who have some power of self-control. Observe how futile are human efforts in restraining sin. What multitudes break through every restraint! This to be prevented, not by strengthening the bonds, but by removing the inclination. This was what Jesus did. III. HUMAN EFFORTS SUPERSEDED. Jesus did not rebuke those who had done their best, but He did something better. He exorcised the evil spirit. The man was at once reduced to tractability; tamed without a fetter. Power of evil spirits illustrated by the fate of the swine. Superior value of the man proved by the permitted destruction of the swine, so the man might be saved. Selfishness of the Gadarenes illustrates that of the world in general, who would rather preserve personal property than sacrifice it for the religious and permanent good of man. Learn—I. The malignity, power, craft, and blindness of evil spirits. II. The wretched state, personally and relatively, of man under their influence. III. The utter helplessness of the best-concerted human means for the restraint of evil. IV. The sufficiency of the word of Jesus (Col. ii. 15). (*C. Gray.*) *Our great enemy*:—From this history we learn three truths of great importance. I. That the devil is a spirit of great malice and power. II. That both his malice and his power are altogether under the government of God. III. That God often permits him to do great mischief, for the profit of worldly men and for the trial of the faith of good men. (*Bishop Wilson.*) *The demoniac of Gergesa*:—I. THE GERGESENE IN BONDAGE. Was he not a free man, one who would not be bound by others—would go his own way? Yet he was a miserable slave (vers. 15–18). Here was one who seemed to be free, yet was really a slave. II. HOW THE GERGESENE WAS RESCUED. Could not escape himself—the evil spirit too strong. Friends could not rescue him. Hopeless until some one stronger than the devils should come—then deliverance (compare Luke xi. 21, 22). Jesus not only stronger than one evil spirit—an army of them here (ver. 9). Yet see His supremacy. 1. They could go nowhere against His will. 2. Besought Him. 3. Even when He defeated them. III. THE GERGESENE AT LIBERTY. 1. Is it like a free man to be sitting at another's feet like that? 2. What does he ask of Jesus? Would it be freedom to have to follow another everywhere? 3. Jesus gives him an order; is that like liberty, to obey it so implicitly? Yes, for it is his own free choice to be, like St. Paul afterwards, the "slave of Christ" (Rom. i. 1). (*E. Stock.*) *Sin destructive*:—Satan's work is a work of destruction. Nearly seven hundred years ago, Jenghis Khan swept over Central Asia, and it is said that, for centuries after, his course could be traced by the

pyramids of human bones—the bones of slaughtered captives—which his armies left behind them. If the bones of Satan's slain captives could be piled up in our sight, what a pyramid that would be! Self-mutilation has always been common among the worshippers of false gods; to this day the fakirs of India cut and gash themselves with knives. The devil sets his servants at the same unprofitable task. Alo-ed-Din, the chief of the Assassins, succeeded in persuading his men that whoever would fall in his service was sure of Paradise; and so, at a nod of their chief, the poor dupes would stab themselves to the heart, or fling themselves over precipices. Satan's one aim is to blind his captives, and lead them to self-destruction. (*Sunday School Times.*) *A man in ruins:*—Can anything be more sad than the wreck of a man? We mourn over the destruction of many noble things that have existed in the world. Men, when they hear of the old Phidian Jupiter—that sat forty feet high, carved of ivory and gold, and that was so magnificent, so transcendent, that all the ancient world counted him unhappy that died without having seen this most memorable statue that ever existed in the world—often mourn to think that its exceeding value led to its destruction, and that it perished. It was a great loss to art that such a thing should perish. Can any man look upon the Acropolis—shattered with balls, crumbled by the various influences of the elements, and utterly destroyed—and not mourn to think that such a stately temple, a temple so unparalleled in its exquisite symmetry and beauty, should be desolate and scattered? Can there be anything more melancholy than the destruction, not only of such temples as the Acropolis and the Parthenon, but of a whole city of temples and statues? More melancholy than the destruction of a statue, or a temple, or a city, or a nation, in its physical aspects, is the destruction of a man, the wreck of the understanding, the ruin of the moral feelings, the scattering all abroad of those elements of power that, united together, make man fitly the noblest creature that walks on the earth. Thousands and thousands of men make foreign pilgrimages to visit and mourn over fallen and destroyed cities of former grandeur and beauty; and yet, all round about every one of us, in every street, and in almost every neighbourhood, there are ruins more stupendous, more pitiful, and more heart-touching than that of any city. And how strange would be the wonder if, as men wandered in the Orient, there should come some one that should call from the mounds all the scattered ruins of Babylon, or build again Tadmor of the desert! How strange it would be to see a city, that at night was a waste heap, so restored that in the morning the light of the sun should flash from pinnacle, and tower, and wall, and roof! How marvellous would be that creative miracle! But more marvellous, ten thousand times, is that Divine touch by which a man, broken down and shattered, is raised up in his right mind, and made to sit, clothed, at the feet of Jesus. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 6. **But when he saw Jesus afar off.**—*The sinner's place:*—Jesus is afar off in the sinner's apprehension, and the sinner is in very deed far off from God. 1. As to character. What a difference between the demoniac and Jesus. 2. As to knowledge. The demoniac knew Jesus, but knew little of His love. 3. As to hope. This man had no hope of recovery, or but a faint one, and that hope the demons tried to extinguish. 4. As to possession. The demoniac had no hold upon the Saviour; on the contrary, he cried, "What have I to do with Thee?" Immeasurable is the distance between God and a sinner; it is wide as the gulf between sin and holiness, death and life, hell and heaven. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sinner's wisest course:*—The demoniac was all in confusion, for he was under contending influences: his own spirit and the evil spirit strove together. He ran towards Jesus, and worshipped Him; and yet in the same breath he cried, "What have I to do with Thee?" Thus are sinners tossed about. But it is the sinner's wisest course to run to Jesus; for—1. He is the Son of the Most High God. 2. He is the great Enemy of our enemy, the devil. 3. He is abundantly able to drive out a legion of devils. 4. He can cause us to be clothed in our right mind. 5. He permits us, even now, to draw near and worship Him. (*Ibid.*) *The law of attraction:*—A needle will move towards a magnet, when once a magnet has moved near to it. Our heart manifests a sweet willingness towards salvation and holiness when the great and glorious goodwill of the Lord operates upon it. It is ours to run to Jesus as if all the running were ours; but the secret truth is that the Lord runs towards us, and this is the very heart of the business. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God?**—

Jesus confronting demons:—I. THE DEVIL CRIES OUT AGAINST THE INTRUSION OF CHRIST. 1. Christ's nature is so contrary to that of the devil, war is inevitable when they meet. 2. There are no designs of grace for Satan; as, therefore, he has nothing to hope for from Jesus, he dreads His coming. 3. He wishes to be let alone. Thoughtlessness, stagnation, and despair suit his plans. 4. He knows his powerlessness against the Son of the Most High God, and has no wish to try a fall with Him. 5. He dreads his doom: for Jesus will not hesitate to torment him by the sight of good done and evil overcome. II. MEN UNDER THE DEVIL'S INFLUENCE CRY OUT AGAINST THE INCOMING OF CHRIST BY THE GOSPEL. 1. Conscience is feared by them; they do not wish to have it disturbed, instructed, and placed in power. 2. Change is dreaded by them; for they love sin, and its gains, and pleasures, and know that Jesus wars with these things. 3. They claim a right to be left alone: this is their idea of religious liberty. They would not be questioned either by God or man. 4. They argue that the gospel cannot bless *them*. They are too poor, too ignorant, too busy, too sinful, too weak, too involved, perhaps too aged, to receive any good from it. 5. They view Jesus as a tormentor, who will rob them of pleasure, sting their consciences, and drive them to obnoxious duties. (*Ibid.*) *Nothing to do with Jesus*:—It is said that Voltaire, being pressed in his last moments to acknowledge the Divinity of Christ, turned away, and said feebly, "For the love of God don't mention that Man; let me die in peace!" *The antagonism of evil provoked by good*:—The coming of Jesus into a place puts all into a commotion. The gospel is a great disturber of sinful peace. Like the sun among wild beasts, owls, and bats, it creates a stir. In this case, a legion of devils began to move. (*Ibid.*) *Man responsible*:—Universally we judge of instincts, or the qualities and dispositions which make up natural character, as we see the creature brought into relation or juxtaposition with something else, and observe, "What it will do with it." Especially is this true of man. This is just what makes up his probation. God has placed him in this world that he may show forth his character, and work out his own future condition, as he rightly uses or abuses it. Different men use the same material, or implement, or opportunity either for good or for evil. From the same forest and quarry one man builds a hospital, and another a gambling hell. Out of the grain from the same harvest-field one man leavens wholesome bread, and another distils a destroying beverage. With the same ink and type and press, one prints Huxley's blasphemies, and another God's Bibles. And while in all this perhaps few men are conscious that they are achieving their probation, yet verily they are. God has brought them into these conditions that the universe may see what the man "will do with them." And according as he does evil or good, he displays his character and decides his own destiny. I. NOW THIS, IN REGARD OF ALL THINGS, EVEN SECULAR AND SOCIAL, IS THE GREAT LAW OF LIFE. BUT HOW MUCH MORE IS ITS SOLEMNITY INCREASED WHEN IT HAS TO DO WITH MATTERS RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL? The question, in its first connection, was addressed to Christ; and its most significant application is to the case of impenitent and ungodly men who, with a like question, turn away from the gospel. "Oh," say some men, "I have nothing to do with it! I am not a professing Christian! I never joined any Church! What, then, is all this to me? What have I to do with the gospel of Christ?" But, alas, for their false logic! they have something to do with it. Their indifference cannot alter their relations to the gospel. Those relations grow out of character and condition. I can imagine a foolish man cherishing a settled dislike to the great law of gravitation, overlooking its beneficent results as working out, from the rounding of a dew-drop to the rounding of a star—from the graceful equipoise of a lily's leaf to the harmonies of the stupendous systems of the universe—all the grand and gracious processes and phenomena of creation—overlooking all this, and thinking that but for its restraining power he might spring up as a pure spirit into the boundless expanse of heaven, and wander at will from star to star through immensity. I can conceive of such an one as disliking that great law, and in his insane hate blaspheming the Omnipotence which devised it. But what of that? Can the man escape from it? Will God have respect to his perverted taste, and annihilate that glorious force whereon depend all the beauties and harmonies of the universe? Oh, surely not. And just so it is of religion. It is that irresistible law of God under which all immortal creatures live. In the very nature of things, retribution must follow every act and experience of probation. Its solemn elements are twofold. First, there is a loss of all the unspeakable blessings which the gospel offers. Consider again these natural analogies. Take the law of gravitation. And the foolish man says:—"I do not like that law; it is the law of falling bodies; it dashes men

down precipices; it brings the destroying avalanche upon human habitations; I will let it alone!" But not so a wise man. He says, I will have something to do with it; it makes the pendulum vibrate; I will set it to keep time for me; it gives momentum to the watercourses, it shall grind for me as a mill. And so of all the natural forces of the universe: by diligently working with them we secure immense benefits. What if a child, lost in a dangerous forest in the stormy night, amid ravening beasts and howling tempests, catching through the darkness the gleam of torches and the accents of gentle voices, and beholding the face of the father who, in agonizing love, had come forth to seek and save him, instead of springing joyfully into those outstretched arms, should turn away with the despising cry, "What have I to do with thee?" What would you call it but madness? And yet immeasurably greater is the madness of the impenitent man who rejects the precious Saviour; for the sinner's danger is more terrible, and the Saviour's love more tender. II. IN THIS REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL YOU INCUR TERRIBLE GUILT. That gospel is not merely an invitation, but as well a sovereign mandate. The gospel is a law, and no law of God is ever violated with impunity. You may not believe in God's ordinances of health; but if you make your bed in a lazar-house you will be stricken with pestilence. You may laugh to scorn God's law of great forces; but if you launch your bark above Niagara, it will sweep you to destruction. Alas! for this folly of infidelity and atheism! It may be effectual in persuading its abettor to have nothing to do with God, but is utterly powerless in persuading God to have nothing to do with him. Retribution is an awful thought, and an awful truth. But the aspect in which our text sets forth the neglect of the gospel is that of the utter folly of rejecting a great blessing. (*C. Wadsworth, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **My name is Legion.**—*The legion of sin:*—Truly the name of sin is Legion. It is anger, malice, intemperance, murder, impurity, unfaithfulness, dishonesty, equivocation, dissimulation, falsehood, hypocrisy, ingratitude, disobedience, impatience, discontentment, envy, covetousness; it is profanity, formality, superstition, idolatry, blasphemy, and atheism. It is a repudiation of the authority, a defiance of the power, a slight to the wisdom, a contempt of the holiness, and unthankfulness for the goodness of God. It is the cause of all the error, conflict, cruelty, suffering, weeping, and woe that exist in this world. Like a foul demon, it has poisoned and polluted, blighted and cursed everything it has touched. It has caused man, the noblest work of God, to become the destroyer of his own soul, the murderer of his brother, the enemy of his God. (*Arthur Thompson.*)

Vers. 11–14. **Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.**—*The demonized swine:*—To clear away the difficulty presented by this miracle of judgment, we must remember—(1) Pork was forbidden for food to Israel, and with good reason. The pigs and the dogs are the scavengers of Syria; the pig itself is vastly inferior to the animal as we know it, and furnishes a food too gross for such a climate. For these and other reasons Moses prohibited its use; for similar reason Mohammed followed his example in doing so; but (2) salt pork was a great article of food with the Romans; and therefore (3) many who, perhaps, would not use pork for their own food had no objections to making a profit by breeding some for the use of others. It was contrary to the whole law, but it was remunerative. So here several owners have together as many as two thousand. (4) Where Christ comes in, the swine must go out. As He purged the temple in Jerusalem, so He purges the temple of nature in Gadara. Men must part with their sins, if they want to have their Saviour. The swine will be driven out of our hearts, if Christ enters them. He came with mercy to Gadara, but it was not a weak but a purifying mercy. (5) God is perpetually using the devil as His whip, with which He corrects the follies of our heart, no evil being permitted to exist which Christ cannot employ in some way for good. This destruction of the swine is, therefore, a call to repentance; a miracle that does for Christ in Gadara what John the Baptist did for Him in Judæa, stimulating conscience and awakening solicitude. It is a message to convince of sin. (*R. Glover.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.**—*The joy of freedom from satanic tyranny:*—At the death of Queen Mary of England, several Protestants were in the prisons awaiting martyrdom. Who can tell their joy when it was announced that the tyrant was dead and they were free! But what is deliverance from a bodily persecutor in comparison with the deliverance of a soul from the

bonds of Satan? Jesus Christ comes as a conqueror to destroy the works of the devil; at His word the bonds of Satan's captives fall from them, and they are free. (*Sunday School Times.*) *The magnitude of a moral change:*—Whenever a man is changed, as this demoniac was, the greatest change that ever can happen in this world takes place—the transformation of a man from a life of vulgarity, of passion, of appetite, of selfishness, of pride, and his translation into a new life, in which purity, truth, and love are the controlling elements. As God looks upon it in its bearings and relations to the eternal existence, there is no change that ever takes place, no change created by skill, no change in æsthetic art, so great and beautiful as this. It is taking place. The wonders of creation are not in Niagara, nor in the Mammoth Cave, nor on the stormy ocean. The wonders of creation are silent. All the thunder of the storm has not in it the power of one blade of grass. All the winds that rock the oak, and make it groan, are not to be compared in power with the suction that is going on in the roots of that one single oak. The powers of nature are silent; and the transformation of men from lower and vulgar conditions of mind into higher and spiritual conditions are the marvels, as God looks upon them. They are the marvels of power in this world; and not all the creations of Phidias, of Praxiteles, of Canova, or of Ward in our modern day; not all that Titian could do, not all that Raphael could do, not all that the great masters on canvas could do, in any age since the world began, can compare with it. These are thin and superficial pictures; they are nothing but a suggestion of what it is when a man is translated from the power of sin and Satan into the kingdom of light and glory. The earth ought to shake, and every string in heaven ought to quiver, with the outblown joy. It does; for there is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine persons that need no repentance. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Life contrasts:*—The august terror of the one experience, and the sweet beauty of the other, are almost that which we see in some days of summer. The clouds bring forth their thunder and their lightning, and the whole earth shakes and quivers at the awful power which the sweeping tempest exhibits. But it sweeps on; the clouds roll away; the thunder grows lower and lower, and more and more distant; the sun breaks through; every tree and shrub is apparelled in jewels; the birds begin to sing; and the bright blue overarches the whole heavens. As between the terror of the storm and the clearing-up of the storm there is an analogy of beauty, certainly, with this terrible experience of the demoniac in the tombs, and his sitting at the feet of Christ sweet as a new-born child. (*Ibid.*) *Change wrought by conversion:*—A young man, an apprentice in an extensive tin factory in Massachusetts, who had been very profligate, but was converted by reading a religious tract, having applied for admission into a church, the minister called on his master to inquire whether any change had been wrought in his conduct, and whether he had any objection to his reception. When the minister had made the customary inquiries, his master, with evident emotion, though he was not a professor of religion, replied in substance as follows: Pointing to an iron chain hanging up in the room, "Do you see that chain?" said he. "That chain was forged for W——. I was obliged to chain him to the bench by the week together, to keep him at work. He was the worst boy I had in the whole establishment. No punishment seemed to have any salutary influence upon him. I could not trust him out of my sight. But now, sir, he is completely changed—he has really become like a lamb. He is one of my best apprentices. I would trust him with untold gold. I have no objection to his being received into communion. I wish all my boys were prepared to go with him."

Ver. 17. **To depart out of their coasts.**—*The Saviour sacrificed rather than sinful gain:*—A great many men cannot afford to have Christ. Here is a man who is renting his buildings for the most obscene and abominable purposes in the world; his revenues depend upon lust and vice; and, if the Spirit of God comes to regenerate him, he cannot afford to have Christ with him. If he does, he must reform his whole revenue system, and lose much possession; and he beseeches Christ to depart out of his coast. He does not want Him. There are a great many men who are trafficking in intoxicating liquors in such a way that they know in their own secret consciences that they are living upon the destruction of their fellow-men; and they cannot afford to give up their traffic for the sake of becoming Christians; and when the power of the Holy Ghost is upon them, they beseech Christ to depart out of their coast. They have the opportunity of reformation and rejuvenation; life, and immortality, and glory, are within their reach; but there are the swine.

In order that they may sit at the feet of Christ, they must lose their herds of unclean beasts, they must lose their unjust profits and wicked pleasures; but, rather than lose these, they will sacrifice the Saviour. So it was in this case. There was no doubt as to the miracle, and its beneficence. There was a man before them in whom the power of God had been made manifest, and they began to pray Christ, through whose instrumentality this power had been made manifest, to depart out of their coast. One would suppose that they would have besought Him to remain, and go on with His works of mercy; but no, they prayed Him to depart. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Regret for contempt of religion*:—Alas! how many will, when too late, regret their neglect of, or contempt for, religion! A few years ago, the Prime Minister of England stepped across Downing Street with a friend, who wanted some information from one of the Government officials. They entered the particular office, and on inquiring for the Head of the Department they were curtly told to "wait" by an insolent young clerk, who did not even look up from his newspaper, and presently added an order to "wait outside." When the principal official returned, he was thunderstruck to find the Head of the Government sitting with his friend on the steps of the stone staircase! Equally surprised was the clerk, when, to his dismay, he learned by his dismissal the result of his careless insolence. In earthly things men bitterly regret "chances" lost or thrown away, and yet we treat with indifference our opportunities in the spiritual life! With slow and sorrowful steps the compassionate Saviour obeyed these requests, and departed from those souls whom He would have so gladly blessed. (*W. Hardman, M.A.*) *The man with an unclean spirit*:—In view of this narrative, which we have thus very briefly traced, I remark—1. We are tempted to undervalue man just as much as these men were. The point of the narrative was that they were supposed to be civilized; that they believed themselves to be religious; that they beheld the miracle that Christ wrought upon this man; and that their ideas of the worth of a man were so low and so vulgar, that they were not in the slightest degree impressed with the man's restoration. There is no point where we need the application of the grace of God more continuously than in impressing us with a sense of the Divine value of men. We believe in the value of poets; of philosophers; of orators; of men that have something pleasing to our taste, dazzling to our intellect, and stimulating to our affections; of eminent men; of men of power, that produce impressions upon us. We believe in manhood that shows itself in attractive forms. But for man, independent of circumstances, simply as a creature of God, as an heir of immortality, and as one that has all the future in him—a future illustrious as heaven or painful as hell—for man as man, how little feeling have we! We walk the streets with contempt for this one, and with loathing for that one. We despise the poor sinners—the children of vice and crime—that we see on every side of us. 2. There are thousands of men yet that are opposed to any reformation of morals that would conflict with the physical prosperity, or the supposed physical prosperity, of the community in which they dwell. Men are numerous, in every city or section of the country, who vote for their physical welfare against their spiritual. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 18, 20. **Prayed Him that he might be with Him.**—*The unanswered prayer*:—I. THE PROBABLE REASON THAT LED THIS RESTORED DEMONIAC TO OFFER THIS PRAYER. 1. A vague but very dreadful fear may have taken possession of him that, perhaps, in the absence of Christ, his deliverer, these demoniac powers might again regain the mastery over him. Fear, the salutary fear, of going astray may often assist the soul; it may be, and has often been our wisdom to be afraid of the possibility of departure from Christ. 2. And there may have been, who can doubt that there was, a depth of gratitude in his heart towards Christ, that, perhaps, he thought could only be expressed by his becoming His disciple. II. SOME OF THE PROBABLE REASONS THAT LED TO THE REFUSAL OF THIS PRAYER BY OUR SAVIOUR. "Go home to thy friends," &c. 1. Because, perhaps, it was better for the healed Gadarene to be a living witness of Christ's goodness and power amongst his countrymen. 2. Because young converts are generally unfit to choose their spiritual vocation. Many, in the freshness of their love, are as impetuous and misguided as a mountain stream bursting from its hidden prison. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Witnessing for Christ*:—In general, every man who believes himself to be a Christian, is bound to make such public acknowledgment that men shall know the source of his godly life. Every man who is conscious that his character has been brought under the power of the Spirit of God, is bound to let men know that the life which is flowing out from him now is not his own natural life, but one which proceeds from the Spirit of God.

This would seem too obvious for remark, did not facts show that multitudes of men endeavour to live Christianly, but are very cautious about saying that they are Christians—and from shame-faced reasons, sometimes; from reasons of fear, sometimes; from reasons of pride, sometimes. Men who are endeavouring to live Christianly say, often, "Let my example speak, and not my lips." Why should not a man's lips and example both speak? Why should not a man interpret his example? Why should a man leave it to be inferred, in this world, that he is still living simply by the power of his own will? Why should he leave it for men to point to him, and say, "There is a man of a well-regulated life who holds his temper aright; but see, it is on account of the honsehold that he has around him; it is on account of the companionship that he keeps; it is on account of the valorous purpose which he has fashioned in his own mind"—thus giving credit to these secondary causes, and not to that Divine inspiration, that power from on high, which gives to all secondary causes their efficiency? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Personal testimony appreciated*:—Two men come together, one of whom is shrunk and crippled with a rheumatic affection, and the other of whom is walking in health and comfort; and the well man says to the other, "My friend, I know how to pity you. I spent fifteen as wretched years as any man ever spent in the world. I, too, was a miserable cripple, in the same way that you are." And the man with rheumatism at once says, "You were?" He sees him walk; he sees how lithe and nimble he is; he sees that he can straighten out his limbs, and that his joints are not swollen; he sees that he is in the enjoyment of all his bodily power; and he is eager to know more about it. "Yes, I was as bad off as you are, and I suffered everything." "Tell me what cured you." There is nothing that a man wants to hear so much as the history of one who has been cured, if he too is a sufferer. (*Ibid.*) *Personal testimony hindered by the fear of subsequent failure*:—When a watch-maker sets a watch, he almost always stops it first, in order to get the second-hand right; and then, at the right second, he gives it a turn, and starts it. But suppose, having stopped a watch, he should lay it down, and should not start it till he knew whether it would keep time or not, how long would he wait? There are a great many men who are set exactly right, and all that is wanted is, that they should start, and go on and keep time. But no, they are not going to tick until they know whether they are going to continue right or not. And what is needed is, that somebody, out of his own experience, should say to them, "You are under an illusion. Your reasoning is false. You are being held back by a misconception. You have enough sense of sin to act as a motive. If you have wind enough to fill a sail, you have enough to start a voyage with. You do not need to wait for a gale before you go out of the harbour. If you have enough wind to get steerage-way, start!" And if a man has enough feeling to give him an impulse forward, let him move. After that he will have more and more feeling. (*Ibid.*) *Personal testimony permits others to share the joys of the Christian experience*:—I was as much struck, when I travelled in England, with the stinginess of the people there, in respect to their gardens, as with anything else. It was afterwards explained to me, as owing partly to conditions of climate, and partly to the notions of the people. I travelled two miles along a park shut in by a fence, that was probably twelve feet high, of solid brick, and coped with stone. On the other side were all sorts of trees and shrubs, and though I was skirting along within a few feet of them, I could not see a single one of them. There were fine gardens in which almost all the fruits in the world were cultivated, either under glass, or against walls, or out in the open air; and a man might smell something in the air; but what it came from, he had to imagine. There were plants and shrubs drooping to the ground with gorgeous blossoms, and there might just as well as not have been an open iron fence, so that every poor beggar child might look through and see the flowers, and feel that he had an ownership in them, and congratulate himself, and say, "Are not these mine?" Oh! I like to see the little wretches of the street go and stand before a rich man's house, and look over into his grounds, and feast their eyes on the trees, and shrubs, and plants, and piebald beds, and magnificent blossoms, and luscious fruit, and comfort themselves with the thought that they can see everything that the rich man owns; and I like to hear them tell what they would do if they were only rich. And I always feel as though, if a man has a fine garden, it is mean for him to build around it a close fence, so that nobody but himself and his friends can enjoy it. But oh! it is a great deal meaner, when the Lord has made a garden of Eden in your soul, for you to build around it a great dumb wall so close and so high that nobody can look through it or over it, and nobody can hear the birds singing in it.

And yet, there are persons who carry a heart full of sweet, gardenesque experiences all the way through life, only letting here and there a very confidential friend know anything about the wealth that is in them. (*Ibid.*) *The gospel a living Christ in living men*:—Why, then, did Christ refuse to allow the man to go with Him? He was calling disciples, and the very watchword almost was, "Follow Me." But now, here was one that wanted to follow Him, doubtless from the best motives, and He says, "Go home." Why? Well, for the best reason in the world, I think. The man's nature was so transformed, the very radiancy of his joy was such a moral power, that not in one of the twelve disciples was there probably so much of the gospel as this man had in his new experience; and He sends him out thus to make known the Christ; to glow before men with trust, with gratitude, and with love. He was a glorious manifestation of the transforming power of the gospel upon the human soul, and that was the power that Christ came to institute in this world. It was because he was a gospel. The gospel never can be preached. The gospel can never be spoken. It is a thing that must be *lived*. It defies letters. It is a living soul in a Christ-like estate. That is the gospel. That can be manifested, but it cannot be described. No philosophy can unfold it. No symbols can demonstrate it. It is life centred on love, inflamed by the conscious presence of the Divine and the eternal. That is the real power of the gospel. (*Ibid.*) *The power of God working through man upon men*:—This condition of the human soul carries with it a mysterious power which all ages and nations have associated with the Divine presence. A man living in that high state of purity, rapture, and love, always seems sacred. He is like a man standing apart and standing above, and seems to have been one informed with the Divine presence. That is always efficacious upon the imagination of men, whether they are brutal, vulgar, or heathen. Anything that seems to represent the near presence of God stops them, binds them, electrifies them. A great soul carrying itself greatly in the sweetness and purity of love, in the power of intelligence, and with all other implements in its hand and around about it, suggests more nearly the sense of Divine presence than any other thing in this world. When the human faculties are centred upon love, and all of them are inflamed by it; when conscience, reason, knowledge, the will power, all skill, all taste, and all culture are the bodyguards of this central element of Christian love, they are really, by their own nature, what electricity is by its nature, or what light is by its nature. They are infectious. If you want to move upon the human mind, that is the one force that all men everywhere and always yield to. The glowing enthusiastic soul, even in its lowest moods, and from its lowest faculties, has great contagious power. If you raise man higher along the levels of wisdom and of social excellence, still more powerful is he; if you give him the dimensions of a hero and make him a patriot, and give him the disinterestedness of a glowing love of country and a love of mankind, still higher he rises and wider is the circle that he shines upon; but if you give him the ineffable presence of God, if God is associated in his thought and perception, as in his own consciousness with the eternities, if he has in himself all the vigour of Divine inspiration and walks so among men, there is no other power like it—no crowned power, no sordid power, no philosophic power, no æsthetic power, no artistic power. Nothing on earth is like God in a man. (*Ibid.*) *Men too opaque to let the gospel through them*:—Time and time again I have felt as though I were a window through which the sun struggled to come. You may remember those old bull's-eye windows, with the glass bulging in the centre so that the sun could not get through them except in twilight. I have felt that the natural man in me was so strong that not half the light of the gospel came through. Or, as you have seen, in an attic long unvisited by the broom, the only windows, jutting out from under the gable, have been taken possession of by dust and spiders, until a veil is woven over them, and the sun outside cannot get inside except as twilight! So men, cumbered with care and worldly conditions, and all manner of worldly ambitions, attempting to preach the doctrinal Christianity, are too opaque, or too nearly opaque, to let the gospel through. (*Ibid.*) *The testimony of a gospel life within the reach of every variety of talent*:—This issue comes home to all souls alike. It is the solvent of the difficulties which we feel in diversities of talent. One Christian man says, "How can I be expected to do much good? I am not eloquent, I am not an apostle, I am not Apollos, I am not a Paul." Another man says, "I should be very glad if I were a man of affairs; I should like to live a Christian life in the conduct of affairs; but I have no ability." Now, the gospel force belongs to every man alike. If you are low in life, you are susceptible of living like Christ.

If you are very high in life, you are susceptible of living a Christ-like life. If you are wise and educated, that is the life for you. If you are ignorant, that is just as much the life for you. It does not lie in those gifts that the world prizes, and justly prizes, too. It is something deeper than that, far more interior than that; and it is clothed by the creative idea of God with an influence over men's souls greater than any other. Wherever you are; whether you are poor, obscure, mean, even sick and bedridden, or in places of conspicuity, the highest, the lowest, and the middle, all come to a gracious unity. Not only that, but they all feel resting upon them the sweet obligations of the duty of loving Christ, of being like Christ, of loving our fellow men. When we shall become communal, whenever the coronal faculties of the human soul are in ascendency and in sympathetic unity, the world will not linger another eighteen hundred years before it will be illumined. The new heavens will come, and the new earth. (*Ibid.*) *The apostle to the Gadarenes:*—Things must have looked perplexing enough to this poor man! "Go home to thy friends!" "But, Lord, I have no friend but Thee. I have been an outcast now these many years—a dweller in unclean sepulchres, abhorred of men. What have men done for me but bind me in chains and fetters of iron? But Thy hand hath loosed my bonds of pain, and bound me with Thy love. Let me be with Thee where Thou art!" But still from that most gracious One came the inexorable "Go back—back to thy friends and thy father's house. Go, tell them what the Lord hath done for thee." "What? I, Lord? I, so disused to rational speech? whose lips and tongue were but now the organs of demoniac blasphemy? I, just rallying from the rending of the exorcised fiends? I, surrounded by a hostile people that have just warned away my Lord and Saviour from their coasts? And can I hope that they will hear my words, who turn a deaf and rebellious ear to Thee? Nay, Lord, I entreat Thee let me be with Thee, there sitting at Thy feet clothed and in my right mind, that men may look and point at me and glorify my Lord, my Saviour! Let them go, whose zeal to tell of Thee even Thy interdict cannot repress—there be many such, send them! But let me be near Thee, be with Thee, and gaze, and love, and be silent, and adore!" Was ever a stronger argument of prayer? And yet the little boat moves off, and Christ departs, and the grateful believer is left alone to do the work for which he seems so insufficient and unfit! How like Christ's dealing is to His Father's! To translate the story into the terms of our daily life it shows us—I. THAT THE PATH OF DUTY WHICH CHRIST HAS MARKED OUT FOR US MAY BE THE OPPOSITE OF THAT WHICH WE NATURALLY THINK AND ARDENTLY DESIRE. All our natural aptitudes, as we estimate them, yea, our purest and highest religious aspirations, may draw us toward a certain line of conduct, while on the other hand the manifest indications of God's Word and providence inexorably close up that way and wave us off in another direction. II. WHEN RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE AND RELIGIOUS DUTY SEEM TO CONFLICT, THE DUTY IS TO BE PREFERRED ABOVE THE PRIVILEGE. III. DUTY, PREFERRED AND FOLLOWED INSTEAD OF PRIVILEGE, BECOMES ITSELF THE SUPREME PRIVILEGE. The interests of the soul are very great, but they are not supreme. The supreme interests are those of the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and whoso, forgetting the interests of his own soul, shall follow after these, shall surely find that all things beside are added unto him. (*L. W. Bacon.*) *Going home—a Christmas story:*—I. WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL. Personal experience. A story of free grace. A story filled with gratitude. II. WHY THEY ARE TO TELL IT. For the Master's sake. To make others glad. III. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD? 1. Truthfully. 2. Humbly. 3. Earnestly. 4. Devoutly. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The refused request:*—It was a natural prayer of gratitude and sweetness. Why, when Christ grants the bad prayer of the people, does He deny the good prayer of the restored sufferer? I. MERCY TO THE MAN HIMSELF. 1. To teach him to walk by faith, not by sight. 2. To leave his fears of a return of his affliction unsanctioned. 3. To indicate that Christ's work was perfect, not in danger of relapse. 4. To suggest that a distant Christ, if trusted, is as strong to save as a Christ who is nigh at hand. II. MERCY TO THE GERGESENES. The presence of the Lord oppressed them. The presence of a disciple among them was (1) a link to Him, and (2) a testimony of Him. So the man is left, a living gospel, seeing whom, others may reflect, repent, and ultimately believe. III. MERCY TO THE FAMILY OF THE RESTORED MAN. His family had suffered much pain, and probably poverty; let them have the pleasure of seeing his health and peace, and the advantage of his care. For wife and children's comfort he should return. How thoughtful is Christ of our best interests, even when He is crossing our wishes! How merciful in leaving an

evangelist with those on whom some would have called down fire from heaven! (*R. Glover.*) *Christ's disinterestedness*:—Do you ever find, among all the persons whom Christ miraculously cured, a single one whom He retained to be afterwards near Him as His disciple, His attendant, His votary? . . . Where now is your worldly friend who will behave himself towards you in this fashion? So far from it, no sooner has he done you any service, however trifling, than he immediately lays a claim upon you for your daily attendance upon him. He requires you to be henceforth always at his elbow, and to be giving him continually every possible proof of your gratitude, of your devoted and even slavish attachment to his person. (*Segneri.*) *The home missionary*:—A converted man should be a missionary to his fellow-men. I. CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY WORK, THE DUTY OF EVERY CONVERTED MAN, should be undertaken (1) out of gratitude to God; (2) from regard to human need, (3) to promote the glory of Christ. II. CHRISTIAN EFFORT SHOULD BEGIN AT HOME. III. CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS MUST BE BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. IV. CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE WILL BE CROWNED WITH THE REWARD OF SUCCESS. (*H. Phillips.*) *The mission of the saved*:—Men saved from Satan—1. Beg to sit at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in their right mind. 2. Ask to be with Him always, and never to cease from personal attendance upon Him. 3. Go at His bidding, and publish abroad what great things He has done for them. 4. Henceforth have nothing to do but to live for Jesus and for Him alone. Come, ye despisers, and see yourselves as in a looking-glass. The opposite of all this is true of you. Look until you see yourselves transformed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The restored demoniac*:—I. AN INTERESTING PRAYER which notwithstanding was rejected. 1. The prayer itself—"To be with Christ." Was not this the end of Christ's mission, that He might collect souls to Himself? Gather them out of the world, &c. It seems evidently a wise and proper prayer, a pious prayer, the sign of a gracious state of soul. 2. The probable reasons by which this prayer was dictated. It might be the result (1) Of holy cautiousness and fear. (2) From grateful love to Jesus. (3) From a desire to know more of Christ. 3. The refusal of this request. "But Christ sent him away." However wise and proper and pious the man's petition appears, Jesus determined and directed otherwise; his suit could not be granted. Here let us pause and learn (1) how necessary to be taught rightly to pray. We know not what we should pray for. (2) We should learn to be satisfied with the Lord's good pleasure whether He grants our requests or not. II. AN IMPORTANT COMMAND WHICH WAS PIOUSLY OBEYED. "Jesus sent him," &c. 1. The nature of the command. He was to be a personal witness for Christ; a monument of Christ's power and compassion. He could testify (1) to the enthronement of reason. (2) To emancipation from the thraldom of evil spirits. (3) To restoration to happiness. (4) To the Author of his deliverance, "Jesus." 2. The obedience which was rendered. (1) It was prompt and immediate. He did not cavil, nor reason, nor refuse. (2) It was decided and public. Not afraid, nor ashamed. Application: 1. The end of our conversion is more than our own salvation. (1) We must testify to and for the benefit of others. (2) We must glorify Christ. 2. The converted should not consult merely their own comfort. 3. Christian obedience is unquestioning and exact. 4. The hearts' desires of the saints shall be granted in a future state. Be with Jesus for ever, &c. (*J. Burns, D.D., LL.D.*) *At the feet of Jesus*:—Two grand features in the close of the parable. I. THE POSITION IN WHICH THE MAN WAS FOUND. 1. How interesting is this spectacle. It was the place of nearness to Jesus and intimate communion with Him. Perhaps he selected this place also as the site of safety, or, he may have been seeking that instruction which was requisite to guide and to direct him. 2. What took place in the case of the demoniac is only a fore-light of what will take place in the case of all creation. II. THE PETITION THAT HE MIGHT BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN WITH HIM OR TO ACCOMPANY HIM. Why? 1. Because he might have recollected the fact of which the words are the description (Matt. xii. 43). If we have obtained anything from Christ for which we feel thankful, we shall be jealous lest we lose it. 2. To give expression to the deep love that he felt to Him. III. THE ACTUAL ANSWER THAT CHRIST GAVE HIM. Explain the seeming contradiction between this and Luke viii. 56 and others. We have in this indirect but striking evidence of the divinity of the character of Jesus. A mere, common wonder-worker would have been too glad of having a living specimen of his great power to accompany him into all lands, &c. We have these great lessons taught us: 1. That he that receives the largest blessing from Christ is bound to go and be the largest and most untiring distributor of that blessing. We receive not for ourselves, but

for diffusion, &c. 2. That the way, if you are Christians, to be with Christ, and to be with Him most closely, is to go out and labour for Christ with the greatest diligence. We are never so near to Christ as when, in His spirit and in His name, we are doing His work and fulfilling His will. 3. That labouring for Christ, according to Christ's command, is the very way to enjoy the greatest happiness that results from being with Christ. Labour for Christ and happiness from Christ are twins that are never separated. 4. That as Christ, in healing the demoniac, had an object beyond him, so, in healing us, He has an object beyond us. 5. But there is something very instructive, too, in the place that the Saviour bade this recovered demoniac go to. Go to the sphere in which providence has placed you, and into that sphere bring the glorious riches with which grace has enriched you. . . . Test your missionary powers at home before you try them in the school, &c. The little home, the family, is the fountain that feeds with a pure and noble population the large home, which is the country. Let us begin at home, but let us not stop there. 6. Conceive, if you can, the return of the man to his home—the picture realized in his reception. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *The power of home in regenerating society* :—Loyalty, and love, and happiness in Britain's homes, will make loyalty, and happiness, and love be reflected from Britain's altars and from Britain's shores. There may be a mob, or there may be slaves; but let statesmen recollect there cannot be a people unless there be a home. I repeat, there may be in a country slaves, or there may be mobs, but there cannot be in a country a people, the people, unless it be a country of holy and happy homes. And he that helps to elevate, sustain, ennoble, and sanctify the homes of a country, contributes more to its glory, its beauty, its permanence, than all its legislators, its laws, its literature, its science, its poetry together. Our Lord began at the first home that was found at Bethabara beyond Jordan—the home of Andrew and Peter; and starting from it, he carried the glorious gospel of which he was the author into the home of Mary and Martha at Bethany, of Cornelius the centurion, of Lydia, of the gaoler of Philippi, of Crispus, and finally of Timothy; and these consecrated and converted homes became multiplying *foci* amid the world's darkness, till the scattered and ever multiplying lights shall be gathered one day into one broad blaze, that shall illuminate and make glad the wide world. Let us begin at home, but let us not stop there. It is groups of homes that make a congregation; it is clusters of congregations that make a country. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *The return of the cured demoniac* :—He went home, and proclaimed not only there, but in all Decapolis, what God had done for him. Conceive, if you can, the picture realized in his reception. He turns his face quietly to his home the first time, perhaps, for years—the first time, at least, that he recollects. One child of his, looking from the casement, sees the father return, and gives the alarm: every door is doubly bolted; the mother and children clung together in one group, lest the supposed still fierce demoniac, who had so often torn and assailed them before, should again tear and utterly destroy them. But a second child, looking, calls out, "My father is clothed; before he was not clothed at all." A third child shouts to the mother, "My father is not only clothed, but he comes home so quietly, so beautifully, that he looks as when he dandled us upon his knee, kissed us, and told us sweet and interesting stories: can this be he?" A fourth exclaims, "It is my father, and he seems so gentle, and so quiet, and so beautiful—come, my mother, and see." The mother, not believing it to be true, but wishing it were so, runs and looks with sceptical belief; and lo! it is the dead one alive, it is the lost one found, it is the naked one clothed, it is the demon-possessed one, holy, happy, peaceful; and when he comes and mingles with that glad and welcoming household, the group upon the threshold grows too beautiful before my imagination for me to attempt to delineate, and its hearts are too happy for human language to express. The father crosses the threshold, and the inmates welcome him home to their fire-side. The father gathers his children around him, while his wife sits and listens, and is not weary with listening the whole day and the whole night, as he tells them how One who proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah, who is the Prophet promised to the fathers, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, spake to him, exorcised the demons, and restored him to his right mind, and made him happy. (*Ibid.*) *Work for Christ the way to retain the vision of Him* :—A poor monk, who, in spite of his cowl, seems from the fact to have been one of God's hidden ones, was one day, according to a mediæval legend, meditating in his cell. A glorious vision burst upon him, it is recorded, with the brilliancy of noon-day, and revealed in its

bosom the "Man of Sorrows," the "acquainted with grief." The monk was gazing on the spectacle charmed, delighted, adoring. The convent bell rang; and that bell was the daily signal for the monk to go to the poor that were crowding round the convent gate, and distribute bread and fragments of food among them. The monk hesitated whether he should remain to enjoy the splendid apocalypse, or should go out to do the daily drudgery that belonged to him. At last he decided on the latter; he left the vision with regret, and went out at the bidding of the bell to distribute the alms, and bread, and crumbs among the poor. He returned, of course expecting that, because of his not seeming to appreciate it, the vision would be darkened; but to his surprise, when he returned, the vision was there still, and on his expressing his amazement that his apparent want of appreciating it and being thankful for it should be overlooked, and that the vision should still continue in augmented splendour, a voice came from the lips of the Saviour it revealed, which said, "If you had stayed, I had not." This may be a legend but it teaches a great lesson—that active duty in Christ's name and for Christ's sake is the way to retain the vision of His peace in all its permanence and power. (*Ibid.*)

The three prayers:—Here are three prayers, the prayer of the devils, of the Gadarenes, and of the demoniac who had been restored. The first prayer was answered, and the devils obtained their wish; the second was complied with, but the last was refused, though all he asked was permission to be with Christ; surely there must be something very instructive in all this, otherwise it would not have been registered. I. "AND ALL THE DEVILS BESOUGHT JESUS, SAYING, SEND US INTO THE SWINE." Here, the devils acknowledge the power of Christ over them; they cannot injure even a brute without leave. This is orthodox so far as it goes, and even beyond the creed of many who profess themselves Christians. None of the devils in hell disbelieve the divinity of Christ. But cannot faith save us? It can, but not such faith as is purely a conviction of truth. All Christians know that their speculative surpasses their experimental and practical religion. But will devils pray? and will they be heard? Yes—"and forthwith Jesus gave them leave." Their request was founded on malice and mischief, in order to render Christ obnoxious to the Gadarenes, through the spoiling of their goods. Permission was given in *judgment*. Satan killed the children of Job; but Job triumphed in his trial. The same permission was given to Satan to tempt the Gadarenes, how different the result; he destroyed their property and them with it. The gold will endure the furnace, the dross will not. II. THEY SAW THE POOR WRETCH DISPOSSESSED, AND INSTEAD OF BRINGING ALL THEIR SICK TO BE HEALED BESOUGHT JESUS TO DEPART. How dreadful was this prayer! Oh, if you were of Moses you would say, "If Thy presence go not with us, suffer us not to go up hence." David said, "Cast me not away from Thy presence." You need the Saviour's presence as much as the earth needs the sun; in adversity, death, judgment. Observe, you may pray thus without words, actions speak louder than words. When you would tell a man to be off, it is done without speaking; an eye, a finger, nay, but turning your back will effect it. God interprets your meaning, he translates your actions into intelligible language. Wonder not if God takes you at your word; He punishes sin with sin; sealing men's eyes when they will not see; withdrawing grace that is neglected. III. THE POOR PATIENT PRAYED TO BE WITH CHRIST. 1. His prayer arose from fear. 2. From gratitude. 3. From love. Every one who has obtained grace prays, "Lord, show me Thy glory." Learn: 1. To think correctly of answers to prayers—that God may hear in wrath, or refuse a petition in kindness. God can distinguish our welfare from our wishes. 2. There is no ostentation in the miracle. The pure benevolence of Jesus terminated with the individual. The religion of Jesus Christ calls us into the world, as well as out of it. It calls us out, as to its spirit and maxims, in, as the sphere of activity, and place of trial. The idea of living among the wretched Gadarenes must have been uncomfortable to the renewed mind of the poor man, yet he is directed to go, without murmuring or gainsaying; not, indeed, in the spirit of the Pharisee, nor of the rigid professor, who, while he confesses a man can have nothing, except it be given him from above, is occupied all the day in maligning and censuring his neighbours; but to display the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ in his conduct and conversation, to relate his recovery, to honour the Physician, and to direct others unto Him. Oh, if there were a history of all whom the Saviour has made whole, what a work would it be. (*W. Jay.*) *Home piety a proof of real religion*:—He that is not relatively godly, is not really so; a man who is bad at home is bad throughout, and this reminds me of a wise reply

of Whitfield to the question "Is such a one a good man?" "How should I know that? I never lived with him." (*Ibid.*) *The recovered demoniac:*—I. THE MAN'S REQUEST. We cannot wonder that his mind should shrink at the thought of the devil's returning in the absence of our Lord. He may have heard of such cases. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man . . . the last state of that man is worse than the first." Thus the soul rescued from Satan is frequently for a time unable to rejoice, but appears to "receive the spirit of bondage again to fear." Our feelings, after any unexpected deliverance or event, are such that we find it difficult to believe its reality. Go, tell the mother who has heard of the shipwreck of her child, that her son who was dead is alive again, she is with difficulty persuaded of its truth. And when so much is at stake we should fear for those who do not sometimes fear for themselves. Can the Christian, harassed by rising corruption, beset with temptation, feel no concern? II. OUR LORD'S ANSWER. We might have supposed, after the great salvation Jesus had wrought for him, He would not have been reluctant to grant him any favour, especially when the request was dictated by gratitude. 1. The reply showed the modesty of the Saviour. 2. Also His compassion for the man's friends. Mercy to one member of the family should be an encouragement to all the rest. 3. And the great object which every man truly converted to God will keep perpetually in view is, the promotion of the Divine glory, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the salvation of those around him. The wife of his bosom, the parent, the brother, or the child; reason, as well as affection, points out these as the first objects of our concern. Religion does not petrify the feelings, and make us to be so absorbed in seeking our own safety, as to be indifferent to the fate of those about us; the grace of God does not annihilate the sympathies, or snap the bonds of nature; no, it strengthens and refines those sympathies, deepens the channel in which the affections flow, and purifies and consecrates the stream. But are there not some, who, instead of entreating Jesus that they may go with Him, are saying of the world and of the flesh, We have loved these, and after them we will go? But, fellow-sinners, be persuaded it is the way of transgression, it is hard. (*S. Bridge, M.A.*)

Vers. 21, 23, 35, 43. **Jairus by name.**—*A proper prayer:*—Better prayers, perhaps, had been offered. He would have shown more faith if he had prayed like the centurion (Luke vii. 7). But, though he does not show such strong faith, yet it is a good prayer. For it is (1) humble: he falls at Christ's feet; (2) believing: he feels Christ is omnipotent to heal; (3) bold: he offers it in face of all the people, many of whom would be shocked that a ruler of the synagogue should acknowledge Jesus; (4) loving, springing from a pure affection. Distress is a great schoolmaster. It teaches men many things; among the rest the greatest of all attainments—the power to pray. (*R. Glover.*) *A revived flower:*—And that bright flower bloomed in the vase of that happy home, more beautiful because the look of Jesus had given it new tints, and the breath of Jesus had given it new fragrance. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Jairus' daughter:*—Jairus was a good man. His light was small, but real. It was feeble, but from heaven. I. HE HAD MUCH TO TRY HIS FAITH. One seems to see all the father in the tenderness of his words. Hope was over,—his daughter was dead. Thus is it with the believer. Instead of the relief he hoped for, all seems as death. Thus does the Lord try the faith He gives. Thus by causing us to wait for the blessing does He endear it. II. THE EFFECT OF THIS TRIAL OF FAITH. He did not distrust the power or willingness of the compassionate Saviour. His faith takes no denial, he still continues with Jesus. Faith hopes against hope. True faith partakes of his nature who exercises it, therefore in all, it is weak at times. But it partakes also of His nature who gives it, and therefore evinces its strength in the very midst of that weakness. III. BUT WHEREVER FOUND, IT IS GRACIOUSLY REWARDED. The scorners are without; but believing Jairus and the believing mother (ver. 40) are admitted. They see the mighty power of God put forth on behalf of their daughter. What an encouragement here to some anxious parent to put the case of their dear child in the hands of that same Jesus. How often has domestic affliction been the means of bringing the soul to the feet of Jesus. Mark the extreme tenderness of Jesus, "Fear not, only believe." Be not afraid convicted sinner. My blood is sufficient, My grace and love are sufficient. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The Humane Society:*—I. THE PARTICULAR FORM OF THE REDEEMER'S WORK. 1. Restoration from a special form of death. 2. Here was the recognition of the value of life—"She shall live." It is not mere life on which

Christianity has shed a richer value. It is by ennobling the purpose to which life is to be dedicated that it has made life more precious. 3. We consider the Saviour's direction respecting the means of effecting a complete recovery. He "commanded that something should be given her to eat." His reverential submission to the laws of nature. II. THE SPIRIT OF THE REDEEMER'S WORK. 1. It was love. He did good because it was good. 2. It was a spirit of retiring modesty. He did not wish it to be known. 3. It was a spirit of perseverance. Calm perseverance amidst ridicule. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *Not dead, but sleeping*:—Nature puts on a shroud at seasons, and seems to glide into the grave of winter. Autumnal blasts come sobbing through the trees, and leaf after leaf, shrivelling its fibres at the killing contact, comes drifting to the ground. The hedgerows where the May flowers and the dog-rose mixed their scents are stripped and bare, and lift their thorny fingers up to heaven. The field where fat and wealthy-looking crops a while ago promised their golden sheaves, is now spread over with a coarse fringe of stubble, and seems a sort of hospital of vegetation. The garden shows no more its beauties, nor sheds forth its scent, but where the coloured petal and the painted cup of the gay flower were seen, there stands a blighted stem, or a drooping tuft of refuse herbs. The birds which carolled to the summer sky have fled away, and their note no longer greets the ear. The very daisies on the meadow are buried in the snow-wreath, and the raw blast howls a sad requiem at the funeral of nature. But those trees, whose leafless branches seem to wrestle with the rough winds that toss them, are not dead. Anon, and they shall again be wreathed in verdure and bedecked with blossom. The softened breath of spring shall whisper to the snowdrop to dart forth its modest head, and shall broider the garden-path again with flowers; the fragrance of the hawthorn bloom ere long shall gush from those naked hedge-rows, and the returning lark shall wake the morning with a new and willing song. No, nature is not dead! There is a resurrection coming on. Spring with its touch of wizardry shall wake her from her slumbers, and sound again the key-note of the suspended music of the spheres. So also shall there arise out of the raging conflagration, in whose fevered heat the elements shall melt and shrivel like a scroll—even out of the very ashes which betoken its consumption—a new heaven and a new earth—an earth as ethereal and pure as heaven itself—and a heaven as substantial and as living as the earth. And consentaneously with the arising of these new worlds, the tombs shall open, and send forth the shrouded tenants, to enter on the inheritance which, in that new economy, shall be theirs. Can you believe that faded flowers shall revive at the blithe beckoning of the spring, that little leaves will quietly unfold at the mandate of the morning, and yet there shall be no spring to beckon the mortal back to life, and no morning to command the clay to clothe itself with the garments of a quickening spirit? Can you believe that the great temple shall arise with all its shrines rebuilded, and its altars purified after the final burning, but that there shall be neither voice nor trumpet to call forth the high-priest from his slumber to worship at those shrines, and to lay a more enduring offering upon those waiting altars? Is the fuel to be ever laid, and none to kindle the burnt-offering? Is the sanctuary to be prepared, and none to pay the service? Is the bridegroom to stand alone before the altar, and no bride to meet him at the nuptials? God forbid! The high-priest is not dead—the bride has not perished—they are not dead, but sleep. Sound forth the trumpet, and say that all is ready, and then the corruptible will put on incorruption, and the mortal will put on immortality. Thus, when we lay our kindred in the earth, and follow to their final resting-place the last remains of those who occupied a cherished chamber in our hearts—while nature finds it hard to dry the tear and quench the sigh—faith ever lifts the spirit from its sad despondency, by assuring us of a reunion beyond the grave—and robs the monster of one-half his terrors—weakening his stroke and taking away his sting, by changing the mystic trance into which he throws his victims into a transient sleep, and speaking of a waking-time of happiness and joy. Nature will look on death as an assassin who murders those we love; but Faith regards him as a nurse who hushes them to sleep, and sings a lullaby and not a requiem beside their bed. To faith it is a sleeping draught and not a poison which the visitor holds to the drinker's lips; for it hails the time when the lethargy of the sepulchre shall be cast off, and the spirit shall arise like a tired slumberer refreshed by sleep, to spend an endless morning in the energy of an endless youth. (*A. Mursell.*) *The death of the young encourages a spirit of dependence on God in the home-life of this world*:—It brings the unseen Hand to bear very directly and potently on the soul's deepest and most hidden springs. Let us suppose for a moment that there was a revealed

ordinance of heaven that every human being born into this world should live to three-score years and ten, and then quietly lie down to rest, and awake in eternity. Would it enrich or impoverish the life of the human world? I venture to think that it would impoverish it unspeakably. The passage of these little ones through the veil, of infants and children, of young men and maidens, of men and women in their prime, brings God's hand very near, and keeps its pressure on the most powerful springs of our nature, our warmest affection, and our most constant and active care. It is not the uncertainty which is the strongest element of the influence, though no doubt that keeps us vigilant and anxious, and helps to maintain the full strain of our power. It is rather the constant contact with a Higher Will, which keeps us in humble, hopeful dependence, which gives and withholds, lends and recalls, by a wisdom which we cannot fathom, but which demands our trust on the basis of a transcendent manifestation of all-suffering and all-sacrificing love. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *The death of the young imparts a consecrating influence to the home-life*:—It brings heaven all round us when we know that at any moment the veil may be lifted, and a dear life may vanish from our sight, not, blessed be Christ, into the shades, but into the brightness which is beyond. And when the life has vanished it leaves a holy and consecrating memory in the home. Something is in the home on earth which also belongs to the home on high. Never does the home-life and all its relations seem so beautiful, so profound, so sacred, as when Death has laid his touch on "a little one," and gathered it as a starry flower for the fields of light on high. It makes the life of the home more anxious, more burdened by care and pain, but more blessed. The nearness at any moment of resistless Death makes us find a dearer meaning in the word, "the whole family in heaven and on earth"—a thought which saturates the whole New Testament, and is not dependent on one text for its revelation. We know then how precious is its meaning, and earth gains by its loss as well as heaven. (*Ibid.*) *The death of the young lends a tender, home-like interest to the life of the unseen world*:—The home, remember, is where the children are. There are those of us who never found the deeper meaning of the Father's love and the everlasting home till a dear child had gone on before. The death of the little ones, while it ought to make the earthly life heaven-like on the one hand, is meant to make heaven home-like on the other. The Lord dethroned and discrowned Death by bearing the human form, living, through His realm of terror. The living Lord abolished death by living on through death, and flashing the splendours of heaven through the shades. The children, as they follow Christ through the gloom, make Death seem beautiful as an angel. Thenceforth we, too, have, not our citizenship only, but our home-life in the two worlds. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus stronger than death*:—And just remember, that when Jesus allows death to knock at your door, and to come in, it is not because death is stronger than He. It is because He has a good reason for permitting it. He is so completely the Master of death that He makes it His messenger to do His bidding; and when death comes to our dwelling and takes away one we love, let us bear in mind that death is not Jesus' enemy but His messenger. He is like an angel; he takes away our friend in his bosom. He has no power at all over us without Jesus. (*Anon.*) *The healing of Jairus' daughter*:—I. The case brought before Jesus. A bodily disease as usual. No spiritual cases, though more important. II. The persons who brought it. A ruler, &c. He had heard Christ's teaching. He had seen His miracles. No mention made, &c., till distress. III. The character in which he came—a parent. IV. The manner in which he came. Reverently. Earnestly. Believingly. V. At the request of Jairus, Christ arose and accompanied him. Christ encouraged such applications—He does so still. (*Expository Discourses.*) I. CHRIST'S RESTORATIVE POWER TRANSCENDS THE ORDINARY EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND. II. CHRIST'S RESTORATIVE POWER IS EXERTED ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS. 1. Earnest entreaty. 2. A reverential spirit. III. CHRIST'S RESTORATIVE POWER ACCOMPLISHES ITS OBJECT WITH THE GREATEST EASE. IV. CHRIST'S RESTORATIVE POWER CONFOUNDS THE SCOFFING SCEPTIC WITH ITS RESULT. Scoffing infidelity is destined to be confounded. There were scoffers in the days of Noah, and they were confounded when the deluge came. There were scoffers in the days of Lot, and they were confounded when the showers of fire fell. There are scoffers now, and when they shall see Him "coming in His glory with all His holy angels," these atheists, deists, and materialists, will be utterly confounded. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Death a sleep*:—Homer fittingly calls sleep "the brother of death"; they are so much alike. On the lips of Jesus, however, the word *sleep* acquires a richer and mightier import than it ever possessed before. Amply has His use of the term

been justified in the last hour of tens of thousands of his devout followers. They laid themselves down to die, not as those who dread the night because of the remembrance of hours when, like Job, they were "scared with dreams" and "terrified through visions," but like tired labourers, to whom night is indeed a season of peaceful refreshment. And how imperceptibly they sank into their last slumber! Their transition was so mild and gradual, that it was impossible for those who stood round their dying pillow to say exactly when it took place. There was no struggle, no convulsion. The angel of death spread his wide, white wings meekly over them, and then, with a smile upon their pallid countenance, serene and lovely as heaven itself, they closed their eyes on all terrestrial objects, and fell asleep in Jesus. And that sleep is as profound throughout as it was tranquil at the beginning. The happy fireside and the busy exchange—the halls of science and the houses of legislation—the oft-frequented walk and the holy temple—are nothing to them now. Suns rise and set, stars travel and glisten; but they see them not; tempests howl, thunders roll and crash; but they hear them not. Nothing can disturb those slumbers, "till the day dawn and the shadows flee away." Then will the voice of the archangel sweep over God's acre, and awake them all. Oh, wondrous awaking! what momentous consequences hang on thee! (*Edwin Davies.*) *Death a sleep:*—I. SLEEP IS REST, or gives rest to the body: so death. 1. Rest from labour and travail. 2. Rest from trouble and opposition. 3. Rest from passion and grief. 4. Rest from sin, temptation, Satan, and the law. II. SLEEP IS NOT PERPETUAL; we sleep and wake again; so, though the body lie in the grave, yet death is but a sleep; we shall wake again. III. THE SLEEP OF SOME MEN DIFFERS VERY MUCH FROM THAT OF OTHERS: so the death of saints differs from that of the wicked. 1. Some men sleep before their work is done; so some die before their salvation is secured. 2. Some fall asleep in business and great distraction, others in peace. 3. Some dread the thought of dying, because of the dangers that lie beyond. But saints have no fear. 4. Some fall asleep in dangerous places, and in the midst of their enemies—on the brink of hell, surrounded by the spirits of perdition. But saints die in the view of Jesus; in the love and covenant of Jesus. IV. A MAN THAT SLEEPS IS GENERALLY EASILY AWAKENED: so the body in death shall be much more easily awakened at the last day than the soul can now be aroused from its sleep of sin. (*B. Keach.*) *Why death of the godly is called sleep:*—The reason why the death of the godly is called a sleep in Scripture is this: because there is a fit resemblance between it and natural sleep; which resemblance consists chiefly in these things. 1. In bodily sleep men rest from the labours of mind and body. So the faithful, dying in the Lord, are said to rest from their labours (Rev. xiv. 13). 2. After natural sleep men are accustomed to awake again; so, after death, the bodies of the saints shall be awaked, *i.e.*, raised up again to life out of their graves at the last day. And as it is easy to awake one out of a natural sleep, so is it much more easy with God, by His almighty power, to raise the dead at the last day. 3. As after natural sleep the body and outward senses are more fresh and lively than before; so likewise after that the bodies of the saints, being dead, have for a time slept in their graves as in beds, they shall awake and rise again at the last day in a far more excellent state than they died in, being changed from corruption to incorruption, from dishonour to glory, from weakness to power, from natural to spiritual bodies (1 Cor. xv. 42). 4. As in natural sleep the body only is said properly to sleep, not the soul (the powers whereof work even in sleep in some sort, though not so perfectly as when we are waking): so in death, only the bodies of the saints do die and lie down in the graves, but their souls return to God who gave them (Eccles. xii. 7), and they live with God even in death and after death. 5. As sleep is sweet to those who are wearied with labour and travail (Eccles. v. 12), so also death is sweet and comfortable to the faithful, being wearied and turmoiled with sin, and with the manifold miseries of this life. (*G. Petter.*) *Death of children:*—God cultivates many flowers, seemingly only for their exquisite beauty and fragrance. For when, bathed in soft sunshine, they have burst into blossom, then the Divine hand gathers them from the earthly fields to be kept in crystal vases in the deathless mansions above. Thus little children die—some in the sweet bud, some in the fallen blossom; but never too early to make heaven fairer and sweeter with their immortal bloom. (*Wadsworth.*) *Goeth in where the child was: Christ in the chamber of death:*—I. A good child is at home in either world, not sorry to go to the other world to get joy, and not sorry to come back to this world to give it. II. We know not where the other world is, but it is evidently within range of the Saviour's voice. Our dear dead are therefore safe, and all their con-

ditions ordered by the Saviour's mercy. III. Life is indestructible by death. IV. On a universal scale Christ will be found to be the Resurrection and the Life to all who love Him. V. He inflicts bereavement, but sympathises with its sorrow. He relieves these mourners here, to show that He pities all mourners. (*R. Glover.*) *Talitha cumi*:—He uses what were, perhaps, the words used every morning by her mother on waking her—"Little one, get up." (*Ibid.*) *The raising of Jairus' daughter*:—I. THE APPLICATION WHICH JESUS RECEIVED. 1. By whom it was made. 2. The favour he implied. 3. The feeling which this ruler displayed. (1) His reverence. (2) His importunity. (3) His faith. II. THE READY COMPLIANCE OF OUR LORD WITH THE REQUEST MADE TO HIM. But as He went we are called upon—1. To witness a strange interruption. 2. To listen to what seemed very discouraging information—"Thy daughter is dead." III. THE WONDERFUL RESULT WITH WHICH THIS VISIT WAS ATTENDED. 1. What our Lord saw. 2. What He said. 3. What He did. (*Expository Outlines.*)

VERS. 24, 34. **And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years.**—*The power of feeble faith*:—I. VERY IMPERFECT FAITH MAY BE GENUINE FAITH. It was intensely ignorant trust. Again, her trust was very selfish. It was also weakened and interrupted by much distrust. II. CHRIST ANSWERS THE IMPERFECT FAITH. Christ stoops to her childish thought and allows her to prescribe the path by which His gift shall reach her. Christ's mercy, like water in a vase, takes the shape of the vessel that holds it. On the other hand, His grace "is given to every one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ," with no limitation but His own unlimited fulness. Therefore—1. Let us labour that our faith may be enlightened, importunate, and firm. 2. There can be no faith so feeble that Christ does not respond to it. III. CHRIST CORRECTS AND CONFIRMS AN IMPERFECT FAITH BY THE VERY ACT OF ANSWERING IT. Her ignorance, selfishness, and fear, were all removed. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The faculty baffled—the great Physician successful*:—I. LET ME EXPOSE THE PHYSICIANS WHO DELUDE SO MANY BY THEIR VAIN PRETENSIONS. Their names are, Dr. Sadducee, Dr. Legality, Dr. Ceremonial, Dr. Ascetic, Dr. Orthodoxy, and Dr. Preparation. II. WHAT IS THE REASON OF THEIR FAILURE? Because they do not understand the disease. They often prescribe remedies which are impossible to their patients. Many of their medicines do not touch the disease at all. III. THE PLIGHT OF THE PATIENT WHO HAS TRIED THESE DECEIVERS. She lost all her time. She was no better. She rather grew worse. She spent all that she had. IV. HOW A CURE CAN BE WROUGHT. I must press to get near Him. I must touch. The least of Christ will save. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The disease of humanity incurable except by Christ*:—The disease of fallen humanity is wholly incurable except by the hand of Omnipotence. It is as easy for us to create a world as to create a new heart; and a man might as well hope to abolish cold and snow as hope to eradicate sin from his nature by his own power: he might as well say to this round earth, "I have emancipated thee from the curse of labour," as say to himself, "I will set myself free from the thraldom of sin." (*Ibid.*) *Determination in the face of tremendous discouragements*:—When sinners sweep away every other delusion, and view Jesus as the ONLY Saviour they will persevere till they find. When Cortez went to conquer Mexico, he found that the soldiers were few and dispirited. The Mexicans were many, and the enterprize hazardous. The soldiers would have gone back to Spain, but Cortez took two or three chosen heroes with him, and went down to the seaside and broke up all the ships; and "now," he said, "we must conquer or die. We cannot go back." When it is death or life, heaven or hell, pardon or condemnation, the sinner will be as determined and courageous as these poor Spaniards or as this poor woman. (*Anonymous.*) *The touch*:—I. THE PATIENT. Note: what courage and spirit she displayed; Her resolute determination; Her marvellous hopefulness. II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF THIS WOMAN'S FAITH. The disease: long-standing: incurable. Her frequent disappointments. Her own unworthiness. Her present poverty. Her extreme sickness. III. THE VANISHING POINT OF ALL HER DIFFICULTIES. All her thoughts have gone toward the Lord Jesus. She has forgotten herself; forgotten the rampant fury of her disease; forgotten her being behind and out of sight: and even her own touch of Him she has put into a secondary place. All that she looks for must come out of Him. If seeking sinners would but think more of Christ, all would be well. IV. HER GRAND SUCCESS. She was healed immediately. She knew that she was healed. She has next the assurance from Christ that she was healed. The wine that cometh out of these grapes is this: the slightest connection with Jesus will

bless us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Apply this thought—I. To SPIRITUAL EXISTENCES. If I touch but a grain of sand or a bud, I find the Mighty One. II. To THE SCHEME OF SPIRITUAL PROVIDENCE. Review your own life from infancy. III. To THE PROCESSES OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION. It is a great thing to see God in heavens rich with systems of suns; it is a grander faith, surely, to see Him in a speck of dust. IV. To THE USES OF SPIRITUAL ORDINANCES. The hymn, the prayer, the lesson, the mere form itself may do men good. Application: The hand must touch Christ, not an apostle, or a minister, or an angel—but God the Son. You may have touched many without benefit; touch HIM and you will live. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) "*Who hath touched me?*"—"*Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.*" It requires the second sentence to complete the meaning of the first. In the days of the semaphore signals a message came across to England concerning the Duke of Wellington, and half the message was read as it appeared upon the semaphore, and astonished all England with the sad intelligence. It ran thus, "Wellington defeated." Everybody was distressed as they read it, but it so happened that they had not seen all the message. Fog had intervened, and when, by and by, the air was clearer and the telegraph flashed out a second time, it was read thus—"Wellington defeated—the *French*." Thus the first sentence may have caused dismay in the poor woman's heart, but if the first appeared to kill, the second would make alive. (*Anonymous.*) *A diseased woman healed:*—The chief design of our Lord's miracles was to confirm His pretensions. But they were more than this. Benevolent, for the greater part in their character, they served to unfold the mercifulness of His nature. They also shadowed forth His mode of serving us. Viewed in this light there is wonderful variety in them. I. THE SAD CONDITION OF THIS WOMAN when she came to Christ for relief. Her malady was an inveterate one. We are all sick in our souls. There is a disease in us which has seized on the noblest part of us. It is weakening, polluting, and destroying our immortal spirits. II. THE STATE OF THIS WOMAN'S MIND in this sad condition. Had it been a despairing state, we could hardly have blamed her. One of the worst features in a penitent sinner's case, is frequently a tendency to despair. No sin so great as despair. Your case may be sad, yet not hopeless. There is a Physician you have not yet tried, or have never tried aright. III. HER APPLICATION TO HIM. There is deep humility evident here, and great self-abasement. Sin is a loathsome and shameful thing. The soul would hide itself from every eye. There is great faith: "I shall be whole"—not relieved. What exalted views she must have had of Jesus. He is no common Saviour. But her faith was not perfect. It settled only on one part of the Lord's character. She believed His power, but distrusted His goodness. This mixture of faith and unbelief is very common in every newly converted soul. If real faith be in us, its inferiority is overlooked. IV. THE CURE THIS SUFFERER RECEIVED. 1. It was immediate. This is always our Lord's mode of acting with one class of persons who come to Him—those who come for pardon—receive it at once. Those who come to have the power of sin subdued in them, are often kept waiting for the mercy they desire. Like the child of Jairus, the disease grows worse while seeking the remedy. But the help sought is found at last. 2. The cure of this woman was one of which she and our Lord were both conscious. You think perhaps, brethren, that it is a small thing with Christ whether you come to Him or not; you conceive that He on His lofty throne has not a look or thought for you; but if you are turning to Him with a broken heart for salvation, there is not an object in the universe He thinks of more than you, there is not a moment in which His eye is off you. Great as is His joy now, it will be greater still when you touch Him and are made whole. He will say to His angels, as He said to His disciples here, "Virtue is again gone out of Me. There is another sinner healed." And the woman, too, was aware of the cure which had been wrought in her; "She felt in her body that she was healed." Her recovery, however, did not produce in her at first the joyous feelings we might have anticipated. There was a mixture of feeling in her. She feared and trembled after she was healed, as many a pardoned sinner trembles when he has reason to rejoice; but healed she was, and she knew it. And it is not easy to conceive how any one can be cured of the dreadful disease of sin, and yet remain long ignorant or doubtful about his cure. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The consciousness of cure:*—We cannot see His hand as it passes over the book of God, and blots out the dark record of our crimes which is written there; but pardon is not all. Sin is more than a crime against God which needs to be forgiven, it is a disease within a man's heart to be subdued and healed. And if we go on always doubting whether this disease within us is in a way of being healed, the probability is that our souls

are sick as ever. It is not easy when a man is ill and recovering, to tell the exact moment in which his disease gives way and his recovery begins; but it is soon seen by those around him that his recovery is begun, and it is soon felt by himself. Just so with the salvation of the soul. A man may doubt for a time at his first return to God, and these doubts may recur again and again at intervals in his future years; nay, they will assuredly recur whenever he allows himself to wander from his God; but the habitual frame of the established Christian's mind is not one of doubt and uncertainty. Christ has not done so little for him, that he cannot see it. The Holy Spirit has not touched his heart so slightly, that he never feels His hand. The gospel is not so poor a medicine, that he is always doubting whether it has done him any good. (*Ibid.*) *A woman which had an issue of blood:*—This case is crowded with lessons. I. Note: HOW MANY UNKNOWN SUFFERERS ARE ABOUT US. II. CHRIST HAD SENT THIS WOMAN'S ILLNESS, AND WAS AS LOVING IN LAYING IT ON HER AS IN LIFTING IT AWAY. III. SHE IS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF THE "SWEET USES OF ADVERSITY." The afflicted class producing then and now more believers in Christ than any other. IV. THERE ARE MANY HEMS OF THE GARMENT THROUGH WHICH WE CAN TOUCH THE DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE AND MERCY. 1. Christ's humanity is the great hem of the garment, through which we can touch His Godhead. 2. A word of Scripture is often a hem of His garment, through which we draw in salvation to our soul. 3. A sacrament is a hem of Christ's garment. All these are valueless unless our touch seeks the Divine Christ within them; but they are saving links to Christ when enlightened faith seeks Him. V. THERE IS ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD BETWEEN PRESSING AND CROWDING ON CHRIST, AND TOUCHING HIM. Many crowd Christ, reading much, attending services, singing hymns, and making impassioned prayers, perhaps fruitlessly; while a publican in the temple, or a dying thief—with one word, full of aim and meaning—finds his soul saved. Be not fussy in religion, but calm your spirit, and speak not until in briefest compass you can name, and lodge, and leave your request with God. VI. LET MERCIES RECEIVED BE DULY CONFESSED. (*R. Glover.*) *Twelve years! Long continuance of discipline:*—It pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions on some of His servants in this life. 1. To manifest His great power, strengthening them to bear such long afflictions. 2. To magnify His mercy in delivering them at length out of them. 3. That He may make thorough proof and trial of their faith, patience, and other graces of His Spirit in them. 4. To wean them from this world, and to stir up in them a longing for heaven. 5. To make them more earnest in prayer to Him for deliverance. It is therefore no evidence of God's wrath, nor any sufficient reason to prove such an one to be out of His favour, whom He so holds for a long time under the cross. Be well content, then, to bear afflictions, though of long continuance; submitting in this matter to the will of God, who knows it to be good and profitable for some to be kept long under discipline. (*G. Petter.*) *A variety of sufferers, their best meeting-place:*—It is strange, the variety of sufferers that meet each other at the feet of Jesus! (*R. Glover.*) *Coming to Christ:*—Come to Christ Jesus to be cured in soul and conscience of your sins. Come to Him, and touch Him by true faith, as this diseased woman did, and thou shalt feel Divine virtue to come from Him to heal thee of thy sins, both of the guilt and of the corruption of them. Thou shalt feel His Divine power healing thee of the guilt of thy sins, by the merit of His obedience and sufferings applied to thy conscience by faith; and the same Divine power healing thee of the corruption of sin, that is, mortifying thy sinful lusts, that they may not reign in thee as they have done, and as they do in the wicked and unbelievers. Oh, therefore, thou that feelest thy soul diseased with sin, make haste unto Christ to be cured by this Divine healing virtue that is in Him: pray Him to manifest it in thee; and withal, labour by some measure of faith to apply it to thyself, as this woman did: then shalt thou most certainly be healed in soul, as she was in body. And let not the grievousness of thy disease hinder thee from coming to Christ to be cured, but rather cause thee to make the more speed to Him by faith: for be assured, there is virtue enough in Him to heal all thy sins, though many and grievous, if thou do but see and feel them, and complain of them, and lay them open to Him, and seek earnestly to Him by the prayer of faith to be cured of them. Do this therefore, and do it speedily, without delay. As in a dangerous sickness of body, thou would'st not dare to put off sending to the physician, lest it cost thee thy life: so much less must thou dare to delay the time in seeking to Christ to be healed of thy sins, lest it cost thee the loss of eternal life, and the salvation of thy soul. Be careful, therefore, forthwith to seek to

Christ to be healed of thy sins. The rather, because there is no other means or physic in the world to cure thee, besides the Divine healing virtue that is in Christ Jesus: no power or virtue that is in any herb, precious stone, or mineral, can cure thee of thy sins: not all the balm in Gilead; not any power or skill of man or angel can cure thy diseased conscience of one sin: only this Divine virtue that is in Christ can do it: and therefore seek to Him alone to be cured, and not to other vain helps and remedies. When thou feelest thy sins lie upon thy conscience, seek not (as many do) to be cured by merry company, or by following vain sports or recreations, nor by going to the bodily physician to purge melancholy (as if this alone would cure thee): all these are in this case physicians of no value; therefore trust not to them, but go directly to Jesus Christ, to be healed by that Divine virtue which is in him. (*G. Petter.*) *Majestic faith:*—Some criticise her faith unfavourably, as if she had a superstitious belief in Christ's clothes. Superstition does not act as she did. Her faith was that Christ's anointing, like Aaron's, goes to the skirts of His garments. One less believing would have sunk, murmuring in despair, quoting dismal proverbs about misfortunes never coming single, and feeling that in her disease, poverty, shame, loneliness, she was specially ill-used by God. Or, if not despairing altogether, feeble faith would have faced Christ, and displayed at large all her claims for help, dwelling on the length of her sorrow, and on the fortune vainly spent in endeavouring to regain her health. But calm, trustful, feeling Christ so willing and so strong to help that there is no reluctance in His heart, she ventures all on a touch of faith. There is a heroism here worthy of Abraham. Full of this faith, she elbows her way through the crowd, and finding the blue hem of Christ's garment within her reach, quietly—so that none observe her—she touches it; and at once a swift, gentle tide of health flushes through all her frame, and she feels she has got what she desired. (*R. Glover.*) *Encouragement to faith:*—If you have faith, though but in its infancy, be not discouraged, for—1. A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire. 2. A weak faith may lay hold on a strong Christ; a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong. She, in the gospel, who but touched Christ, fetched virtue from Him. 3. The promises are not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise does not say, He who hath a giant faith, who can believe God's love through a frown, who can rejoice in affliction, who can work wonders, remove mountains, stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but, whosoever believes, be his faith never so small. A reed is but weak, especially when it is bruised; yet the promise is made to it, "A bruised reed will He not break." 4. A weak faith may be fruitful. Weakest things multiply most. The vine is a weak plant, but it is fruitful. The thief on the cross, who was newly converted, was but weak in grace; but how many precious clusters grow upon that tender plant! 5. The weakest believer is a member of Christ as well as the strongest; and the weakest member of the body mystical shall not perish. Christ will cut off rotten members, but not weak members. Therefore, Christian, be not discouraged: God, who would have us receive them that are weak in the faith (Rom. xiv. 1), will not Himself refuse them. (*Watson.*) *Coming to Christ:*—We are like this woman, inasmuch as—I. We, too, have a need of Christ. He alone can (1) pardon our sins; (2) renew our nature; (3) strengthen us to wage the spiritual conflict with success. II. We should have a sense of this need. As long as we suppose that a slight change, a little penitence and contrition, will suffice; so long, not heartily applying to Christ for the blessings we want, we shall go empty away. III. We have nothing to offer for the blessing we desire. Christ's people receive all, and return nothing; for, all they can offer is already His. IV. We come to a willing Benefactor. He is more ready to give than we to receive. It is as natural to Christ to give blessings to all who ask, as it is for the sun to diffuse its beams on all the objects beneath; if we receive not, it is because we have intercepted the rays flowing from the Sun of Righteousness. V. In the exercise of faith we are sure of a blessing. All spiritual blessings may be ours, if only we will believe in Christ's goodness and grace, and come to Him. VI. The blessing may be delayed; but no prayer and no exercise of faith is ever lost. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *Told Him all the truth: Be open with Jesus:*—This woman has a word for two classes. She urges the penitent to a full confession, and the true convert to an open profession. I. To THE PENITENT, URGING A FULL AVOWAL OF THEIR STATE AND CONDITION. Tell Jesus all the truth (1) about your disease. Show yourself in all your foulness to the great Physician. Do not draw the picture flatteringly when you are in prayer. Do not use dainty terms; but make a clean breast of every sin. (2) about your sufferings. Tell how your heart has been broken, your conscience

alarmed. Let your sorrows flow in briny floods before the Lord. Though no other can understand them, He can. (3) of your futile attempts after a cure; your wicked, sinful pride in seeking a righteousness of your own, instead of submitting to that of Christ. (4) regarding your hopes. (5) and your fears. II. REASONS FOR THIS. 1. The Lord knows it all already. It would be folly to deny or attempt to hide what He has seen. 2. To tell Him will be a very great service to you. It will tend to make you feel your need more. While you are in the act of opening your heart to God, He will pour in the oil and wine of His Divine grace. III. TO THOSE WHO ARE CONVERTED, BUT WHO HAVE NOT YET ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR FAITH IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS. 1. This is for God's glory. The Christian is not to be always wishing to expose what is in him; that were to make himself a Pharisee; but if God has put in you anything lovely, beautiful, and of good report, who are you that you should, by covering it, rob Him of His praise? 2. For the good of others. In the case before us, the woman's confession was doubtless intended to strengthen the faith of Jairus, who was sorely tried by this delay. You do not know of how much service your open confession of Christ might be to some trembling soul. 3. For the person's own sake. I have no doubt this was the main reason. Suppose Christ had let her go home quietly, without any word from Him—when she reached home she would have said, "Ah, I stole that cure; I am so glad I have it." But one day there would come a dark thought, "What if it should die away after a time; then I shall be as bad as ever; for I never asked him." Conscience would say to her, "Ah, it was a theft;" and though she might excuse herself, still she would not be easy. Now Christ calls her up, and conscience cannot disturb her, for He gave her the cure before them all. She need not be afraid of the return of her disease, for Jesus has said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Salvation*:—There are three great truths which are illustrated in this narrative. I. SALVATION NEEDED. That woman needed healing; we need saving. The gospel is the remedy, and the fact of the gospel being provided is a sufficient proof of the necessity of it. A remedy suggests the evil which is to be remedied. Justification by faith is a remedy to meet a special case of necessity. The most obvious and legitimate method of being justified is to be just; let me be just, and I am justified in the eye of the law. So the angels are justified. But we have sinned. How, then, are we to be justified? The gospel tells us we are to be justified by faith; we are to believe in Jesus Christ, and on the ground of His great sacrifice on our behalf we shall be accepted as just, though we ourselves have sinned. If you see a lifeboat on the sea-shore, it suggests storms and deaths; so the gospel suggests the ruin which it is meant to remedy. Look abroad on the world, and you will see evidences enough of the necessity. Consult your own consciences and history, and every one will know in himself that there was need for such a remedy—that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Christ has come into the world as "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." A universal remedy indicates a universal necessity. II. SALVATION PROVIDED. Jesus obeyed the law we had broken; He suffered the punishment we had merited; He obeyed and suffered on our behalf. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." III. SALVATION OBTAINED—obtained by faith. We accept Christ as our representative. (*N. Hall, LL.B.*) *The resource of faith*:—Here, then, is an exhaustless reservoir of power, the power of Omnipotence, and the means by which it may all be made available to feed our lives. The mill-owner stores up in a reservoir on the heights the water that shall run his mill. Then he needs only a channel or sluice-way that shall bring the water to his wheels. If it was an exhaustless reservoir, like the Atlantic Ocean for extent, he would have no fear that his mill would run dry. These miracles and this text teach the Christian that Omnipotence and Omniscience alone bound the reservoir of his spiritual graces, and that he has under his own control the width and depth of the channel called faith which brings them into his life. When Franklin grasped the principle of electricity, he could not only draw the lightning from a single cloud: all the electricity in the earth and in all the clouds was at his command, and he could send it upon his errands. When James Watt mastered the principle of the expansive power of steam, not only the little cloud of vapour that issued from his mother's tea-kettle was under his control, but all the steam that could be generated by the stored-up combustibles of the world was really his. When the Christian can grasp this truth of the power of faith, the infinite spiritual resources of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are his. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." There is the reservoir. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in

prayer, believing, ye shall receive." There is the channel that conveys the power into our lives and makes it available. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) *The persistence of faith*:—Again, Jairus and the woman and the blind men teach us not only what faith is, but what it inevitably involves. It always involves a persistent effort. Even though death has stiffened his little daughter's limbs, and silenced her tongue, and has rolled the deep, dark stream which no soul was ever known to recross between her and him, Jairus will still persist. He will not give over his efforts. "Come and lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live," is his entreaty still. Though the invalid for twelve years has tried physician after physician and has received no help, she will try again. It could not have been easy for her to press through that curious throng of stronger ones, but she does it until she even grasps His garment's hem, and then He turns and speaks the healing word. Our Lord at first seemed to take no notice of the blind men, but when they persistently followed Him, when He saw that the rebuke of pitiless bystanders had no effect but to increase their effort to reach Him, when they followed Him into the house, then He touched their eyes. Persistent effort is not true faith, but it always accompanies true faith. Thunder never split the heart of the oak-tree, but it always accompanies the lightning's flash, and tells to all about of the lightning's presence. The farmer does not show his faith by lying in his bed and waiting for God to plough and harrow his field and sow his seed. He ploughs, and harrows, and sows, and shows his faith in then waiting for God to give the increase. God's winds are always blowing; the man of faith spreads his sail before God can fill it. (*Ibid.*) *Gospel pictures*:—As a picture from a magic lantern is dashed upon the screen, is looked at for a moment, then vanishes, and is gone, so different persons come upon the stage in the narratives of the Evangelists, enact perfect dramas, exquisite in texture and construction, and momentous in moral bearing, and then pass away. There is no lineage, no record, no name; and yet all is so vivid and powerful. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Sickness spoils life*:—She was sick; and what is all the world worth when one is sick? What is all that is presented to the eye, what is the income of the year, what are all the treasures of life worth under such circumstances? What is everything that can be desired worth when one is thoroughly sick? Sickness takes the flavour out of everything. It changes the whole current and course of desire and feeling. She had long been sick. She had worn out years in sickness, and those years had well-nigh worn her out. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." (*Ibid.*) *An ungrateful reception of healing*:—Well, ought she not, in that very instant, to have cried out? Ought she to have taken such bounty, and to have borne no witness to it? It is true that she did not say anything; but her silence was not altogether from ingratitude. It may have been a relative want of appreciation of the greatness of the favour. She may have said to herself, "How do I know that it is anything more than my imagination? I will say nothing about it until I am sure;"—just as a great many persons, when they begin to feel the saving power of the Divine Spirit in their souls say, "I will not speak of this; I will wait; I will see what it is." She may have said, "How can I speak of this? My lips refuse to open; I cannot speak." It may have been sensibility, delicacy of feeling, shrinkingness, that kept her from speaking. How many there are who believe that they have been pardoned, and that the blood of Christ which takes away the stain of sin has healed them, but who consult their sensibility and their shrinking tastes, and say, "How can I speak of this?" And it does not look as though it were wicked. Yet, if there be anything that a person ought to acknowledge, it is obligations which touch the great core of things. He who has been healed by a faithful physician should be the friend of that physician as long as he lives. It may be that he acted professionally; it may be that he took his fee; but money never pays a physician who performs his duty faithfully. If your child has come back from death, never forget the faithful old nurse that made her bosom a cradle in which the child rocked, and gave her days and nights to the care of it. For such service as hers nothing material can be an adequate compensation. We are ungrateful in a thousand ways which we hardly suspect. We do not pay what we owe to men who enfranchise our understanding. Authors who give us a higher and nobler conception of life; poets who give wings to our fancy, so to speak, enabling us to fly higher than ordinary men, who stumble and fall down in the midst of the vulgarities of society; those who make virtue beauteous, and draw us to it,—who can repay the services of such as these? Men scarcely know what they owe to those who fortify them in virtue; to those who make it plain to them that integrity is safe under all circumstances; to those who have walked before them in

the beauty of holiness; to those who have redeemed them from the conception that religion is a bondage, and led them to see that it was an efflorescent garden full of sweet delights. There is among men a great lack of the sense of their obligation toward those who have served them. (*Ibid.*) *Unpurposed healing*:—Ah! it is a good thing for men to be filled with grace to such a degree as that their unconscious moods and unpurposed influence shall be healing, as well as the things which they intend. So it was with our Master. Purposely He cast out demons. He set persons free from insanities. He quenched the fire of fevers. Dropsies were dried up by Him. Men were brought to health on every side through His instrumentality. With a word, with a gesture, with a look, with a touch, He did great works of beneficence. But so full was He of Divine savour, of spiritual power, that His very garments, as it were, were imbued with it; and when the woman stole up and touched the hem of His garment, straightway she experienced a joyful release. Oh, soul-filling surprise! She that for twelve years had not known one hour's exemption from disease, felt the sovereign balm of perfect health flow through her veins; and she stood restored! She was well! (*Ibid.*) *Touches that do not touch; or contact without sympathy*:—There seems to be requisite, then, a relation between souls before the real and rich fruits of life can come to them in the highest forms of Christian experience. Let us look along the lines of analogy a little. Souls touch each other in various ways. Life touches life variously. People live together in bodily contact. They live in agreement only as to bodily conditions. They are related to each other simply by the necessity of food, raiment, warmth, protection. Ten thousand wedded souls are to each other simply as a blade is to a knife. There is no real vitality between the two. Only in regard to provision for worldly wants and in bodily conditions are they in contact. But, then, these are the lowest, rudest forms of contact; yet there are people that are more in sympathy. There are multitudes that come into sympathy with each other only through their children. The cradle is a reconciler, often, between husband and wife. It opens up, in the rude, hard man, streams like those which Moses brought forth from the rock. For the child's sake, the mother becomes dear to him. There is mediation; and yet how little of life is there in common between two such souls! Again, people dwell together in single lines of mutuality. Many persons live together in all intellectual qualities, but in no other respects. Many dwell together being in accord in their tastes; but in no other regards. Many live together in literature, in history, in the ordinary and easier forms of knowledge that are of the earth earthy; but they never rise into eminence, aspiration, glorification, of each other, and never see anything in each other except that which the bird sees, or which the animal sees. They do not touch each other; and yet they are in perpetual contact. Higher phenomena of life there are, however; and there is developed heroism at times. There is a coming together of soul with soul, not through the ministration of the body, nor of taste, nor of thought, nor of mutual service, alone, but by that rare inflammation of the whole soul which has no definition, and which no man can describe. It is not needed by those who have it; it is not possible to those who have it not. Every faculty in one, then, has sympathy with every faculty in the other. Either they fit each other by exact agreement, or the positive element of one is just adapted for the absence of it in the other. Thus souls come together in an indefinable way. They are conscious that their lives mingle and blend. This is the rarest and highest form of contact; and yet is the revelation of that law by which men can rise from bodily conditions into social, and from those conditions into intellectual; but the consummation lies in that invisible, indescribable element which inheres in every man and woman—inheres sometimes only as a seed ungrown, and at other times develops and is full of fragrance, and then is full of fruit. (*Ibid.*) *The survival of the fittest and a higher law*:—Jesus did not say to this woman, "Go away; you are too weak and broken to hold your own in the world; best for you to be down and wait for the end, while others take your place who can do your work." That would have been a sorrowful word, not to her only, but to us also; for it would have set a limit, not to Christ's power merely, but to His very compassion, and therein also to ours. That, however, is not the law which human hearts acknowledge. Our power may easily have limits, but our pity must have none; and as we can help not a little even when we cannot heal, it is bound upon our conscience never to be inhuman. The bruised reed He would not break. But this, while it is the supreme law of man's nature, is by no means the law of nature elsewhere. Nature throws away her broken vessels with no compunction or pity whatever. Everywhere the weak and sickly among the lower animals are

ruthlessly killed off, and only those remain which are able to do for themselves. The fit survive—the feeble perish. It is hardly necessary to lead any proof of this. The stricken deer turns aside to die, while the fat herd sweeps on indifferent to its fate. The pack of lean wolves know of no surgery for a fainting comrade, except to fall on him and rend him in pieces. The frail bird that cannot fly with the rest of the brood is tumbled from the nest and left to its fate. Nature has, indeed, a great healing power for the strong and healthy in case of accident, so that wounds and broken bones soon come together again. But among wild animals sickness, disease, feebleness, and age meet with no compassion. In their warfare it is still *Væ victis*, for they cannot cumber themselves with the wounded. The halt and the blind get no chance at all. The weak and sickly are left to their fate, and the sooner it comes the better, for their kindred turn from them, and their friends will not know them. Unfit for the struggle of existence which is their supreme business, they perish without ruth or remorse. Thus everywhere on sea and land, and in the lightsome air, among all creatures that swim, or fly, or creep, or run, we find this law working, and doubtless working for the general good of the whole, yielding a benevolent harvest of health and comfort to the unthinking creatures of God. But now, when we pass from them into the province of man, we meet at once with a law which breaks in upon this, and controls it. The struggle for existence goes on there too, but it is no longer supreme and all in all. Everywhere it is modified by ideas that are confessedly of greater moment and higher authority. Sometimes it is set aside altogether, for we are not always bound to exist if we can, but we are always bound to do right. Thus the moral rises above the natural, and even flatly contradicts it. The struggle for existence is subordinated to the struggle for a higher perfection. Instead of the survival of the fittest, we have a law requiring the strong to help the weak, the healthy to improve their health for the sake of the diseased, and even those who are hopelessly stricken, and for ever invalided from the battle of life, are cast on us as a peculiar care, to neglect which were to outrage the noblest instincts of humanity. The natural law, everywhere else in full swing, that the weak and sickly, the halt and blind, must be left to their fate, or even hurried out of the way, not only does not hold among us, but the very reverse of it holds. And the moral principle which thus asserts its supremacy vindicates its claim by many fruitful results. For often times the poor cripple whom natural law would have cast away, has grown up to bless the world with wise and noble counsel, and blind men, all unfit for the mere struggle of animal life, have yet done brave and good service in the higher warfare of humanity; and even the utterly broken, the helplessly disabled, who can "only stand and wait," have yet, by their meek patience under affliction, shown us an example which made our hearts gentler, humbler, better, and was well worth all the care we bestowed on them. So it is, at any rate, that no sooner do we pass from the mere natural life of animals to the moral life of man, than we find another law breaking in upon the law of survival of the fittest—controlling, suspending, even utterly reversing it, with an authority which cannot be gainsaid, without forfeiting all that is most nobly and distinctively human. (*Walter C. Smith, D.D.*) *Christ's kindness in discipline*:—It is not often that we are able to perceive the full purpose of any one of God's dealings. Seldom can we see the perfect fruit of the chastisement He allots us. And no wonder: the life of man is so short; the purposes and operations of God are so vast. I. In the conduct of our Lord notice—1. Christ's apparent harshness. He insisted on the woman's coming forth to tell her shame. But see Christ's real kindness. It was not in mere assertion of authority that He called her forth. It was to complete the blessing. He would give her His benediction before she went. Again, it was to purify and strengthen her faith. He would prepare her to confess Him elsewhere. Christ alone knew the trials to which this woman would be exposed at home. 2. So in like manner and with like purposes, will Christ deal with you, if you be of those who have come to Him with faith. The purpose of all Christ's discipline—the discipline that we experience—is exemplified in His conduct to this woman. First, we noticed that He called her forth to receive further blessing. She came for healing only, but He would give her spiritual grace. Like her, many now come to the Saviour, barely praying for pardon, for deliverance from punishment. But Christ did not achieve redemption merely to keep men out of hell—He died to take them to heaven. Now, to prepare for heaven much grace is necessary, and men must be summoned to return to Christ again and again, that they may receive far more than the blessing for which they first came. Christ has yet richer favours to

bestow; and if His people do not apply for them they must be placed in circumstances where they will feel their want and their need, and hungrily ask Him for more. Next, we saw that He called her forth to purify and strengthen her faith. There is no need for me to tell you that your faith is both imperfect and impure. Would you not desire your faith to grow stronger and larger? Then it must be used and tried, exercised and trained. Again, we noticed that Christ was probably preparing this woman to witness for Him in time to come. He requires from all men the public profession of His name. Salvation is not a sort of spiritual luxury to be enjoyed in private. And, further, men never know what lies before them as messengers of God; they are ignorant of the high and arduous service to which, may be, they have been appointed. But Christ knows it; and He prepares them and exercises them in bearing testimony for God in one difficulty and trial after another, until they are ready for the work they have to do. Thus does He grant to His applicants, not only the healing they pray for, but also the strength which they are content to lack. As in the experience of this woman, so in His treatment of us, will Christ combine apparent harshness with real kindness. II. For the further investigation of this subject shall we turn from the Saviour to the saved, and try to trace the feelings of this woman as the black cloud of Christ's seeming displeasure passed over her. 1. We find her full of sudden joy at feeling in her body that she was healed of that plague. Twelve years' misery, labour, expense, and disappointment are all at an end. How universal the joy must have been. No fibre of her frame that did not thrill with gladness. And there was another cause of joy too; she had escaped the exposure she so much dreaded. But her joy was all at once quenched in awe and fear when He asked, "Who touched Me?" and when He asked again, and when He looked round about with a gaze that showed He knew her that had done this thing. So feeling, for a moment, she comes forward and tells Him all the truth. But, instead, sounds came upon her ear tenderer and tenderer, and stronger in consolation: "Courage, daughter; thy faith hath saved thee," &c. Ah! what feelings were hers, as she rose and departed. It would take her long to disentangle all their varied happiness. Did she not feel that the benediction of Christ amply made up for the loss of secrecy? She was really happier for the discipline through which He made her pass. Had she gone away as she hoped and planned, she would have carried with her none of this joy—the love of Christ. She would have received the cure, and that alone. And, on the other hand, she would have had doubts as to Christ's willingness to heal her; doubts as to His forgiveness of her intrusion and underhand application; doubts, too, as to the permanence of the cure—all would have been in uncertainty. But now she knew that His will healed her, His kindness welcomed her, His grace blessed her. Moreover, had she gone away as she hoped, she would have retained her superstition with her faith. It would have cramped and enfeebled it, and she might never have believed in Jesus to the salvation of her soul. And the weakness that made her come to Christ in the crowd behind might have betrayed her into greater fear of man at home, and she might never have been able to confess His name. But now she knew Him, and believed in Him—not in the fringe of His garment; now she had confessed Him before the multitude, and would not fear to confess Him before her friends. Would she not be sure that it was loving wisdom that deprived her of the convenience which she had yearned for, and substituted blessings of which she had not dreamed? And, further, was she not glad that she had been made to undergo all this? If she could have had her choice, and it were all to do over again, think you she would have wished to go away secretly without seeing Christ's beaming eye and hearing His "Courage, daughter, go in peace"? Surely not. She saw now that Christ's kindness, though it seemed harsh at first, was wiser than her own selfish cowardice, and secured her greater happiness. 2. This narrative shows us also a person undergoing harsh discipline, and perceiving herself in a few moments the kindness which appointed it. Now this makes it specially interesting. It is so seldom we can see both sides of any dispensation—the peaceable, happy fruit as well as the present grievousness—that every instance in which we can do so ought to receive most careful meditation. It is not always granted to Christians to see this happy change so suddenly; and yet some time or other in the experience of every believer as swift a vision of God's kindness in discipline is accorded. And from over us will the cloud sometimes pass as quickly as in this case. Many a discipline which we think harsh we shall find to be kind. Not only will it really be kind, but we shall know it to be so, and shall receive the joy of experiencing God's goodness. Many an exposure or trial that we

would have avoided at any cost will turn out to be the means of bringing blessings which we shall reckon cheaply bought. Conclusion: It is painful when speaking of privileges and securities, to think that they are limited to a few. But I must warn you that none but those who come to Christ for salvation may hope that He is training them for eternity. Those who do not touch Christ by faith, their sorrows are but sorrows, their disappointments bring no outweighing joy, their troubles are not trials, only calamities. Of how much are you depriving yourselves by unbelief! Now that Jesus is near, is even waiting for you, will you not trust in Him and come to Him to be healed? (*J. Alden Davies.*) *A cure by the way:*—Jesus was pressing through the throng to the house of Jairus to raise the ruler's dead daughter; but He is so profuse in goodness that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossoms of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it; it were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit, and for a man to fulfil his own particular calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of grace, that like the sun which shines as it fulfils its course, His path is radiant with loving-kindness. He is a fiery arrow of love, which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is always going out of Jesus, as sweet odours exhale from the flowers; and it always will be emanating from Him, as light from the central orb. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Men speak of killing two birds with one stone, but my Lord heals many souls on one journey. (*Ibid.*) *Tell all to Jesus:*—If your heart be very grieved, do, I pray you, remember that compassion is one of the most rapid ways of getting relief. While the banks hold good the lake swells; let them break, and the water is drained off. Let a vent be found for the swollen tarn up yonder on the mountains, and the mass of water which might otherwise inundate the valleys will flow in fertilizing streams. When you have a festering, gathering wound, the surgeon lets in the lancet and gives you ease. So confession brings peace. (*Ibid.*) *Confessing Christ:*—Why should the wonders He hath wrought be hid in darkness and forgot? When I look abroad upon nature, it is true I do not see nature fussily trying to make itself tidy for a visitor, as some professors do, who, the moment they think they are going to be looked at, trim up their godliness to make it look smart. But on the other hand, Nature is never bashful. She never tries to hide her beauties from the gazer's eye. You walk the valley; the sun is shining, and a few raindrops are falling; yonder is the rainbow; a thousand eyes gaze at it. Does it fold up all its lovely colours and retire? Oh, no! it shrinks not from the eye of man. In yonder garden all the flowers are opening their bejewelled cups, the birds are singing, and the insects humming amid the leaves. It is a place so beautiful that God Himself might walk therein at eventide, as He did in Eden. I look without alarming the bashful beauties of the garden. Do all these insects fold their wings and hide beneath the leaves? do the flowers hang down their heads? does the sun draw a veil over his modest face? does nature blush till the leaves of the trees are scarlet? Oh, no! Nature cares not for gazers, and when they come to look upon her, she doth not hasten to wrap a mantle over her fair form, or throw a curtain before her grandeur. So the Christian is not to be always wishing to expose what is in him; that were to make himself a Pharisee; yet, on the other hand, if God has put anything that is lovely and beautiful and of good report in you, anything that may glorify the cross of Christ, and make the angels happy before the eternal throne, who are you that you should cover it? Who are you that you should rob God of His praise? What! Would you have all Nature's beauties hid? Why, then, hide the beauties of grace? (*Ibid.*) *Best to apply direct to the Master:*—A tenant farmer on a rich lord's estate had been refused a renewal of his lease by the steward of the estate. Instead of giving up, the farmer went to the owner himself, laid the matter before him, and was successful in getting his renewal. Why? He had gone to the one who had the ultimate power to grant or refuse. So Jairus, so the woman with the bloody flux, when all human help failed, went to Him in Whom alone was the power to heal and make alive. All the bread in the world will not keep you from starving, if it is shut up in storehouses, and you have no key. There may be water enough in the well, but if you have no bucket to draw it with, it will do you no good. And all Christ's treasures of healing for body and soul will be nothing to you, if you do not go to Him for

your share of them. (*Sunday School Times.*) *The sanctity of touch*:—I. How GREAT AND MYSTERIOUS THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHING TO TOUCH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. 1. Thus touch is pollution (Hag. ii. 12, 13). 2. Thus touch is consecration (Exod. xxx. 26, 29). 3. Thus touch is strength (Dan. x. 10, 16, 18). 4. Thus touch is wisdom (Jer. i. 9). 5. Thus touch is purity (Isa. vi. 7). II. THE GREAT LESSON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS BY TOUCH, TO SHOW TO US THE ABSOLUTE COMMUNICABILITY OF THE DIVINE POWER AND HOLINESS; IT IS THE STORY ALSO OF THE VACCINATION OF THE WORLD. The Old Testament is the story of the first man, and how one sin tainted the world. The New Testament is the story of the second Man, and how His holiness purified the tainted stream. Jesus went about touching. The holy awakening of Divine grace restores man. III. THERE IS NO CURE WITHOUT CONTACT. You cannot satisfy hunger without eating, although your table be covered with food. You cannot satisfy thirst without drinking, although fountains play before the eye. You cannot satisfy faith by reading about Christ, or by knowing Him—you must appropriate Him. Imputed righteousness is really transferred righteousness; the purity of the Saviour becomes ours. What does the whole teaching and miraculous life of our Lord convey to us but this doctrine—Transfusion. Faith is the finger by which man touches God. Meanwhile it is not faith that saves; it is faith in Jesus Christ. We are not saved by faith as an act of the mind, but by faith on the object of the mind. It is not the faith, but the Person. No cure without contact. Thus if man cannot come to God, God must come to man, or these two can never meet. This is the meaning of Christ's incarnation. By faith we come into contact with God, and are saved; by sympathy, we come in contact with man and cure. (*E. P. Hood.*) *Touch is the key to all the senses*:—Touch is the principle of all the senses. Perhaps, also, I shall be right, if I say that it is the most subtle of all the senses. There is no sensation without touch; sight is touch; fragrance is touch; we give that name to what is the sense of resistance; but all things are known to us and are related to us by touch. Touch is the internal sensitive principle—it is the principle of communication, and of reception, and of translation. We are told that particles are constantly floating off to touch the sensitive body, to bid the door of sensation spring open; and I think you must have felt that while those avenues are touched by their proper affinities, there are other senses within which are not touched, and never awakened, but which might own and yield to the appropriate key. Touch is, to me, far from being that endorsement of materialism it has been described as being; it is the assurance of an inhabitant behind the gateway. Indeed, the more closely I look into any of the senses, the more spiritual they become. All knowledge is by contact; all sympathy is in contact; and sin and purity, and health and disease, grow in contact. How true it is that there is no cure, no healing, without contact—that is, without mutual touching. If we cannot get near to that which heals, how can it heal us? Suppose I know of the medicine which might cure me, but I am in England, and the medicine or the physician is in America, and it is the only medicine—how can I be cured? Hence, then, guard the avenues of touch. It has been well said that the skin isolates the man, and makes him world-tight; but it is necessary that the world's goods should come into his house—necessary, too, that the refuse and wear and tear should be carried forth, and that he should go out and in with the freedom of a man. The skin is our abode, not our prison; and the porous skin has its bivalve doors and windows, to admit supplies from without, and to allow the spirit to steer forth from within. Some things we must be careful to touch not. (*Ibid.*) *Sin spreading by contact*:—It contains also the history of the transference of Divine holiness, but it is especially the history of the inoculation of sin; it is the history of the drop that taints and ruins the race—the fatal virus; it is not inconceivable. I remember, some time since, when in the University of Edinburgh, being told of a young man who slightly touched his two fingers with the dissecting knife, they were instantly cut off to save his life, so fatal was the touch of corruption. Such is the corrosive power of poisonous touch. We can appreciate the touch of fire, the touch of caustic, the touch of poison; but can we not appreciate the touch of sin? Can we not so far appreciate it as to know its power, its danger, and to see in it the dreadful virus tainting and damning our race? (*Ibid.*) *Christianity a healing influence*:—Now it is, as I have before said, not difficult to perceive to what teaching all the doctrine concerning touch in the Old Testament and in the New, points: even to the great doctrine of a transferred or transfused purity. It is mournfully true that, for the most part, except as we are divinely breathed upon, we but add to each other's impurity. Let the Book be removed from our midst—let all church ordinances

expire from among us—let every opportunity of prayer be suspended or at an end—and all the offices of the religious life, as aided and inspired by the sacred Scriptures, and then what shall we see? Still man would exercise his powers as an artist—still would he utter himself in poetry and in song, in painting and in sculpture. Can you doubt for a moment, or wonder, what would be the nature of those performances? Anacreon, and Juvenal, and universal impurity over the marble and over the canvas. When you think of man's genius, his native genius, you are not to think of it as you behold it here, but as it was in the day in which the apostle bore his witness in the prison at Rome, and on the hill of Greece; and you must see how the touch of holiness transformed all that impurity into the holy lights of virtue and truth. But Greece, and Rome—what power had they to impart purity to each other? Therefore is there needed another ray, another touch, another hallowing fire. (*Ibid.*)

"*Twelve years!*" *The contrasts of life:*—In Capernaum there were two houses whose inmates are strangely linked together in the Gospel history. The one was the house of Jairus, which perhaps stood on the rising ground fast by the synagogue: the other was the house in which the nameless woman, with the issue of blood, dwelt, which probably was situated in the poorer part of the city. Let us mark the contrasts of life presented by these two houses in the "twelve years" twice mentioned by Mark. I. HOPE AND FEAR—There was a day when a great event took place in the house of Jairus. A child was born. What congratulations of friends, &c. The same year—perhaps the same month and day—a memorable event took place in the house of a poor woman. "Issue of blood" (v. 25). How it came is not told. Such contrasts are common. In one home they are lifted up with hope and joy; while in another there is the gloom and trouble. II. HEALTH AND SICKNESS. In the house of Jairus all goes well. The child grows. She is the joy of her parents, &c. But alas! how different have been the circumstances in the other house. Perhaps the woman thought at first that her ailment was slight and temporary. Certainly she was buoyed up with the hope that it would yield to the skill of physicians. But disappointed. III. COMFORT AND PENURY. Jairus must have held a good position: he was wealthy. As to the woman, we cannot tell what her original condition was. At any rate, she soon felt the pressure of adversity. IV. SOCIETY AND LONELINESS. Jairus had wife and daughter, and many friends. If he needed sympathy, there would be always people ready to give it. Besides, he had his place and his duties, as a ruler of the synagogue, to furnish him with honourable employment and holy rest. But how different with the poor woman. She is represented as alone. No one is named as taking interest in her case. V. BUT THERE CAME A TIME WHEN THE FORTUNES OF THESE TWO PEOPLE WERE STRANGELY ASSIMILATED, AND WHEN IN THEIR EXTREMITY THEY MET AND FOUND RELIEF AT THE FEET OF THE SAME SAVIOUR. Lessons: 1. Trouble comes to all. 2. Trouble should drive us to Christ. 3. Trouble should bind us more closely in sympathy and love with our brethren. 4. Trouble should endear to us the more the hope of heaven. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *Methods of spiritual treatment:*—There are cases in which the physicians must still, to save life, resort to treatment which is painful. But it is now known, it is now conclusively settled among physicians, that the way to master disease is not to torture the patient into health or into his grave, but to provide that those miraculous processes of nature which include healing should as far as possible have fair play, to make art the handmaid of nature, instead of offering any violence to nature in the name of art. Now-a-days, therefore, your physician who is not an age behind his age does not give you drugs in doses which horribly aggravate your suffering—he prescribes fresh air, the delights of travel, gentle exercise, good diet, warmth, comfort, suggests that pleasant company has its own benign influence on body and mind, recommends innocent amusement, and, as regards the welfare of this mortal tabernacle, agrees with the ancient maxim that godliness with contentment is great gain. It is certain that more cures are effected by the modern system of medical treatment, while, as for the soothing of pain, no comparison is possible between them. The difference between the two systems is that by the one the attempt is made to check and to extirpate disease by violence, by the other to aid nature by gentle methods to overcome it. From doctors for the body is not the passage easy to doctors for the soul? Among them, too, the curing of disease by violence has been much and long in vogue. In our day, it is true, we hear little and know less of the coarser and more outrageous means which were once universally approved for effecting spiritual cures. We don't now believe that we can save souls by burning the bodies belonging to them. Looking thus to the general scope of the teaching of Christ, we have no difficulty in seeing what religion

was meant by Him to be in relation to all moral and spiritual disability and disease. It was not to be a system of bleeding and blistering, of curing by counter-irritation, of making six days of the week holy by making the seventh miserable, of making earth a place of torment in order to render heaven accessible, of overcoming one disease by the production of another. It was to be a kindred influence with the sunshine, and the air of shores and hills, and the kindly ties of home, and the sympathy which is born of comradeship in adversity and sorrow—it was to be an influence kindred with all these in restoring to health those that were ready to perish. Every way you choose to look at it, this is the character of the Christianity of Christ. (*J. Service, D.D.*) *Christ discriminates His healing virtue* :—Who would not think that a man might ladle up a dish of water out of the sea, without its being missed? Yet that water, though much, is finite; those drops may be numbered: that art which hath reckoned how many grains of sand would make up a world, could more easily compute how many drops of water would make up an ocean. Whereas, the mercies of God are absolutely infinite, and beyond all possibility of proportion; and yet this bashful soul cannot steal one drop of mercy from this endless, boundless, bottomless sea of Divine bounty, but it is felt and questioned. (*Bp. Hall.*) *Virtue had gone out of Him! Christ an inexhaustible reservoir of grace* :—As heat goeth out of the sun into the air, water, earth, earthly bodies, and yet remains in the sun; so here. A fountain is not drawn dry, but cleared; so skill is not lost by communicating it to others, but increased. (*John Trapp.*) *The looks of Jesus* :—"And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing." The record in this Gospel of the looks of Christ is very remarkable. Let us gather them together and by their help think of Him whose meek, patient eye is still upon them that fear Him. I. The welcoming look of love and pity to those who seek Him. There are two recorded instances—that of our text and that of the young ruler. II. The Lord's looks of love and warning to those who found Him. There are three instances of this class—Mark iii. 34; viii. 32; x. 23–27. The stooping love which claims us for His brethren, shines in His regard none the less tenderly though He reads and warns us with His eye. III. The Lord's look of anger and pity on His opponents. This took place in the synagogue (Mark iii. 1–5). IV. The look of the Lord on the profaned temple (Mark xi. 11). How solemn that careful, all-comprehending scrutiny of all that He found there. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 36. **Be not afraid, only believe.**—*Only believe* :—The circumstances in which our Lord uttered these simple but memorable words. . . . Did He say this for the sake of Jairus alone? Nay, surely not! I take these precious words of our Lord, and now especially apply them to one who is seeking forgiveness, but who feels as if he need scarcely hope, as if he could never be a child of God, &c. If you have some such feelings, it is just to you I say, "Be not afraid, only believe!" 1. There are some, many, alas! and the Bible scarcely contains a word which I should not sooner think of addressing to them than, "Be not afraid!" O that I could make them be afraid! Who are they? Persons who are not, and perhaps never were troubled with fear about their souls. God is too merciful to cast them out, or they are not wicked enough to be lost, or they are sure to be converted before they die, or they can make up for past defects by good living for the future. 2. But to thee who like Jairus art troubled in heart and seeking help from Christ, and over whose hopes dark feelings pass, as if it was all in vain, all too late—to thee I say, "Be not afraid!" While a man remains indifferent as to his soul, the great deceiver seeks to persuade him that nothing is so easy as salvation; but the moment conscience becomes awake, and the man begins in earnest to ask, What must I do to be saved? the deceiver changes his voice. Now, nothing is so difficult, so impossible, as salvation. Before, it was too soon; now, it is too late. "Be not afraid, only believe!" (1) Be not afraid that the day of grace is past. Why are you thinking upon your soul? Because God is still calling you, &c. While you have one desire in your heart to say, "Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt have mercy on such as I, here I lay me at Thy feet, O save me!" your day of grace is not, cannot be, past. (2) Be not afraid that your sins are too many. I do not believe you have any idea how many they really are. But you must not think that they are greater than the mercies of God. 3. When He said to Jairus, "Only believe," what idea did it convey? Simply, trust to Me. You are not walking with Him side by side; you cannot look into His countenance or hear the unearthly power of His words. But He is as close to you as He was to Jairus. When He said "Only believe," the

hopeless father had no alternative but either to feel He is not trusted, or to feel He will save her after all. Had he looked down to the ground, probably he would have felt the first. If he looked full into the face of Jesus, he would feel, He cannot lie: it seems impossible, but I must trust Thee. So with you. (1) Believe that He is able to save thee. Make out as bad a case against yourself as ever you can. In full knowledge of this, fix your helpless soul upon His atonement, upon His intercession. (2) Believe that He is willing to save you. The Lord has sealed His willingness with these words, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." (3) Believe that He is ready to save you. "But I am not prepared": He is. (4) Believe that He will save you. This you must do. The woman came saying, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole." It was this faith that saved her. (*William Arthur, M.A.*) *Be not afraid, only believe*:—This exhortation has two sides—the negative and the positive. I. IN ITS NEGATIVE ASPECT (1) it does not apply to the reckless and the ungodly, for there is never a period of their lives in which they ought not to fear. They have to fear—life and death, present, past, and future, earth and heaven, time and eternity. The very breath they breathe may be charged with its mission of judicial punishment; (2) but to those who are striving to live in accordance with the requirements of the Divine will. When the soul has found her foundation to be the Rock of Ages, and her rest in God; when the earnest of the Divine Spirit is received and felt as a quickening power, then there is no need for alarm. II. IN ITS POSITIVE ASPECT (1) it indicates a means by which we may obtain release from causes which justify fear. Christ is the central object of trust. He is able to save, and He is willing. Here is a strong and lasting foundation; (2) it is just the message needed by those who are turning away from the spirit of the world, who feel it cannot meet their wants when the heart stoops with grief, and when its fondest ties are being broken. It may be, that when they turn to God, great difficulties present themselves. Old habits are strong, the tendencies of the passions are earthward, and religion seems gloomy and unattractive. Besides, a deep sense of guilt and shame oppress the soul. Thus the trial of faith is severe. Still the remedy is simple. Trust wholly in God, and submit yourself to Him. "Only believe" is to acknowledge God's power and one's own helplessness. It is a thing of instinct and of reason. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *Only believe*:—I. FAITH. It is faith that sends him on this errand; faith in Jesus as a healer, for at first his faith only reached thus far. But Jesus leads him on; and ends with realizing in Him the raiser of the dead. Faith often begins with little and ends in much; it begins with a trickling streamlet, and ends with a full broad river. II. FAITH GIVING WAY. Does not faith often fail thus? We can go to Him for a little thing; not for a great. Instead of feeling that the worse the case the greater the glory to His power and love, we stop short, and cease to expect anything from Him. III. FAITH STRENGTHENED. "Fear not," &c. IV. FAITH VICTORIOUS. The victory is resurrection. V. UNBELIEF REBUKED. Excluded from the glorious spectacle. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Only believe*:—I. CONCERNING THIS FEAR. 1. Fearfulness is common in applicants to the Saviour, and it springs from such sources as the following: (1) Ignorance of the power and resources of the Saviour. We may believe that He can heal disease, but doubt that He can raise the dead. (2) From morbid imagination of danger and of mischief. These we exaggerate. (3) Hardness of heart towards Christ's chief display of love, especially that manifestation of His mercy which He has given by dying for us. (4) Then there is the memory and the consciousness of sin. 2. There can be nothing in the circumstances of an applicant to Jesus Christ to justify fear. Jesus does not reject you for sin, weakness, sadness—nothing is difficult to Him. He will do all at the right time. 3. Fearfulness when cherished is positively displeasing to the Saviour. It is groundless, dishonouring, injurious to ourselves. II. CONCERNING TRUST. 1. Trust in Jesus is His due. 2. It is not always easy. 3. Are you all applicants to Jesus Christ? "Be not afraid." Trust for the knowledge which is essential to life and salvation. (*S. Martin.*) *The charge of Christ under affliction*:—1. When difficulties are numerous and complicated. 2. When temptations are powerful and malignant. 3. When sickness occurs and is continued. 4. When bereaving providences are experienced. 5. What is the character and influence of our faith under these painful circumstances? (*T. Wallace.*) *Faith*:—Much is said in the Word of God of the principle of faith. The place that it occupies in the scheme of redemption is a very important one. It is essential to salvation. Without it we must remain destitute of all its blessings. This will be evident if we apply it—I. TO THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF SALVATION. To every inquirer for salvation we

say, "Only believe." Not that faith is the originating cause of salvation, for that were to deny the free grace of God; nor that faith is the procuring cause of salvation, for that were to set aside the efficacy of Christ's atonement; nor that faith is the efficient cause of salvation, for that were to set aside the agency of the Holy Spirit: but we say that faith is the instrumental cause of salvation, that without the exercise of which no individual can experience salvation. This is the doctrine of the gospel (Acts xvi. 31, xiii. 39; Eph. ii. 8; Romans iii. 20–28, v. 1). 1. This method of salvation conveys most glory to God. 2. This method of salvation alone produces real obedience. 3. This method is in accordance with the other parts of redemption. Let us apply the principle before us—II. To THE CASE OF THE TRUE PENITENT. III. To CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS. IV. To THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is applicable—1. To seasons of temptation. 2. To seasons of afflictive providences. (*W. M. Bunting.*) *Believing:*—I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE TEXT IS APPLICABLE. The case of Jairus. There was an evil he wanted to remove. A danger he wanted to prevent. A blessing he wanted to procure. 1. The first qualification of souls coming to Jesus is a sense of want, some evil to be removed, &c. 2. This sense of want brings us out of ourselves—out of dependence on mere external means. 3. The expression of our wants in earnest supplication. 4. Jairus came to Christ in faith. II. THE NATURE OF THE DELIGHTFUL DUTY AND PRIVILEGE. 1. Fear is a painful feeling, arising from the apprehension of some evil. A man at the feet of Jesus need not indulge in tormenting fear, for there is no evil he is in danger of but he may be saved from—no blessing he needs but he may secure. "Fear not," &c. 2. What is this believing—what is faith? Sometimes it is called looking, receiving, &c. III. THE RIGHT YOU HAVE TO ALL THE ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE TEXT. 1. If you have the sense of need, and if you are at the feet of Jesus, then you have an absolute, personal, Scriptural right to appropriate the salvation of God as your own. You are just where a sinner ought to be, &c. 2. You have a right because you comply with the invitation. 3. You are at the central point of all the promises. All "yea and amen" in Him. 4. Will you still indulge in tormenting fear? "Yes," says one, "You don't know what reason I have to fear," &c. Enumerate the various sources of fear, and show that no sinner need fear who is truly penitent and at the feet of Jesus. (*W. Dawson.*) *Only believe:*—Mr. Moody was one night preaching in Philadelphia; near the pulpit sat a young lady, who listened with eager attention, drinking in every word. After he had done talking, he went to her. "Are you a Christian?" "No," she replied, "I wish I was; I've been seeking Jesus for three years." Mr. Moody replied, "There must be some mistake." "Don't you believe me?" said the distressed girl. "Well, no doubt you think you have been seeking Jesus; but, believe me, it don't take three years for a seeking soul to meet a seeking Saviour." "What am I to do, then?" "You have been trying to *do* long enough; you must just *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh!" said the young lady, "I am so tired of that word: 'Believe,' 'believe,' 'believe!' I don't know what it means." "Then we'll change the word, and say, 'trust.'" "If I say, 'I'll trust Him,' will He save me?" "I don't say that, for you may say ten thousand things; but if you do trust Him, He certainly will." "Well," said she, "I do trust him; but I don't feel any better!" "Ah!" said Mr. Moody, "I see; you've been looking for feelings for three years, instead of looking to Jesus." If the translators of the Bible had everywhere inserted "feelings" instead of "faith," what a run there would be upon the book. But God does not say a word about feelings from Genesis to Revelation. With men "seeing is believing" but with the believer "believing is seeing." An orphan child was once asked by her little friend, "What do you do without a mother to tell your troubles to?" "Mother told me to go to Jesus; He was mother's Friend, and He's my Friend too," was the simple reply. "But He is a long way off; He won't stop to mind you." Her face brightened, as she said: "I don't know about that, but I know He says He will, and that's enough for me." And should not that be enough for you and me? (*Anon.*)

Ver. 43.—**Something should be given her to eat.**—*Feeding upon Christ:*—A GREAT THING NEVER MADE CHRIST FORGET A LITTLE THING. This is real greatness. Always as you go up to the highest, you find it more and more that the little things take a larger place. The disclosures of the microscope are quite as wonderful as the discoveries of the telescope. And if any thoughtful, religious man had to tell what had given him his highest idea of God, and made the deepest impression of His love he would probably single out some very small event of life. It was so wonderful

and so good, that the great God should care to notice, and superintend, and answer prayer, about such a little thing, which might have appeared so very insignificant. And, correspondingly, that is the greatest faith which is occupied about minutiæ. There is many a man who believes that he is saved; but yet finds it very hard to trust God for the details of common life. GOD ALWAYS FEEDS THE LIFE HE GIVES. I see it in creation. The light and air created before vegetable life; the vegetable life before animal life; animal life before human life. To an observant eye, the whole earth is a table laid out, and amply spread for the sustenance of everything which God's hand has made. But it is not only concerning your bodily life, that you may rest secure that God will maintain the being He has made: there is the life of your intellect; and a man's mind needs food as much as his body. And has not God secured it? Are not subjects for thought, and for the exercise of our rational faculties, in every place? God's great lesson-book around him, and beneath him, and above him, every moment, in all the beauties of earth, and sky, and air, and sea, teeming with their suggestive wonders and their great teaching facts? And now the great question is, "What is it which He gives us to eat, and which is the vitality of a soul? and how is it communicated?" In its strictest and truest sense, the answer to that question is only one—"Christ is the food of the soul." Never think that your Bible will be "feeding" of itself. Neither its words, nor its histories, nor its doctrines, nor its promises. You must find the Christ that is in it, before it feeds you. And the more Christ you find in the word, the more that word will feed your soul. Secondly, all spiritual acts between the soul and God feed. Meditation—adoration—prayer—secret converse. For the Holy Ghost flows through means. And He carries Christ into the very currents of your being, till Christ mingles with your very life-blood. And each time that happens, it renews, it restores, it strengthens, it expands some part of the inner life; and by continual applications you have "life," and you have it more abundantly." Thirdly, that habit formed, and that communication opened to the heart, there is nothing which may not convey nutriment to a believer's soul. Everything that is beautiful—everything that is loving—everything that is wise—everything that is true—in nature, in art, in science, in history, and in Providence—everything may be an element of nutrition. It may all turn to spiritual nerve, and power, and growth. And fourthly, to a very great extent, Christian intercourse and fellowship feed. And you must remark that our Lord did not say to the damsel, "Eat," but to those before her, "Give you to her to eat." We are bound to feed one another. Whatever knowledge, or grace, or peace, or comfort, God has given you, He says, "Feed, with this, one of My lambs." But fifthly, and especially, the Holy Communion. This was ordained for this very end. It is essentially feeding. It is the feast where there is spread the richest, the sweetest, and the best! How can some of you expect your souls to live, if you neglect this great sustentation of all spiritual life? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1–6. And He went out from thence, and came into His own country.—*Jesus re-visits Nazareth*:—I. GRACIOUS CONDESCENSION. Jesus, although He had been cruelly treated at Nazareth, once more turns His steps homewards. Jesus practised what He preached (Matt. xviii. 21, 22). Love of home natural to men. Thoughts suggested by visits home. How shall we be received—welcomed or slighted? Have we so passed our time since we left home, that we may deserve a cordial reception; or may even some poor Nazareth be justifiably ashamed of us? II. UNWORTHY PREJUDICES. "He came to His own and His own received Him not." Neither did His brethren believe in Him (John vii. 5). Why? Because He was known to them; and was poor and of lowly origin. Some look at religion as children at books, more attracted by the binding than the contents. III. FATAL REJECTION. Nazareth turned its back on Jesus. He left never to return. Learn: I. To do good to those who despitefully use us and persecute us. II. To guard against evil and ignorant prejudices. III. To take heed how we reject Jesus. IV. To beseech Him to return and save us, if we have thoughtlessly or wilfully slighted Him. (*J. C. Gray.*) *Christ's return to Nazareth*:—Was it not a strange mota-

morphosis to Him—once a peasant lad; now the Light of the world! And yet here are surroundings unchanged, and natures as narrow and stupid as ever, and He, having moved away from them as the infinite is remote from the finite; He, able to heal the sick and forgive sins by a word, and they helpless and hopeless in both body and soul. As He spoke, authority seemed to voice itself in natural, faultless utterance. He had not gained this gift at the feet of any sage. Public debate could not confer it. The people were astonished. Such wisdom and such deeds are not in the carpenter's line, they said. I. THE SINNER CANNOT UNDERSTAND NOR ENDURE THE SAINT. Humanity cannot comprehend divinity. Now, no more than then, is there any room for Christ where Satan rules. II. GOD'S GREATEST BLESSINGS ARE OFTEN PREVENTED BY MAN'S DISTRUST. Unbelief forfeits infinite mercies. So does unauthorized credulity. (*De W. S. Clark.*) *Unbelief at Nazareth:*—Our Lord may have had two reasons for leaving Capernaum and for visiting Nazareth. One, a personal reason—to see His mother and His sisters, who seem to have been married there. The other, a ministerial reason—to escape from the busy throngs who resorted to Him by the lake, and to take a new centre for evangelistic labours on the part of Himself and His disciples. I. THE UNREASONABLENESS AND INEXCUSABLENESS OF UNBELIEF IN CHRIST. 1. He was well-known to them. They had hitherto always found Him true and upright; therefore they ought to have candidly considered His claims. 2. He brought with Him a great and acknowledged reputation. 3. He came to Nazareth and taught publicly, thus giving His townsmen an opportunity of judging for themselves of His wisdom and moral authority. II. THE GROUNDS OF UNBELIEF IN CHRIST. 1. Prejudice on account of His origin and circumstances. 2. His educational deficiency. He had not been trained in the rabbinical schools, so they thought nothing of Him. III. THE REBUKE OF UNBELIEF. "A prophet is not without honour," &c. There was sadness in Christ's language and tone. Yet what a reproach to the unbelieving! They might be offended; there were others who would believe, evince gratitude, and render honour. IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF. 1. Christ "marvelled." 2. The results to the people of the town were lamentable—"He could do no mighty work." 3. Benefit to others—"He went round about the villages, teaching." The indifference or contempt of the unspiritual and self-sufficient may be the occasion of enlightenment and consolation to the lowly, receptive, needy. Application: (*a*) The coming of Christ to a soul, or community, is a moral probation involving serious responsibility. (*b*) It is the most fatal guilt and folly, in considering the claims of Christ, to overlook the wisdom and grace of His character and ministry, and to regard circumstances at which the superficial and carnal may take offence. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Jesus visiting His own country:*—By going thither—I. HE GRATIFIED A HUMAN YEARNING. II. HE ILLUSTRATED AFRESH AN OLD AND FAMILIAR EXPERIENCE. 1. He was one of many, yet by Himself even in this. 2. One of the greatest of griefs to a pious spirit, to be hindered from doing good and conferring benefit. 3. A greater humiliation than His human birth, because a moral one consciously experienced. III. HE EXHIBITED DIVINE MERCY. 1. Past offences were forgiven. 2. Although conscious of restriction because of their unbelief and indifference, He still persisted in His works of mercy. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Rejection of Christ:*—I. INDIFFERENCE TO CHRIST SOMETIMES ARISES FROM FAMILIARITY WITH HIS SURROUNDINGS. Beware of that familiarity with sacred things which deadens spiritual sensibility. II. CONTEMPT FOR CHRIST SOMETIMES SPRINGS FROM ASSOCIATION WITH HIS FRIENDS. III. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST BRINGS ABOUT A WITHDRAWAL OF HIS INFLUENCE—"He could not," &c. His power was omnipotent, but it conditioned itself, as infinite power always does in this world; and by this limitation it was not lessened, but was glorified as moral and spiritual power. If faith, the ethical condition, be absent, we bind the Saviour's hands, and He cannot do for us what He would. He does not wish to leave us, but He must; old impressions become feebler, the once sensitive heart waxes dull. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *Christ at home:*—I. THE WONDERS IN EVERY-DAY LIFE. Growth of knowledge and experience; change of circumstances, &c. II. THE JEALOUSY OF HOME-GROWN GREATNESS. Tyranny of custom. Beware of egotism, shutting out from light and beauty, divinity and blessedness. III. THE MOST INVINCIBLE OBSTACLE IS THE WILL OF MAN. Against stupidity even the gods fight in vain! When the business of the kingdom seems at a standstill, ask whether the cause be not want of wish, will, prayer. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Detracting from the Divine greatness of Christ:*—I. HOW THIS IS DONE. 1. By attributing Divine effects to secondary causes. 2. Absence of faith and spiritual sympathy. 3. By being offended at the mystery of His humiliation, either in

Himself or in His followers. II. WHAT IT PRODUCES. 1. Unsatisfied indecision. 2. Hardening of heart. 3. The doubter's own loss. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Is not this the carpenter?** *Jesus Christ, the carpenter:*—I. HOW THE FACT THAT JESUS WAS A CARPENTER WAS A HINDRANCE TO THE FAITH OF HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN. 1. The objection was natural. He had grown up among them. They had become familiar with His ways. 2. Yet it was wrong and unreasonable. Their intimacy with Him ought to have opened their eyes to His unique character. 3. The objection they raise against His claims tells really in His favour. They find no fault in His character; they can only complain of His trade. High, unconscious tribute to His excellence. II. HOW THIS FACT SHOULD BE A HELP TO OUR FAITH. 1. It is a sign of Christ's humility. 2. It is a proof that He went through the experience of practical life. Christ knows good work, for He looks at it with a workman's eye. 3. He found the school for His spiritual training in His practical work. 4. This sheds a glory over the life of manual industry. 5. This should attract working-men to Christ. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *The dignity of honest labour:*—If labour was first imposed as a curse, it is turned truly into a blessing by this example of Him who thus wrought. The occupancy of a sphere of lowly industry by Christ, henceforth consecrates it as—I. A SUITABLE OCCUPATION OF TIME. 1. Profitable. 2. Healthful. 3. Saves from bad effects of indolence. 4. A source of pure and useful enjoyment. II. AN HONOURABLE MEANS OF MAINTENANCE. 1. Nothing degrading in it. 2. Deserves and commands fair remuneration. 3. Preserves a man's independence. III. A WORTHY SERVICE TO OTHERS. The products of industrial toil, especially of handicraft, are serviceable in the highest degree. Without them the comfort of large communities must be greatly impaired. He, therefore, who works with his hands the thing that is good, is a useful and honourable servant of his race. 1. In the lowliest spheres, the loftiest powers are not necessarily degraded. 2. In those spheres the holiest sentiments may be cherished, and the holiest character remain untarnished. 3. Whilst in them the humblest labourer may know that his toil is honoured, for it was shared by his Lord. (*R. Green.*) *Value of industrial employments:*—The word *carpenter* was given as an alternative translation by Wycliffe, and has descended into all the succeeding English versions; Wycliffe's primary translation was *smith*, the word that was used in the Anglo-Saxon version. It had in Anglo-Saxon a generic meaning, equivalent to *artificer*. A worker in iron was called in Anglo-Saxon *iren-smith*. A *smith* is one who *smites*; a *carpenter* is one who makes *cars*. The word *carpenter*, therefore, must be a much later coinage than the word *smith*. The original Greek term (*τέκτων*) means primarily a *producer*; the word *wright* very nearly corresponds to it, as being closely connected with *wrought* or *worked*. It just means *worker*, and occurs in Anglo-Saxon in the two forms *wryhta* and *wyrhta*. This is the only passage in which it is stated that our Lord worked at a handicraft. It is a different expression that is found in Matt. xiii. 53, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" There is no contradiction, however, between the two representations; both might be coincidently employed, and no doubt were, when the Nazarenes were freely and frettingly canvassing the merits of their wonderful townsman. Our Lord would not be trained to idleness; it was contrary to Jewish habits, and to the teaching of the best Jewish rabbis. It would have been inconsistent moreover with the principles of true civilization, and with the ideal of normal human development. It is no evidence of high civilization, either to lay an arrest on full physical development on the one hand, or on the other to encourage only those modes of muscular and nervous activity which are dissociated from useful working and manufacturing skill. Society will never be right until all classes be industrious and industrial: the higher orders must return to take part in the employments of the lower; the lower must rise up to take part in the enjoyments of the higher. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *The village carpenter in our Lord's time* held the position of the modern village blacksmith. Almost all agricultural instruments—ploughs, harrows, yokes, &c.—were made of wood. His workshop was the centre of the village life. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Jesus came from amongst the labouring classes:*—That Jesus did in fact spring from the labouring class of the population, is confirmed by the language of His discourses and parables, which everywhere refer to the antecedents and relations of the ordinary workman's life, and betray a knowledge of it which no one could have gained merely by observation. He was at home in those poor, windowless, Syrian hovels in which the housewife had to light a candle in the day-time to seek for her lost piece of silver. He was acquainted with the secrets of the bakehouse, of the

gardener, and the builder, and with things which the upper classes never see—as "the good measure pressed down and shaken together running over" of the corn chandler; the rotten, leaking wine-skin of the wine-dealer; the patchwork of the peasant woman; the brutal manners of the upper servants to the lower,—these and a hundred other features of a similar kind are interwoven by Him into His parables. Reminiscences even of His more special handicraft have been found, it is believed, in His sayings. The parable of the splinter and the beam is said to recall the carpenter's shop, the uneven foundations of the houses, the building yard, the cubit which is added, the workshop, and the distinction in the appearance of the green and dry wood, the drying-shed. (*Hausrath.*) *Self-respect vital to religion:*—They could not believe in any Divine inspiration reaching such as themselves, and therefore resented it in Christ as an unjustifiable pretension of superiority. They had no proper faith in themselves, so had no proper faith in God. Self-respect is vital to religion. They believed in a God in a kind of way, but not in a God who touched their neighbourhood or entered into close dealings with Nazarenes. They were not on the outlook for the beautiful and the divine in the lives of men. No Nazarene Wordsworth had shown them the glory of common life, the beauty and divinity that exist wherever human life will welcome it. (*R. Glover.*) *The model artisan:*—These words reveal to us—I. CHRIST'S SOCIAL POSITION. 1. That he sympathised with the humblest sons of men. 2. That social rank is no criterion of personal worth. 3. That moral and spiritual excellence should be honoured in whomsoever found. II. CHRIST'S MANUAL LABOUR. 1. That honourable industry and holy living may co-exist. 2. That mental development and physical toil may be associated. CONCLUSION: Observe—(*a*) That labour is essential, not only to existence, but to happiness. (*b*) That the greater our industry the fewer our temptations. (*c*) That Christ waits to sanctify the duties of life to our spiritual interest. (*A. G. Churchill.*) *The Divine Carpenter:*—The Divine Carpenter applies the language of His earthly trade to the spiritual things He has created. 1. He has built a Church. 2. He has founded the resurrection—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 3. He has established His divinity—"The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." 4. He has prepared our eternal home—"In My Father's house," &c. 5. He has urged earnest heed to our building. (*C. M. Jones.*) *Jesus in the workshop:*—I. WE SEE HIM HERE BEARING THE CURSE OF THE FALL—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," &c. II. WE SEE HIM HERE BRINGING HIMSELF NEAR TO ALL MEN. III. HE ENTERS THE WORKSHOP THAT HE MAY UNITE MEN AS BRETHREN. IV. HE ENTERS THE WORKSHOP THAT HE MAY SANCTIFY ALL SECULAR LIFE. (*J. Johnston.*) *Work the law of life:*—From that tiny fly thus at work all day over your head, to the huge hippopotamus of the Nile, that seems to spend its life-time half asleep, all have to work. But emphatically is this true of man. The wild Indian huntsman, as he plunges over the prairie armed with tomahawk or rifle, in pursuit of the thundering buffalo; the Bosjesman, in the impenetrable thickets of Africa, as he digs with hardened, horny fingers for the roots on which he lives; the amphibious South Sea Islander, as he wages perilous warfare with the monsters of the ocean; the fur-clad Esquimaux, as he tracks the bear or seal of the icy north; as well as the semi-civilized myriads of Asia, or the more advanced peoples of Europe—all find this world is a workshop, and they must toil to live. And the exceptions to this rule are fewer than at first sight we are apt to suppose. It is not only the artisan who has to work, but also the merchant amongst his wares, the author amongst his books, the statesman with the affairs of the nation, and the sovereign upon his throne. Whether impelled by the necessities of mere existence, or by the necessities of position and spirit, it may be said of all—"Men must work." Our Lord, therefore, came near unto us when He entered the workshop. But as the great majority must gain their daily bread by manual labour, He entered even into that condition as the village carpenter of Nazareth. Had He been born in a palace and to a throne, or even into the estate of a wealthy merchant, He would have been separated, not in His feeling, but in theirs, by a great gulf from the great majority of men. (*Ibid.*) *Manual work redeemed:*—See how our whole life is redeemed, so that it may all be lived unto God and for eternity, and none of it be lost. He entered the kingdom of toil and subdued it to Himself for our salvation, so that toil is no more a curse to the Christian workman. The builder, as he lays brick on brick, may be building a heavenly temple; the carpenter, as he planes the wood, may thereby be refining his own character and that of others around him; the merchant, as he buys and sells, may

be buying the pearl of great price; the statesman may be directing the affairs of an eternal kingdom; the householder may be setting her house in order for the coming of her Lord. As the blood of the sacrifice was put not only upon the ear, but upon the toe, of Aaron and his sons, so our Lord when, by entering it, He sanctified human life, sanctified its meanest and most secular things, spending His holy and Divine life mostly in the workshop. Brethren, whatever our station, we may live a holy, god-like, useful life. (*Ibid.*) *The royal shipwright*:—A strange workman took his place one day amongst the shipwrights in a building yard in Amsterdam. Fit only for the rudest work, he was content at first to occupy himself with the caulking mallet, hewing of wood, or the twisting of ropes, yet displayed the keenest desire to understand and master every part of the handicraft. But what was the astonishment of his fellow-workmen to see persons of the highest rank come to pay their respects to him, approaching him with every mark of regard, amid the dust and confusion of the workshop, or clambering up the rigging to have an audience with him on the maintop. For he was no less a personage than Peter the Great, founder of the Russian Empire. He came afterwards to England, and lodged amongst the workshops in Deptford. Bishop Burnet, when he visited him, said he had gone to see a mighty prince, but found a common shipwright. But the king who had invited him to visit this country understood him better. He was the ruler of an empire vaster in extent than any other in Europe, but as far behind the poorest financially as it was before it territorially. It was, in fact, in a state of absolute barbarism. Its largest ship was a fishing-boat, and it was as yet destitute of almost all, even the rudest arts of civilization. The Czar, determined to elevate his people, ordered the youth of the nobility to travel in lands distinguished by wealth and power, and become qualified to take part in the regeneration of their own country, he himself showing them the example. It was thus that wonderful spectacle was seen by the astonished workmen, ambassadors waiting in state on a man in the dress and at the work of a common shipwright. (*Ibid.*) *Useful reflections on Christ's working as a carpenter*:—I. To ILLUSTRATE THIS OBSERVABLE CIRCUMSTANCE OF OUR LORD'S LIFE. It was a maxim among the Jews, that every man should bring up his son to some mechanic trade. II. To SUGGEST SOME USEFUL REMARKS FROM THIS OBSERVABLE CIRCUMSTANCE OF OUR LORD'S LIFE. 1. A person's original, his business and circumstances in life, often occasion prejudices against him: against his most wise, useful, and instructive observations. 2. Such prejudices are very absurd, unreasonable, and mischievous. 3. The condescension of the Son of God in submitting to such humiliation, demands our admiration and praise. 4. The conduct of our Lord reflects an honour upon trade, and upon those who are employed in useful arts. 5. This circumstance in Christ's life furnisheth all, especially young persons, with an example of diligence and activity. 6. Persons may serve God and follow their trades at the same time. (*J. Orton.*) *Jesus an offence*:—The word rendered *offended* is *scandalized* in the original. It is a very graphic word, but incapable of adequate translation. It presents to view a complex picture. Christ was to His kinsmen and townsmen like a *scandal*, or catch-stick, in a trap. They did not see what He was. They hence heedlessly ran up against Him and struck on Him, to their own utter ensnarement; they were spiritually caught; they became fixed in a position in which it was most undesirable to be fixed; they were spiritually hurt, and in great danger of being spiritually destroyed. Such are the chief elements of the picture. The actual outcome of the whole complex representation may be given thus: They spiritually stumbled on Jesus. To their loss they did not accept Him for what He really was. They rejected Him as the Lord High Commissioner of heaven. They came into collision with Him, and were ensnared, by suspecting that His indisputable superiority to ordinary men in word and work was owing to some other kind of influence than what was right and from above. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Offended at the carpenter's son*:—People in high station or of high birth are very often displeased if one of humbler position excels them in anything. The nobles of Scotland did not work hand in hand with Wallace, because he had not such good blood as they gloried in. *Jealousy of greatness in neighbours*:—Our Lord specifies three concentric circles of persons to whom every prophet is nearly related. There is (1) the circle of his little fatherland, or district of country, or township; (2) the circle of his relatives or "kin;" (3) the circle of his nearest relatives, the family to which he belongs. In each of these circles there is in general but little readiness to recognize native or nascent superiority. The principles of self-satisfaction, self-confidence, self-complacency, come in to lay a presumptive interdict upon any adjoining self rising up in eminence

above the my-self. The temporary advantage of age, and thus of more protracted experience, asserts to itself for a season a sort of counter-superiority; and the mere fact of proximity makes it easy to open the door for the influence of envy, an ignoble vice that takes effect chiefly in reference to those on whom one can actually look (*invidia, in-vides*). In the long run, indeed, real superiority, if time be granted it, will vindicate for itself its own proper place in the midst of all its concentric circles. But, in general, this will be only after victories achieved abroad have made it impossible for the people at home to remain in doubt. (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **And He could there do no mighty work.**—*The unbelief of the Nazarenes:*—Our plan will be to give you in the first place CERTAIN REASONS WHY, WHERE THE UNBELIEF WAS STRONGEST, THE MIRACLES WERE FEW; and then in the second place, to examine THE PARTICULAR TERMS IN WHICH ST. MARK SPEAKS OF OUR LORD'S CONDUCT AT NAZARETH. Now the first thing to be observed is, that, though our Lord wrought not many miracles among His countrymen, He wrought some: so that they were not wholly without the means of conviction. Undoubtedly it is altogether a mistake to imagine that miracles give evidence in proportion as they are multiplied; it would not be difficult to prove, that the reverse of this is nearer the matter of fact. But if more and greater miracles would have made them believers, why did He not work more and greater? Do you not know that God deals with men as with rational creatures; and that if He were to make proof irresistible, men would virtually cease to be accountable. It is God's course to do what is sufficient to assist you, but not what will compel you to be saved. But we do not see any reason to suppose that it was exclusively in judgment, and in order to punish the obstinacy of His countrymen, that our Lord refrained from working miracles in Nazareth. Christ, in virtue of His omniscience, saw that He should be rejected, even if He wrought many wonders. He would determine, in virtue of His benevolence, to work only few. You cannot but see that individuals are often favoured for a time with spiritual advantages, and then placed in circumstances where those advantages are wanting. But we shall let you more thoroughly into an understanding of the conduct of our Lord, if we now examine, in the second place, more particularly, the TERMS IN WHICH THAT CONDUCT IS DESCRIBED IN OUR TEXT. You observe that St. Mark represents it as not having been altogether optional with Christ, whether or no He would work many mighty miracles in Nazareth; he rather speaks of actual inability: "He could there do no mighty works." "He was unable," is the original, "to do there any mighty work." In what sense, then, are we to suppose that He was unable? We are sure He was not unable in the sense of deficiency, so that the inability must be interpreted as meaning, not that our Lord was actually unable, but unable consistently with certain fixed principles, with what was due to His own character and mission. You may find, indeed, some few exceptions to this rule in the narratives of the evangelists; but ordinarily you will perceive that our Lord inquired into the faith of the party before He made that party the subject of a miracle; as though, unless two things concurred—power on one side, and belief on the other—there was to be no supernatural working. But still, when we have shown that our Lord's rule throws no suspicion on His miracles, it will naturally be inquired why such a rule was prescribed and enforced. Say what we will, the miracle would have been more striking if wrought on an unbeliever; and it seems strange to ask that faith as a preliminary, which you are accustomed to look for as a consequence. On this we have to observe, that a miracle, though it required faith in its actual subject, did not require faith in the bystanders, and might, therefore, be instrumental in subduing their unbelief. But, if what Christ did for a diseased body were emblematic of what He would do for a diseased soul, how natural, how necessary, that He should require faith in those who sought to be healed. Otherwise, as you may all have remarked, it might have been thought that Christ would heal unconditionally as a spiritual physician. If faith be surprising from what its possession can effect, it is yet more surprising from what its non-possession can effect. And shall we doubt, men and brethren, that there is much the same baneful energy in our own unbelief, as in that of the Nazarenes? "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." So that even as the want of faith in the men of Nazareth prevented Christ from showing Himself as a worker of miracles, so may want of faith in ourselves, prevent Him from showing Himself as the Healer of souls. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The power of unbelief:*—What an idea it gives us of the wonder-working power of Jesus—that to "lay His hands on a few sick folk, and heal them," was

not accounted as any very "mighty" thing. And how irrepressible must be that grace which, even where it was restrained, must go forth, and go forth savingly, to some. Happy some! who in the midst of that wilderness of faithlessness, retained their faith, and carried off faith's reward. A type of that little, blessed band in every age whom the Lord chooses, and the Lord heals—as if to show in them what all life had been, if only all life had had faith. Great and many are the things which God has done for every one of us, they are but as nothing in comparison with what He might have done, and would have done, if only we had let Him. Now remember that the place was Nazareth—the most privileged spot of the whole earth; for there, of thirty-three years, Jesus spent nearly thirty. There, His holy boyhood, and the piety of His early manhood, had shed their lustre. And now, mark this, brethren—true to nature, true to the experience of the Church—true to the convictions of every heart—in the minds of the men of Nazareth there was an unholy familiarity with holy things—with the name, and the person, and the work, and the truth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the minds of the men of Nazareth, there was the usual consequence of that kind of familiarity—they looked at the external, till they were absorbed in the external. They had no faith—the material view destroyed the spiritual. They grovelled in the confidence of an outside knowledge till they became steeped in unbelief. Am I wrong in my fear that the more light, the less love; and that faith has retired as knowledge has advanced? There are two great truths which we must always lay down as fundamental principles. One is, that the love and beneficence of God are always welling and waiting, like some gushing fountain, to pour themselves out to all His creatures. And the other, that there must be a certain state of mind to contain it—a preparation of the heart to receive the gift—both, indeed, of grace, but the one the moral condition of the soul previous and absolutely necessary to the other. Before you can have the gift, you must believe the Giver. Continually God is communicating the power to believe, in order that afterwards He may fill the vessel of your belief with every possible good. But then, all depends on the way in which you welcome and cherish that first imparting of the grace of the Spirit. Without it, not another drop will flow. You go to your knees in prayer, and, within the range of the promises, there is no limit to the answers which God has covenanted to that prayer. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Unbelief preventing the mighty works of Christ*:—I. THE MIGHTY WORKS WROUGHT BY CHRIST. II. THE REASON WHY THESE MIGHTY WORKS HAVE NOT BEEN WROUGHT ON A LARGER SCALE. 1. Is it because God is unwilling to save sinners? His nature, &c., forbid such an idea. 2. Is it that God is unable to save? 3. Is it that the benefits of the atonement are limited to a few? 4. Is it that there is some defect in the Gospel? Man is the cause—unbelief. Conclusion: 1. Unbelief is absurd and unreasonable. God has ever kept His word. 2. Unbelief is absolutely criminal. Implies forgetfulness of past favours, &c. 3. Unbelief is ruinous. It prevents man's salvation, &c. 4. The great importance of faith. (*A. Weston.*) *Unbelief a wonder*:—I. IT IS IRRATIONAL. 1. Unlimited and perfect knowledge belong to God alone. 2. Absolute uncertainty and doubt can be attributed to no intelligence whatever. Faith is a necessary condition in the spiritual life and prayers of all finite intelligences. II. IT IS INCONSISTENT. 1. We are constantly exercising faith in inferior matters. 2. The evidence of the gospel is of the highest and most satisfactory kind. III. IT IS CRIMINAL. 1. If it is the result of non-examination of evidence, there is sin of neglect. 2. If he has examined, and still does not believe, there must be mental inaptitude or moral resistance. (*Anon.*) *Christ's wonder*:—The unbelief of the Nazarenes was a wonder to our Lord. The wonder was "real," says Cardinal Cajetan, being "caused" by the Saviour's "experimental inacquaintance" with such an unreasonable state of mind. It was "real" on another account. Unbelief in such circumstances as those of the Nazarenes was actually a most remarkable thing. It had a cause indeed; it had occasions; but it had no reason for its existence. Far less had it a sufficient reason; it was, that is to say, utterly unreasonable. It should not have been; it was an utter anomaly. So is all sin (*see* Jer. ii. 12). It is an exceedingly strange phenomenon in the universe of God, and may well be wondered at. If wonder indeed were always the daughter of ignorance, one might wonder at Christ's wonder. Schleusner and Kuinöl wondered, and rendered the word, not *wondered*, but *was angry*. Fritzsche, too, wondered, and while too precise a scholar to admit that the word could mean *was angry*, he proposed that we should correct the text and read it thus, *and, because of their unbelief, they wondered* (viz., *at Jesus*). But one may most reasonably wonder at such feats and freaks of exegesis. There is nothing

really wonderful in Christ's wonder. While it is the case that there is a vulgar wonder, which is the daughter of ignorance and dies when knowledge is attained, it is also the case that there is another wonder, of noble origin, the daughter of knowledge. This wonder dwells in the loftiest minds, and is immortal. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *The astonishment of Christ*:—What men marvel at indicates their character. It shows what manner of spirit they are of, on what level they are moving, how high they have risen, or how low they have sunk on the scale of being. And I do not know that we ever feel the immense interval between ourselves and the Son of Man more keenly than when we compare that which astonishes us with that which astonished Him. To us, as a rule, the word *miracles* denotes more physical wonders; and these are so wonderful to us as to be well-nigh incredible. But in Him they awake no astonishment. He never speaks of them with the faintest accent of surprise. He set so little store by them that He often seemed reluctant to work them, and openly expressed His wish that those on or for whom they had been wrought would tell no man of them. . . . What does astonish Him is not these outward wonders so surprising to us, but that inward wonder, the mystery of man's soul, the miraculous power which we often exercise without a thought of surprise, the power of shutting and opening that door or window of the soul which looks heavenward, and through which alone the glories of the spiritual world can stream in upon us. Only twice are we told that He marvelled to whom all the secrets of Nature and Life lay open—once at the unbelief of men, and once at their faith (Matt. viii. 10; Luke vii. 9). (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The possibility of unbelief*:—God's plan of impressing spiritual truths is not by demonstration. Christianity has no irresistible proof. If it had, there would be neither unbelievers nor Christians, for in such a case there would be no such thing as faith, but only knowledge, and a Christian is a man who has knowledge but who also lives by faith. Religion would be pursued and practised as mathematics are, or as science is when mathematics are applied to it. But observe under what system we should then be placed. Man would not be capable of moral freedom in conducting his life and forming his character. He would think of God and of his soul and its interests in the way in which a man builds up the propositions of geometry; his convictions would be the theorems, and his actions the problems which were fastened to one another by iron links. Man would be a creature of mind, but where would there be room for his heart and its loving surrender to God, for his will and its resolve to listen to the Divine voice and obey it? These can only exist where man has power to give himself away, *i.e.*, where he has moral freedom. And if we take away freedom and love and will in man's relation to God, there would be no meaning in them as between man and man. If we destroy the source there can be no streams, and sympathy and love and gratitude, the feelings which unite men in families and friendships, cease to exist; these have their life, not in necessary chains of reasoning, but in the free exchange of the soul. In such a world God might be a supreme architect and mechanician, building up a universe by fixed physical laws; He might even be an author of scientific thought leading forth intellects into higher and wider investigations in the track of His own creations; but He could not be a Father and Friend, drawing to Him the love of children for the glimpses they have of the supreme beauty of His purity, and the pulsations that come throbbing from the love of His heart. The universe might be a temple, but where would be the worshippers with songs of love and joy and self-devotion? . . . God could not make spiritual truths subject to the laws of mental demonstration, without making them no more spiritual—without depriving man of his freedom, and leaving him no room for his heart and conscience and spirit. If there are to be ties of sympathy between man and God, and an immortality which has in its bosom an eternal life, man must be dealt with as capable, not only of knowledge, but of the choice of love. God has made man capable of faith, but therefore also of unbelief; the kind of proof He gives him may persuade, but will not constrain. God does not force His own existence upon men. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *The character of unbelief*:—We begin, then—I. With SPECULATIVE UNBELIEF; that unbelief which shapes itself into a creed, denying either the being of a God or the inspiration of the Bible. And we say it is a marvel, whether regarded as a matter of taste or of judgment, as a matter of taste, or preference, or choice. We are astonished that any man should be willing to disbelieve these great facts. Take atheism. Even if there be no God, still we should suppose that any intelligent being would wish there were one. The simple idea of living in a world, sustained and managed by no almighty and benevolent intelligence, and which the

next hour some tremendous brute and blind force might shatter and send back to the old primordial chaos, this very thought is so dreadful that our very instincts recoil from it. Even if atheism were a logical belief, we should expect every man to argue against it—that men of philosophy and science would go abroad through creation, climbing every mountain, traversing every desert, sounding every ocean, descending into all the spectral caverns of geology, ascending all the sublime heights of astronomy, questioning all phenomena, or forces, or forms of nature, in the intensest agony of a desire to find evidences for a God, crying in the words and accents of a child searching for an absent father, "O tell me, tell me! have you not seen Him? have you not heard Him? In all these broad realms is there no print of His footsteps? no trace of His handiwork? Am I, indeed, a poor, wretched, forlorn orphan? O tell me, tell me! is there not a God?" Now, I repeat it, all this is simply marvellous. It is marvellous that a man should choose rather to be a creature of chance than child of Jehovah; and more marvellous that he should take testimony rather of pulsating spawn than of soaring seraphim, and choose rather to follow a reptile's trail in the mire to God's awful grave, than mount exultingly in the glorious track of an archangel to God's everlasting throne. II. That PRACTICAL UNBELIEF which consists in a personal rejection of the gospel of Christ, as manifest in the man who, believing in God, and accepting the Bible as His inspired Word, yet goes on, from day to day, putting his eternity away from him as carelessly—yea, as resolutely as if he stood boldly forth with the infidel, professing to believe that God is but a phantom, and the Bible a lie. We say the attitude of this man is even more wonderful than the other. We are less astonished at an intellectual mistake than at a great practical blunder. We are not so profoundly shocked when a blind man walks off a precipice as when a man does the thing when possessed of all his senses, and with his eyes wide open. To believe that in this world of probation we are positively working out our own salvation, absolutely settling the question whether we are to be saved or whether we are to be lost; that there is a heaven of inconceivable and everlasting happiness and glory, and yet turn madly away when its gates are lifted up to our immortal footsteps—is to make exhibition of a folly immeasurable, and all the angels of heaven must stand astonished at the spectacle, and the omniscient Son of God "marvels at our unbelief." (*C. Wadsworth, D.D.*) *Jesus wondering at man's unbelief*:—I. WHO marvelled? The Son of God. He did not marvel amiss. II. AT WHOM did He marvel? At the men of Galilee. He had been brought up among them. III. AT WHAT did He marvel? Why, at their unbelief. 1. Because it was so unreasonable. He had done everything to prevent it. 2. It was so unkind. He had yearned over them. 3. It was so sinful. 4. It was so unprofitable. 5. It was so dangerous. 6. It was so wilful. 1. Sinner, Jesus marvels at your unbelief. 2. Anxious soul, Jesus marvels at your unbelief. 3. Backslider, Jesus marvels at your unbelief. 4. Believer, Jesus marvels at your unbelief. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The sad wonder*:—I. TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. The wonderful forms of unbelief that are found among the professed people of God. (*a*) At times they doubt the wisdom of providence. (*b*) Mistrust of the Divine faithfulness. (*c*) The efficacy of prayer is doubted. (*d*) The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (*e*) The efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. 2. Why they are so wonderful. (*a*) Because of believers' relationship to the Father and the Lord Jesus. (*b*) Because faith is backed up by such wonderful historical facts. (*c*) The personal experience of the present. (*d*) It is wonderful when we consider our own beliefs. II. TO THE UNCONVERTED. 1. You have no saving trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. 2. Some are afraid theirs is an exceptional case. 3. Such unbelief is marvellous because—(*a*) The cause is inexcusable. (*b*) With some of you it is little more than a mere whim. (*c*) It causes you so much grief. (*d*) It has existed so long. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Marvellous unbelief*:—Unbelief, as regards Jesus Christ, is surprising because of—I. MAN'S PRONENESS TO EXERCISE FAITH. II. THE NUMBER AND POWER OF THE EVIDENCES WHICH ENCOURAGE FAITH IN HIM. The people whose unbelief amazed Jesus had many and weighty reasons for faith. 1. His holy life. 2. His wise teaching (ver. 2; Luke iv. 22). 3. His mighty works (ver. 2). 4. The agreement of these things with the Messianic predictions (Luke iv. 18–21). III. THE DREAD CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH UNBELIEF. By unbelief man—1. Foregoes the most precious blessings. 2. Incurs the most terrible condemnation (John iii. 16–19, viii. 24). (*W. Jones.*) *Unbelief*:—I. UNBELIEF RESTRAINS CHRIST. His beneficence was restrained by the lack of faith. While Jesus never defined faith, He did not demand great faith before He blessed men, but responded to the weakest. But the

absence of faith restrained Him. The reason of this. Sceptics sometimes object that Christ's miracles were a matter of faith. . . . There was no real cure. . . . They use the word faith as if synonymous with imagination, excitement, &c. But a lame man cannot possibly imagine himself able to walk, &c. It is not the faith of a frenzied, heated imagination, but the faith that gave up to Christ to do as He pleased, &c. This was essential. Is often illustrated in common life. You cannot know the skill of your physician until you trust him. You cannot know the full benefit of friendship until you trust your friend. A regiment cannot prove the military skill and courage of their captain until they trust him. II. Unbelief ASTONISHES Christ. He has shown His power in manifold ways. He has promised His grace and strength, and He is astonished that we still refuse to trust Him. The argument for trusting Christ gathers strength every day. The reproach of unbelief gathers strength every day. (*Colmer B. Symes, B.A.*) *Unbelief*:—I. THE EVIL OF UNBELIEF. 1. Unbelief undervalues all the perfections of Deity. 2. Unbelief insults all the persons of the Godhead. 3. Unbelief renders the all-important work of salvation impossible. II. THE CAUSES OF UNBELIEF. 1. There is the natural depravity of the heart (Heb. iii. 12). 2. There is ignorance, or blindness, of mind. 3. There is love of sin. 4. There is satanic influence (2 Cor. iv. 14). 5. There is the pride of human nature. III. THE EFFECTS OF UNBELIEF. 1. It keeps us in a state of condemnation before God. 2. It renders useless all the provisions of the gospel. 3. It is a sin for which there can be no remedy. 4. It is a sin peculiar to those favoured with the light of the gospel. 5. A sin which, if not abandoned, must consign to eternal remediless perdition. 1. Your responsibility. God calls upon you to believe. 2. However feeble faith is, if exercised, it shall be increased. 3. Let it be exercised now. "The word is nigh thee," &c. (Rom. x. 8–17). (*J. Burns, LL.D.*) *The sin of unbelief*:—There are three general forms of unbelief. 1. That of scepticism, either doubting or rejecting the truths of religion and morals in general, or the Divine origin and authority of the Bible in particular. 2. Want of faith and confidence in God, in His promises and providence, which may and often does co-exist with a speculative belief of the Scriptures. 3. The rejection or failure to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed and offered in the Bible. These several forms of unbelief, although they have their common source in an evil heart, have, nevertheless, their specific causes and their peculiar form of guilt. I. SCEPTICISM. This arises—1. From pride of intellect; assuming to know what is beyond our reach, and refusing to receive what we cannot understand; setting ourselves up as capable of discerning and proving all truth. 2. From the neglect of our moral nature and giving up ourselves to the guidance of the speculative reason. 3. From the enmity of the heart to the things of God; or opposition in our tastes, feelings, desires, and purposes, to the truths and requirements of the things of religion. 4. From frivolous vanity, or the desire to be thought independent, or upon a par with the illuminate. The sinfulness of this form of unbelief is manifest. (1) As pride, self-exaltation is sinful and offensive in such a feeble insignificant creature as man. (2) As the habitude of the moral nature which makes it possible to believe a lie, is evidence of moral degradation. (3) As opposition to the truth is opposition to the God of truth, it is alienation from Him, in which all sin consists. Hence unbelief is the generic form of sin. It is the general expression of aberration, and the opposition of our nature to His. It is, therefore, the source of all other sins. II. UNBELIEF, OR WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE DOCTRINES, THE PROMISES, AND PROVIDENCES OF GOD. This may exist in even the hearts of believers. It is a matter of degree. It arises either—1. From the entire absence, or from the low state, of religious life. 2. Or from the habit of looking at ourselves, and on difficulties about us rather than at God. 3. Or from refusing to believe what we do not see. If God does not manifest His care, does not at once fulfil His promise, then our faith fails. The sinfulness of this state of mind is apparent. 1. Because it evinces a low state of Divine life. 2. Because it dishonours God, refusing to Him the confidence due to an earthly friend and parent, which is a very heinous offence, considering His greatness and goodness, and the evidences which He has given of His fidelity and trustworthiness. 3. Because it is a manifestation of the same spirit which dominates in the open infidel. It is unbelief in a form which it assumes in a mind in which it has not absolute control. But it is in all its manifestations hateful to God. III. UNBELIEF IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST. This is a refusing to recognize and receive Him as being what He claims to be. 1. As God manifest in the flesh. 2. As the messenger and teacher sent from God. 3. As our atoning sacrifice and priest. 4. As having rightfully absolute

proprietorship in us and authority over us. This is the greatest of sins. It is the condemning sin. Its heinousness consists—1. In its opposition to the clearest light. He who cannot see the sun must be stone blind. 2. It is the rejection of the clearest external evidence which evinces the opposition of the heart. 3. It is the rejection of infinite love, and the disregard of the greatest obligation. 4. It is the deliberate preference of the kingdom of Satan before that of Christ—of Belial to Christ. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

Vers. 7–13.—**And He called unto Him the Twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two.**—*The first mission of the twelve*:—Christ sends them forth. I. ORDERLY. 1. As to the persons evangelized. To the Jew first. To have disregarded that, would have excited most bitterly the jealousy of His countrymen, as well as committed the apostles to a work for which they were by no means prepared, because their national antipathies were not yet eradicated. 2. As to the persons engaged in the work of evangelization. Two and two: companionship—a most desirable arrangement. How important then was this pairing off, enabling them to hold sweet converse together, and strengthen and correct one another when necessary. II. THE MISSION WAS IN A SENSE SELF-SUPPORTING. They were to go forth in simple dependence upon their Master, and He would put it into men's hearts to supply their wants. The work on which they were now sent demanded the total surrender of all their energy and will for Christ's cause. III. IT WAS FRAUGHT WITH SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. Those to whom they addressed the gospel message would reject it at their own peril; and the guilt of impenitence would be proportioned to the force with which the truth was revealed. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The mission of the Twelve*:—I. CONSIDER BY WHAT THIS MISSION WAS PRECEDED. 1. By a return to Nazareth where His life was once threatened. (*a*) This shows Christ's readiness to forgive and to do good to His enemies. 2. By graciously seeking to win back His fellow townsmen. 3. By another scornful rejection of Himself and His message. II. THE OCCASION AND PURPOSE of this mission. 1. The occasion (*see* Matt. ix. 36–38). 2. The purpose. (*a*) To preach. (*b*) To heal the sick. (*c*) To cleanse the lepers. (*d*) To raise the dead. III. THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY WERE TO GO FORTH. 1. They must go forth without taking anything for their journey. 2. If rejected in one city, they must proceed to the next. "They might flee from danger, but not from duty" (Matt. Henry). 3. They must refrain from all resentments and retaliations. 4. The full assurance of their Lord's assistance in every trouble. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Apostolic labours and their reception*:—I. Christ's ministers receive from Him power for their appointed work. II. When called to high service, they need not care for common wants. III. The rejection of the greatest good leads to the greatest ill. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *Preparations for preaching*:—Mark significantly says, "Then Jesus *began* to send them forth:" for ever since that day He has been giving similar work, and qualifying similar representatives. I. To go forth from the presence of Jesus. II. To be willing to work together. III. To be content with the use of moral influence. Men are to be urged, not forced. IV. To exercise self-denial and cheerful trust in God. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *The apostolic commission*:—The grandest commission ever entrusted to man. Consider—I. ITS IMPOSED CONDITIONS. 1. In company: "by two and two." Thus for mutual encouragement and help. For the heart of the strongest may fail in presence of danger, difficulty, death. 2. In poverty. Thus was it shown that their power and influence with men was not of earth. 3. In danger. Those whom they went to bless would turn against and persecute them. 3. Yet in safety. God watching over and protecting them. And even if the body is slain, the soul will be safe, and the confessor of Christ will be owned by Him before the Father. II. ITS TRUST; or, the terms of the commission. How grand, how honourable, how precious to the world—the world of ignorant, suffering, sinful men! The great mission has for its object the removal of the evils of human life. Its foulness, its suffering, its error, its subjugation to evil, are all to be combated. III. ITS LIMITATION. Only to the Jews, at present. The children must first be filled. IV. Its success. (*R. Green.*) *Missionaries*:—I. Missionaries must not be, as a rule, solitary men. For counsel, defence, cheerfulness, "two are better than one." II. Missionaries must be, as a rule, frugal men. No luxuries; bare necessaries. Like the soldier on the march, or the exploring traveller. III. Missionaries must not be, as a rule, sedentary men. Sound the trumpet-blast, and then on again. IV. Missionaries must, as a rule, act directly upon the conscience of men. The missionary's work is to break up the

fallow ground. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Companionship*:—The solitary soul on a new enterprise is apt to lose heart, and not half perform his part. With no counsellor, sympathizer, helper, he goes uncertainly. Jesus would give His ambassadors all advantage of fraternal support, that in this "apprenticeship," as one terms it, they might not falter. The confirming word, too, is of might when the message is novel. The apostles afterward went thus in pairs. St. Paul's strongest expression of regret was that, on any part of his journey, he must be left alone. Livingstone, in the depths of the African continent, longed for the society and cheer of her who laid down her life on the way thither; and, as the end drew near, he leaned harder on the Lord, for no hand but God's could smooth the troubled brow on which the death-damps gathered, as the noble man, kneeling at his bedside in prayer, bade farewell to earth. (*De W. S. Clark.*) *Incumbrances to be abandoned*:—Armies most amply furnished with stores and comforts are most inefficient. The Zulu hordes, with but spear and shield, held long at bay the well-provisioned and disciplined troops of England. Baggage is well termed "impedimenta." It checks, by just so much, the quickness, and fosters, by hardness. The soul heavily freighted with the luxuries and appliances of this life is at a disadvantage for the sudden movements and missions on which the great Captain would send it. (*Ibid.*) "*No money:*"—Literally, no copper, for that is the metal that is got from the bowels of the earth. Brass is an artificial alloy, having in it a mixture of tin with the copper, and was unknown, as is supposed, to the Hebrews. The word is not used by the evangelist to denote any particular copper coin, but simply, though representatively, copper money in general. The underlying idea is money in general. Not even coppers would be needed, not to speak of silver and gold. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Mutual help*:—Why did Jesus send the apostles forth "by two and two?" The answer is, in order that they might be helpmeets for each other. A father was walking one day in the fields with his two children. The wind was blowing over a fine field of ripe corn, and making the beautiful golden ears wave like the waves of the sea. "Is it not surprising," said one of the children, "that the wind does not break the slender stalks of the corn?" "My child," said the father, "see how flexible the stalks are! They bend before the wind and rise again when the wind has passed over them. See, too, how they help to support each other. A single stalk would be soon bent to the ground, but so many growing close together help to keep each other up. If we keep together when the troubles of life come upon us like a stormy wind, we shall keep each other up, when one trying to stand alone would fall."

Vers. 14–29. **And king Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead.**—*The sovereign power of conscience*:—I. Now we are to begin with simply considering Herod as ACTED ON BY CONSCIENCE: for it is evident that nothing but the workings of a mind ill at ease would have led him to conjecture that Jesus was the Baptist. Conscience was continually plying Herod with the truth, that a record had been made of his crime by a Being who would not suffer it to pass unavenged, but who, sooner or later, would let loose His judgments. In the midst of his revelry, in the midst of his pomp, there was a boding form flitting to and fro, and no menace could compel it to depart, and no enchantment wile it from the scene. It came in the silence of the midnight, and it came in the bustle of the noon; it mingled with the crowd in the city, and it penetrated the solitude of the chamber. And thus was Herod a witness to himself that this world is under the rule of a supreme moral Governor. And there is this peculiarity in the evidence of conscience, that it is independent of observation, it is independent on deduction: it asks no investigation, it appeals to no logic. A man may take great pains to stifle conscience, so that its voice may be drowned in the storm and in the mutiny of his passions; but this is after its testimony has been given. He could do nothing to prevent the testimony being given. He must receive the testimony, for it is given at once in the chambers of his soul, unlike every other which has to knock at the door, and to which if he will the man may refuse audience. Herod might have met argument, proof by proof, had it depended upon the result of a controversy whether he was to admit the existence of a Being who takes cognizance of actions, and that too for the very purpose of awarding them their just retribution; but he could do nothing with reference to conscience. Conscience left no place for subtleties: conscience allowed no room for evasions. Conscience was judgment already begun; and what had the most ingenious debater to say against that?

And if there be one of you in this crowded gathering, who is pursued by the remembrance of his sin, and cannot free himself from dread of its punishment, he is precisely such a witness as was Herod to the retributive government beneath which the world lies. He may be a deist; it matters not; he wants no external revelation to certify him that there is a God who will take vengeance: the revelation is within him, and he cannot disguise it if he would. He may be an atheist—or rather let me say he may call himself an atheist; he may tell me that he sees no foot-prints of the Deity in the magnificent spreadings of creation, he may tell me that he hears no voice of the Deity, either in the melodies or the tempests of nature: it matters not; the foot-prints are in his own soul, the voice rings in his own breast. A being with a conscience is a being with sufficient witness of a God. II. To consider him AS DRIVEN IN HIS DISTRESS TO ACKNOWLEDGE A TRUTH WHICH HE HAD BANISHED FROM HIS CREED. Conscience is not to be stifled with bad logic. III. There is yet one more point of view, under which we propose to regard Herod; HE HAD WHAT MIGHT HAVE PASSED AS A SPECIOUS APOLOGY FOR HIS CONDUCT, BUT NEVERTHELESS HE WAS UNABLE (IT APPEARS) TO QUIET HIS ANXIETIES. No doubt Herod pleaded the oath in excuse for the murder, and endeavoured to extenuate his crime to himself by representing it as forced upon him by a combination of circumstances. Our wits are never so sharp, as when our vices are to be excused. But learn ye from the instance of Herod, that all the wretched sophistry, in whose meshes ye thus entangle conscience, will break away, as a thread of tow when it touches the fire, as soon as ye shall find yourselves within the view of death and judgment. God allows no apology for sin; He can forgive it, He can forget it, He can blot it out as a cloud, and bury it in the depths of the sea, but He will take no excuse for it. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *John and Herod*:—There are some men who would rather be without a head than without a conscience; John was one of this kind. I. A SELF-REVELATION. The text with a single stroke lays open before us the mind of Herod. Deeper than mere speculation, below all the apathy of worldliness, there exists in man some conviction of spiritual reality and of moral obligation. The awe of Christ's marvellous works awoke the solemnities of even that debased nature. Deep called unto deep. The vibration of miraculous power brought up the secret shapes of conscience, as it is said the vibration of cannon will bring drowned men to the surface of the water. Now, this spiritual substance, in which man differs widely from all other creatures, and in which all men are most alike, is both a point of recovery and a ground of condemnation. I say, in the first place, this is a point of recovery. In the worst man—though his nature, like Herod's, be enslaved to passion, though his hand, like Herod's, be stained with blood,—there is this profound relation to spiritual things. In some way they are acknowledged. And, however vile the man may be, it is a sign of hope and a point of recovery. But this spiritual consciousness is also a ground of condemnation. Responsibilities are in proportion to capabilities. In the reckoning for talents used, we rate as a decisive element the amount of talents possessed. The depth of a man's fall must be measured by the dignity of his original position. Let no man delude himself, by any manner of sophistry, with the notion that the evil of his guilt ends with the guilty act, or that the wrong which he has done lies buried in his memory as in a grave. It may lie as in a grave; but there will be trumpet-blasts of resurrection, when conscience calls, and memory gives up its dead. "Confessions of faith," so called, may be sincere, or they may be heartless and formal. Yet the most genuine confessions of faith are not expressed in any creed or catechism, but in utterances of the moment, that come right out of the heart. So Herod made his confession of faith. So might any man be startled by his own self-revelation. II. But the text also suggests a point of CONTRAST. The contrast is between Herod, and John whom he beheaded. Here are two different types of men,—a type of worldliness, and a type of moral heroism. Two different types of men; and yet let it not be considered a mere play upon words, when I say not two types of different men. Beneath all external and all moral contrasts lay the same essential humanity. The self-willed and voluptuous king was forced to acknowledge the same spiritual realities as those in reference to which John so steadfastly acted. But starting from this common root, see how unlike these two men were in the branching of their lives. Herod illustrates the sensuality of the world, the imperious domination of appetite and passion. He treated the world as a mere garden for the senses. But there appears in Herod another phase of worldliness,—the phase of policy. I do not mean wise policy, but policy divorced from principle. Herod had no honest independence: he vacillated with the wind. Now, I suppose there are a great many such men in our day,—men

who, on the whole, are disposed to honour truth, to eulogize it, even to put it foremost, if just as well for themselves. But they would imprison it, behead it, and send the desecrated head around in a charger, if they could gain votes or get pleasure by doing so. Moreover, Herod was obedient to a false code of honour. "For his oath's sake, and for the sake of them that sat with him," he commanded that John should be beheaded. All men, however faithful and earnest they may be, are not cast in the mould of John the Baptist, or tempered to such a quality. But such a soul crying out in the world does the world good. It is refreshing to see the moral heroism of John set sharp against the worldliness of Herod. But, in closing, let us consider the fruit and consummation of these two lives thus brought in contrast. The world's power triumphant. O sad type of many a defeat of many a fallen cause! Such, then, is the upshot of these two lives,—Herod victorious in his wickedness; John in his moral loyalty defeated and slain. But we do not, we cannot, say this. We form a different estimate than this of John and Herod. Even in the conditions of this world and of time, we hear the tetrarch crying out, "It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead!" We see him driven into exile, and dying an inglorious death. We see, too, the Baptist, in the processes of his truth, going abroad throughout the earth in "the spirit and power of Elias." So, in other instances, we are to judge not by the transient event, or the aspect of the hour, but by the prevailing influence, the product that abides. Truth conquers in the long run, and right vindicates itself against the wrong, as "John risen from the dead." (*E. H. Chapin.*) *On the character of Herod Antipas:*—I. CONTEMPLATE IN THE CONDUCT OF HEROD AND OF HIS QUEEN THE NATURAL PROGRESS OF DEPRAVITY. LOOK PRIMARILY TO HERODIAS. II. LET ME ADD SOME OBSERVATIONS, APPLICABLE TO YOUR OWN CONDUCT, WHICH ARE SUGGESTED BY THE HISTORY BEFORE US. 1. In the first place, allow not yourself to be entrapped into sin by the solicitations and importunities of others, not even of your friends and your nearest relations, should you be unhappy enough to perceive tempters among them. 2. That one sin naturally leads to another: that, if you indulge in small offences, you will be carried headlong into greater. You have drawn up the floodgates: and who shall pronounce where the torrent shall be stayed? How frequently doth a similar progress occur. In the humbler ranks of life you see a man beginning to be idle, and to neglect his business. This evil habit grows upon him. His time soon hangs heavily upon his hands: and he fills it up at the public house; at first going thither sparingly, but ere long to be found there almost every day. Now drunkenness is added to idleness. These two sins speedily make him poor: and he resorts to dishonest means of gaining money: till justice overtakes him, and he finishes his days in exile or on the gallows. The criminal of high life, in the meantime, pursues a kindred career, but in a wider and a more splendid circle. He commences with fashionable extravagance. He grows hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Make your stand through Divine grace against the beginnings of sin: for you know not what will be the end thereof. 3. Contemplate the inconsistency, the weakness and the corruption of human nature. Herod withstood for a season the arts and importunities of Herodias. She waited until she found a convenient time; renewed the attempt and succeeded. The great enemy of man is ever on the watch to betray you. He is waiting for the hour when you shall no longer be on your guard; or when you shall have grieved by a recent offence the Spirit of God; or when a concurrence of ensnaring circumstances shall heighten the allurements of sin. The birthday of Herod shall arrive. Thy heart shall be opened to enticement. The year shall not revolve without bringing the convenient time. Mirth shall render thee thoughtless: or sorrow shall bow thee to despondence. Pride shall inflate thee with confidence: or sloth shall indispose thee to exertion. Then shall the temptation present itself afresh: perhaps in its original garb; or, if need be, in colours more attractive. 4. That nothing short of a settled determination to labour to avoid all sin, joined with constant application to God, through Christ, for the influence of His sanctifying Spirit, can authorize you to hope that you will preserve for a single hour a conscience void of offence. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*) *Herod's conjectures:*—The young woman retires to consult her mother. In her absence behold Herod amusing himself with conjectures concerning the nature of the recompense which she will prefer. "Will she demand a jewelled robe? A sumptuous palace? The revenues of a city? The government of a province?" He knows not what is passing in the mind of Herodias. He knows not that vanity and pride and avarice and ambition have retired, and have relinquished the whole heart to revenge. His speculations are interrupted by the entrance of her daughter. Mirth

and curiosity sparkle in her eyes. She advances straightway with haste. All is silent. She requires the head of John the Baptist. (*Ibid.*) *John Baptist and Herod*:—I. THE BEST PEOPLE OFTEN EXPERIENCE A HARD FATE. No garland of roses for the followers of Him Who wore the crown of thorns. Do not suppose from this that God is indifferent to goodness. He is with His people when they are in affliction, even more than at other times. The loss of material comfort is made up to them by a richer spiritual gain. II. BAD MEN HAVE GOOD FEELINGS AND PURPOSES. The spiritual nature may be repressed and brought into bondage by sin, but it cannot be destroyed. Conscience and memory make themselves felt. III. AN IRRESOLUTE MIND IN RESPECT TO GOOD IS THE CAUSE OF GREAT MISCHIEF. Herod was but the tool of Herodias. Although he did not originate the murder of John, he executed it. Without him it might not be done. IV. THE DANGER OF DALLIANCE WITH SIN. Herod gladly listened to John, but would not obey him. Had he heeded the faithful prophet and put away Herodias, he might never have had the sin of murder to answer for. No safety in partial courses. We must not only hear, but heed the warning voice. V. THE HAUNTING ALARMS OF GUILT. A Sadducee conjuring up a ghost—what a contradiction! No safeguard can protect a wicked man from the most absurd, but to him terrible, alarms. They spring up to poison his enjoyment in unexpected hours. Never again would Herod enjoy "a happy birthday." There is no misery more exquisite than that proceeding from an evil conscience. Think of it when proceeding to sin. This sin does not sink into oblivion, and nothing come of it. Committed, it becomes a pursuing vengeance. It assumes a dreadful voice and takes to itself feet, and, like a blood-hound, follows the evil-doer, baying frightfully on his track. (*A. H. Currier.*) *Results of Herod's sin*:—The issues of the act are not all seen immediately. But it is worth noting them. 1. There is the terror that seizes him. Haunted with feeling that he is not done with the prophet yet. 2. He gains nothing by the murder, for no sooner is John slain than Jesus rises ominously on his horizon. 3. He seals in death the only lips that could teach him the way of mercy. 4. All his improvement at once evaporates, and he lives to mock the Saviour (Luke xxiii. 11). 5. The woman whom he gratified at such a cost became his ruin. Her ambition moved her to long for a higher title for Herod than that of tetrarch. Against his own judgment Herod permitted himself to be overborne, and going to Rome to ask for higher honour he found himself accused before Caligula. They were banished to Gaul, and died in obscurity and dishonour. (*R. Glover.*) *Herod—a startled conscience*:—I. YOU HAVE HERE THE VOICE OF A STARTLED CONSCIENCE. We all of us do evil things that it is not hard for us to seem to forget, and with regard to which it is not hard for us to bribe or silence memory and conscience. The hurry and bustle of daily life, the very weakness of our characters, the rush of sensuous delights, may make us blind and deaf to the voice of conscience; and we think all chance of the evil deed rising again to harm us is past. But some trifle touches the hidden spring by mere accident; as in the old story of the man groping along a wall, till his finger happened to fall upon one inch of it, and immediately the hidden door flies open, and there is the skeleton. An apparently trivial circumstance, like some hooked pole pushed at random into the sea, may bring up by the locks some pale and drowned memory long plunged in an ocean of oblivion. II. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A CONSCIENCE AWAKENED TO THE UNSEEN WORLD. Theoretical disbelief in a future life and spiritual existence is closely allied to superstition. So strong is the bond that unites men with the unseen world, that, if they do not link themselves with that world in the legitimate and true fashion, it is almost certain to avenge itself upon them by leading them to all manner of low and abject superstitions. Spiritualism is the disease of a generation that does not believe in another life. III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF A CONSCIENCE WHICH, PARTIALLY STIRRED, SOON WENT FINALLY TO SLEEP AGAIN. Do not tamper with a partially awakened conscience; do not rest until it is quieted in the legitimate way. It is possible so to lull the conscience into indifference, that appeals, threatenings, pleadings, mercies, the words of men and the gospel of God, may all run off as from a waterproof, leaving it dry and hard. The convictions of conscience which you have not followed out, like the ruins of a bastion shattered by shell, protect your remaining fortifications against the impact of God's truth. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Conscience removes illusions*:—When the evil deed was done, Herod scarcely felt as if *he* did it. There was his plighted oath, there was Herodias' pressure, there was the excitement of the moment. He seemed forced to do it, and scarcely responsible for doing it. And no doubt, if he ever thought about it after, he shuffled off a large percentage of

the responsibility of the guilt upon the shoulders of the others. But when, "in the silent sessions of things past," the image and remembrance of the deed comes up to him, all the helpers and tempters have disappeared, and "it is John whom *I* beheaded." There is an emphasis in the Greek upon the "*I*"; "whom *I* beheaded." "Herodias tempted me! Herodias' daughter titillated my lust; I fancied that my oath bound me; I could not help doing what would please those who sat at the table. I said all that before I did it. But now, when it is done, they have all disappeared, every one of them to his quarter; and I and the ugly thing are left there together alone. It was I who did it, and nobody besides." And the blackness of the crime presents itself to the startled conscience as it did not in the doing. There are many euphemisms and soft words in which, as in cotton wool, we wrap our evil deeds, and so deceive ourselves as to their hardness and their edge; but when conscience gets hold of them, and they pass out of the realm of fact into the mystical region of remembrance, all the wrap pages and all the apologies and all the soft phrases drop away; and the ugliest, briefest, plainest word is the one by which my conscience describes my own evil. *I* beheaded him! I, and none else, was the murderer. (*Ibid.*) *The storehouse of memory*:—Take care of the storehouses of memory and of conscience, and mind what kind of things you lay up there. (*Ibid.*) *Conscience*:—I. THE FACTS OF CONSCIENCE. 1. We have a discernment of the difference between right and wrong. 2. We approve of the one and we disapprove of the other, as of good and bad laws. 3. We condemn ourselves for what conscience disapproves in our states and acts. 4. We are impelled by conscience to do what is right, and deterred by it from what is wrong. II. OF THIS MYSTERIOUS POWER THE OBVIOUS CHARACTERISTICS ARE — 1. That it is independent of the understanding and will. 2. It is authoritative. 3. It does not speak in its own name. The authority which it exercises is not its own. 4. It is avenging. Remorse is a state produced by conscience. III. OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO CONSCIENCE. 1. To enlighten it. 2. To obey it. 3. Not only to obey it in particular cases, but to have a fixed and governing purpose to permit it to rule. The ground of this obligation to obey conscience is—1. The authority of God in whose name it speaks. 2. Respect for our own dignity as rational and moral beings. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The cause and manner of the Baptist's death*:—I. AN EXAMPLE OF THE LENGTH TO WHICH UNGODLY MEN WILL GO IN THE WAY OF RELIGION. Herod feared and honoured John. He heard him preach—gladly. Let no one be too hasty in concluding that he is religious. II. AN EXAMPLE OF MINISTERIAL FAITHFULNESS. III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CERTAINTY AND THE REASON OF PERSECUTION. The certainty—the reproof. The reason—pride, interest, conscience. The favour of worldly men worthless. IV. WE HAVE EXEMPLIFIED THE TWOFOLD ASPECT OF THE WORLD—to its own, to the Church. The festival for the one—the dungeon for the other. The world in miniature. V. A SAMPLE OF THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PLEASURES. Masked pride, vanity, envy. Masked misery. VI. An instance of AN ABANDONED PARENT SACRIFICING HER CHILD. VII. An instance of MINGLED HYPOCRISY AND COWARDICE. Herod's oath, cowardice—through fear. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Remembrance of past sin*:—Henry of Essex, struck down in a duel, attributed his defeat to the imagined appearance of a knight whom he had murdered, standing by the side of his adversary. Speaking of the man who planned the massacre of Glencoe, Macaulay tells us that Breadalbane felt the stings of conscience. He went to the most fashionable coffee-house in Edinburgh, and talked loudly about what he had done among the mountains; but some of his soldiers observed that all this was put on. He was not the same man that he had been before. In all places, at all hours, working or sleeping, Glencoe was for ever before him.

Ver. 17. **For Herodias' sake.**—*Evil effects of vice*:—The pleasures which chiefly affect or rather bewitch the body, and by so doing become the pest and poison of the nobler and intellectual part of man, are those false and fallacious pleasures of lust and intemperance. Nothing does or can darken the mind or conscience of man more. Could Herod have ever thought himself obliged by the religion of an oath to murder the Baptist, had not his lust and his Herodias imprisoned and murdered his conscience first? It seems his besotted conscience, having broken through the seventh commandment, the sixth stood too near it to be safe long. So that it was his lust obstinately continued in which thus darkened and deluded his conscience; and the same will no doubt darken, delude, and in the end extinguish the conscience of any man breathing, who shall surrender himself up to it. (*Dr. South.*) *The reciprocal revenge of wrong*:—There is another point that should be brought

out—the power which one nature has upon another, and the reciprocal revenge of wrong. When Herod ensnared his brother's wife, when he tempted her into adulterous abandonment of her husband and into unlawful intercourse with him, he was the aggressor and she was the partner; but when they were living in unholy concord she became the avenger, and her influence upon him led him into this infamous crime and this damnable cruelty. He destroyed her virtue, and she destroyed his manhood; and from that time to this how many have been destroyed by those who should have been their protectors, and who should have inspired in them purity and gentleness and forgivingness! Oh, what chance was there for sweet and wholesome water to come out of such fountains! But they rotted together and spoiled each other. How many times, if we could look into the secrets of the household, should we see the same work going on: a bad man lowering the tone of the woman that came to him pure and simple-minded, destroying her aspiration, familiarizing her with vulgarity, urging all his influence and power to take away from her the fear of evil and wrong, and rather rejoicing as every barrier is broken down to bring her to his level! And how many men have been despoiled by hard, selfish, and ambitious wives, the man being simple-minded, and, on the whole, having right notions, and the woman perpetually employing the subtle arts of influence, persuasion, and fascination, and all of them in the direction of selfishness, and oftentimes in the direction of corruption and malignant crime! (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 18. **For John had said unto Herod.**—*The difficulty of wise rebuke:*—It is difficult to rebuke well; *i.e.*, at a right time, in a right spirit, and in a right manner. The Baptist rebuked Herod without making him angry; therefore he must have rebuked him with gravity, temper, sincerity, and an evident goodwill towards him. On the other hand, he spoke so firmly, sharply, and faithfully, that his rebuke cost him his life. . . . He reproved him under the prospect of suffering for his faithfulness; and we should never use a strong word, however true it be, without being willing to acquiesce in some penalty or other, should it so happen, as the seal of our earnestness. (*J. H. Newman.*) *Rebuke of sin considered indelicate:*—I have always noticed that people who live in the practice of vice think the servants of God ought not to allude to things so coarse. We are allowed to denounce the sins of the man-in-the-moon and the vices of savages in the middle of Africa; but as to the everyday vices of this city of London, if we put our finger upon them in God's name, then straightway some one cries, "It is indelicate to allude to these things." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 20. **For Herod feared John.**—*Better to fear God than His minister:*—Herod feared John, and did many things; had he feared God, he would have laboured to do everything. (*Gurnall.*) *Fear versus Love:*—The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear. Herod's love of Herodias was too hard for his fear of John. (*Ibid.*) *What moves wicked men thus to affect and reverence God's faithful ministers?*—1. The consideration of the excellent gifts which they discern in them, especially natural gifts. These draw them into admiration, and so cause them to esteem and reverence them. 2. Some worldly good or benefit which they reap by the acquaintance or society of such faithful ministers of God. 3. The holy lives of God's faithful ministers. (*G. Petter.*) *Character of Herod:*—I. How MYSTERIOUS AND COMPLEX IS THE CHARACTER OF MAN! In the same individual what a variety of qualities, apparently the most opposite, are sometimes combined. How important it is that we should "know" ourselves and the sins which so easily mislead and overcome us; looking meanwhile for guidance to Him who searcheth the reins and trieth the hearts of men. II. How STRONG IS THE IMPRESSION WHICH REAL EXCELLENCE OF CHARACTER MAKES, EVEN ON THE MINDS OF WICKED MEN. With all his abandonment of principle and looseness of practice, Herod could not help admiring and respecting John. III. YET A MAN MAY GO FAR IN HIS ADMIRATION OF GOODNESS, WHILE HE REMAINS PRACTICALLY UNAFFECTED BY IT. The precise extent of John's moral influence over Herod we do not know; but it is plain that he did follow his guidance in some respects, and, so far, for good; but, in spite of all, there was no real, decided, permanent change in his heart and character. He had mistaken the semblance of religion for its reality—the husk for the kernel. Consequently, when temptation came, it made him tenfold more the child of Satan than before. IV. LEARN FROM THIS THE DANGER OF YIELDING TO FAVOURITE SINS. Until met by the home-thrust, "It is not lawful for thee to have her," all went on

smoothly and pleasantly between Herod and John; but the exposure of his darling vice turned his friendship into enmity. V. THE DANGER OF TRIFLING WITH SERIOUS IMPRESSIONS, AND ACTING CONTRARY TO CONSCIENCE. Herod's association with John ought to have brought him to a humbling sense of sin and a decided change of heart. But he trampled on his convictions; and fatal was the result. Let us be warned by his example. Every funeral that passes, solemn and slow, along the streets; every visit of disease and death to your family circle; every season of holy communion with God; every prick of conscience; these are all so many instruments which God puts in operation for your well-being. Attend to these faithful monitors; cherish them; and they will be productive of lasting benefit to your soul. (*R. Burns, D.D.*) *Bad men with better moments*:—This wicked and despotic man, though he appointed for himself no bounds of morality, had moral sensibility lying within him. In the midst of vice and crime he had a conscience. More than that: this man whose very name has come down as a synonym of all that is corrupt and oppressive, had, in the midst of vices and crimes, a kind of yearning for goodness. He had heard John; he had heard him gladly; he wanted to hear him again; and, after the momentary flash of passion and anger was over, he wanted to save him. He was sorry that he was to be executed. There was something in this despotic king which yearned towards justice and goodness. And woe be to every wicked man who, in his wickedness, never finds a single spark of virtue to illuminate his life. I have reason to believe that the men who follow vice have hours in which they look out from themselves longingly, and wish they were better; and that men who are given over to the power of their passions have hours and days in which no outward condemnation is comparable to that which they themselves pass on themselves. Men, because they are wicked, are not necessarily dead. Because they violate rectitude, they do not necessarily destroy their conscience utterly. It sleeps or is drugged; but it has its revenge. Nay, more; it is this dormant or latent sensibility to that which is in contrariety to their whole course of life, that lays the foundation for hope of the recovery or reformation of men. There are hours when many a man, if he had power to regenerate himself, would speedily do it. Oh! that we only knew those hours. Oh! that some friend could approach every such man at those periods when the doors of his prison are thrown open for a time, and lead him by the hand. How many men might be rescued from the abyss which finally overwhelms and destroys them, how many men might be brought up from their degradation and peril, if only we were wise to seize the hours in which they are impressible. The acute and watchful physician knows that a disease runs to a crisis, and that there are points of time when, if the patient is carefully nursed and tended, curative tendencies will set in, and his health may be restored. Now, men are in the same condition spiritually; and if there were only some oversight of them, they might be saved; but, alas! they themselves cannot perpetuate these hours; they will not; and we stand outside, and know nothing of them. So in every street, and in every community, there are men who are secretly burning out the very vital substance of their life; who are walking in ways, the beginnings of which are pleasant, but the ends of which are death; who are going down through the community, moaning as they go, sighing for something better, and at times holding up hands of prayer and saying, "God, help me!" Nevertheless, there are men who, with all these experiences, are utterly destroyed. Here was this man Herod—as bad a man as could well be pictured, in many respects; and yet there were in him elements that could have reformed and restored him. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Herod's partial repentance*:—It is curious and instructive to observe that Herod is set before us here in the good points of his character—at least, in the best points that he had. It is in the Holy Gospels that one of the vilest wretches in human history is set before us in a somewhat amiable and interesting aspect. He feels a sincere respect for religion. He is not so far gone but that he knows honesty and faith and self-devotion when he sees them in another man. And he does not respect these the less, but a great deal the more, when the just and holy man does not spare his own sins, but denounces them to his face. Not only this, but he takes the preacher under his protection; and declares, doubtless with much hard swearing, when one and another of the courtiers propose to stop the prophet's insolence by taking his life, that no man shall hurt a hair of his head. And I have no doubt that he took enormous pride in it, too, as many a swearing, drinking, cheating reprobate nowadays will pride himself on hiring a pew in a most puritan church, where righteousness and temperance and judgment are faithfully preached to him, and will insist, with profuse expletives, that no man

shall say a word against his minister. The case is common enough. But we should do Herod injustice if we should suppose this to be all. Herod listened to the preacher of righteousness and repentance with a genuine personal and practical interest. He applies John's teaching to his own case—to his own sins and his own duties—so far as anything was left to his ingenuity in the matter of application, for John's teaching was sufficiently direct and pointed in itself. Herod did lay the word of the Lord to heart with reference to his own amendment, and did obviously begin to make such a difference in his course of life as to give Herodias reason to fear that he would not make an end of reforming until he had reformed her and her devil's imp of a daughter out of the palace altogether. "He did many things" in consequence of John's preaching—many just and upright things such as were strange enough to hear of in the vice-regal court of Palestine; beneficent and public-spirited things, making his reign, for the time, a less unmitigated curse to that afflicted country; merciful things, using his princely wealth and power for the relief of the distressed. What a thing to give thanks for was even this partial repentance of Herod, for the good it did, for the pain and outrage that it saved! Let no one think that the preaching of God's kingdom is a total waste, even when no man yields to it his unreserved submission. The whole work of Christ's gospel in any community is not to be summed up in the net number of converts or communicants. How many a soul is saved from being just such an abandoned wretch as Herod was; how many a decent home from being such a sty of uncleanness as Herod's palace was; how many a State from being defiled with blood and turbulent with wrong, just through some men's standing in awe before the holiness of Christ, and hearing Him gladly, and being willing to "do many things"! (*Leonard W. Bacon.*) *Insufficiency of Herod's right-doing*:—In all his doing of right things, Herod does nothing right; for in all that he does he is Herod. The things that he does in obedience to John's preaching are right in the abstract, considered independently of the man that does them. But as a matter of fact, these actions in the abstract never get done in actual life. We can think about them, and reason about them; but we never really see or know of an action that is not done by somebody. The action is the man acting. Strictly speaking, it is not actions that are right or wrong; it is men. And when the question is,—Did the man do right? we have to look at the man as well as the deed. And the honest conscience has no doubt on this point: No man is right in his doing, so long as he is cherishing a fixed, conscious purpose to do wrong, or not to do altogether right. This is a rule that does not work both ways. The hidden thought of the heart is like the morsel hidden in the garment (Haggai ii. 10–14); it can pollute a good act, it cannot sanctify an evil act. Here is Herod resolutely protecting the sternest of God's prophets, eagerly listening to him, heeding him, obeying him in many things, but standing out obstinately in his incestuous and adulterous love against that word of the Lord, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." How does the case stand with him, just now? It was right, wasn't it? for Herod to "do many things" at the preaching of John. He was a pretty good man for the time being, wasn't he? Wasn't it quite like heroism—moral heroism—backed up by political caution, when he stubbornly refused to permit the killing of John, and said to Herodias, "No! I will not! I will agree to lock him up in prison, but not one step further will I go!" Was he not rather the pattern of what we should call a good member of society—a man with a sincere respect for religion, and a great interest in the church, and a strong attachment to his favourite minister;—a man who is willing to subscribe handsomely, and do many things, and deny himself many things, but of course, not everything? Now I do not find that the gospel has any dealings with this kind of goodness. It does not appear that Jesus Christ has any advice or encouragement for those who would like to be rid of a part of their sins. He is not a specialist in spiritual maladies; He is a Great Physician. It is not worth your while to go to Him with a request for partial and local treatment—to hold up before Him your infected, swollen limb, and say, "There! give me something for that! Don't touch the rest of me. I am all right. I only want that arm cured." He will not treat the case on any such terms. Your case is constitutional, not local. If you would have the help of Jesus Christ; you must surrender the case to Him; and prepare for thorough treatment, perhaps for sharp surgery. (*Ibid.*) *Character a power*:—Your success is very much connected with your personal character. Herod "heard John gladly," and "did many things," because he knew the preacher to be a just and holy man. Words uttered from the heart find their way to the heart by a holy sympathy. Character is power. (*R. Cecil.*) *Inconstancy*:—A ship that is not of the right make can

not sail trim, and a clock whose spring is faulty will not always go true; so a person of unsound principles cannot be constant and even in his practices. The religion of those that are inwardly rotten, is like a fire in some cold climates, which almost fries a man before, when at the same time he is freezing behind; they are zealous in some things, as holy duties, which are cheap; and cold in other things, especially when they cross their profit or credit; as Mount Hecla is covered with snow on one side, when it burns and casts out cinders on the other: but the holiness of them that are sound at heart is like the natural heat,—though it resorts most to the vitals of sacred performances, yet, as need is, it warms and has an influence upon all the outward parts of civil transactions. It may be said of true sanctity, as of the sun, "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof." When all the parts of the body have their due nourishment distributed to them, it is a sign of a healthy temper. As the saint is described sometimes by a "clean heart," so also sometimes by "clean hands," because he has both; the holiness of his heart is seen at his fingers' ends. (*G. Swinnock.*) *A false respect for religion*:—A man may be acknowledged to be just and holy, and for that very reason he may be dreaded. You like to see lions and tigers in the Zoological Gardens, but you would not like to see them in your own room; you would very much prefer to see them behind bars and within cages; and so very many have respect for religion, but religious people they cannot bear. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Wanting to go to heaven, but liking the way to hell*:—Herod was a foxy man. We sometimes meet with these foxy people. They want to go to heaven, but they like the road to hell. They will sing a hymn to Jesus, but a good roaring song they like also. They will give a guinea to the church, but how many guineas are spent on their own lust. Thus they try to dodge between God and Satan. (*Ibid.*) *John and Herod*:—I. THE HOPEFUL POINTS IN HEROD'S CHARACTER. He respected justice and holiness. He admired the man in whom he saw justice and righteousness. He listened to John. He obeyed the word to which he listened. He continued to hear the preacher gladly. His conscience was greatly affected. II. THE FLAWS IN THE CASE OF HEROD. Though he feared John he never looked to John's Master. He had no respect for goodness in his own heart. He never loved the Word of God as God's Word. He was under the sway of sin. His was a religion of fear, not of love. III. WHAT BECAME OF HEROD. He slew the preacher whom he respected. This Herod Antipas was the man who afterwards mocked the Saviour. He soon lost all the power he possessed. His name is infamous for ever. (*Ibid.*) *Limed by lust*:—He was like a bird taken with lime-twigs: he wanted to fly; but, sad to say, he was willingly held, limed by his lust. (*Ibid.*) *Preaching! Man's privilege and God's power*:—I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE WORD. The preaching of the gospel is represented by the sowing of seed—casting the net into the sea—it is the bread of heaven—it is the light of the world. II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEARER OF THE WORD. III. THE NEEDFUL ACCOMPANIMENTS OF HEARING THE WORD. (*Ibid.*) *Transient religious impressions*:—When you take hold of a piece of india-rubber, you may make any impression that you like all over it, but after all it resumes its old shape. There are hosts of hearers of that kind: very impressible, but they quickly return to their old tastes and habits. (*Ibid.*) *Why Herod feared John*:—Herod was a king; John was a subject. Herod was in a palace; John was in a prison. Herod wore a crown; John most probably did not even own a turban. Herod wore the purple; John wore camlet, as we should call it. John was the son of an obscure Jewish country priest and his wife: the child of their old age. There is no hint that John had any wealth, or name, or fame, or education, or influence, when he began his life as a man. He comes on the scene as a rough, angular man, with not many words and not many friends. Herod began to reign just about when John began to live, so that there was no preponderant age in the priest's son over the king's son: that was all on the other side. Indeed, by all mere surface facts, principles, and analogies, John ought to have feared Herod; he ought to have bated his breath and bent his head before him. Now, I propose to discuss at this time the roots of this power and weakness, to see what made Herod so weak and John so strong, and to ask this question, What can we, who are set as John was, in the advance guard of reformers, do to make a deep, clear mark? And I note for you that John had three great roots of power: First, HE WAS A POWERFUL MAN BY CREATION—a man with a clear head, a steady nerve, and a nature set in a deadly antagonism to sin and meanness of every sort and degree. He was the Jewish John Knox, or John Brown.

"When he saw a thing was true,
He went to work and put it through."

He could die, but he could not back down. Every time I meet a man who is a man, and not a stick, I ask myself one question: "Why are you the man you are? Whence does your power hint itself to me? Whence does it come." And while the ultimate answer has never come out of Phrenology or Physiognomy, or any of the sciences that profess to tell you what a man is by how he looks, yet the indicative answer has always lain in that direction. In the head, and face, and form of a man there is certainly something that impresses you in some such way as the weight, colour, and inscription of a coin reveal to you, with a fair certainty, whether it be gold, or silver, or—brass and it is possible, too, that the line in which a man has descended, the country in which he is born, the climate, the scenery, the history, the poetry, and the society about him, have a great deal to do with the man. The father, in Queen Elizabeth's time, as I have known in old English families, may be twenty-two carat gold; and the children in Queen Victoria's time may be no better than lead. That mysterious antagonism that sows tares among the wheat, sows baseness in the blood; and if there be not for ever a careful and most painful dividing and burning, the tares will in time come to nearly all there is on the soil. But still for ever the great mint of Providence beats on, silently, certainly, continually, sending its own new golden coins to circulate through our human life, and on each of them stamping the infallible image and superscription that tells us "this is gold." Nay, the same great Providence makes not only gold coins, but silver and iron too; and if they are true to their ring, they are all Divine; as in all great houses there be divers vessels, some to more honour and some to less honour, but not one to dishonour if it be true to its purpose; for while the golden vase that holds the wine at the feast of a king is a vessel of honour, so is the iron pot that holds the meat in the furnace; the Parian vase that you fill with flowers is a vessel of honour, and so is the tin dipper with which you fill it at the well. For me, it is a wonderful thing to study merely the pictures of great men. There is a power in the very shadow that makes you feel they were born to be kings and priests unto God. But if you know a great man personally, you find a power in him which the picture can never give you. I suppose this good Jewish country parson, the father of John, from the little we can glean about him, was just a gentle, timid, pious, retiring man, whose mind had never risen above the routine of his humble post in the temple. But lo! God, in the full time, drops just one golden ingot down into that family treasury, pure, ponderous, solid gold. Yet I need not tell you that there is a theory of human nature that busies itself for ever in trying to prove that our human nature in itself is abominably and naturally despicable. Now, this primitive intrinsic nature, I say, was the first element that made John mightier in the prison than Herod was in the palace. The one was a king by creation; the other was only a king by descent. And then, secondly, there comes into the difference another element. Herod made the purple vile by his sin; John made the camel's hair radiant by his HOLINESS. And in that personal truth, this rightwiseness, this wholeness, he gained every Divine force in the universe over to his side, and left to Herod only the infernal forces. It was a question of power, reaching back ultimately, as all such questions do, to God and the devil. So the fetter was turned to a sceptre, and the sceptre to a fetter, and the soul of the Sybarite quailed, and went down before the soul of the saint. Then the good man, the true, the upright, downright man of power, goes right on to the mark. Let me tell you a story given me by the late venerable James Mott, of Philadelphia, whose uncle, fifty years ago, discovered the island in the Pacific inhabited by Adams and his companions, as you have read in the story of "The Mutiny of the Bounty." I was talking with him one day about it, and he said that, after staying at the island for some time, his uncle turned his vessel homeward, and steered directly for Boston,—sailing as he did from your own good city,—eight thousand miles distant. Month after month the brave craft ploughed through storm and shine, keeping her head ever homewards. But as she came near home, she got into a thick fog, and seemed to be sailing by guess. The captain had never sighted land from the time they started; but one night he said to the crew, "Now, boys, lay her to! I reckon Boston harbour must be just over there somewhere; but we must wait for the fog to clear up before we try to run in." And so, sure enough, when the morning sun rose it lifted the fog, and right over against them were the spires and homes of the great city of Boston! So can men go right onward over this great sea of life. The chart and compass are with them; and the power is with them to observe the meridian sun

and the eternal stars. Storms will drive them, currents will drift them, dangers will beset them; they will long for more solid certainties; but by noon and by night they will drive right on, correcting deflections, resisting adverse influences, and then, at the last, when they are near home, they will know it. The darkness may be all about them, but the soul shines in its confidence; and the true mariner will say to his soul, "I will wait for the mist to rise with the new morning; I know home is just over there." Then in the morning he is satisfied; he wakes to see the golden light on temple and home. So God brings him to the desired haven. Now John was one of those right-on men. Had there been a crevice in John's armour, Herod would have found it out and laughed at him; but in the presence of that pure life, that deep, conscious antagonism to sin, that masterful power, won as a soldier wins a hard battle, this man on the throne was abased before that man in the prison. Then the third root of power in this great man, by which he mastered a king,—by which he became a king,—lay in the fact that he was a TRUE, CLEAR, UNFLINCHING, OUTSPOKEN PREACHER of holiness. Some preachers reflect the great verities of religion, as bad boys reflect the sun from bits of broken glass. They stand just on one side, and flash a blaze of fierce light across the eyes of their victim, and leave him more bewildered and irritated than he was before. Such a one is your fitful, changing *doctrinaire*, whose ideas of right and wrong, or sin and holiness, of God and the devil, to-day, are not at all as they were last Sunday: who holds not that blessed thing, an ever-changing, because an ever-growing and ripening faith, but a mere sand-hill of bewilderment, liable to be blown anywhere by the next great storm. Then there is another sort of preacher, who is like the red light at the head of a railway night train. He is made for warning; he comes to tell of danger. That is the work of his life. When he is not doing that, he has nothing to do. I hear friends at times question whether this man has a Divine mission. Surely, if there be danger to the soul,—and that question is not yet decided in the negative,—then he has to the inner life a mission as Divine as that of the red lamp to the outer life. And I know myself of men who have turned sharp out of the track before his fierce glare, who, but for him, had been run down, and into a disgraceful grave. But the true preacher of holiness, the real forerunner of Christ, is the man who holds up in himself the Divine truth, as a true mirror holds the light, so that whoever comes to him, will see his own character just as it is. Such a man was this who mastered a king. His soul was never distorted by the traditions of the elders, or the habits of "good society," as it is called. On the broad clear surface of his soul, as on a pure still lake, you saw things as if in a great deep. He had no broken lights, for he held fast to his own primitive nature, and to his own direct inspiration. (*R. Collyer.*)

Ver. 26. **And the king was exceeding sorry.**—*Crisis hours:*—The acute and watchful physician knows that a disease runs to a crisis, and that there are points of time when, if the patient is carefully nursed and cared for, curative tendencies will set in, and his health may be restored. Now, men are in the same condition spiritually, and if there were only some oversight of them they might be saved; but, alas! they themselves cannot perpetuate these hours; they will not; and we stand outside and know nothing of them. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Sorrow not always Divine:*—Herod was "sorry" when Salome asked for the head of John. But "sorry" for what? Was it on account of respect and love for the prophet? or was he sorry because he feared popular indignation? or because he felt that this was going a little too far in cruelty and injustice? Men are sorry in various ways. One is sorry for his sins, and another is sorry for his scruples. One is sorry that he made a fraudulent profit, and another is sorry that he did not. One, with strong anguish, mourns the loss of a friend, and another the loss of a fortune. One sheds drops of pity, and one of mortification. The mother is sorry for her dead babe that lies upon her breast like a withered blossom, and the miser is sorry to part with a dollar. Sorrow is not always Divine, and tears are not always of the kind that consecrate. In Herod's case it is quite significant that we cannot exactly tell why he was sorry. One thing we know, that his sorrow was not strong enough to stop the hand of the executioner, and keep himself from crime. It was not strong enough to resist the sense of shame, and the impulse of the hour. (*E. H. Chapin.*) *Conditions of promise keeping:*—Must a man, then, always keep a promise? I say, No. Let us look at some of the conditions. 1. A promise of that which in itself is impossible, I need not say, a man cannot fulfil. It is the making of such a promise

that is a sin. 2. When the fulfilment of a promise is rendered impossible by the happening of subsequent events, a man who makes it is released from fulfilling that promise—at any rate, so far as those events hinder him from fulfilling it. Where a man promises to settle upon his son-in-law a certain stipulated amount in case of the uniting of his daughter in marriage to him, if, when the occasion comes, the father-in-law is bankrupt, how can he fulfil his promise? Circumstances have changed. His power to fulfil his promise is gone. 3. When the thing promised is contrary to the law of the land it is void. 4. Where a promise is made which involves a violation of morality, or the laws of God, no man has the right to keep it. And this is exactly the case that Herod found himself in. He was a fool to make the promise; he was a demon to fulfil it. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The course of sin*:—Herod's sin began in a very common place for the beginning of deadly sin. It began in the riot and levity of sensual amusement. The fact is, that Satan only wants the occasion of a beginning of a sin from us; however slight that may be though we may have removed from the sure ground of a clear and undefiled conscience, by a step of a hair's breadth, he has gained all that he wants. He has removed us from the ground where we could watch and pray: he has put the fear of God, and love of Christ, out of our hearts; he has withdrawn us from the presence of God, tempted us to come forth from the hiding-place of His pavilion, and the secret of His tabernacle; and to come down from the rock on which we had been set up through His merciful protection; and then we are completely in his power. Who, then, that knowingly begins a sin, can tell where it will end? Most men begin it with a notion that they can stop in its course when they like, and that they will have the opportunity and the will to repent. But how miserably they are mistaken in both those notions; they hardly need even Herod's example to warn them. We have seen at length already, how utterly unable they are to stop; and a very few considerations will show how little reason they have to look forward to a genuine repentance. They forget, in the first instance, the nature of sin, which is to harden the heart, to sear the conscience, and to blind the understanding. All these effects are the very contrary to repentance. And they may, therefore (since they have put God out of the question), as well expect corn to come out of thistle seed as repentance out of wilful sin. On the whole, the text gives us a solemn warning upon the nature of sin. It is not always barefaced and audacious, even when most heinous. The sinner may even set about his dreadful taskwork which Satan has set him, with exceeding sorrow, as did Herod. But this does not avail to abate its violence, or to lessen their guilt. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) The beginning of evil is like the letting out of water. The poet tells us that the destruction of the lute begins with the first rift; and the rottenness of the fruit with the first speck. Resist, I pray you, the first temptation. Endeavour to conquer Herod. (*W. Walters.*) *The effects of the preaching of John the Baptist upon Herod*:—The case of Herod and Felix much alike. We are not told of Felix that he ever did more than tremble; there is no register of his having taken any steps in consequence of his conviction. Herod did "many things" in consequence of what he heard from the Baptist. I. Now it is very carefully to be observed (for upon this we shall throughout have to lay no small stress), THAT HEROD FEARED JOHN, BUT THAT NOTHING IS SAID FROM WHICH WE CAN INFER THAT HEROD FEARED GOD. We are not, perhaps, aware what power there is in the principle of the fear of man, for it will often cause persons to disobey God, and peril their eternity, rather than run the risk of a frown: And this principle may operate as well to the withdrawing men from vice, as the confirming them in it. It is not indeed by this denunciation of sin in the general, that the preacher will become an object of fear, and a motive to reform; for a man will sit with the greatest complacence under the universal reproof, and think it nothing to be condemned in common with all. But when he denounces particular sins, and thus, as it were, singles out a few from the mass, he may cause those few to feel so sensitively, as though all eyes were upon them; so that if the sins be such as may be abandoned without great pain, they will be likely to abandon them just to prevent the being again thus exposed. They give up one thing after another, according as conscience is more and more urgent; but the favourite practice, the darling passion, this still retains its mastery, whilst less cherished habits are broken, and less powerful desires are subdued. The man whose master-passion is covetousness may become most rigidly moral, though he had not heretofore been distinguished by purity of life; but measured morality, in place of being attended with diminished covetousness, may be only a make weight with conscience against the abiding and even the growing eagerness for gain. The man again, whose master-passion is sen-

suality, may give much in alms to the poor, though he had previously been accounted penurious; but is he, therefore, necessarily less the slave of his lust? Ah, no. He may only have bought himself peace in the indulgence of his appetites by liberality in relieving the destitute. It is the same in the case of every other master-passion. Unless it be Herodias that is put away, there is no evidence of genuine repentance; all that is surrendered may be nothing more than a proof of the value put upon what is retained. And therefore, if you would discriminate between reformation and repentance, if you would know whether you have limited yourselves to the former and are yet strangers to the latter, examine what it is you keep, rather than what you give up. Reformation will always leave what you love best to the last; whereas repentance will begin with the favourite sin, or go at once to the root, in place of cutting off the branches. II. BUT WE SAID THAT IT WAS A YET MORE REMARKABLE STATEMENT, IN REFERENCE TO HEROD, ESPECIALLY AS CONTRASTED WITH FELIX, THAT HE HEARD JOHN GLADLY. There is a pleasure in being made to feel pain, even where a long course of dissipation has not generated the disease of ennui. Is it not thus with the frequenters of a theatre, who flock eagerly to their favourite amusement when some drama of terror and crime is to have possession of the stage? They go for the purpose of being thrilled, and of having the blood made to creep, and of feeling an indefinable horror seize upon their spirits. They are altogether disappointed if no such effect be produced; and unless the exhibition of fictitious suffering quite carry them away, and so produce all the emotions which witnessed suffering will produce, they lay blame upon those who have conducted the mimicry, and count them deficient in skill and in power. We repeat, then, our words, that there is a pleasure in being made to feel pain even with those who cannot be said to have worn out their sensibilities, and, of course, in a greater measure with others to whom such description applies. And would it, therefore, follow that Herod could not have heard John gladly had John so preached as to make Herod tremble? Oh! far enough from this. It may just have been the fact of trembling which made Herod a glad hearer of the Baptist. There was a power in the Baptist of exciting the torpid feelings of a jaded voluptuary. Because you are made to tremble, and because, so far from shrinking at the repetition of the process, you come with eagerness to the sanctuary and submit yourselves again to the same overcoming influence, you may easily fancy you have a just apprehension of God's wrath, and even that you have duly prepared yourselves for a day, of whose terror you can hear with something of pleasurable emotion: and therefore we have laboured to show you that there may be a complacency and gladness beneath the preaching of the Word, when that preaching is the preaching of vengeance, which is wholly unconnected with any effort to escape what is threatened, but may quite consist with the remaining exposed to it with no shelter against its fury, no real dread of its coming. It is not merely possible, but in a high degree probable, that a man addicted to gambling might gaze in anguish at the scenic representation of a gambler, hurried on until utter ruin crushed his family and himself, and then pass from the theatre to the gambling-table, and there stake his all on the cast of the dice. We should not necessarily conclude, from observing the frequency with which the gambler came to the representation of the gamester, and the riveted interest which he felt in the harrowing drama, that he was at all sensible to the evils of gambling, or would at all endeavour to extricate himself from its fearful fascinations; we should, on the contrary, see nothing but a common exhibition of our nature—a nature that has pleasure in excitement, though the exciting thing be its own ruin, if we knew that on the very night, after listening to the thrilling cry of the maddened victim of the hazard table, he hurried to the scene where he and others did their best towards making the case precisely their own. We need not draw out a parallel between such an instance and that of a sinner, who can listen with an eager interest to the descriptions of the sinner's doom, and then depart and be as resolute as ever in doing evil deeds. The parallel must be evident to you all, and we only exhort you so to form it for yourselves, that you may never confound the having pleasure in the hearing future judgment energetically set forth with the being alive to that judgment, and watchful to remove it from yourselves. But we do not design, as we have already said, to ascribe the gladness of Herod exclusively to such causes as we have alone been endeavouring to trace. If Herod were at times made to tremble, and if that very trembling were acceptable as a species of animal excitement, we may yet suppose that this was not the only account on which he heard the Baptist gladly. Herod had "done many things," and it is therefore likely that he thought himself sufficiently righteous and secured against the vengeance which John denounced against the wicked. He may have become that most finished

of all hypocrites, the hypocrite who imposes on himself; and having wrought himself into a persuasion of safety, he may have hearkened with great delight to the descriptions of dangers in which others stood. It is therefore a matter of prime moment, that we warn our hearers against the inferring that they have undergone a moral change, from the finding they have pleasure in listening to the gospel. For even where men have not, like Herod, "done many things," they may, like Herod, "hear the Baptist gladly." There is many an enthusiastic lover of music, who mistakes for piety and religious emotion, the feelings of which he is conscious, as the sacred anthem comes pealing down the aisle of the cathedral, just because he feels an elevation of soul and a kindling of heart. As the tide of melody poured forth from the orchestra comes floating to him, he will imagine that he has really an affection towards spiritual things, and really aspires after heaven. Alas! alas! though music be indeed an auxiliary to devotion, it proves no devotion that you can be thrilled and lifted out of yourselves by the power of music. It is altogether on natural feelings and sensibilities, which may or may not be drawn out by religion, that the lofty strain tells with so subduing an effect; and even when you are most carried away and overcome by the varied notes, I see no reason whatsoever, why you might not return from the oratorio of the "Creation" and ascribe the universe to chance, and from that of the "Messiah" and be ready with the Jews to crucify the Christ. The case is altogether the same with the preaching of the gospel. In sacred music, it is not the words, it is only the machine by which the words are conveyed, that produces feelings which the man mistakes for devotion. He may be without a care for the truth which is uttered, and yet be fascinated by the melodies of the utterance, and thus take the fascination as proof of his delight in spiritual things. And thus in the case of preaching. Indeed, the cases are so identical, that it was said by God to Ezekiel, when multitudes of the impenitent flocked to the hearing of him, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Sin haunting the guilty*:—In illustrating how Herod was haunted by the ghost of his sin—recall some points from former lessons, as, for instance, the witness of Abel's blood from the ground against Cain; and the self-reproaches of Joseph's brethren, when the memory of their sin came upon them in after years. Reference should be made to the poem of Eugene Aram; to the night scene in Macbeth, where Lady Macbeth tries to cleanse her guilty hands; and to the story of the man who, to gain an inheritance, flung his brother into the sea, and, ever after, when he looked upon water, saw his brother's dead face staring up from the depths. There is one stone in the floor of an old church in Scotland which stares out at you blood-red from the gray stones around it. The legend tells of a murder committed there, and of repeated fruitless attempts to cover the tell-tale colour of that stone. Morally, the legend is true; every dead sin sends its ghost to haunt the soul of the guilty. *The progress of sin*:—A drop of poison is poison as really as a phial of it is. The drop and the phial differ in quantity, not quality. Make ever so slight a cut on your finger with a poisoned blade, and the canker is carried through your system, polluting all your blood. The leaven put into the meal leavens the whole lump. The train which has been carelessly left to stand at the top of an incline begins to move down slowly at first, but at an ever-increasing speed, till at last it thunders down with irresistible swiftness, carrying destruction to whatever opposes it. Trace the progress of Herodias' sin, from hate—which is latent murder—to actual murder. *The sinful snare*:—When we wish to trap an animal, we hide the snare and show only the tempting tit-bit. We hide the hook beneath the bait. Compare Satan's trap for Herod—a dancing girl, practising her seductive arts.

Vers. 30, 31. **Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place.**—*The Saviour's invitation to rest*:—I. NOTE THE TENDERNESS OF CHRIST. II. LABOUR LIGHTENED IS NOT LOST. III. SPIRITUAL WORK ESPECIALLY NEEDS REST. IV. THE BREEZY MOUNTAIN-SIDE, AWAY FROM MEN, STILL GIVES THE FINEST SORT OF REST. V. REST NEVER SEEMS TO BE HAD WHERE YOU ARE, BUT ALWAYS OTHER-WHERE; and sometimes when you reach the quietest spot, the disturbing element has gone there before you. (*R. Glover.*) *The necessity for rest*:—God has signified this to us in His material creation. He has made the earth to revolve on her axis in a way that brings her at stated seasons under light and shade; and He has proportioned the strength of man to those seasons. I. We need rest PHYSICALLY. The hands begin to slacken and the eyes to close when God draws the curtain. It is one of those adaptations which show God's kindly purpose. The thoughtless or covetous over-tension of our own powers

the hard driving of those under our control, the feeling that we can never get enough work out of our fellow-creatures, the evil eye cast on their well-earned rest or harmless recreation, are all to be denounced and condemned. II. This law applies also to MENTAL exertion. The mind must at times look away from things, as well as at them, if it is to see clearly and soundly. This is not necessarily waste time; when the mind is lying fallow it may be laying up capacity of stronger growth. III. THE SPIRITUAL faculties are subject to the same law. A continual strain of active religious work is apt to deaden feeling and produce formality. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Recreative rest*:—I. RECREATIVE REST IS RECOGNIZED BY GOD AS A NECESSITY FOR MAN. II. IT SHOULD HAVE A JUST RELATION TO EARNEST WORK. *Rest* is the shadow thrown by the substance *work*, and you reach the shadow when you have passed by the substance which throws it. III. IT IS INTENDED TO EXERCISE A WHOLESOME INFLUENCE ON CHARACTER. If it fits us for doing our work better, it is right; otherwise, it is wrong. The test is, Can we engage in it in conscious fellowship with Christ? (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *The Christian uses of leisure*:—It is not an indolent animal repose, but that rest of refreshment which befits those who have souls. Its elements are—I. COMMUNION WITH OUTWARD NATURE. The world was made not merely for the support of man's body, but also for the nurture of his mind and spirit. What architect would build his house only with an eye to stores and animal comforts, paying no regard to its being a home for a man, with windows opening on wide expanses of land and sea, or quiet nooks of homely beauty? We should endeavour to make the inner world of our thoughts about God and spiritual things not a separate thing from the world of creation, but with a union like that between body and soul. If we could learn to do this aright, it would strengthen us in good thoughts, and relieve doubts and calm anxieties. Nature can do very little for us if we have no perception of a Divine Spirit breathing through it; but very much if the Great Interpreter is with us. If we surrender ourselves to this Teacher He can show us wide views through narrow windows, and speak lessons of deep calm in short moments. II. INTERCOURSE WITH FELLOW-CHRISTIANS. There will always be a want in a man's religious nature if he has not come into contact with hearts around him that are beating with a Divine life to the pulse of the present time. Every age, every circle, has its lessons from God, and no one can learn them all alone. Let us be more frank and confidential, also more natural, in our talk on these matters concerning our mutual faith and hope. III. A CLOSER CONVERSE WITH THE MASTER. When we are doing our appointed work in God's world, or labouring actively for the good of others, our minds are dispersed among outward employments; we may be serving God very truly all the time, but we are careful about many things, and have not leisure to sit at His feet and speak to Him about our own individual wants. It is essential that we should from time to time secure leisure for this. The flame of devotion will not burn very long or very bright unless you have oil in your vessels with your lamps. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Rest by the way*:—Rest is an absolute necessity of life; without it the body dies. The traveller on a journey looks forward to some spot where he can stay a while. The sailor has his haven where he can for a time furl his sails and find shelter from the storm and tempest. The wanderer in the hot desert strains his eyes to see the one green spot in all that sandy waste where there are trees and water and the promise of rest. And the soul needs rest as well as the body. Just as too much excitement and hurry and over-work wear out our bodily strength, so our spiritual life, the life of the soul, becomes faint and weak without rest. On our journey from earth to heaven we need some quiet harbours, some peaceful spots, where we can find rest. Jesus has built such cities of refuge for us, His pilgrims, and provided quiet havens for His people as they pass over the waves of this troublesome world. I. THE SERVICES AND SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH. There is a famous bell in a certain church abroad known as the "Poor Sinner's Bell." This is how it got its name. Five hundred years ago a bell-founder was engaged in casting this bell. For a few moments he left a boy in charge of the furnace, charging him not to touch the apparatus which held the molten metal in the cauldron. The boy disobeyed his master, and meddled with the handle. Instantly the liquid metal began to pour into the mould. The terrified boy ran to tell the bell-founder, who, thinking his great work was ruined, struck the boy in a fit of passion, and killed him. When the metal was cold, the bell, instead of being spoiled, was found to be perfect in shape and singularly sweet in tone. The unhappy bell-founder gave himself up for the murder of the boy, and as he was led to execution the Poor Sinner's Bell rang out sweetly, inviting all men to pray for the doomed man, and warning all men of

the effects of disobedience and anger. Is there no Poor Sinner's Bell among us? Does the church bell bring no message to you? II. PRIVATE PRAYER. III. BIBLE READING. Put your heart into this, and you will find a refreshment, a resting-place. It will take you for a time out of the world, out of the great, busy, noisy Vanity Fair, and you can, as it were, walk in God's garden, or wander through His great picture gallery. Men or women who have lived and died in faith will be your companions, your examples. (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) *Rest and work:*—I. There is no true rest which has not been earned by work. II. The duty of resting has the same reasons as the duty of working. III. Solitude is the proper refreshment after public work, and preparation for it. IV. The spirit can never be at leisure from compassion, sympathy, love. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *No leisure:*—Duty of religious teachers to point out and rebuke social evils. One of these is the want of leisure. A fair amount of labour is necessary and desirable, but when work is so absorbing that mind, affections, and spiritual life are neglected, we sin against law of nature and God. So far as labour out of doors is concerned, God Himself interposes by drawing the curtain of night; but in certain trades, through the ambition of the trader or the carelessness of the general public, young people are often kept on their feet twelve or fifteen hours, with scarcely time allowed to swallow a morsel of food. The wrongs of these silent sufferers ought to be redressed. Let us not forget—I. THAT EARNEST WORK IS DIVINELY APPOINTED. Before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Afterwards in the fourth commandment. Labour and rest are linked together by God in indissoluble bonds. Work is necessary to (1) human progress; (2) the preservation of society; (3) the nobility of man. I confess that I sympathize very much with the American who was told by an English tourist that he was surprised to find no "gentlemen" in his country. "What are they?" was the reply. "Oh," said he, "people who don't work for their living." "Yes, we have some of them," replied the shrewd New Englander, "only we call them tramps." Thank God if the necessity of work, and the opportunity, and the power for work are yours; and in whatever sphere of life you are placed, pray that you may deserve at last the epitaph which was put, at his own request, on the tomb of one of the bravest and most brilliant Christian soldiers England ever had: "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty." II. THAT SUITABLE LEISURE IS IMPERATIVELY REQUIRED. Observe the evils resulting from long hours of labour. 1. Physical. Constant strain and tension. 2. Mental. No chance of improving the mind by reading, classes, societies, &c. 3. Moral. When the young people do get free, scarcely anything is open to them but what may tend to their corruption. And the temptation comes at a time when there is the more danger of yielding to it, from the reaction which follows continuous work and induces a craving for excitement. 4. Religious. Home-training rendered impossible. Lord's Day almost necessarily devoted exclusively to bodily rest and recreation, and so worship neglected. III. THAT THIS JUST CLAIM FOR LEISURE IS OFTEN DISREGARDED. Things are, in some respects, much better than they were. The wholesale houses, and many offices, close earlier than before, and Saturday is a half-holiday. But this improvement only affects certain trades and districts. Those in retail shops—milliners, dressmakers, &c., remain unrelieved. Leisure is the more required now, because work is done much more strenuously and exhaustingly than hitherto. IV. REMEDIES. 1. Combination among *employés*. 2. Agreement among employers. It is for their own interest. 3. More enlightened public opinion, resulting in altered practice. (1) Give up late shopping, so that there shall no longer be a demand for protracted labour. (2) Encourage employers who show their willingness to do what is right in this matter. (3) Allow a reasonable time for execution of orders, so that the beautiful dress at a party shall not be hideous in the sight of angels by the stains of tears and blood they alone can see. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *A victim to want of leisure:*—A well-known visitor among the poor found living in a notorious court a woman who was known as "the Button-hole Queen," who often gave work away, poor though she was, to those poorer than herself. Reserved as she appeared to be, she was at last induced to tell her story, which accounted for the interest she took in the poor girls around her; and poor they were, for fancy the misery of making 2,880 button-holes in order to earn 10s., and having "no time even to cry!" Her story was this: Her daughter had been apprenticed to a milliner at the West End. She was just over sixteen, and a bright young Christian. She got through her first season without breaking down; but the second was too much for her. She did not complain, but one day she was brought home in a cab, having broken a blood-vessel, and there she lay, propped up by pillows, her face white as

death, except for two spots where it had been flecked by her own blood. To use the mother's own words: "She smiled as she saw me, and then we carried her in, and when the others were gone she clung round my neck, and laying her pretty head on my shoulder, she whispered, 'Mother, my own mother, I've come home to die!'" Killed by late hours! She lingered for three months, and then she passed away, but not before she had left a message which became the life-inspiration of her mother: "For my sake be kind to the girls like me;" and that message, with God's blessing, may make some of you think and resolve, as it did the poor "Button-hole Queen." (*Ibid.*) *Ministers need rest*:—The apostles were well-nigh overwhelmed with their labours, for work had made work: they were cumbered with much serving—not preaching the gospel only, but healing and exorcising; their meals and needful rest were broken in upon by importunate crowds; and so the Lord, to teach us that His ministers must have time for needful refreshment, does not recruit them by a miracle, but insists upon their using natural means. And is it not so now? Is not many an active and self-denying minister well-nigh broken down and worn-out, because there is no time for thought and rest, and tranquil meditation, and a change of scene? Rich men, with many-roomed mansions, could not do a greater kindness to poor over-worked ministers than by inviting them from their crowded streets and alleys to find a little rest and leisure in their multitudes of unnsed apartments. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Rest in nature*:—For all organic life God has provided periods of repose, during which repair goes on in order to counteract the waste caused by activity. In the spring-time we see movement and stir in gardens, fields, and hedgerows, which continues till the fruits are gathered in and the leaves fall; but then winter's quiet again settles down over all, and nature is at rest. Even the flowers have their time for closing their petals, and their sleeping hours come so regularly, and yet are so varied in distribution among them, that botanists can construct a floral clock out of our English wild-flowers, and tell the hour of night or day by their opening or closing. The same God who created the flowers and appointed the seasons, ordained the laws of Israel, and by these definite seasons of rest were set apart for the people—the Sabbath, the Jubilee year, and the annual festivals. Indeed, in every age and every land, the coming of night and the victory of sleep are hints of what God has ordained for man. (*A. Rowland, LL.B.*) *The season of rest*:—The first of these principles is that rest is the result and the fruit of labour and toil; it is the right and duty of workers. The second principle which I venture to lay down with reference to recreation is this—that its proper object is to prepare us for further work. There is yet one other principle to be noticed in connection with our subject, viz., that in our rest and recreation we should maintain a consciousness of God's presence, and carry out the apostolic rule—whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (*J. F. Kitto, M.A.*) *Recreation*:—Luther used to sport with his children; Edmund Burke used to caress his favourite horse; Thomas Chalmers, in the dark hour of the Church's disruption, played kite for recreation—as I was told by his own daughter; and the busy Christ said to the busy apostles: "Come ye apart awhile into the desert and rest yourselves." And I have observed that they who do not know how to rest do not know how to work. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Seclusion with Christ*:—It was a time of mourning. Our Lord had just heard of the death of a near kinsman; that lion-hearted man who had confronted a king in his adultery, and had given his life as a martyr. His death, with its circumstances, affected no doubt with more than common sorrow the tender, loving, most human heart of Jesus. Also it was one of those dangerous times in human life, at which the accomplishment of a difficult duty is apt to throw us off our guard, and through self-complacency to induce slumber. The apostles had just returned from a difficult mission, and had come back to report to their Master both what they had done and what they had taught. And for this third reason also. Theirs was a busy life, a life of great unrest at all times: "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." For some purposes indeed the world cannot be too much with us. With it and in it lies our work. To encourage the activities, to direct the energies. Besides which, there are not only virtues which can have no exercise but in society—there are also many faults which spring up inevitably in solitude. There are some influences of the world which need a strong counteraction. One of these is irritation. Another of these evil influences is what must be called, in popular language, worldliness. And there is this, too, in the presence of the world, that it keeps under, of necessity, the lively action of conscience, and makes any direct access to God an absolute

impossibility. A Christian man thinks it no part of religion, but the very contrary, to do his worldly business badly. If he is to do it well, he must give his thoughts to it. If he is to give his thoughts to it, the lively presence of high and holy topics of meditation is scarcely possible. The correcting necessity—"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." This seclusion may be either periodical or occasional. Think what night is, and then say what we should be without it. And that which night is, in one aspect, as a periodical withdrawal from the injurious influences of the multitude, that, in another point of view, and yet more impressively, is God's day of rest, the blessed Resurrection-day, the Christian Sunday. One He visits with a loss, and one with a misfortune, and one with a bereavement, and one with disease. But there remains just one caution. We must not wait for this seclusion by Christ Himself. If Christ comes not to take us aside, we must go aside to Him. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The higher use of retirement*:—And after the weary six days have seen him burning, glowing, sacked, replenished, and sacked again, Sunday comes; and thousands of men do on Sunday what railroads do—run the old engine into the machine-shop, and make the needed repairs, that it may be fit to start again on Monday. So men, dealing in the affairs of life, and coming under its excitements, go into retirement purely and merely to rest, simply to refit. It is a life that is not worthy of a man. It is a life that certainly is adverse, in all its influences, to the plenary development of that which makes man the noblest animal on the globe. We do not need retirement because we are so weary: we need it, and enough of it, and we need it under certain right circumstances, in order that we may think, consider, and know what we are, where we are, and what we are doing. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Retirement for observation*:—Then we need these periods of rest for taking new observations. Every ship that makes a voyage, after fogs or storms obscured the sky, seizes the first moment of starlight or sunlight to take observations. The seamen have been going by dead reckoning or by no reckoning, but when they get an opportunity to make an observation, they can very soon tell by computation where they are. (*Ibid.*) *Rest from one set of ideas*:—One fact which we cannot afford to overlook is that the instrument of the soul in all its mental and emotional workings is a material brain, undergoing with each modification of thought and play of feeling a corresponding molecular change. In common with every other bodily organ, its healthy activity is limited by its need of nutrition and sleep. Besides, the researches of men like Professor Ferrier have proved that there is a localization of faculty in the brain, so that persevering without intermission in one set of ideas has an effect upon it corresponding to the exclusive use of one set of muscles in another part of the body, with similar results also of disproportionate development and consequent incompleteness of mental character. These are only physiological explanations of the well-established facts of experience, that work without play induces dulness, that the bow must sometimes be unbent, that there must be in mental culture not only a rotation of various crops, but periodical fallows, or barrenness will be the result. In the name of morality and religion, also, a protest may be raised against unceasing and exclusive occupation for the welfare of others, as the ideal of a worthy life. God sent us into the world to grow and realize His own thought in creating us. If human welfare is an end of our existence, our own welfare is, at least, part of it. But it is inconsistent with our welfare to dwarf and repress any part of our God-given nature. We were intended to grow all round, on our north side as well as on the side that faces the sun. The sense of melody, the feeling of humour, the perception of beauty in form and colour, and the social instinct, are as much from God as our conscience of right and wrong. They are of immeasurably less importance, but of some importance, nevertheless. Their culture cannot be neglected, or their cravings repressed, without a corresponding loss of mental symmetry. (*E. W. Shalders, B.A.*) *The richer for rest*:—The first element of recreation is rest. Change of employment brings a measure of relief, but no change of employment will dispense with the necessity there is for rest. To suppose that the time spent in it is so much deducted from the world's welfare or our own is a great mistake. In a speech delivered by Lord Macaulay, more than thirty years ago, advocating a shortening of the hours of labour, he describes, in language as true as it is eloquent, the material advantages this country has derived from the observance of the Sabbath. He says: "The natural difference between Campania and Spitzbergen is trifling when compared with the difference between a country inhabited by men full of bodily and mental vigour and a country inhabited by men sunk in

bodily and mental decrepitude. Therefore it is that we are not poorer, but richer, because we have, through many ages, rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost. While industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrow, while the Exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machines, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and the Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labours on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed corporeal vigour. Never will I believe that what makes a population stronger, and healthier, and wiser, and better, can make it poorer." (*Ibid.*) *Retirement essential to the growth of true piety*:—There were two classes to whom this invitation was addressed—the mourners for John Baptist (*see* preceding verses, and Matt. xiv. 12, 13) and the triumphant apostles, exulting, excited, and perhaps unduly elated (ver. 30). I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE SAVIOUR MAKES THIS APPEAL. 1. On the Lord's day. 2. Frequent intervals during the week. 3. Seasons of sickness. 4. Various relative trials. II. THE NATURE OF THE RETIREMENT TO WHICH WE ARE INVITED. 1. Not simply withdrawal from others. You may live aloof from the world, and yet not be with Christ. 2. Not monkish seclusion. It was only "for awhile." Not like the hermits of the deserts. 3. To enjoy His sympathy. 4. To listen to His instructions; to learn His truth. 5. To feel the sanctifying effect of His presence. III. THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THIS RETIREMENT IS NEEDED—"They had not leisure so much as to eat." 1. Our physical nature requires it. 2. For our spiritual health. The late Sir E. Parry was remarkable for his regular observance of devotional exercise on board his ship, and equally for his skill and presence of mind in times of danger. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." There is much growth of a warm, still, summer's night, when the dew is quietly descending on the plant. 3. To prepare us for usefulness. Lamps must be secretly fed with holy oil. 4. To prepare us to be alone with Christ at last. (1) Here is a test for your state. Can you bear His presence alone. (2) Secure time for being alone with Christ. By rising early; by being less in company with the world; by planning how you will spend a day. (3) Assist others to obtain it. Let employers afford it to their servants. (*Studies*). *Rest awhile*:—It will amply repay the pilgrim to turn aside sometimes from the beaten track; for the incidental teachings of the Blessed Life, like the wild flowers of the glen, or the fern sheltering in the fissure, or the silver stream dripping from the rock, or the still pool with its myriad beauties, are no inconsiderable element in the attainment of that wisdom whose ways are pleasantness, and whose paths are peace. The lessons of the story are broad and obvious. Foregoing the lessons of this story as a whole, it will be profitable to give our attention to that one feature of it which is enshrined in the words: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." I. For with what graphic force do the words on which the Master's invitation was based DESCRIBE THE UNREST OF TO-DAY—"There were many coming and going." We meet it everywhere. On all sides one is brought face to face with work—exciting, bewildering, exhausting. This is not an eccentricity, an abnormal and therefore transitional phenomenon; it is a necessity of the times. The energy which at one time commanded a fortune is now needed to win one's daily bread. Inventions which once excited the wonder of the world are now regarded as curiosities. The scholarship which a century ago secured a European reputation now provokes a smile. This is growing upon us. Such a state of things cannot be viewed without anxiety. Physiologically, or from the standpoint of the political economist, this wear and tear of life is serious. In the home-life of to-day the absorbing interests of the outside world are telling with terrible force. But it is in its influence upon the moral and religious life that the present unrest is to be viewed with the gravest anxiety. The claims of the day upon a man's thought, energy, time, are not only perilous; they are fatal to the true and healthy growth of the soul; and where there is no growth there is decay. II. THE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST THE DANGERS OF THE PREVALENT UNREST AND EXCITEMENT which the words of the Master suggest—"Come ye . . . and rest awhile." For there is no peril, no necessity, to which the resources of Divine grace and sympathy are not adjusted. It might seem superfluous to dwell, even for a moment, on the imperative need there is for physical rest in these days when there are "many coming and going." (*R. N. Young, D.D.*)

Vers. 32, 34.—**And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved**

with compassion. *Christ's teaching the world's great need.*—I. THE PEOPLE. 1. The people saw Him. 2. They knew Him. 3. They ran afoot thither. 4. They outran and reached Him. II. THE LORD. 1. He came. 2. He saw. 3. He pitied. 4. He taught. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The compassion of Christ*:—I. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. Compassion is a branch or modification of kindness of heart, or of benevolence. Under the influence of it we enter into the circumstances and feelings of others; prompted to aid and relieve them. The term "compassion" signifies to sympathize, or to suffer along with others; and, therefore, while it is a most lovely affection, and the exercise of it yields the purest delight on the one hand; yet, on the other, it is always attended with uneasy feelings and painful sensations, and that in exact proportion to the strength of our compassion. Hence you will see, that when compassion is ascribed in Scripture, as it often is, to God, it must differ in some essential points from human compassion. We are compound beings, having not only bodies, but rational souls; and possessing not only the powers of understanding, will, and conscience, but instincts, affections, or passions. But "God is a Spirit" a simple uncompounded being. In Him there is no such thing as passion; and, consequently, no uneasy feelings or painful sensations can attend the exercise of compassion in Him. It is the benevolent and ready tendency of His gracious nature to pity and relieve the miserable, when this is consistent with His sovereign and wise pleasure. "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." This ready and benevolent tendency of nature, to pity and relieve the miserable, was one of the brightest and loveliest features in the character of the Saviour; and, from eternity, and as He was a Divine person, it was exactly the same in Him as in the other persons of the adorable Trinity. But in the person of Jesus Christ are now closely united both the Divine and human natures; and, thus, when He was in this world, in the form of a servant, and acting and suffering in our stead, compassion in Him partook of the nature and properties both of Divine and human compassion. He possessed not only the perfections of Godhead, but the sinless feelings and affections of manhood. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." In His present state of glory, He wears our nature, and will do so for ever; and He is said to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," yet, as His humbled suffering state is completely at an end, He is really and tenderly, though not painfully, impressed with our weaknesses, sorrows, and dangers. But the case was widely different with Him while in this world. It was then a part of His humbled suffering state to take our infirmities on Him, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. In His human nature, He felt our sorrows and wretchedness as far as His sinless and unsinning nature could feel them. He was then literally "moved with compassion." He felt as a shepherd does for his straying sheep; as a compassionate man for suffering humanity; as the incarnate Son of God, in the character of Redeemer, for perishing sinners. "And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." II. I SHALL SPEAK OF THE OBJECTS OF THE SAVIOUR'S COMPASSION:—1. Sinners of the human race were the objects of His Divine and eternal compassion. In common with the Father and Spirit, "He remembered us in our low estate; for His mercy endureth for ever." His compassion was not of the sentimental speculative kind, which leads many to say to the naked and destitute, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;" but to do no more. No. It was real, deep, operative. He pitied sinners, "and so He was their Saviour," and did and suffered all that infinite wisdom and justice saw to be necessary to procure eternal redemption for them. 2. During the time the Saviour was in this world, the condition of sinners daily moved His compassion. When He saw the widow of Nain following the bier of her only son to the grave, "He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." 3. All His people, even the best and holiest in this world, are the objects of His compassion. All need it. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." "For in many things we offend all." 4. The weak, the timid and doubting, are peculiarly the objects of His compassion—who are weak in the faith, who are of a fearful mind, who are harassed with temptations, and borne down with poverty and oppression, vexations and bereavements. Application: 1. Do you wish to have objects of compassion presented to your view? Think of the heathen. 2. This subject reads an important lesson to all ministers of the gospel. We should be imitators of the compassion of Christ. 3. Will sinners have no compassion on themselves? 4. Let weak and timid Christians be encouraged.

We have set before you the compassionate Saviour. Put your case into His hands. Trust in His compassion. (*Scottish Pulpit.*) *Pity more unselfish than love:* — We often speak of love as the ultimate passion, but there is a depth even beyond love. For love is largely its own reward, and so may possibly have an element of imperfection, but pity or compassion has not only all the glory or power of love, but it forgets itself and its own returning satisfactions, and goes wholly over into the sufferings of others, and there expends itself, not turning back or within to say to itself, as does love, "How good it is to love!" It may be a factor in the solution of the problem of evil that it calls out the highest measure of the Divine love; a race that does not suffer might not have a full revelation of God's heart. What! Create a race miserable in order to love it! Yes, if so thereby its members shall learn to love one another, and if thus only it may know the love of its Creator. In the same way it is man's consciousness of misery, or self-pity, that reveals to him his own greatness—a thought that Pascal turns over and over. Pity is love and something more: love at its utmost, love with its principle outside of itself and therefore moral, love refined to utter purity by absorption with suffering. A mother loves her child when it is well, but pities it when it is sick, and how much more is the pity than the love! How much nearer does it bring her, rendering the flesh that separates her from it a hated barrier because it prevents absolute oneness, dying out of her own consciousness, and going wholly over into that of the child whose pains she would thus, as it were, draw off into her own body! To die with and for one who is loved—as the poets are fond of showing—is according to the philosophy of human nature. Might not something like it be expected of God, who is absolute love? And how shall He love in this absolute way except by union with His suffering children? Such is the nature of pity; it is a vicarious thing, which bare love is not, because it creates identity with the sufferer. (*T. T. Munger.*) *Christ's pity embraced the unconscious suffering of men:*—It is not to be thought, however, that this Christly pity embraced only the conscious suffering of men. It is an undiscerning sympathy that reaches only to ills that are felt and confessed. We every day meet men with laughter on their lips, and unclouded brows, who are very nearly the greatest claimants of pity. Pity him who laughs but never thinks. Pity the men or women who fritter away the days in busy idleness, calling it society, when they might read a book. Pity those, who, without evil intent, are making great mistakes, who live as though life had no purpose or end, who gratify a present desire unmindful of future pain. Pity parents who have not learned how to rear and train their children: pity the children so reared as they go forth unto life with undermined health and weakened nerves, prematurely wearied of Society, lawless in their dispositions, rude and inconsiderate in their manners, stamped with the impress of chance associations and unregulated pleasures. "No! it is not pain that is to be pitied so much as mistake, not conscious suffering, but courses that breed future suffering. Who then calls for it more than those who have settled to so low and dull a view of life as not to feel the loss of its higher forms, content with squalor and ignorance and low achievement or mere sustenance? It is now quite common to say at the suggestion of some very earnest philanthropists that the poor and degraded do not suffer as they seem: that they get to be *en rapport* with their surroundings, and so unmindful of their apparent misery. This may be so, but even if the wind is thus tempered to these shorn lambs of adversity, it is no occasion for withholding pity. Nay! the pity should be all the deeper. The real misery here is, that these poor beings do not look upon their wretched condition with horror and disgust, that they are without that sense and standard of life which would lead them to cry, "This is intolerable; I must escape from it." Hence, the discerning Christ-like eye will look through all such low contentedness to the abject spirit behind it, and there extend its pity. Not those who suffer most, but oftener those who suffer least, are the most pitiable. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 35–44. **He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.**—*Miracle of the loaves:*—The miracles of Christ ought to be considered; they are not trifles, and they ought not to be passed over as if they were the mere commonplaces of a daily newspaper. Everything that has to do with the Son of God is worthy of deepest study. What He did at one time is an index to what He will do again when need arises. He is grand in emergencies, and will rather feed His sheep by miracle than let them starve. I. THE GUESTS. 1. Their great number. Feasting on an imperial scale. Five thousand gathered together, and all as easily provided for as

if there had been but five! 2. The strange character of the guests. A nondescript multitude, collected from all classes. Little good could be said of them, except that they had an ear to hear Jesus preach, and were especially glad if the sermon was the first course, with loaves and fishes for the second. But Jesus did not wait until men deserved it, before blessing them. Bad or good, the generous Saviour fed them all; and He is willing to do so still. 3. What the guests had in common. All hungry, and all poor. Yet Christ invites, and He provides everything. We only need to receive, to partake of the fruit of His compassion. II. THE ORDERLINESS OF THE GUESTS. They sat down in ranks. How were they marshalled so well? The Lord of Hosts was there; He knows how to marshal armies. Out of our disorder, Christ makes His order. However it may seem to us, God's purposes are being carried out, and at the right time we shall see that all has been done wisely and well. III. THE FARE SET BEFORE THE GUESTS. Bread and fish—a relish as well as a sufficiency. Christ is not content to give what is barely enough; He likes to give more than is actually required. You shall find in your dish a secret something which will sweeten all. IV. THE WAITERS AT THE FEAST. The disciples. He employs men to minister to men. What condescension! And what a blessed occupation for those whom He thus employs. V. THE BLESSING. Nothing without worship and thanks. Jesus must bless our labour, or it will be fruitless. Always give that look upward before you begin your work. VI. THE EATING. When Jesus provides spiritual meat He intends it to be used—eaten. If you put two canaries in a cage to-night, and in the morning when they wake they see a quantity of seed in a box,—what will the birds do? Will they stop and ask what the seeds are there for? No, but they each reason thus: "Here is a little hungry bird, and there is some seed; these two things go well together." And straightway they eat. Even thus, if in your right senses, and not perverted by sin, you will say, "Here is a Saviour, and here is a sinner; these two things go well together; dear Saviour, save me a sinner. Here is a feast of mercy, and here is a hungry sinner; what can that feast be for but for the hungry, and I am such. Lord, I will even draw near and partake of this blessed feast of Thine; and unless Thou come and tell me to begone, I will feast till I am full." We need fear no repulse. Jesus rejects none from His feast of love. Come and partake, and the more fully the better pleased will He be. VII. THE CLEARING AWAY. This teaches economy in the use of the Lord's goods. And when properly used, not only is there never any lack, but abundance over. Christ's power cannot be exhausted, no matter what the demands upon it may be. Come, for all things are ready. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Feeding the five thousand: a miracle*:—A grand display of—I. WISDOM. 1. A practical discipline of the Church in its great function towards the world. 2. A demonstration to the world of the principles and order of the Kingdom of God. II. POWER. 1. Creative. 2. Multiplying human resources. III. MERCY. 1. Bodily, in the relief of the hunger, consideration for the weariness of the multitude. 2. Spiritual, in giving spiritual bread, in teaching dependence upon God, and in enjoining economy of Divine gifts. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *A parable in a miracle*:—No less significant as parable than as miracle. Perhaps, indeed, the suggestion of spiritual things was its chief aim. It sets forth the physical and spiritual dependence of men upon God, and the Father's willingness and power to provide for His children; also the nature of principles of Divine mercy to mankind are suggested. I. THE POVERTY OF THE CHURCH. 1. In position. Desert. 2. In material supplies. 3. In spiritual resource. II. THE RICHES OF CHRIST. 1. Administered through the appointed means of grace. 2. Abundant to satisfy all demands. III. CONDITIONS OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION TO MEN. 1. Obedience. 2. Order. 3. Divinely commissioned service. 4. Prayer. 5. Faith. (*Ibid.*) *The multitude fed*:—I. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST. For the body as well as the soul. Where a want exists, those who first see it should seek to supply it. II. LOVE IS RICH IN RESOURCES. If the best use is made of existing means, they will insensibly multiply. III. METHOD IN BENEFICENCE. When we introduce order into our works, we reflect the law of heaven and imitate the thought of God. IV. IN GOD'S FEASTS THERE IS EVER ENOUGH AND TO SPARE. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *The miracle of the loaves*:—This miracle (1) teaches us that all feeding is from the Divine hand; (2) declares that God feeds men in tenderness and compassion; (3) points to those many processes of nature which are (like the disciples here) employed by Him to convey to us His gifts; (4) shows that, in God's gifts, the poverty of human means and natural resources hinders not the fullest satisfaction of our wants; (5) illustrates the economy which reigns in God's house: His gifts are precious in His own sight at least; (6) teaches the duty of thankful reception of all

He bestows. (*R. Green.*) *Christ the Sustainer of life* :—Jesus here manifests Himself as the Sustainer of life. As such—1. He works by making use of what appear to us to be ordinary means. No striking exhibition of supernatural power here. He takes the common food which God's providence had supplied, and in the distribution of that the whole multitude are fed. Possibly many present never recognized it to be a miracle at all. 2. He works by the ministry of men. Indeed, He was less visibly the agent in this miracle than were His disciples. The ignorant multitude might have imagined that it was they who were feeding them. But the disciples knew that it was Jesus only, and that they were but His instruments, carrying out the miracle only as far as they were acting in simple obedience to Him. 3. He works by order and method. 4. He recognizes that all must be done in union with the Father. He blesses that wherewith He would work, knowing that what the Father has blessed must fulfil its purpose. He gives thanks for it, knowing that to give thanks for a little is the way to make it become more. Application : (*a*) By such methods the Eternal Word, by Whom all things were made, sustains the natural life of the creatures of His hand. He works by the natural laws which He has Himself provided, and so withdraws Himself from common observation that the thoughtless multitude fail to recognize His presence, and regard not Him who is ever for their sakes multiplying by His hidden power our natural sustenance. He works also by the ministry of men, thereby teaching us our mutual dependence on one another. This we further learn from the divisions of the human family into nations and callings, which is part of His Divine order. All this sustaining work of the Eternal Word is done in union with the Eternal Father, from Whom and in Whom are all things. (*b*) By like methods the same Eternal Word sustains our spiritual life. By the simple means of grace, by the Communion of Saints, by the Divine Order of the Church ; by all these, under the blessing of the Father, the life of His Spirit in men's souls is ever being nourished. (*Vernon W. Hutton, B.A.*) *In ranks* :—The word here translated "ranks" indicates that the people were seated in "separate detachments," with sufficient space left to move freely between them. According to another etymology, however, it signifies "a bed of herbs or flowers," and its usage would then illustrate St. Mark's picturesqueness, the bright Eastern costumes of the compact masses upon the brilliant green having suggested to an eye-witness a close resemblance to a bright and well-ordered garden. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Christ's ability to do much with little* :—It is true that we have but our five coarse barley loaves and two small fishes ; in themselves they are useless. Well, then, let us give them to Christ. He can multiply them, and can make them more than enough to feed the five thousand. A cup of cold water—what a little thing it is ! Well, but will the world ever forget one cup of cold water which David would not drink, but poured upon the earth, because his men had risked their lives to fetch it him ; or the other cup of cold water which Sir Philip Sidney, although dying and athirst, gave to the wounded soldier who eyed it eagerly at the battle of Zutphen ? A grain of mustard seed—can anything be smaller ? Well, but when Zinzendorf was a boy at school he founded amongst his schoolfellows a little guild which he called the "Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed," and thereafter that seedling grew into the great tree of the Moravian Brotherhood whose boughs were a blessing to the world. The widow's mite ! When they laughed at St. Theresa when she wanted to build a great orphanage, and had but three shillings to begin with, she answered, "With three shillings Theresa can do nothing ; but with God and her three shillings there is nothing which Theresa cannot do." Do not let us imagine, then, that we are too poor, or too stupid, or too ignorant, or too obscure to do any real good in the world wherein God has placed us. Is there a greater work in this day than the work of education? Would you have thought that the chief impulse to that work, whereon we now annually spend so many millions of taxation, was given by a poor, illiterate Plymouth cobbler—John Pounds ? Has there been a nobler work of mercy in modern days than the purification of prisons ? Yet that was done by one whom a great modern writer sneeringly patronized as "the dull, good man, John Howard." Is there a grander, nobler enterprise than missions ? The mission of England to India was started by a humble, itinerant shoemaker, William Carey. These men brought to Christ their humble efforts, their five loaves, and in His hand they multiplied exceedingly. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Looked up to Heaven, and blessed* :—The king of the island of Toobow avowed an attachment to Christianity. In 1823 he went on board a British vessel, to pay a visit to the captain, and unconsciously conveyed a very forcible practical reproof to the party. He sat down at table to partake of some refreshment ; but,

although food was placed before him, he made a very observable pause; and, when asked why he did not begin, replied that he was waiting till a blessing had been asked upon the food. The reproof was felt, and the party were ashamed at being rebuked by a man whose intellectual attainments they considered far inferior to their own. They rose, and the king asked a blessing before they commenced the repast. *Carefulness even in small things*:—Here observe—1. God wastes nothing—in nature, in providence, in grace. 2. Thrift is duty. The wasteful have as little to give as the penurious. 3. Husbandry of joys is wisdom. Too late to begin trying to "gather up the fragments" when calamity has come. 4. Husbandry of time is duty. The men who do most in this world are those who waste least time. 5. Those who give, get more than they part with. Lend a boat to Christ, and you get a miraculous draught of fishes. Give him five loaves, and He will give you twelve baskets of fragments back. He that saves his money loses it; but he that loses it for love's sake, will keep it. (*R. Glover.*) *Feeding of five thousand*:—In this narrative we may note the following points—I. THE COMPASSION AND POWER OF CHRIST WERE FOR THE BODIES AND MINDS OF MEN. II. THE EXCITEMENT OF EXPECTATION PREPARES FOR THE RECEPTION OF GOOD. III. MATERIAL OBJECTS AND HUMAN AGENCY ARE EMPLOYED IN THE COMMUNICATION OF DIVINE GIFTS. IV. ORDER SHOULD BE OBSERVED, GRATITUDE EXPRESSED, AND LIBERALITY BE COMBINED WITH FRUGALITY, IN COMMON MEALS. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *Our duty to the multitude*:—Let us inquire what that part is, which belongs to us, analogous to that which devolved upon the disciples; and let us learn from the three lessons which are furnished, to magnify and exalt that saving mercy, of which we have been so long and so abundantly partakers. I. We learn from the text, in the first place, then, A CALL TO DUTY. The advancement of the kingdom of Christ is, or ought to be, the first object of every sincere Christian. II. But we learn, in the second place, A CALL TO FAITH. There is one essential difference, without doubt, between the case of the disciples and our own; the difference, I mean, of miraculous interposition. In the case of the disciples, a miracle was necessary; in our case, all is left to us. Did I say, all?—all exertion, all prayer, and all faith; but the blessing must unquestionably be added from above, or all is in vain. III. But I am anxious to summon your attention to the third and last lesson of the text, namely, ITS CALL FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. How great is our encouragement! Like the disciples, we have the Saviour, to whom we may look to bless the means we use, and to make the results glorious. (*W. Harrison, M.A.*) *The multitude fed in the wilderness*:—I. THE MIRACLE. 1. Power over the material world. This to material beings like ourselves is a concern of no small moment. Have the things around us any Master? If so, who is He? "The Lord Christ," answers the gospel. It follows that He can never be at a loss for an instant to punish us; also that the stores of nature are to us just what He pleases to make them. In the material world, as in the spiritual, His people are safe. 2. Notice also in this miracle the little value which Christ puts on sensual gratifications, on luxuries and what we call comforts. We have seen His power; it was evidently boundless. A word from His lips could have spread before this multitude all the delicacies of the East. But in calling His omnipotence into exercise for them, the only food He provides is the mean fare of the humblest fisherman. II. Let us pass on now TO THE FEELINGS WITH WHICH THIS MIRACLE WAS WROUGHT. 1. One of these was evidently a consciousness of power. Not that it was wrought ostentatiously, for the purpose of exciting astonishment or applause; it was a work of pure compassion, with no vain show whatever in it; nay, with a concealment of power, rather than a display of it. 2. We have thus looked at the author of this miracle as God; but He is as really man as He is God, and he feels and acts here like a dependent man; for mark further the spirit of devotion He manifests. "When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes," the evangelist says, "He looked up to heaven and blessed." Why this bringing of devotion to bear upon the trifles of life? Because God is in all these trifles. True religion is not an act, but a habit; not an impulse or emotion, but a principle; not a sudden torrent, produced by the snows of winter or the thunder-storm of summer; it is a stream ever running, varying indeed in its breadth and depth, but from the moment of its rise, ever flowing on till it reaches the ocean of everlasting life. Banish God from your meals, or habitually from anything, and you might as well banish Him from everything. 3. Notice also the munificence, the liberality, with which our Lord spread this wide board for this vast multitude. "The two fishes divided He among them all; and they did all eat and were filled." None were excluded, none were controlled, none went away dissatisfied. There was enough and to spare. And think not, brethren, that you

can ever exhaust the grace, or diminish the fulness, of your Almighty Saviour. III. THE TIME CHOSEN FOR THIS MIRACLE—"When the day was now far passed." The disciples were thus taught that they could do nothing for the hungry crowd. This mode of proceeding runs through all his dealings with us, whether in providence or in grace. He humbles us "under His mighty hand," before He exalts us; He breaks our hearts, before He heals. IV. And this is nearly the same truth that our fourth subject will suggest to us—THE PLACE WHERE THIS MIRACLE WAS PERFORMED. You discover then at once, brethren, the lesson we have to learn here—our richest supplies, our best comforts, are not the growth of our worldly prosperity, nor often the companions of our worldly ease; they come to us in situations and under circumstances, which seem to cut us off from every comfort and supply. Think of the deserts in which you have wandered. Outward affliction has been one of these. Spiritual sorrow, too, conviction of sin, is another wilderness; a dark and fearful one; none on earth more fearful. O never let us fear the desert, as long as we are there with the Lord Jesus Christ. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Food for the million:*—I. JESUS CHRIST AFFORDS US ALL OUR FOOD FOR BODILY SUSTENANCE. II. NEEDFUL FOOD IS ENSURED TO HIS TRUE DISCIPLES. III. SEE HOW CHRIST WOULD HAVE US RECEIVE OUR FOOD. 1. With thankfulness and decorum. 2. With generous distribution of it to others. 3. With frugal care of it. IV. THE MIRACLE IS A TYPE OF GOSPEL PROVISIONS FOR THE SOULS OF MEN. 1. Christ gives us spiritual food; as truth, righteousness, and love. 2. He distributes it through His ministering servants, and it multiplies in their hands. 3. It is superabundantly enough for all mankind. Therefore—(1) Come and eat with all thankfulness. (2) Freely hand it round to others. (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Christ's feast free:*—Christ's banqueting-hall was an open field, there were no walls or doors, or persons guarding the entrance: thus free is His feast of love at this moment. Whosoever will, let him come. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Order out of disorder:*—The original word used by Mark represents them as divided, like beds of flowers, with walks between, so that as a gardener can go up and down, and water all the plants, so the waiters at the feast could conveniently give every man his share of bread and his piece of fish without confusion. They sat down in ranks by fifties and by hundreds. Things do not look so orderly now, do they, as we see Christ through His Church feeding the multitude? There is a good work going on in the North of England, there is a revival in Scotland, there is an awakening in Ireland, there is a stir in the Midland Counties; but does it not look very like a scramble? Do we not seem to tumble over one another, instead of doing our work in soldierly order? A good work springs up in one place on a sudden, while religion is dying out in other quarters; the people are satiated yonder, and are starving only a little way off. We do not get at the masses as a whole, or see the Church progress in all places. Let us not, however, judge too hastily, for Jesus makes *His* order out of *our* disorder. We see a piece of the puzzle, but when the whole shall be put together and we shall see the end from the beginning, I warrant you we shall see that Christ's great feast of mercy, with its myriads of guests, has been conducted on a principle of order as mathematically accurate as that which guides the spheres in their courses. (*Ibid.*) *Salvation for us:*—Why flows the river, but to make glad your fields? Why sparkles the fountain, but to quench your thirst? Why shines the sun, but for your eyes to be blessed with his light? As you breathe the air around you because you feel that it must have been made for you to breathe, so receive the full, free salvation of Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Four thousand men to be fed in the wilderness:*—My brethren, the difficulty urged by the disciples is one not of bygone times only. I. It is a difficulty arising from numbers, and it is a difficulty arising from place. When from any unhappy cause, such as that terrible and most wicked war which is at this time raging in the new world, the supplies of trade and commerce are suddenly cut off from a large portion of our countrymen, how sad a meaning is given even in a literal sense to the inquiry in the text! What a burden is thrown upon private charity, what a burden is thrown upon the public resources, by a cry for bread, for the food of the body, going up from destitute thousands! And are there not some among us capable of feeling the same weight of difficulty in reference to things spiritual? And when our thoughts take a wider range, and pass to towns and cities in our own land where the population is counted not by hundreds, but by tens of thousands; when we think of that aggregate of ignorance, ungodliness, and sin, which a population of a hundred thousand or of a million of souls must present to the eye of a holy and heart-searching God, and then compare with it the few faithful ministers and

servants of God who are set to dispense the bread of life amongst that mighty multitude. The least we expect of the disciples is their own faith, their own obedience. If the prospect is discouraging, it must not be made more so by the faithlessness of the faithful: they at least must eat of Christ's bread, and assist Him in the distribution (so far as it will go) to others. II. We have to think also of the difficulty arising from the place; from the disparity between the scene which was before them and the food which was wanted. Bread here in the wilderness. When we apply this to spiritual things, two remarks will suggest themselves. There is an apparent contrariety between heavenly supplies and our earthly condition. We are here in a wilderness. There is an incongruity between the place and the promise. Rest in a changing world, happiness in a troublous world, the ideas are inharmonious and discordant. I appeal to some of you, my brethren, to testify that, though there may be contrariety in the ideas, there is no contradiction. Some of you have found that, though all else changes, God changes not; that, though all else is unrest, in Christ there is peace. You can already attest the truth of His words, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *Important lessons from Christ's procedure:*—1. The poverty of Christ. 2. The voluntary character of His privations. 3. His riches for others are brought into contrast with the poverty of His own estate. 4. The wants of the soul are first to be attended to—as most important. 5. Christ should be trusted with our temporal affairs—He has sympathy and ability. 6. Christ will succour us under the difficulties and hardships felt in following Him. 7. It is when the sagacity and power of man are confessedly inadequate that Christ interposes. 8. It is in using our natural resources that Christ communicates His gracious aid. 9. It is the blessing of Christ which makes anything serve its proper end. 10. The richness and pleasures of an entertainment do not depend on the costliness of the provision. 11. We can never come to Christ at a wrong time. 12. "The bread of life." "The living bread." (*J. Stewart.*) *Miraculous feeding of five thousand:*—I. A STRIKING VIEW OF THE SAVIOUR'S TENDER COMPASSION. Regard it in connection with—1. The disciples. "When I sent you without purse and script and shoes, lacked ye anything?" And they said, "Nothing." Now they have a new token of His fidelity and love. 2. The multitude. (1) The feeling with which they were regarded. (2) The cause of this feeling—"They were as sheep," &c. (3) Its consequences—"And He began to teach them many things." II. THE DISPLAY HE GAVE OF HIS ALMIGHTY POWER. 1. There was no misgiving. 2. There was no confusion. 3. There was no parade. 4. There was no deficiency. 5. There was no waste. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The lad's loaves and fishes:*—This miracle is remarkable—I. FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY NUMBER OF WITNESSES THERE WERE TO IT. II. FOR THE MYSTERIOUS PECULIARITY OF THE PROCESS IN WORKING. III. FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY AFFLUENCE OF ITS PRODUCTS. IV. FOR THE PROFOUND IMPRESSION IT MADE, AND IS YET MAKING. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Providential supply of food:*—Bishop Bascom was preaching on one occasion in a cabin which was at once church and dwelling. In the midst of the sermon his host, who sat near the door, suddenly rose from his seat, snatched the gun from its wooden brackets upon which it lay against the joist, went hastily out, fired it off, and returning, put the gun in its place, and quietly seated himself to hear the remainder of the sermon. After service was ended, the bishop inquired of the man the meaning of his strange conduct. "Sir," said he, "we are entirely out of meat, and I was perplexed to know what we should give you for dinner; and it was preventing me from enjoying the sermon, when God sent a flock of wild geese this way. I happened to see them, took my gun, and killed two at a shot. My mind felt easy, and I enjoyed the remainder of the sermon with perfect satisfaction." (*S. S. Teacher.*)

Vers. 45–51. **And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship.**—*Need of constraint from Christ:*—This does not mean that our Lord forced His disciples' wills, but that from being unwilling He made them willing to do as He desired. Reasons why they were loath at first to take ship without Him. 1. Because His society was very amiable, sweet, and comfortable to them, as they had hitherto found by experience; therefore they were unwilling to part from Him, though but for a time. 2. It seemed a matter against reason for Him to stay behind alone in a desert place, especially as night was coming on; therefore they were unwilling to leave Him there. 3. They knew there was in that place no other

ship or boat besides the one in which they were to pass over (John vi. 22); therefore they would have had Him go over with them in the same ship. 4. It may be also that they were afraid to pass over without Him, lest, if a storm should arise, they should be in danger. Once before, they had been in danger of drowning when Christ was with them; much more, then, might they now fear the worst, if they went without Him. (*G. Petter.*) *Backward to yield obedience:*—By nature the best of us are very slack and backward to yield obedience to the will of Christ, especially in such things as oppose our natural reason, will, and affections; in such commandments of Christ, we have much ado to yield obedience, and are very hardly brought to it. Though we have the express word and commandment of Christ, yet when the things commanded are contrary to our reason and will, we draw back, and are loath to obey Christ's will. We are by nature so wedded and addicted to our own reason, will, and affections, that we find it exceedingly hard to captivate them in obedience to the will of Christ as we ought. 1. Labour to see and bewail this our natural corruption. 2. Pray to Christ to subdue it, and to frame us by the power of His Spirit to more willing and cheerful obedience. (*Ibid.*) *The Christian life:*—I. WE MAY TAKE THIS AS A PICTURE OF THE STATE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH BETWEEN THE ASCENSION AND PENTECOST. The disciples were then for the first time launched without Him upon the sea of this world—powerless as yet to run the race set before them, and in darkness and uncertainty as to what might be their Master's grand design. But His eye noted from above their comfortless condition, and soon He came to them in the person of the Holy Spirit, to be not only their far-off Intercessor, but their present Guide and Helmsman, piloting them to the bright shore of eternal life. II. WE MAY ALSO SEE IN THE LITTLE FISHING-BOAT, TOSSED ON THE DARK AND STORMY WAVE, A LIVELY IMAGE OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE PRESENT DISPENSATION. There is usually in the life of each individual Christian a period of striving after grace, life, and power, which have not yet been communicated to the soul. But Christ will come if the soul remain stedfast. And then shall all things go well. The vessel, freighted with the presence of the Incarnate God, shall no longer be driven back by the violence of the winds, but make her way surely, if slowly, to the haven where she would be. III. THIS INCIDENT MAY, MOREOVER, BE REGARDED AS TYPICAL OF CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT. Much darkness and obscurity and perplexity now—the necessary tests of faithfulness and stability. But the day is at hand when all things shall be manifested in the light of the Divine Presence. Watch and prepare for that, by weaning the affections from earthly things and fixing them on Christ; also by exerting yourself to bring others into such a state as that they shall be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Toiling in rowing:*—I. ANALOGIES IN THE CHRISTIAN'S VOYAGE THROUGH LIFE. 1. How many earnest truth-seekers have been thus tossed by doubts and perplexities, with scarce one ray of light to guide them. 2. How many in the hour of spiritual awakening have passed through similar experience. 3. How many realize this amid the difficulties and temptations of life. 4. And others learn it in the hour of sorrow and suffering. II. CONSOLATIONS. 1. Christ knows all. 2. Christ loves ceaselessly. 3. Christ prays constantly. 4. Christ comes with deliverance at the right time. (*M. Hutchison.*) *Religious despondency:*—This word "toiling" is quite inadequate to express the full force of the term. One of the oldest of English versions has it, "harassing themselves." Tyndale renders it, "troubled." Alford suggests, "distressed," which is the best word of all, and the one which our new revision adopts—"distressed in rowing." Those skilled fishermen evidently had a hard time of it. They needed to put forth the most violent and persistent efforts in order to keep the small boat from being dashed to pieces before the hurricane. And of course they became positively tired out, and their faith had something like a melancholy failure. In religious experience we are often more disheartened than we need to be, because some perverse disposition misleads us to contrast our states of low enjoyment with remembered disclosures of high exhilaration under extraordinary excitement. The midnight of commonplace rowing appears more gloomy and unwelcome just because the previous noon was so abundantly blessed with gifts and graces. Our favours seem hopelessly dull, simply because they were so lately revived into unusual strain, and are now worn out by the exalted indulgence. The changes begun in the circumstances are continued in our bodies, and so these moods grow reciprocally depressing. What we mourn over as base coldness, sometimes is nothing but natural reaction. Oftentimes our most heavy seasons of despondency are brought about by mere physical illness, or unusual prostration from distemper or overwork. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ knows who have need of Him:*—

"He saw them toiling," so we read, and then we reflect how little reason these men had for being melancholy. "In our fluctuations of feeling," says pious Samuel Rutherford, "it is well to remember that Jesus admits no change in His affections; your heart is not the compass Christ saileth by." Our vicissitudes toss only themselves, and overturn only our pride, and that not perilously. Jesus' care remains steady. If it be dark, and He has not yet arrived, we may be always certain it is because He pauses among the trees to pray. We are to keep working and watching; for when He sees we are ready to receive Him, He will start directly towards us on the sea. (*Ibid.*) *Christ was seen in the storm*:—There was more dread than joy in the presence of the Saviour. They would not have been so much afraid had they been expecting Him, but the troubles of the night had made them forget His promise. Their terror is not, however, a thing altogether unknown in the deeper religious experience. For when a trouble comes upon the pious Christian, what is felt most sorely is not the outward calamity which his neighbours see, but an inward wound which comes from the conviction that God has actually forsaken him and delivered him over to the assaults of an unknown hostile spirit-power armed against him. There is no lesson harder to understand than that troubles are not signs of the wrath of God. Had the disciples seen that it was Jesus who was coming to them through the storm, they would not have been troubled; could we know that behind the storms of life there is the Saviour Himself near us, we should not have that vague yet bitter sense of the presence of a spirit of evil who is seeking to overwhelm us. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Christ's absence*:—I. Separation is sometimes required to prevent improper sympathy. II. Difficulties are to be expected, and weakness experienced, in the Christian course. III. Appearances awaken needless fear through inconsideration. IV. Christ speaks to encourage, and comfort, and give peace. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *The voice of Jesus in the storm*:—The design of religion is to make us of good cheer. We are surrounded by causes of alarm, but the gospel bids us fear not. And that which alone can enable us to be of good cheer amid sorrows is the presence of God our Saviour. I. THE DISCIPLES IN A STORM. 1. It is most likely that they did not understand the reason of the request (ver. 45). But they were *commanded*, and this was sufficient. It is the duty of Christians to do many things the *reason* of which is hidden from them. Our duty may even sometimes oppose our preferences. However delightful the company of Jesus must have been, the disciples gained far more by being obediently absent than rebelliously near. Obedience is the best kind of nearness. 2. The evening on which the disciples embarked was calm and fair. But the finest day may be followed by the stormiest night. 3. The frightened disciples in their storm-driven boat fitly represent the circumstances by which believers are often tried—disappointments, losses, cares, &c. Christian discipleship does not exempt from such storms (1 Cor. x. 13; 1 Peter iv. 12, v. 9). These storms may often rise against us, even when acting in direct obedience to the will of Christ. No difficulty must daunt us in the way of obedience. 4. While the disciples are battling with the winds and the waves, where is Jesus? (ver. 46). But they were not forgotten, nor are we. He watched them in the tempest, and He sees His storm-driven followers now. 5. When He sees the fitting season has arrived, He will appear for their deliverance (ver. 48). He may delay to reveal Himself, but not to succour and support them. 6. When He did appear to His disciples, the manner of His coming was so unexpected and strange that, instead of joy, their first emotion was terror. Like the disciples, we often mistake the form and presence of our Lord! II. THE TERROR OF THE DISCIPLES ALLAYED BY THE ENCOURAGING VOICE OF JESUS. "It is I; be not afraid!" In every event, important or trivial, in the estimation of man, He speaks, and says, "It is I." Recognize Christ more vividly in all your troubles. Look away from inferior agencies, or you will be sure to fear. The assurance of Christ's presence involves everything needed to calm the fears, and soothe the sorrows of afflicted believers. 2. It was the voice of power. 3. Of love. 4. Of wisdom. The faith which recognizes in all events the voice of Jesus is the true alchemy which transmutes all baser substances into gold. The storm is terrible in appearance only. 5. The voice which speaks to us in the storm is that of One who has Himself been tempest-tost. What strong consolation is thus presented to afflicted disciples! Shall we wonder or repine at affliction? 6. The disciples had often witnessed the efficacy of His voice. Nor is it altogether strange to us. Has never spoken in vain. All anxieties should subside at the sound. What could He say that He has left unsaid to calm our apprehensions? Believe the promises, and there will be a great calm. Conclusion: To those who are not disciples He does not say, "Be of good cheer!" You are in awful peril. He

is only with His disciples in the storm. No comfort for you while continuing "an enemy to God." Your condition and character must be changed. Let your eye gaze upon Jesus! He offers to screen you from the danger, and says to all who flee to Him for safety, "Be of good cheer!" (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*) *Toiling in rowing*:—I. CHRIST SEES ALL THE STRUGGLES OF HUMAN LIFE. The greatest battles are not those fought on the plains of the world and recorded in history, but those fought in courts and alleys by unfortunate men and women, who have to weather the storm of life without a friend. Christ sees every man's circumstances and heroism, &c. II. CHRIST SEES ALL THE STRUGGLES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. They are numerous, hard, continuous. He does not permit us to see all the difficulties of the future. Ply your oars. Watch and pray. III. IN THESE STRUGGLES, HUMAN AND DIVINE, CHRIST DOES NOT COME TO US AT ONCE. There was time for the development of character, for the exercise of faith, patience, &c. Christians often complain that Christ's comforts do not come sooner. It is not when we will, but Divine love is never late. There is a time for succour. Times and seasons are known to Him. IV. How HIS COMING AFFECTS US. He did not perform the miracle first, but said, "Be of good cheer." The Master's "good cheer" suited to all classes and conditions of His disciples, especially those who are liable to be dull, morbid, despondent, fearful. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The disciples in the storm*:—What is it which so often troubles our faith in the Divine promises? It is the fact that God does not direct events and things for the triumph of His cause, and that that cause seems often to be vanquished by fatality. This is a contradiction which confounds us. God wants truth to prevail; He commands His Church to announce it to the world; His design is here express and manifest, and when, to serve Him, His Church puts itself to the work, God permits circumstances to array themselves against it and hinder it. The wind was contrary! How many times have believers felt this! In the first centuries it was that periodical succession of implacable persecutions, scattering the flocks, immolating the shepherds, annihilating the Holy Scriptures, destroying in one dark hour the harvest of which the world had seen the admirable firstfruits. The wind was contrary! At the close of the Middle Ages, and under the influence of the scandals displayed in Rome, it was that mocking and profound unbelief which secretly undermined the Church to such a degree that, without a religious awakening, the world would seem to become heathen again under the breath of the Renaissance. The wind was contrary! Later on came the ardent and generous passions of the eighteenth century letting loose on the world a formidable tempest. In our days listen. Is the wind which comes down from the icy heights of positive science favourable to our cause? Is the stream which comes to us from the springs of our democratic societies sympathetic? Are you not often scared at seeing all the hostile powers which combine against Christianity to-day? Doctrines openly materialistic, grave or cynical atheism, harsh and disparaging criticism, rightful complaints too well justified by the infidelities of believers, prejudices, misunderstandings, blind passions,—do not all these announce, even to the least clear-sighted, formidable storms to which our actual strifes are only as child's play? Why does God allow His cause to be thus compromised? Why does not He, who is the Master of the waves, pacify the storms? That is one of those grievous questions which none of us can escape. Scripture replies to it in some measure. It has pleased God, says St. Paul, to choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. One would say that He wishes to show that the triumph of the gospel expects nothing from external things, from the impulse which comes from popular currents. We forget that Christ overcame the world only by raising against Him all its resistance, that the cross has been a sign of triumph only because it has been an instrument of punishment, and that in its apparent impotence and ignominy we must seek the secret of its power. The wind was contrary! But this was not the only obstacle the disciples encountered. Jesus Christ comes to them, but not till the fourth watch of the night, that is to say, near to the morning. Till then, we might say, He has forgotten them. It is in the last hour that He comes to succour them. History is like a night stretching across the ages; in all times believers are called to wait for God's intervention, but God delays to come, and that is the supreme trial of faith, greater perhaps than the opposition of men and even of persecution. The first Christians believed in the immediate return of Christ; that hope has often filled a generation of believers with enthusiasm. Already they saw the dawn breaking, they saluted the King of glory who came to deliver the Church and to subdue humanity. A dangerous excitement, a transitory fever in which imagination had more share than faith!

On coming out of those dreams, the enervated soul often despairs, and in a paroxysm of gloomy discouragement it doubts the truth, because it no longer expects its triumph. It must be said that God, who is the Master of time, has reserved to Himself to fix its duration, and that we are absolutely forbidden to bind it in our measures and limits. Now what is true of the history of humanity applies equally to each of us. When the night of trial begins, we want deliverance to be announced during the first watch. Why does God remain inactive and silent? Why those long delays and those unanswered prayers? Why that tranquil, slow, regular course of second causes behind which the First Cause remains mute and without effect? The violent emotions of great trials are less formidable than that pitiless monotony which enervates and wears out the secret springs of the soul. Now, precisely because this danger is so real we must forecast it. Let us know, beforehand, that that trial is in store for us. If God delays, wait for Him. At last Christ draws near. He walks on the waves before the disciples, but they, frightened, see in Him only a phantom, and emit a cry of terror. All the traits of this narrative may seem those of a striking allegory, and this last still more than the others. Often Christ has appeared to humanity as a phantom. That pure and holy image, all whose features unite in the eyes of faith to form the most ravishing harmony, that face which surpasses all those of the sons of men, and which traverses the centuries surrounded by a halo of righteousness, of purity, of infinite mercy, that being at once so real and so ideal, so real that none has left on earth a deeper impression, so ideal that no light has made His pale, that Christ has often awoke in those who beheld Him for the first time only mistrust, hostility, mockery, and more than one generation has hailed Him with a repellent cry. Let the writings of the most ancient adversaries of Christianity be read. Let one page be quoted to me in which a trace is recognized of the moral impression which the life of Christ produces to-day on every sincere conscience. We believe that they never contemplated Him; that their look was never stayed on Him in an hour of justice. They had the Gospels, they had the living testimony of the Church, and the history of Jesus was not yet disfigured by the iniquities of its defenders. It does not matter, they saw Him only through the thick cloud of prejudice and hatred. It was a phantom they fought against. The Christ of Celsus and of Julian, the Christ whom anti-Christian satire mocks, is a silly Jew, whose greatness no one suspects for a moment. Our century has seen the same facts reproduced in an entirely different form. To what did that vigorous and learned attack against Christianity tend, so cleverly led by Strauss, if not to make a myth of Christ and His work; that is to say, a mere conception of the human consciousness? Now a mythical personage is a phantom and nothing more. The supernatural Christ was to them only a phantom, and they would never have believed then that one day they would find light and peace at His feet. But in the midst of the gloom which envelops the disciples a voice is heard. Jesus Christ has spoken. He has said, "It is I; be not afraid." The apostles recognize that voice, and in the midst of the storm their hearts are penetrated with a Divine peace. It is the same at all seasons. There is an incomparable emphasis in Christ's sayings. Yesterday we were in trouble and anguish, to-day we hear and are subdued. Explain who can this phenomenon. It is a fact for which witnesses would rise to-day in all parts of the world. Here is the tempest of doubt. Here around you and into your very soul another night descends, envelops and penetrates you. It is the night of remorse, the memory of a guilty past which haunts and besets the human conscience. Here is the hour of suffering. Finally, here is death, death which for many of our travelling companions is the extreme end and the separation without return. He has spoken. Will you pay attention to this? I do not say, "He has reasoned, He has argued, He has proved." I simply say, "He has spoken!" Now it is found that everywhere and in every age there are men who are enlightened, soothed, consoled by this voice, and to whom it gives an invincible conviction, an immortal hope! (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *The contrary currents of life*:—The winds always seem contrary to those who have any high and earnest purpose in life. Careless sailors afloat on the currents, with no aim but the pleasure of motion, who can watch the play of the wavelets, and hear their musical splash, or gaze on the tints that gleam on the opalescent sea, find life a pastime—for a time. But those who have a course, a compass, a pilot, and are in haste on the errand of heaven, are kept to the full strain of vigilance lest winds should sweep them backwards; and often hand-weary, heart-weary, they are tempted to give up all effort to keep their course, content to drift with the current which sets back again to the for-

saken shore. An earnest purpose alone gives us the measure of the influences which surround us. I. We are able when thinking over this great matter, a life-course and its issues, to remind ourselves of THE GREAT LIFE-COURSE TO WHICH THE WINDS WERE EVER CONTRARY, which something seemed always to sweep back from its end. Without question, life is a hard matter to the earnest; the night is dark, the toil hard. Often the main support of faith is to look steadily to Him to whom the night was darker, the toil harder, and who is seated now a radiant Conqueror at the right hand of the throne of God. II. LET US LOOK AT THE BROAD FACT OF THE CONTRARINESS OF THE CURRENTS OF LIFE. I am not speaking of storms, but of the constant steady set of the current, which seems to keep us under perpetual strain. With some there is a lifelong struggle to fulfil the duty of some uncongenial calling, which yields no fair field of activity to the powers which they are conscious are stirring within. There are others who are crossed in their dearest hopes; life is one long, sad regret. There are others with a weak and crippled body enshrining a spirit of noblest faculty; with intense ardour pent up within. III. THE REASON AND RIGHTNESS OF THIS CONTRARINESS OF THE CURRENTS OF LIFE. God sets things against us to teach us to set ourselves against things, that we may master them. We are kings, and have to conquer our kingdom. IV. THE MASTER IS WATCHING HOW THE LESSON PROSPERS. Not from on high; not from a safe shore; but there in the midst of the storm He is watching, nay is walking, drawing nigh, in the very crisis of the danger and the strain. He enters the ship; the danger is over. A force stronger than the current is there to bear us swiftly to the shore. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Toiling in rowing*:—I. THE EFFECT OF RAPID TRANSITIONS IN OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES UPON INTERNAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. That had been a great day to these disciples. Their enthusiasm had been aroused by the magnificent miracle. But out here on the water they had no cheering alleviation of their work. Wet to the skin by the spray, cut to the bone by the wind, we cannot wonder that they speedily became fatigued and disgusted. II. THE CLOSE AND SOMEWHAT HUMILIATING CONNECTION BETWEEN WISTFUL SOULS AND WEARY BODIES which always has to be recognized. Our most heavy seasons of despondency are often brought about by mere physical illness, or unusual prostration from our work. III. THAT MERE FRAMES OF DESOLATE FEELING GIVE BY NO MEANS A RELEASE FROM THE PRESSURE OF DILIGENT DUTY. They could not let the boat drift. They had to use all their skill. IV. JESUS CHRIST, EVEN IN DARKNESS, KNOWS WHO HAVE NEED OF HIM. V. THAT JESUS CHRIST SOMETIMES DELAYS HIS COMING TO BELIEVERS TILL HE IS SURE OF A WELCOME. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ walking on the sea*:—The sovereignty of Christ over the forces of inanimate nature is the general truth illustrated in this miracle, which may be taken with the former one, also wrought upon the sea, recorded two chapters before. He made the liquid waves a pavement for His feet; at His command their fury ceased; as He stepped into the tossing boat there was a great calm. We may look at this sovereignty of Christ over the sea in three ways—literally, spiritually, prophetically, in each case drawing a lesson. Let me try in a few words to show this. 1. Literally. There can be no force of nature, however untameable by man, which is beyond His control. If it was so in the day of His humiliation, how much more so now in His glory and universal sovereignty. Under His rule now must lie all the physical elements and forces which play such an important part in the lives and fortunes of us all. Think of the importance of this fact. There are times when nature seems tyrannical, remorseless. The earthquake crushes hundreds of sleeping families beneath the ruins of their shattered dwellings. The volcano scorches and blasts the fair scenes of human industry. The storm strews the shore with wrecks and corpses; the hungry sea swallows up its thousands of victims. Pestilence depopulates whole districts; drought and mildew make barren the fields, and leave the tillers of the soil to starve. Explosions, conflagrations, collisions, great catastrophes to life and property, happen in spite of all precautions, and scatter around wounds, and misery, and death. It might seem as if nature went on its reckless course, heedless of human cries, rushing along on the iron lines of fate, on its fickle wheels of chance, without pity and without purpose. Here comes in the first lesson of the miracle. Despair, fear, even inquietude, may be banished, if all nature be in the hand of Him who died to redeem us. 2. Let us view the miracle spiritually. Nature's storms are emblems of storms in man's heart; and Christ's sovereignty over those is a pledge to us of His power to control these also, and reduce them to peace. If we have any true knowledge of ourselves, our own consciousness will tell us how greatly we need to experience the peace-giving power of our Redeemer. We cannot be ignorant that

human nature is discordant within itself, and that sin has set its faculties at war with each other. Times come when tempests blow in our own souls—tempests of temptation, and trial, and unbelief; times when our passions are violent and break away from control, or our fears rise and sweep wildly over us; times when inclination and self-interest fight fiercely against conscience, or guilt stirs up shame and remorse, and from one cause and another we are unquiet, restless, tossed to and fro, like the troubled surface of the sea beneath the smiting of the storm. And who shall lay to rest these tempests of the soul, and bring us to a holy calm and harmony within? The true and only Peacemaker is He who stood in the tempest-tossed boat, and said to the winds and the sea, "Peace, be still." 3. Once more, the miracle has a lesson for us when viewed in its prophetic aspect. Christ, Lord of the raging waters, stilling the violence of the storm, and bringing peace and rest to the tempest-tossed disciples, images His final victory over evil, and the salvation in which His redeeming work shall at last be completed. (*B. Maitland, M.A.*) *God present though not seen*:—In the novel, "Blessed Saint Certainty," a student, the son of a white father and an Indian mother, retires to the woods to seek communion with the Power above him. There, after many days, his Indian mother finds him talking to God, and crying to Him to reveal Himself. She sees that it would be a mistake to make known her presence; so she lies still among the brushwood, watching his struggles lovingly and sympathizingly, yet never uttering a word of help, And at last, when she judges it safe, she steals quietly away. God often treats His children in just that way. He, too, often sees that it is best to look upon the struggle, and to make no sign. So Jesus, in to-day's lesson, looked down from the hill and saw the disciples toiling all night in a storm which a word of His would have stilled. He meant that His disciples should learn a lesson from that storm. *Self-confidence to be learnt*:—It is usual, in some swimming-schools, to teach beginners by sending them into the water with a belt around their waist, to which is attached a rope which again is connected with an overreaching arm of wood. This is under the control of the swimming-master, and it is used at first to support the learner in the water; but as the learner gains confidence, the rope is slackened, and he is left to support himself by his own efforts. The master stands by, watching the boy's struggles, ready to note any sign of real danger. When danger is seen, the rope is again tightened—at the right moment, not before—and the boy is taken safely out of the water. Jesus knows just how long to withhold help, and just when to bring it. He came to the struggling disciples in the fourth watch of the night. *Failing to recognize Christ*:—The foolish child shrinks with terror from the sight of the doctor who comes to bring him relief. And we, sometimes, as foolishly fail to recognize, and shrink from, God's greatest blessings. A countryman saw, one morning, a gigantic figure coming towards him through the mist. He was about to flee in terror, when he noticed that the figure grew less and less as it approached. So he waited until it was near; and then found that he had been about to flee from his brother. Christ's disciples, through the mist of their fears, failed to recognize Him as He walked on the sea. *The worth of absent sympathy*:—There was once a young officer in a battle in India who was terribly wounded. The doctor ordered both his legs to be amputated (this was before the days of chloroform); and after the agonizing operation was done, and when the poor young fellow was laid exhausted on his bed, he at once asked for pen and paper, and wrote a letter to his mother. Doubtless during his sufferings there was present to his mind to strengthen him the thought of his mother, far away in England, and how she would feel for him. And if we gain strength from human sympathy, there is even more to be found in the assurance of Divine sympathy from our risen Lord and Saviour, who can send down His grace and the strength of the Divine Spirit. (*W. Hardman, M.A.*) The Lord can bear to see His followers distressed—to see them engaged in sore conflict with the enemies of His salvation, and yet not fly to their immediate succour; for secretly He is helping them. His tenderness is not weak, but moves according to the rules of perfect wisdom. (*J. W. Pearson.*) You are appalled, overwhelmed, and cry out with terror. But remember, it is Christ imperfectly known that terrifies: once understand and know His dispensations—once be thoroughly acquainted with the amplitude of His grace—once perceive how immense is His compassion towards the greatest sinners, how full and complete the price He has paid—and all this doubt and fear will vanish. And do we not often misunderstand the march of God's Providence? (*Ibid.*) Observe, moreover, they go forward. That had been a sin, a capital offence, if they had endeavoured to go back to the shore. And yet they were but a little way from it. Happy is that young Christian who, if,

after engaging in a course of real practical Christianity, after entering in the paths of piety and true religion, he speedily met with obstacles, speedily found himself overtaken with difficulties and distresses, still determined that he will struggle against them, that he will not be driven back by any difficulties, but that he will effect the good pleasure of the Lord, convinced that He will never forsake those that trust in Him. They might indeed have said, after toiling so long, "It is useless—we labour in vain—we spend our strength for nought—we never counted on this—we never imagined we were to engage in a service so arduous." O no; this is not their feeling; but having once engaged in it, they press forward; and He who commanded them to enter upon it, will assuredly succour them in due time. (*Ibid.*) *Be of good cheer, it is I:*—Christ would accustom them to hardship by degrees. They had before this been in danger at sea, but then their Lord was present with them; and though He was asleep, they had free recourse to Him to awake Him, and did so, with their cries (Matt. viii. 24, 25, &c.). But now they were without His company. But though their fears and troubles were great while Christ was absent, they were increased at His coming to them in so wonderful a way, walking on the sea to give them help. And how ready are our hearts to sink, even when God and Christ are about accomplishing our deliverance! 1. The Person that spake, the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Those to whom He spake, viz., His disciples in their present distress; and by them to all true Christians. Their thoughts were as much troubled even as the sea. 3. We may observe the kind nature and design of Christ's speech to them at this time. It was full of compassion, and tending to their support: Be of good cheer, do not faint, nor be afraid. 4. The argument He used to silence their fears and doubts, and give them relief—"It is I:" *i.e.*, One whom you have seen and known, and need not now distrust; One whose power and grace you have experienced, and on which you may still rely. 5. The time when He spake thus comfortably to them—"Straightway." In their greatest extremity He speedily reveals Himself to be their refuge; and raises their hope when their hearts are ready to fail. When believers are ready to sink under their troubles, 'tis the most powerful argument to their relief, to have Christ seasonably coming in, and saying to them, "It is I." I. WHENCE IT IS THAT EVEN BELIEVERS ARE APT TO SINK UNDER THEIR TROUBLES. 'Tis no uncommon case for gracious souls to be cast down and disquieted under pressing afflictions. But there is a peculiar anguish in the hour of death. As to the springs of this. 1. We are too prone to put far from us the evil day. 2. Death may find us in the dark as to our title to the life to come, or meetness for it. 3. Conscience in our last hours may be awakened to revive the sense of past sins, and so may increase our horrors and terrors. 4. Satan sometimes joins in with an awakened conscience, to make the trial the more sore. Lastly, God sometimes withdraws the light of His countenance: and how deplorable is the case that the soul must then be in! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If He speak peace, who can give trouble? And who could keep from fainting, did not Christ seasonably interpose, saying by His word and Spirit, "Be of good cheer, it is I." To proceed to the second thing. II. WHAT CHRIST THUS SPEAKS FOR THE RELIEF OF HIS PRESENT DISCIPLES, BELONGS TO ALL THE REST OF HIS SERVANTS. III. WHAT IS CARRIED IN THE ARGUMENT HERE USED, AND WHAT THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST MAY GATHER FROM IT FOR THEIR SUPPORT. In general, it notes His presence with them, and His wisdom, power, faithfulness, and love to be engaged for them. 'Tis the Lord that speaks: and so—1. 'Tis One that hath an unquestionable right to take from me, or lay upon me, or do with me, what He pleases. 2. 'Tis Christ that invites our regard to Him under every dispensation, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 3). 3. 'Tis He that steps forth and offers Himself to our notice, saying, "It is I;" One who hath purchased heaven for His believing followers, and is preparing them for it, and in the best way conducting them to it. 4. He that thus speaks has moreover said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John xiii. 7). 5. In Christ, who here speaks, all the promises of God are Yea and Amen: and He has bid His disciples to ask what they will in His name, and He will do it. It is I, your only and all-sufficient Redeemer, on whom your help is laid, and whose business and delight it is to succour and save. It is I, who died, the just for the unjust, that I might bring you to God; and who have undertaken that you shall not miscarry or lose your way. It is I, who can bestow whatever you need, and deliver you from all your fears, and keep what you have committed to me against that day, the day of My coming to judgment. "It is I, who live, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 18). Fear not to go down into the grave, I will

be with thee, and surely bring thee up again. It is I, who never yet failed any that trusted Me, and am the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. It is I, who am the resurrection and the life, with whom is hid your life in God; and though you lay down your bodies in the dust, when I who am your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Me in glory. A few words by way of use shall close all. 1. Are believers themselves so ready to sink under their burdens, what then can bear up the hearts of others? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 2. Seeing 'tis Christ's voice alone that can comfort the soul, how desirable is an interest in Him, and how earnestly should we labour after it? Lastly, let the disciples of Christ in all His dealings with them, dismiss their fears at His kind reviving voice, "It is I." It is I, who have all your times in My hand, and your safety as to both worlds at heart. It is I, whose power is over all things in heaven and earth, and that power is by unchangeable love engaged for you; and if this be enough to your comfort, be of good cheer, it is I, who call you now by My gospel to receive the benefit of it, further and further. It is I, who am entrusted with you, and may be trusted by you, as your nearest, best, and everlasting friend. (*D. Wilcox.*)

Ver. 52. **For they considered not the miracle of the loaves.**—*The miracle of the loaves*:—The disciples "were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered." Had the miracle of the loaves been duly considered, the inference from it must have been that He who had wrought it must be Lord over the whole system of nature, and could, therefore, whenever He pleased, bend the elements to His rule. I. There was another occasion on which Christ miraculously fed a great multitude. We read of His sustaining four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few little fishes. THERE WERE ONLY TWO OCCASIONS ON WHICH THIS WAS DONE. He showed Himself ready to heal all manner of sickness; but He showed no readiness to provide food miraculously. The reason is not far to seek. It was altogether one of the consequences of sin that men were afflicted with various maladies and pains, and that disease and death held sway in this creation. But it was not one of those consequences, that men had to labour for subsistence. Labour was God's earliest ordinance, so that Adam, in innocence, was placed in paradise to keep it. Had He dealt with men's want as He dealt with disease, removing it instantly by the exercise of miraculous power, He would have pronounced it a grievance that labour had been made the heritage of man; whereas, by the course which He actually took, He gave all the weight of His testimony to the advantageousness of the existing appointment. Universal plenty, yielded without toil, would generate universal dissoluteness. II. When He multiplied the scanty provision, and made it satisfy the wants of a famishing multitude, He designed, we may believe, TO FIX ATTENTION ON HIMSELF, AS APPOINTED TO PROVIDE, OR RATHER TO BE THE SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE. And how striking, in the first place, the correspondence between Christ, the multiplier of a few loaves and fishes, and Christ the expounder of the commandments of the moral law. It might almost have been excusable, had a man who lived under the legal dispensation, and had nothing before him but the letter of the precepts, imagined the possibility of a perfect obedience to the commandments of the two tables. It was a wonderful amplification. The statute-books of a nation are numerous and ponderous volumes; various cases as they arise demand fresh laws, and legislatures are either busy in making new legislations, or modifying old. But the statutes of God, though intended for countless ages, contain only ten short commandments—the whole not so long as the preamble to a single act of human legislation, and these ten commandments, breathed on by Him who spake as never man spake, amplify themselves into innumerable precepts, so that every possible case was provided for, every possible sin, every possible duty enjoined; and who can fail to observe how aptly Christ represented His office as expounder of the law, when He fed a multitude with the slender provision which His disciples had brought into the wilderness? But have not the virtues of the single death, the merits of the one work of expiation, proved ample enough for the innumerable company which have gathered round Christ and applied to Him for deliverance? And are not—if we may use the expression—are not the basketfuls which still remain, sufficient to preclude the necessity for any fresh miracle, though those who should crave spiritual food for ages to come should immeasurably exceed those who have already been satisfied in the wilderness? III. To the PRECISE EFFECT WHICH A WANT OF CONSIDERATION PRODUCED IN THE CASE OF THE APOSTLES, AND WHICH IT IS JUST AS LIKELY TO PRODUCE IN OUR OWN. It is

evident that the miracle of the loaves is referred to by the sacred historian, as so signal a display of Christ's power that none who witnessed it ought to have been surprised at any other. The thing charged against the apostles is that they were amazed and confounded at Christ stilling the winds and the waves, though they had just before seen Him produce food for thousands; and the thing implied is—for otherwise there would be no ground for blame—that the miracle of the loaves should have prepared them for any further demonstration of lordship over nature and her laws. Thus the miracle of the loaves should have sufficed to destroy all remains of unbelief, and should have furnished the apostles with motives to confidence under the most trying circumstances, and a simple dependence on the guardianship of the Saviour, whatever the trials to which they were exposed. And why is it that we ourselves adopt not His reasoning? Why is it that we do not similarly argue from the loaves to the storm—from the mighty works of the atonement to the manifold requirements of a state of warfare and pilgrimage? Ah, if we did, could there be that anxiety, that mistrust, those fears, those tremblings, which we too often manifest when pains and troubles come thickly upon us? No, no; it is because we look not on the cross, because we forget the agony and bloody sweat and passion of the Redeemer, that we shrink from the storm and are terrified by the waves. We consider not the miracle of the loaves, and then, when the sky is dark, and the winds fierce, we are tempted to give ourselves up for lost. (*H. Melvill.*) *Forgotten mercies*:—Hard hearts and painful unbeliefs spring up in the waste places where we bury our forgotten mercies. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Consider the past*:—Neither earth nor heaven, time nor eternity, yields choicer gems of thought than the achievements of our Lord. (*Ibid.*) *Past action an index to future help*:—Since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, what He did at one time ought to be well considered, because it is the index of what He is prepared to do again should need arise. His accomplished wonders have not spent His strength, He has the dew of His youth still upon Him. Our Samson's locks are not shorn, our Solomon has not lost His wisdom, our Immanuel has not ceased to be, "God with us." (*Ibid.*) *The inconsideration of the disciples*:—"They considered not the miracle of the loaves."—At first sight this may seem almost as marvellous as the miracle itself. I. IT IS BY NO MEANS DIFFICULT TO DISCOVER A VERY SATISFACTORY REASON WHY THE DISCIPLES SHOULD BE MUCH LESS AFFECTED BY THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND, THAN BY THE WALKING UPON THE WATER AND THE SUDDEN STILLING OF THE TEMPEST. 1. The former was a miracle wrought in the open day, when there was nothing to disturb the imagination, or to awaken fear. It was, moreover, not a sudden effect, but a gradual operation; not a shock upon the senses, but a gentle and continuous appeal to them; and would thus be far too calm and quiet in its general character to produce anything like that turbulence of emotion which the latter miracles would excite, aided as they were by the presence of danger, the confusion of the storm, the horror of darkness, and all that sublimity of circumstance with which they were accompanied. This, however, though it may afford an explanation of their excessive amazement, is far from explaining their total inadvertency to that great miracle at which they had so recently been present; and which, had it occurred to their memory, as it manifestly ought, would speedily have recalled them from their transport. 2. The evangelist accounts for this, by saying that their heart was hardened. They had become so accustomed to the sight of their Master's mighty works that they had ceased to regard them with any peculiar interest, or to attach to them any peculiar importance. Every one is aware of the influence of familiarity with the great and astonishing, in abating the impressions they originally produce. How little, for instance, are any of us affected by the sublime spectacle of the universe around us! Even the conclusion which, beyond all others, one would have thought it impossible to escape—the conviction of His omnipotence—they seem far from having practically realized. Some exception from the full weight of this censure may perhaps be made in favour of Peter, who, on various occasions, discovered a certain boldness and force of apprehension, which we look in vain for in his fellow-disciples. 3. Our Lord knew all this, and felt the necessity of reviving their early feeling of wonder, in order to rouse them from that mental inactivity, that slumberous inconsideration, into which they had fallen. Hence He sent them away, &c. Astonishment opens the eyes of their understanding to at least some temporary recognition of His greatness, for now, says St. Matthew, they "came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God!" But they speedily relapsed into their old habit of inconsideration. To this, accordingly, He frequently addressed Himself, and sometimes in a tone of the strongest expostulation and reproof

(Mark viii. 15–21). II. THE PRACTICAL IMPORT OF THE SUBJECT IN APPLICATION TO OURSELVES. 1. We ought to derive a strong corroboration of our faith in the gospel. How unfit were the disciples for the great work for which, nevertheless, they were set apart. What can we say to the story of their success, &c, but "This is the hand of God." 2. Their heedlessness of mind ought to come directly home to our own bosoms, and awaken us to the necessity of earnest and serious reflection. Familiarity has produced the same effects upon many of us. So with respect to the volume of Scripture generally. 3. There are methods in the order of Divine grace by which we are at times roused from that insensibility and heedlessness to which we are prone, and the remedy which the Lord adopted in the case of the disciples is strikingly symbolical of the manner in which He still condescends at times to deal with us. Affliction and fear, under the gracious direction of the Divine Spirit, are at times the most efficient of all interpreters of Scripture. 4. The gospel, when it does not soften the heart, hardens it, &c. (*J. H. Smith.*)

Vers 53–56. **They laid the sick in the streets.**—*The multitude in affliction*:—I. A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, INHABITATED BY A MULTITUDE OF SICK. II. A PROMPT RECOGNITION OF A FORMER BENEFACTOR—"They knew Him (Matt. ix. 35, xi. 20–24; Mark iii. 7–11). III. ENERGETIC EXERTION—"And ran, &c." IV. AN AFFECTING PICTURE OF HUMAN HELPLESSNESS—"Began to carry about," &c. V. AN ADMISSION THAT HEALING VIRTUE DWELT ALONE IN CHRIST. VI. THE INFALLIBLE NATURE OF THE REMEDY. (*F. Wagstaff.*) *Jesus and His fulness*:—I. THE LANDING. Wherever the Son of God landed there was blessing, peace, health, liberty. II. THE RECOGNIZING—"Straightway they knew Him," "If thou knewest," &c. III. THE GATHERING. IV. THE TOUCHING. V. THE HEALING. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Touch Jesus and be healed*:—1. The touch was needy. 2. The touch was wise. 3. The touch was prompt. 4. The touch was believing. 5. The touch was personal. 6. The touch was unrestricted. There was no exception to the healing. 7. The touch was efficacious. No failure. 8. The lost will be inexcusable. (*J. Smith.*) *A crowd of eager applicants*;—It was after a walk through the village of Ehden, beneath the mountain of the cedars, our last Syrian expedition, in which we visited several of the churches and cottages of the place, that we found the stairs and corridors of the castle of the Maronite chief, Sheykh Joseph, lined with a crowd of eager applicants, "sick people taken with divers diseases," who, hearing that there was a medical man in the party, had thronged round him, "beseeching him that he would heal them." I mention this incident because it illustrates so forcibly these scenes in the gospel history, from which I have almost of necessity borrowed the language best fitted to express the eagerness, the hope, the anxiety of the multitude who had been attracted by the fame of this beneficent influence. It was an affecting scene; our kind doctor was distressed to find how many cases there were which with proper medical appliances might have been cured; and on returning to the ship, by the Prince of Wales' desire, a store of medicines was sent back, with Arabic labels directing how and for what purpose they should be used. (*Dean Stanley.*) *Spiritual healing*:—I. THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH AN APPLICATION TO CHRIST. 1. You have a disease of guilt upon you. 2. You have a disease of corruption upon you. II. THE MANNER OF IT. 1. They persuaded themselves that Christ was able to do this thing for them. 2. They put themselves in His way. 3. Those who could not come of themselves, sought the help of their stronger neighbours; none of them were so unfeeling as to refuse the needful aid. 4. They earnestly prayed for the blessing which they desired. 5. They complied with the simple method which was prescribed. This was to touch Him. III. THE CERTAIN SUCCESS OF IT—"Made whole." (*J. Jowett, M.A.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 1–16. **Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the Scribes.**—*Scribes and Pharisees coming to Christ*:—I. WHEN THEY CAME. When Gennesaret turned its heart toward Him. When diseased bodies had felt the virtue of His touch, and imprisoned souls had been set free by His word. *Then.* As soon as ever the Church's Child was born, the devil sought to drown Him (Rev. xii). II. WHO THEY WERE THAT CAME. Pharisees and scribes. The learned and the religious. These

two classes have always been the greatest opponents of Christ's kingdom. III. WHENCE THEY CAME. From Jerusalem. Machiavel observed that there was nowhere less piety than in those that dwelt nearest to Rome. "The nearer the Church, the farther from God." "It cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem." IV. WHERE THEY CAME. To Jesus. As the moth flies at the lamp, and bats fly at the sun. What a contrast between such a coming and those named in chap. vi. 56. "I will draw all men unto Me." (*L. Palmer.*) *The tradition of men:*—It is the folly of men that, in discharge of the duties of religion, they are satisfied to put ceremonies and confessions that cost but little, in the place of righteousness of heart and life which cost a great deal. I. There is to-day an ECCLESIASTICAL ritualism, which is disastrous to piety. It starts with the assumption that its methods of worship are the best possible; and, after a little, declares they are the only ones acceptable to God. The Church usurps the place of Christ. Of any church that estimates ritual above character, that endeavours to build up form rather than shape life, Christ says, "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your tradition." II. There is to-day a SOCIAL ritualism, which is disastrous to true piety. Public opinion is a power; it has its theory of religion. Certain things done, and certain others left undone, are the credentials of piety. Men's actions are the only things taken into account, not the men themselves. Society has agreed that a little honesty, a little charity, and church-going, shall be accepted as religion. Such reject the commandment of God that they may keep their tradition. III. There is a ritualism of PERSONAL OPINION, which is disastrous to true piety. Every man has his own idea of the conditions on which he personally may be right with God. They forget that it is for God to decide what is satisfactory to Him. It is sometimes argued that, since there are so many opposite theories and conflicting creeds, our acceptance or rejection of what is called religion cannot be of much importance. But religion is a simple matter. Piety is the being and doing what God has commanded; just that; nothing more and nothing less. Those commandments are few, brief, intelligible. Whatever vagueness and confusion there may be in our ideas of religion, it is of our own making. Let God speak for Himself, and listen only to Him, and all is plain. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Tradition accumulates rubbish:*—Accepting the traditions of men as our rule, we get to be heirs of a vast deal of rubbish. Just as around the anchored rock in the ever-swinging tide, there gathers all sorts of *débris*, floating fragments of wrecks, drifting grass and weeds, with perhaps now and then some bright sea-blossom, or shell of beauty cast up by the heave of the surge—so a church that takes as pattern of its creed and ceremonial the belief and methods of men of other times, is sure to be cumbered with a mass of outworn mistakes, the refuse and driftwood of centuries, with here and there a suggestion of world-long value, but as a whole, out of date and useless. (*Ibid.*) *Tradition conceals truth:*—Each generation encumbered the divinely ordained ritual with its own comments; so after awhile men's notions overgrew and hid from sight God's thought, as some wild vine in the forest wreathes its fetters of verdure around the hearty tree, interlacing and interknotting its sprays, looping mesh on mesh of pliant growth, till the tree is smothered and hidden, and the all-encompassing vine alone is seen and seems to have life. (*Ibid.*) *Perverted tradition the bane of the Church:*—It is a subtle artifice of the Great Enemy of mankind, to make the real Word of God of none effect by means of a pretended Word. When he cannot prevail with men to go contrary to what they know to be the Word which came from God, then he deals with them as he taught his lying prophet to deal at Bethel with the prophet of God who came from Judah. When Jeroboam "said to the Man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward," the prophet resolutely repelled the invitation: "If thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place; for so was it charged me by the Word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water." An old prophet, however, followed the man of God, and gave him a like invitation, and received a like refusal. But, when the great deceiver put a falsehood into the mouth of the wicked old man: "I am a prophet also, as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the Word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water,' but he lied unto him"—the lie proved fatal! "He went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water" (1 Kings xiii.). The Man of God was greatly to be pitied, yet he was greatly to be blamed. He had received it explicitly from God that he should neither eat nor drink in idolatrous Bethel; and it was his plain duty to adhere to that command, unless God repealed it in the same

way in which he gave it, or with equal evidence that such was His will; whereas he believes an old man of whom he knows nothing, on his own word, under suspicious circumstances, and in opposition to what had been the Word of God to himself. While a direct and palpable temptation to go contrary to God's command was offered, he resisted and repelled the temptation; but when a temptation was offered, which came as a repeal of the command and in relief of his necessities, though on no sufficient authority, then his weakness prevailed. Why, think you, were lying prophets permitted? Why are lying teachers still suffered? Why, even lying wonders? To try the state of men's hearts. Is your heart, by the grace of God, made humble and teachable? then will you be taught of the Spirit "to discern the things which differ"—to detect the fallacies and delusions practised upon it—and "to approve the things which are more excellent." Is your heart self-sufficient, careless, carnal? then will it be deceived and led astray by plausible and flattering pretences. In contending that the Scriptures are the sole rule of faith, we give them exclusive authority over the judgment and the conscience. This authority lies in the real sense, and the just application of that sense, not in any sense or application contrary to that which is just and true, and which man may seek to impose. This sense is to be ascertained, and the right application of it is to be learnt by humble, teachable, diligent, and devout study, with the use of all needful helps thereto. The influence of the Scriptures on the *heart* is the special work of Him who dictated them. The blessing of God is needful to our success in endeavouring to ascertain the sense and right application of them; but so great are the obstacles to our "receiving with meekness the engrafted Word," that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our hearts" by the special grace of the Holy Spirit, in order to our feeling the transforming influence of the light of the knowledge of His glory, as seen in the face of Jesus Christ. No consent of man in any interpretation or application of Scripture is of binding authority on others. Consent is often contagious—not enlightened. The influence of leaders, the supposed interests of party, early associations, and prejudices, often bias the judgment. But the unerring standard remains. And the deviations of churches, and councils, and nations, from this standard, and the continuance of those deviations for ages, cannot deflect this standard one jot or tittle from its rectitude. But while no consent of men can bind of authority to any interpretation or application of Scripture, yet those views of truth which are commended to us by the consent in them of varied bodies of enlightened and devout men, come to us under a just and commanding influence. (*J. Pratt, B.D.*) *Ceremonialism and spirituality*:—I. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES WASHING WITH WATER FOR PURITY OF HEART. II. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS FOR THE COMMANDS OF GOD. III. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES THE WORSHIP OF THE LIPS FOR THE WORSHIP OF THE HEART. IV. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES A SUBTLE EVASION FOR FILIAL DUTY. V. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES AVOIDANCE OF UNCLEAN FOOD FOR AVOIDANCE OF IMPURE AND MALICIOUS THOUGHTS. Application: It is possible to be, in a sense, religious, and yet, in a deeper sense, sinful, and out of harmony with the mind and will of God. None is wholly free from the temptation to substitute the external, formal, apparent, for the faith, love, and loyalty of heart required by God. Hence the need of a good heart, which must be a new heart—the gift and creation of God by His Spirit. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *The tradition of men* versus *the commandments of God*:—In the conflict between the Church and the sacred relationships of common life, to the latter must be assigned the pre-eminence. The necessities of the temple, of its services or its servants, must not be met at the expense of filial faithfulness. The sin of the Pharisees and scribes was—I. A GROSS PERVERSION OF THE RELATIVE CLAIMS OF THE PARENT AND THE CHURCH. II. A WICKED INTERFERENCE WITH THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE. III. A CRUEL UNDERMINING OF FILIAL AFFECTION AND FIDELITY, AND AS CRUEL AN EXPOSURE OF THE AGED AND ENFEEBLED PARENTS TO A FALSELY-JUSTIFIED NEGLECT. IV. AN UNWARRANTED USURPATION OF AUTHORITY TO WEAKEN THE OBLIGATION OF A DIVINE LAW. (*R. Green.*) *The religion of the Jews*:—The interference of the Pharisees and scribes served to bring out their religion. Consider some of its features. The religion here depicted and condemned—I. CONSISTED MAINLY OF EXTERNAL OBSERVANCES (vers. 2–4). 1. By this feature the same system of religion may be detected in the present day. 2. Religion in this sense is upheld by many strong principles in the nature of man—awakened conscience, self-righteousness, vanity. 3. This system is exceedingly dangerous. Misleads the awakened sinner; produces a deep and fatal slumber. II. RESTS ON HUMAN AUTHORITY AS ITS WARRANT (vers. 3, 5, 7). 1. By this feature

we may detect it in the present day. Among those who take away the right—duty—and exercise of private judgment. Among those who derive their religious belief from man—in whatever way. 2. This form of false religion is exceedingly dangerous. It dishonours Christ as a prophet, &c. It gives despotic power to man, which he is not qualified to wield. It degrades the soul to be a servant of servants, &c. 3. Call no man master. III. PUTS DISHONOUR UPON THE SACRED SCRIPTURES. 1. By this feature we detect its existence now. In the Church of Rome, &c., the Scriptures are wholly concealed—made to speak according to tradition and the Church. Amongst ourselves: opinions are not surrendered to them, and they are neglected. 2. This form of religion stands opposed to those Scriptures which it dishonours (John v. 39, and others). 3. Know the Scriptures and revere them. IV. MADE LIGHT OF THE MORAL LAW (vers. 8-12). 1. May be seen in our own day—in the Church of Rome. May be seen, amongst ourselves, in those who put religious ceremonies in the place of moral duties. 2. This form has its origin in the love of sin, and is accommodated to an unsanctified heart. 3. It has no tendency to purify, but the reverse. 4. Beware of Antinomianism. V. CONSISTED IN HYPOCRISY, putting on appearances. VI. WAS VIGILANT AND JEALOUS OF CHRIST, AND CENSURED HIS DISCIPLES (vers. 1, 2). (*Expository Discourses.*) *Unwashen hands*:—It was laid down that the hands were first to be washed clean. The tips of the ten fingers were then joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, then turned down, so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was poured on them as they were lifted up, and twice again as they hung down. The washing itself was to be done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. When the hands were washed before eating, they must be held upwards, when after it downwards, but so that the water should not run beyond the knuckles. The vessel used must be held first in the right, then in the left hand; the water was to be poured first on the right, then on the left hand; and at every third time the words repeated, "Blessed art thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands." It was keenly disputed whether the cup of blessing or the handwashing should come first; whether the towel used should be laid on the table or on the couch; and whether the table was to be cleared before the final washing or after it. (*Geikie's Life of Christ.*) *The tradition of the elders*:—The excess to which these regulations were carried is well illustrated by what is told of one Rabbi Akaba, who, in his dungeon, being driven by a pittance of water to the alternative of neglecting ablution or dying with thirst, preferred death to failing in ceremonious observance. *Moses commanded washing very freely*:—But it was always in connection with some very definite cause; being required either (1) because of physical pollution which had been gathered, or (2) in connection with moral consecration which was purposed. The priests at consecration were washed. So was the leper after his recovery, and so were all after defilement or contact with those defiled. But the tradition of the elders had come to require as many washings in a day as Moses would have required in a month. The secret of this development lay in the adoption of the principle of "The Hedge," *i.e.*, something which guarded the Law by prohibiting not only actions forbidden, but all actions which might by any possibility lead to them. Accordingly, because Moses said that he who was defiled by contact with a corpse should wash, they held it was well to wash always after being out of doors, as you might have touched some one who might have touched some one or something dead. . . . . Thus life became a very slavery. Of course "the common people," as they were contemptuously styled, could not afford either time, or thought, or money, to practise such scruples. But a great number associated themselves together, calling themselves "Haberim," or "Comrades," to observe these scruples. The Pharisees belonged to this society, of course, to a man. (*R. Glover.*) *Pharisaic prejudice*:—These Pharisees found fault because Christ's disciples did not obey man's law, the quoted "tradition," the authority of their Church. It was not until the great (seventh) Earl of Shaftesbury was twenty-five years of age that he supposed that any one outside the Church of England was worth listening to, or ever wrote anything worth reading. "As to their having any views of their own worthy of consideration," he says, "it never crossed my mind until one day I got hold of a copy of some Commentary, and, after reading for awhile with great interest, it suddenly struck me, 'The writer must have been a rank Dissenter!' and I instantly shut up the book, recoiling from it as I would from poison. One of the first things that opened my eyes was reading of Doddridge being condemned as a Dissenter, and I remember exclaiming, 'Good heavens! how will he stand in the day of judgment at the bar of God, as compared with Pope

Alexander VI.?' It was not till I was twenty-five years old, or thereabouts, that I got hold of Scott's 'Commentary on the Bible,' and, struck with the enormous difference between his views and those to which I had been accustomed, I began to think for myself." *A hypocrite*:—A hypocrite has been likened to one who should go into a shop to buy a pennyworth, and should steal a pound's worth; or to one who is punctual in paying a small debt, that he may get deeper into our books and cheat us of a greater sum. (*T. Manton.*) *Hypocrites perform small duties and neglect great*:—Hypocrites make much ado about small things that they may be more easy in their consciences while living in great sins. They pay the tithe of mint to a fraction, but rob God of His glory by their self-righteousness. They give God the shells, and steal the kernels for their own pride and self-will. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Heart worship required*:—God requires soul worship, and men give Him body worship; He asks for the heart, and they present Him with their lips; He demands their thoughts and their minds, and they give him banners, and vestments, and candles. (*Ibid.*) *Perverse penances*:—No matter how painful may be the mortification, how rigid the penance, how severe the abstinence; no matter how much may be taken from his purse, or from the wine vat, or from the store, he will be content to suffer anything sooner than bow before the Most High with a true confession of sin, and trust in the appointed Saviour with sincere, child-like faith. (*Ibid.*) *Faith and works reversed, or the plant upside down*:—Some time ago a lady showed me a small seedling acacia, remarking, "I cannot make this plant out; it doesn't do well at all; it doesn't grow a bit, though I water it well, and attend to it carefully." I looked at the plant, and soon discovered the cause. The little plant had a tap-root, as all seedlings have, and this tap-root should have been inserted in the soil, where it would soon have struck out its lateral rootlets; but, instead of this, the plant was upside down, the leading root being in the soil, and the tap-root exposed to the sun and air. It was impossible that the plant could grow or even live. It is thus with some people's religion. (*Sword and Trowel.*) *In what sense worship is voluntary*:—The duties of worship ought to be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to constrained; but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to instituted or appointed. God doth no more approve of that worship we give Him according to our will, than He doth approve of our neglect of that which is according to His own will. (*Burkitt.*) *Human tradition* versus *Divine command*:—The experience is a universal one, that God's commandments suffer from the competition of human rules. The great precepts of God have only an unseen God behind them, but behind the human rules there is generally a class whose pride is gratified by their observance and incensed by their neglect. Accordingly, whenever small rules of outward conduct begin to flourish, the great principles of religion—faith, love, honour—fall into the background. It is so to-day. The Thug in India who confessed to having killed 320 people had no pangs of conscience for killing them, but was somewhat distressed on account of having killed a few of them after a hare had crossed his path or a bird whistled in a certain direction. Murder was no crime in his opinion, but the neglect of an omen from Bowany was a grave one. In Hinduism, which is ceremonial throughout, a man may be a most religious man, and yet very wicked. Many in our own country would unscrupulously commit great crimes, and yet be very careful to avoid eating flesh on Good Friday. It seems as if we only had a certain amount of power of attention in us, and, if it goes to little rules, there is none left for great principles. (*R. Glover.*) *Tradition and inspiration*:—As with the man who attempts to serve two masters, so with him who thinks to walk by two lights: if he would keep in the straight path he must put out one of the two, and guide himself by the other. (*Dr. Wylie.*) *Laying aside the commandment of God*:—A philosopher at Florence could not be persuaded to look through one of Galileo's telescopes, lest he should see something in the heavens that would disturb him in his belief of Aristotle's philosophy. Thus it is with many who are afraid of examining God's Word, lest they should find themselves condemned. (*Buck.*) *The inefficacy of God's Word—how produced*:—We make it of none effect when we—I. Fail to read and study it and to appropriate its blessings. II. When we give precedence to any human authority or law. III. When by our lives we misrepresent it before the world. IV. When we fail to urge its truths upon the anxious inquirer or careless sinner. (*J. Gordon.*) *Ears to hear*:—This rule must needs be of very great importance to Christians. For our Great Master (1) calls all the people unto Him on purpose to tell them only this. (2) He requires of them a particular attention. (3) He requires it of every one of them without exception. (4) He exhorts them to endeavour thoroughly to under-

stand it. (5) He lets them know that in order to do it they have need of a singular grace and a particular gift of understanding. It was for want of understanding this rule that the Jews still remained Jews, adhering to a mere external way of worship. It is for the very same reason that numbers of Christians, even to this day, serve God more like Jews than Christians. (*Quesnel.*)

Vers. 17–23. **Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man.**—*The true source of defilement*:—Having rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, our Lord addressed the people, and laid down a great general principle (ver. 15), which His disciples asked Him to explain more fully. We are taught—I. THAT MERE EXTERNAL OBSERVANCES DO NOT AFFECT OR CHANGE THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF MAN. 1. The statement that nothing from without defileth a man, must be taken in connection with what goes before, and then it becomes a principle, of which the Jews had much need to be told. All require to be told. 2. That mere outward observances cannot affect the moral nature, seems a very simple truth. Reason teaches it. The body may be affected by them, but not the soul; to influence the heart, means of a right class must be selected. Experience teaches it. Observation confirms it. 3. This principle requires in our day to be loudly proclaimed. 4. The more nearly the soul can come to God, irrespective of outward things, the better. II. THAT THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF A MAN, IS AFFECTED BY THAT WHICH COMETH OUT OF HIS HEART. 1. The fountain-head of all that enters into human history and character, is the heart. Hence, the character of the moral law, the order of the Spirit's work, the importance of the inspired precept, "Keep thine heart," &c. 2. That which naturally proceeds from the heart proves that it is wholly depraved. 3. By these things, which proceed from the heart, is man defiled. Christ's blood and spirit, alone can cleanse. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Spiritual defilement*:—I. THE CEREMONIALISM OF THE PHARISEES DENOUNCED. 1. The undue importance they attached to outward observances. 2. The additions they made to the requirements of the law of Moses. 3. The Saviour's discourse on this occasion was evidently intended to prepare the minds of the people for the total abolition of all ceremonial rites. II. THE IGNORANCE OF THE DISCIPLES REPROVED. "And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also?" 1. To us their dulness of apprehension appears strange and unaccountable. 2. In their ignorance we see the effect, not merely of inattention, but of prejudice and bigotry. III. THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE EXHIBITED. We are shown—1. The source of evil. It is in the heart. 2. The diversified streams of evil. "Adulteries, fornications, thefts, murders, covetousness," &c. 3. The contaminating influence of evil. These are the things by which men are defiled. (*Expository Outlines.*) *Things from within*:—It is well known that rotten wood and glowworms make a glorious show in the night, and seem to be some excellent things; but when the day appears, they show what they are indeed—poor, despicable, and base creatures. Such is the vanity and sinfulness of all haughty, proud, high-minded persons, who, though now shining in the darkness of this world, through the greatness of their power, place, and height of their honour, when the Sun of Righteousness shall appear and manifest the secrets of all hearts, then they will be seen in their own proper colours. (*Spencer.*) **Out of the heart.**—*The heart determines the life*:—The bowl runs as the bias inclines it; the ship moves as the rudder steers it; and the mind thinks according to the predominancy of vice or virtue in it. The heart of man is like the spring of the clock, which causes the wheels to move right or wrong, well or ill. If the heart once set forward for God, all the members will follow after; all the parts, like dutiful handmaids, in their places, will wait on their mistress. The heart is the great workhouse where all sin is wrought before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where evil thoughts are coined, before they are current in our words or actions. It is the forge where all our evil works as well as words are hammered out. There is no sin but is dressed in the withdrawing room of the heart, before it appears on the stage of life. It is vain to go about an holy life till the heart be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart. If the chinks of the ship are unstopped, it will be to no purpose to labour at the pump. When the water is foul at the bottom, no wonder that scum and filth appear at the top. There is no way to stop the issue of sin, but by drying up the matter that feeds it. (*Swinnock.*) *Natural corruption of the heart*:—That which Æsop said to his master, when he came into his garden and saw so many weeds in it, is applicable to the heart. His master

asked him what was the reason that the weeds grew up so fast and the herbs thrived not? He answered, "The ground is natural mother to the weeds, but a stepmother to the herbs." So the heart of man is natural mother to sin and corruption, but a stepmother to grace and goodness; and further than it is watered from heaven, and followed with a great deal of care and pains, it grows not. (*Goodwin.*) *The heart a storehouse of evil*:—Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet, who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins are the sparks. If you could count them (which you cannot do), yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities—eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your soul? You must know this before you can know the sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the weeds upon the surface soil, but I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and centre, we should find it is fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *An evil heart*:—A certain little boy in Kansas, only eleven years old, strove hard to be a Christian. Once he stood watching Maggie paring the potatoes for dinner. Soon she pared an extra large one, which was very white and very nice on the outside, but when cut into pieces it showed itself to be hollow and black inside with dry rot. Instantly Willie exclaimed, "Why, Maggie, that potatoe isn't a Christian." "What do you mean?" asked Maggie. "Don't you see it has a bad heart?" was the child's reply. This little Kansas boy had learned enough of the religion of Jesus to know that however fair the outside may be, the natural heart is corrupt. (*Baptist Messenger.*) *Evil passions when restrained only by custom, law, or public opinion, and not by the grace and love of God, still merit condemnation*:—If men were shut up in cells, so that they could not commit that which their nature instigated them to do, yet, as before the Lord, seeing they would have been such sinners outwardly if they could have been, their hearts are judged to be no better than the hearts of those who found opportunity to sin and used it. A vicious horse is none the better tempered because the kicking straps prevent his dashing the carriage to atoms; and so a man is none the better really because the restraints of custom and Providence may prevent his carrying out that which he would prefer. Poor fallen human nature behind the bars of laws, and in the cage of fear of punishment, is none the less a fearful creature; should its master unlock the door we should soon see what it would be and do. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *No heart free from sin*:—Well-tempered spades turn up ill savoury soils even in vineyards. (*Baily.*) *The heart its own laboratory*:—We hear a great deal said in our day about the doctrine of environment. "Circumstances," we are told, "make the man;" "Life is a modification of matter;" "Thinking is matter in motion;" "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile;" "The difference between a good man and a bad man is mainly a difference in molecular organization;" "The affections are of an eminently glandular nature;" "Not as a man thinketh in his heart, but as he eateth, so is he;" "Character is the aggregate of surroundings, the sum-total of parents, nurse, place, time, air, light, food, &c." Now this doctrine of environment is in a certain sense entirely true. The mind does not more certainly act on the body than the body on the mind. But the doctrine of environment means, or at least tends to mean, more than this. It tends to teach that sin is not so much a crime as a misfortune, not so much guilt as disease. Not so did the Galilean Master teach. "Hearken to Me, all of you, and understand: Nothing that goeth into a man from without can defile him; but the things that come out of him are what defile a man." Here He is in direct issue with the materialism of the day. For man is something more than matter, or an organized group of molecules. Behind the visible of him there is the invisible. The heart is its own laboratory. Friend, overtaken in a sin, do not judge yourself too charitably. Don't ascribe too much to outward circumstances. Recall the first Adam: he was in a garden, where every outward circumstance was for him; yet he fell. Recall the second Adam: He was in a desert, where

every outward circumstance was against Him; yet He remained erect: the Devil failed to conquer Him, not because He was Divine, but because He was sinless. Don't excuse yourself then too much by your "environment." Man is not altogether an imbecile. True, "circumstances do make the man." But they make him only in the sense and degree that he permits them to make him. You will find the most niggardly of men in the mansions of the rich, and the most generous of men in the cabins of the poor; the humblest of Christians in the palace, and the proudest of Pharisees in the cottage; saints in the dungeon, and villains in the Church. It is not so much the outward that tinges the inward as the inward that tinges the outward. It is for the man himself to say whether his own heart shall be a temple or a kennel. The great problem then is this: How shall a man use his "circumstances"? For just what he does with them—just what he does with his strength and time, and skill, and money, and imagination, and reason, and affections, just what the heart does with its opportunities—just this is the test of him. Do these opportunities, after passing through the laboratory of his heart, issue as blessings on the world? Then his heart is pure, Do they issue in moral blights? Then his heart is defiled. Not that these bad issues do of themselves defile the heart; but the heart being itself defiled, and sending forth issues of evil thoughts and deeds, these issues take on the impurities of the source from which they spring, marking its defilement, and aggravating its pollution by the very act of outflowing. These are the unclean things, which, coming out from within, defile the man. Keep thy heart, then, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life and of death. Friend, are you disheartened by my Master's doctrine? Don't seek to remedy your case by merely altering your circumstances, or reforming your habits. You can't purify a fountain by purifying its streams. Jesus Christ is the most radical of reformers. He does not say, "Change your circumstances, and you will change your character;" but He does say, "Change your heart, and you will be likely to change your circumstances." (*George Dana Boardman, D.D.*)

Evil Thoughts.—*Source of evil thoughts:*—Notice how evil thoughts are by the Saviour said to be the first of the evil things which coming out of the heart defile. We should not, I think, have put evil thoughts amongst the things which come out of the heart, because we suppose them to be in the heart. But is not what the Saviour says true of that which He alone knows—the very nature and substance of the soul? In its very centre, or close to its centre, the evil has its root or fountain. The evil suggestion arises, and then the will or affection takes notice of it. If the will is right with God, it immediately puts out the evil thing as if it were a loathsome reptile, but if the will be not right with God, it harbours the first suggestion of evil, it cogitates it, thinks it over and over, dwells upon it in imagination, chews the food of the evil fancy, desires to do the evil deed, resolves to do it, and so has already done it in the heart. So that out of the heart, out of the unseen and unthinkable depths within, proceed the evil thoughts which become evil acts within before they are incarnated, as it were, in some evil deed without. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Sinfulness of evil thoughts:*—Some please themselves in thoughts of sinful sports, or cheats, or unclean acts, and sit brooding on such cockatrice-eggs with great delight. It is their meat and drink to roll these sugar-plums under their tongues. Though they cannot sin outwardly, for want of strength of body or a fit opportunity, yet they act sin inwardly with great love and complacency. As players in a comedy, they act their parts in private, in order to a more exact performance of them in public. (*Swinnock.*) *Thoughts usually indicate character:*—Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms, so that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most blossoms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind does most abound with them there is the least fruit, the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men's minds. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object, for whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of them.

selves on the mind as shall engage all its thoughts about them; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts runs quite another way than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original acting of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it, the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. (*J. Owen.*) *Petrifying influence of evil thoughts*:—Any one who has visited limestone caves has noticed the stalactite pillars, sometimes large and massive, by which they were adorned and supported. They are nature's masonry of solid rock, formed by her own slow, silent, mysterious process. The little drop of water percolates through the roof of the cave, and deposits its sediment, and another follows it, till the icicle of stone is formed: and finally reaching to the rock beneath, it becomes a solid pillar, a marble monument, which can only be rent down by the most powerful forces. But is there not going forward oftentimes in the caverns of the human heart a process as silent and effective, yet infinitely more momentous? There in the darkness that shrouds all from the view of the outward observer, each thought and feeling, as light and inconsiderate, perhaps, as the little drop of water, sinks downward into the soul, and deposits—yet in a form almost imperceptible—what we may call its sediment. And then another and another follows, till the traces of all combined become more manifest, and at length, if these thoughts and feelings are charged with the sediment of worldliness and worldly passion, they have reared within the spirit permanent and perhaps everlasting monuments of their effects. All around the walls of this spiritual cave stand in massive proportions the pillars of sinful inclinations and the props of iniquity, and only a convulsion like that which rends the solid globe can rend them from their place and shake their hold. Thus stealthily is the work done; mere fancies and desires and lusts unsuspiciously entertained, contribute silently but surely to the result. The heart is changed into an impregnable fortress of sin. The roof of its iniquity is sustained by marble pillars, and all the weight of reason and conscience and the Divine threatenings are powerless to lay it low in the dust of humility. Such is the power of those light fancies and imaginations and desires which enter the soul unobserved, and are slighted for their insignificance. They attract no notice. They utter no note of alarm. We might suppose that if left to themselves they would be absorbed in oblivion, and leave no trace behind. But they form the pillars of character. They sustain the soul under the pressure of all those solemn appeals to which it ought to yield. How impressive, then, the admonition, "Keep thy heart with all diligence"! Things which seem powerless and harmless may prove noxious beyond expression. The power of inveterate sin is from the silent flow of thought. Your habitual desires or fancies are shaping your eternal destiny. (*American National Preacher.*) *Evil thoughts not to be harboured*:—The best Christian's heart here is like Solomon's ships, which brought home not only gold and silver, but also apes and peacocks; it has not only spiritual and heavenly, but also vain and foolish thoughts. But these latter are there as a disease or poison in the body, the object of his grief and abhorrence, not of his love and complacency. Though we cannot keep vain thoughts from knocking at the door of our hearts, nor from entering in sometimes, yet we may forbear bidding them welcome, or giving them entertainment. "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" It is bad to let them sit down with us, though but for an hour, but it is worse to let them lie or lodge with us. It is better to receive the greatest thieves into our houses than vain thoughts into our hearts. John Huss, seeking to reclaim a very profane wretch, was told by him, that his giving way to wicked, wanton thoughts was the original of all those hideous births of impiety which he was guilty of in his life. Huss answered him, that although he could not keep evil thoughts from courting him, yet he might keep them from marrying him; "as," he added, "though I cannot keep the birds from flying over my head, yet I can keep them from building their nests in my hair." (*Swinnock.*) *Importance of keeping the mind well employed*:—Man's heart is like a millstone: pour in corn, and round it goes, bruising and grinding, and converting it into flour; whereas give it no corn, and then indeed the stone goes round, but only grinds itself away, and becomes ever thinner and smaller and narrower. Even as the heart of man requires to have always something to do; and happy is he who continually occupies it with good and holy thoughts, otherwise it may soon consume and waste itself by useless anxieties or

wicked and carnal suggestions. When the millstones are not nicely adjusted, grain may indeed be poured in, but comes away only half ground or not ground at all. The same often happens with our heart when our devotion is not sufficiently earnest. On such occasions we read the finest texts without knowing what we have read, and pray without hearing our own prayers. The eye flits over the sacred page, the mouth pours forth the words, and clappers like a mill, but the heart meanwhile turns from one strange thought to another; and such reading and such prayer are more a useless form than a devotion acceptable to God. (*Scriver.*) *Good thoughts strangers:*—The thoughts of spiritual things are with many as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house. (*Dr. John Owen.*) *Cure for evil thoughts:*—As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man, and through self they run into hell. It is a fond thing to set a dam before such a river to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles, or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course, but only by providing other channels for its waters, and turning them thereinto. The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop unto them. There are but two ways of relief from them; the one respecting their moral evil, the other their natural abundance. The first by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho; that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the tree must be made good before the fruit will be so; the other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects; so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thought we shall, whether we will or no. (*Ibid.*) *Evil thoughts not trifles:*—Notice this evil catalogue, this horrible list of words. It begins with what is very lightly regarded among men—evil thoughts. Instead of evil thoughts being less simple than evil acts, it may sometimes happen that in the thought the man may be worse than in the act. Thoughts are the heads of words and actions, and within the thoughts lie condensed all the villany and iniquity that can be seen in the words or in the acts. If men did more carefully watch their thoughts, they would not so readily fall into evil ways. Instead of fancying that evil thoughts are mere trifles, let us imitate the Saviour, and put them first in the catalogue of things to be condemned. Let us make a conscience of our thoughts. In the words of the text the first point mentioned is evil thoughts, but the last is foolishness. This is the way of sin, to begin with a proud conceit of our own thoughts, ending with folly and stupidity. What a range there is between these two points, what a variety of sin thus enumerated! Sin is a contradictory thing: it takes men this way and that, but never in the right way. Virtue is one, as truth is one; holiness is one, but sin is ten thousand things conglomerated into a dread confusion. When we look upon any man and only regard him with malignity, we sin in all that—it is the sin of envy. There stands pride. One would have thought that a man who commits these sins would not have been proud. When a man is filled with a proud conceit of himself he is justifying his own iniquity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Human depravity seen in the thoughts of man:*—Consider the wild mixtures of thought displayed both in the waking life and the dreams of mankind. How grand! how mean! how sudden the leap from one to the other! how inscrutable the succession! how defiant of orderly control! It is as if the soul were a thinking ruin, which it very likely is. The angel and the demon life appear to be contending in it. The imagination revels in beauty exceeding all the beauty of things, wails in images dire and monstrous, wallows in murderous and base suggestions that shame our inward dignity. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) **Covetousness.** *Covetousness—its spirit:*—The spirit of covetousness which leads to an over-value and over-love of money, is independent of amount. A poor man may make an idol of his little, just as much as the rich man makes an idol of his much. We know our Lord showed how the poorest person may exceed in charity and liberality the richest—by giving more than the wealthy in proportion to the whole amount of his possessions. So in like manner, a poor man may be more covetous than a wealthy man, because he may keep back from the treasury of God more in proportion to his all than the rich man keeps back from *his* all. If the Christian character is debased, and heaven is lost by such indulgence of covetousness as to make a man an idolater of mammon, it is of little consequence whether the heart be set on an idol of gold, or an idol of clay. (*Dean Ramsay.*) *Covetousness exchanges true riches for the false:*—As the dog in Æsop's fable lost the real flesh for the shadow of it, so the covetous man casts away the true riches for the love of

the shadowy. (*T. Adams.*) *Covetousness pines in plenty*:—The covetous man pines in plenty, like Tantalus up to the chin in water, and yet thirsty. (*Ibid.*) *Degradation of the covetous*:—A young man once picked up a sovereign lying in the road. Ever afterwards, in walking along, he kept his eye fixed steadily upon the ground in the hope of finding another. And in the course of a long life he did pick up a good many gold and silver coins at different times. But all these years, while he was looking for them, he saw not that the heavens were bright above him, and nature beautiful around. He never once allowed his eyes to look up from the mud and filth in which he sought his treasure; and when he died—a rich old man—he only knew this fair earth as a dirty road to pick up money as you walk along. (*Dr. Jeffers.*) *Delusion of the covetous*:—Some of us may remember a fable of a covetous man, who chanced to find his way one moonlight night into a fairy's palace. There he saw bars, apparently of solid gold, strewed on every side; and he was permitted to take away as many as he could carry. In the morning, when the sun rose on his imaginary treasure, borne home with so much toil, behold! there was only a bundle of sticks, and invisible beings filled the air around him with scornful laughter. Such will be the confusion of many a man who died in this world with his thousands, and woke up in the next world not only miserable, and poor, and naked, but in presence of a heap of fuel stored up against the great Day of burning. (*Anon.*) *Covetousness mental gluttony*:—Covetousness is a sort of mental gluttony, not confined to money, but craving honour and feeding on selfishness. (*Chamfort.*) *Covetousness manifested in insufficient expenditure*:—Whosoever, when a just occasion calls, either spends not at all, or not in some proportion to God's blessing upon him, is covetous. The reason of the ground is manifest, because wealth is given to that end to supply our occasions. Now, if I do not give everything its end, I abuse the creature; I am false to my reason, which should guide me; I offend the Supreme Judge, in perverting that order which He hath set both to those things and to reason. The application of the ground would be infinite. But, in brief, a poor man is an occasion; my friend is an occasion; my country; my table; my apparel. If in all these, and those more which concern me, I either do nothing, or pinch and scrape and squeeze blood, indecently to the station wherein God hath placed me, I am covetous. More particularly, and to give one instance of all: if God have given me servants, and I either provide too little for them, or that which is unwholesome, and so not competent nourishment, I am covetous. Men usually think that servants for their money are as other things that they buy, even as a piece of wood, which they may cut, or hack, or throw into the fire; and so that they pay them their wages, all is well. Nay, to descend yet more particularly: if a man hath wherewithal to buy a spade, and yet he chooseth rather to use his neighbour's, and wear out that, he is covetous. Nevertheless, few bring covetousness thus low or consider it so narrowly, which yet ought to be done, since there is a justice in the least things, and for the least there shall be a judgment. (*George Herbert.*) **Pride.**—*Pride*:—Diogenes being at Olympia, saw at the celebrated festival some young men of Rhodes, arrayed most magnificently. Smiling scornfully, he exclaimed, "This is pride." Afterwards, meeting with some Lacedæmonians in a mean and sordid dress, he said, "This is also pride." Pride is found at the same opposite extremes of dress at the present day. *The folly of pride*:—Of all sins, pride is such a one as we may well wonder how it should grow, for it hath no other root to sustain it, than what is found in man's dreaming fancy. It grows, as sometimes we see a mushroom, or moss among stones, where there is little soil or none for its root to take hold of. (*W. Gurnall.*) *The test of purity*:—A gentleman was once extolling loudly the virtue of honesty, saying what a dignity it imparted to our nature, and how it recommended us to the favour of God. "Sir," replied his friend, "however excellent the virtue of honesty may be, I fear there are very few men in the world who really possess it." "You surprise me," said a stranger. "Ignorant as I am of your character," was the reply, "I fancy it would be no difficult matter to prove even you to be a dishonest man." "I defy you." "Will you give me leave, then, to ask you a question or two, and promise not to be offended?" "Certainly." "Have you never met with an opportunity of getting gain by unfair means? I don't say, have you taken advantage of it; but, have you ever met with such an opportunity? I, for my part, have; and I believe everybody else has." "Very probably I may." "How did you feel your mind affected on such an occasion? Had you no secret desire, not the least inclination, to seize the advantage which offered? Tell me without any evasion, and consistently with the character you admire." "I must acknowledge, I have not always been absolutely

free from every irregular inclination; but——." "Hold! sir, none of your salvos; you have confessed enough. If you had the desire, though you never proceeded to the act, you were dishonest in heart. This is what the Scriptures call concupiscence. It defiles the soul; it is a breach of that law which requireth truth in the inward parts, and, unless you are pardoned through the Blood of Christ, it will be a just ground for your condemnation, when God shall judge the secrets of men.

Ver. 24. **But He could not be hid.**—*He could not be hid:*—There are some persons in this world who cannot be hid: by birth, inheritance, or talent, they come to the front. But this was not the case here. Christ was but the reputed son of a village carpenter, a poor despised Nazarene. Yet He could not be hid. And no wonder. He had come to seek and save that which was lost, to fulfil all prophecy, to preach the everlasting gospel, to work such miracles as the world had never seen; therefore the fame of Him spread abroad. 1. The Lord Jesus is not hid. He may be plainly seen by those who will use their eyes—in the works of creation, in His Word, in the effects of His grace. 2. He OUGHT not to be hid. We must *re*nounce self to *an*nounce Christ. He is the only remedy for the yearning cry of humanity. 3. He CANNOT be hid. The Christian sky may be clouded for a time, but it will clear, and the Sun of Righteousness burst forth in fresh power and glory. All things are preparing for His coronation. He must reign. Over all man's resistance, His purpose must prevail. 4. He WILL not be hid. A day is coming, when every eye shall see Him, and self-deception will be no longer possible. (*J. Fleming, B.D.*) *Why Christ cannot be hid:*—Because—1. Great need will seek Him out. 2. True love will surely find Him. 3. Earnest faith will ever lead to Him. 4. His own heart will betray Him. 5. His disciples will make Him known. (*A. Rowland, B.A.*) *He could not be hid:*—Tacitus saith of Brutus—"The more he sought to secrete himself, the more he was noticed." *The open secret of character:*—I. CHRIST DESIRED TO BE HID. He entered into a house, and would have no man know it. We are sure this desire was not prompted by fear or shame, that it did not spring from caprice or unworthy policy. One reason will be found—1. In the modesty of high goodness. There is a religiousness which clamours for recognition. Far removed from this stagey pietism is the goodness which does not clamour for recognition. With all her magnificence, how modest is Nature. Christ's character and life is the grandeur of the firmament—silent, simple, severe. He enjoined upon His disciples constant sequestration, and Himself set the example. Let us remember the modesty illustrated by the Master, enjoined by Him. He for ever discarded the trumpet. "Let your light so shine." Have we been anxious for distinction or applause? Have we cared for the foreground? Let us rise to a more perfect life, and we shall think less of society, less of ourselves, and live more than content in the eye of God. 2. The sensitiveness of high goodness constrained Christ to privacy. Wherever you find rare purity, you find this shrinking from the corruptions of the times. We find the same desire to escape from the world's wickedness in the Master Himself, and it is so shared by all His pure-hearted followers. Monasticism had its origin, to a considerable extent, in this shrinking of the saints from the corruptions of their age. II. CHRIST COULD NOT BE HID. With all His miracle working power, He could not accomplish this; and all who are thoroughly like their Master share this inability. High goodness desires to hide; it cannot be hid. 1. Christ could not be hid because of the manifestiveness of such goodness. Goodness is self-revealing. This is true in large measure of genius, of culture, and this is pre-eminently true of character. It "cannot be hid." That Christ could not hide Himself is manifest from other passages than our text, *e.g.*, when the disciples walked with Him to Emmaus. However carefully He might shroud Himself, some rift in the cloud, some shifting of the darkness, would betray the hidden glory. And, indeed, the course adopted of making Palestine the scene of the Incarnate Life is itself the supreme illustration of the necessary manifestations of glorious character. It is ever thus with worthy lives—*hidden*, they are *revealed*; all the more impressively revealed for the attempt at retirement and suppression. Christ could not be hid, because of humanity's felt need of what great goodness has to give. Mark the event which drew Christ forth from His sequestration. How she knew of the power and presence of Jesus it boots little to conjecture. Misery has a swift instinct for a helper, and, as Lange observes, "The keen sagacity with which need here scents out and finds her Saviour is of infinite, quite indeterminable, magnitude." All this is true, in its measure, of those who are like Christ. The world needs them, knows them, and denies them retirement and

leisure. 3. Christ could not be hid, because of the self-sacrificing nature of His perfect goodness. When the afflicted woman made herself and her sorrow known to the Master, He did not refuse to come forth from His hiding-place. Desiring to be hid, we are half like Jesus Christ; desiring to be hid, but forced by charity into the light, we are like Christ altogether. Let us, in these days of manifold luxury and chronic self-indulgence, remember the admonition of the Prophet (Amos vi. 4–6). (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Pharisaic hypocrisy inflictive to the holy nature of Christ*:—Culture of any kind is pained by contact with coarseness and imperfection. An eye schooled to beauty is pained by a misshapen thing, an ear schooled to harmony is tortured by dissonance, and thus a high, delicate, moral nature is wounded by the world's sin and shame. There is a goodness, maybe, which dwells with a wicked generation contentedly enough, simply because it is so little ahead of the generation; but a deeply true and spiritually tender nature suffers in all the sin and suffering of its neighbourhood. And this is the situation of Christ in the instance before us. He had seen the worst features of the age in the pharisaic party. All their lies and impurities were open to His eye, unutterably afflictive to His holy nature, and He retired before the impure atmosphere as before the breath of pestilence. They were defiled, hardened, blinded by sin, and He shrank from them with horror. His pure soul was grieved by the common sinfulness, hollowness, shamelessness; and heart-sore, heart-sick, He sought solitude and rest. (*Ibid.*) *Hidden, yet revealed*:—The hidden violets proclaim their presence in every passing breeze; the lark, hidden in the light, fills all the landscape with music; and the vivid freshness of grass and flower betrays all the secret windings of the coy meadow stream. Thus superiority of mind and life all unconsciously reveals itself, makes itself everywhere known and felt as a thing of beauty and blessing—all the more penetrating for its softness, all the more subduing for its silence, all the more renowned for its secrecy. The still, small whisper shakes the world; those are crowned who shun greatness; the valley of humility is the peak of fame. The man of royal soul cannot hide himself. In his modesty he may draw a veil over his face, but the veil itself will share the transfiguration. Or, if constitutionally timid and retiring, the superiority of his spirit and method will declare itself, and the "unknown" are the "well-known." Or, he may be poor, illiterate, persecuted, yet will the innate grandeur shine through all poverty, rudeness, or unpopularity, winning the suffrages of all beholders. And as he cannot hide himself, neither can the world hide him. Never does the world appear more foolish than when it attempts to extinguish a burning and shining light. In the Indian legend, a mighty, wicked sorcerer seeks, with very poor success, to keep the sun, moon, and stars in three separate chests; and those who have sought to suppress God's servants have succeeded no better. John was banished to Patmos; but far from sinking out of view in the solitary sea, he stands before the world amid sublimest illuminations, like his own "angel standing in the sun." They drove Luther into the Wartburg; but there, in translating the Scriptures into German, he became the cynosure of all eyes. Bunyan's enemies consigned him to Bedford gaol, and lo, he became known to the race, one of the foremost of the immortals of Christendom. Eminent goodness will out—neither men nor devils can keep it under a bushel. (*Ibid.*) *The true disciple cannot be hid any more than his Master*:—The Chinese have a wood which, buried some feet underground, fills the air with fragrance; and thus grand qualities, powers, graces, assert themselves through all obstructions, filling the atmosphere of earth with the fragrance of heaven. (*Ibid.*) *Attraction at a distance*:—Observers have stated that if flowers are placed in a window, the window closed and the blinds drawn, the bees outside are aware of the presence of flowers, and beat against the window-panes, evidently anxious to reach them. This "action at a distance" is sufficiently wonderful; yet misery has a sense still more keen, faith a penetration yet more powerful. Christ "entered into a house, and would have no man know it," and no doubt took necessary measures to secure and preserve secrecy; but the sorrowful woman discovered His locality, apprehended His power and grace, and rested not till she gained that Plant of Renown whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations." The world in its pharisaical mood may spurn Christ and drive Him away, but as the world realizes its misery it feels its absolute need of Him, and feels after Him, if haply it may find Him. (*Ibid.*) *He could not be hid*:—I. The purpose of God forbids that Christ should be hid. II. The innate glory of the Son of God is another reason why He could not be hid. III. The desperate need of sinners rendered it impossible that He should be

hid. IV. The boundless compassion of the Son of God accounts for the fact that He could not be hid. V. The deep and abiding gratitude of His followers forbids that Christ should be hid. (*W. G. Lewis.*) *If a Christian abide hidden, there is little to hide:*—What does this prove in respect to some of us? We enter into a house and *are* hid—we are not inquired for, solicited, dragged unwillingly into the light. We wish to be let alone, and are let alone. What does all this reveal but the poverty of our nature? We are not sought out, for we are not worth seeking. A needy heart is an infallible divining-rod to discern where the gold is hidden in the social strata, and if none inquire for us, if none disturb our solitude, we may infer with certainty that there is little preciousness in our nature either toward God or man. He who knows the deep things of God will be sought out far and wide, as the Queen of Sheba came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. A man of prayer will ever be importuned, and an interest be sought in his sympathy and supplication. The good Samaritan is known throughout the city, and his aid implored day and night. If a Christian abides hidden, there is little to hide. If we are greatly pure, sympathetic, wise, prayerful, we are worth discovering, and shall soon and often be discovered. If there is in us the sweetness of the Rose of Sharon, we shall not be permitted to waste our "sweetness on the desert air"; if there is in us the preciousness and beauty of God's jewels, we shall be fished from deepest caves to enrich the world. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The most beautiful characters the most unobtrusive:*—Travellers tell that the forests of South America are full of the gem-like humming-bird, yet you may sometimes ride for hours without seeing one. They are most difficult to see when perched among the branches, and almost indistinguishable flying among the flowering trees; it is only every now and then some accidental circumstance reveals the swarm of bejewelled creatures, and they flash upon the vision in white, red, green, blue, and purple. It is somewhat thus with society—the noblest, the most beautiful characters, are not the obtrusive ones. Going through life carelessly, one might think all the people common enough; reading the newspapers, one might suppose the world to contain only bad men; but it may comfort us to remember the truly great and good shun observation and walk humbly with God. The poorest and worst side of things is the most obvious. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;" and it is the glory of God's people to conceal themselves. Nevertheless, the time comes for their revelation, and then we are delighted to find how much silent, hidden goodness the world contains. The spectacle of want and woe draws forth the excellent ones of the earth; and however keen the trial of public life, however repugnant contact with scenes of sin and shame and suffering, all is bravely, cheerfully borne for the Saviour's sake and the world's betterment. When a true soul hesitates between the contemplative and active life, the example of Christ and love of Christ determines to self-renouncing service. (*Ibid.*) *The unhidden Saviour:*—I. The HUMANITY of Christ as revealing itself in the story. His fatigue was real: Nature did not spare Him. When the soul is constantly going out towards the objects of one's solicitude, the body may bear up bravely for a time; but Nature exacts her penalty. II. There is also in these words a glimpse into something of A DIVINE PURPOSE. It was part of the Divine plan that Christ's *immediate* testimony should be conveyed to the Jews only; this involved great self-restraint. III. This desire to be quiet in those regions, gives a PROPHETIC GLIMPSE. All the tenderness of God's heart will be disclosed when we are prepared for it. IV. THE OVERTURE TO A MASTER'S WORK MAY SEEM SOMETIMES LONG AND NEEDLESS. 1. "He could not be hid." No, not even in these regions, where His ministry did not especially lie. Marvellous that the world should have got almost to disbelieve in the existence of a warm, generous heart. 2. How could Christ be hid? If He were a revelation, then He must be declared. There are great spring epochs in the working out of Divine thoughts and purposes; times when what had been concealed comes out to view. *Love* must reveal itself; so must *life*. If our inner life is to retain its force and beauty, it must manifest itself. A spiritual recluse is a mistake. (*G. J. Proctor.*) *Life must reveal itself:*—Life must reveal itself, and it must reveal itself after its own way. There is no need of parade and pomp to declare it. Christ-like piety, which is so delightful in all its phases, is specially so in this; while very courageous it is very modest; while gloriously strong it is very retiring. Parade and pomp were the prominent features of the Pharisees' religion. Blow the trumpet! Sound the alarm! Make way for virtue, temperance, zeal, and godliness! Make way indeed! But where is love, the soul of all life? Love is modest. Have you forgotten her? Forgotten her? Then never mind about the rest. Your virtue

is merely an accident of circumstance or constitution; your temperance only desire worn out; your zeal and godliness only self-importance dressed in sober garb, undertaker's costume. No need of a flourish of trumpets and a beating of gongs to declare the true life. It must manifest itself, but not simply on state occasions. It will come to the light, but it would rather not have the lime light of a merely popular applause thrown upon it. It cannot be hid, but it will not speak of its own beauties. It will be self-assertive, but after the Christly sort. The life must be the light of men. A revealer of Divine mysteries and a redeemer of human sins and griefs could be no sealed fountain. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 25–30. **The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation: and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.**—*The Canaanitish mother*:—Through her natural affections she had mounted up, as it would seem, to higher and spiritual things; for to a wonderful degree did she enter into the secrets of His mysterious nature; "she worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!" She pierced, as though by the intuition of some blessed instinct, through the veil in which He was shrouded. Her faith laid its hold at once upon His very Godhead, and on His true humanity. As God, she fell before Him—she worshipped Him; as man, she appealed to His feeling for the sorrows of man's heart, crying to Him, "Lord, help me!" She reached on to that entire sympathy which was to be the fruit of His being "perfected through suffering," "Thou that art the Man of Sorrows; by Thy man's heart, and by the covenant of Thy suffering, help me in my woe." Twice more, we know, she seemed to be refused; and yet she persevered. He had but tried her faith, and perfected her patience. There was in her heart a hidden treasure which was thus brought forth; there was in it the fine gold, to which this hour of agony had been as the refiner's fire. Her importunity had won its answer; for indeed it was itself His gift. The fire upon the altar of her heart had been kindled by the beams of His own countenance; her cleaving to Him was His gift; her love the reflection of His love to her; He had put the words into her mouth, and He had strengthened her to speak them. And so the end was sure: she had knocked, and the door had opened; she had asked, and she received: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Such is the narrative; and in all its parts we may read that which concerns ourselves most closely. For what else are our lives, with all their varying accidents and issues, than, as it were, the shadows cast forward into all time by these dealings of the Son of God with man? He has come nigh unto us; yea, He stands amongst us—He, the Healer of our spirits; He, our heart's true centre—He is close beside us; and we, have we not each one our own deep need of Him? Have we not each one our own burden?—the "young daughter who lieth at home grievously afflicted," whom He only can heal? And then, further, do not characters now divide off and part asunder even as they did then? Are there not those who, like the Jews, know not the office of this Healer; who hear all His words, and see all His signs, and languidly let Him pass, or angrily murmur at Him, or blasphemously drive Him from them; from whom He passes, even to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, to pour on others the blessing they refuse? But then there are also those who do seek Him with their whole heart—unmarked, it may be, by any of the outward appearances which catch the eye of man. I. There is the lesson taught us by the Jews, that He does pass away from those who will not stay Him with them; that He goes on and heals others: and that they die unhealed, because they knew not "the time of their visitation." And the root of this evil is here pointed out to us: it is a want of faith, and, from this, a lack of the power of spiritual discernment. Such men are purblind: the full light of heaven shines in vain for them. They do not intend to reject the Christ, but they know Him not; their gaze is too idle, too impassive, to discover Him. They know not that they have deep needs which He only can satisfy. They yet dream of slaking their thirst at other streams. II. But there is also here the lesson of the woman of Canaan; and this has many aspects; of which the first, perhaps, is this, that by every mark and token which the stricken soul can read, He to whom she sought is the only Healer of humanity, the true portion and rest of every heart; that He would teach us this by all the discipline of outward things; that the ties of family life are meant thus to train up our weak affections till they are fitted to lay hold on Him; that the eddies and sorrows of life are meant to sweep us from its flowery banks, that in its deep strong currents we may cry to Him; that for this end He opens to us, by little and little, the mystery of trouble round

us, the mystery of evil within us, that we may fly from others and ourselves to Him. III. And, once more, there is this further lesson, that He will most surely be found by those who do seek after Him. For here we see why it often happens that really earnest and sincere men seem, for a time at least, to pray in vain; why their "Lord, help me!" is not answered by a word. It is not that Christ is not near us; it is not that His ear is heavy; it is not that the tenderness of His sympathy is blunted. It is a part of His plan of faithfulness and wisdom. He has a double purpose herein. He would bless by it both us and all His Church. How many a fainting soul has gathered strength for one more hour of patient supplication by thinking on this Canaanitish mother; on her seeming rejection, on her blessed success at last! And for ourselves, too, there is a special mercy in these long-delayed blessings. For it is only by degrees that the work within us can be perfected; it is only by steps, small and almost imperceptible as we are taking them, yet one by one leading us to unknown heights, that we can mount up to the golden gate before us. The ripening of these precious fruits must not be forced. We have many lessons to learn, and we can learn them but one by one. And much are we taught by these delayed answers to our prayers. By them the treasure of our hearts is cleared from dross, as in the furnace-heat. He would but teach us to come to Him at once for all, and not to leave Him until we have won our suit. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) *Faith triumphant over refusal:*—1. Here is, first, the Saviour leaving the usual scenes of His ministry, and passing into a land to which He had as yet no message. As soon as He reaches it, He makes it plain that He did not come there for purposes of public ministration. He came there, I think we may say, for the sake of one soul. He would leave on record just one example of His care for those who were not yet His own. Thus would He warn the Jews that God's blessing might escape them altogether, if they gave not the more earnest heed. When and as He will, such is the law of His working. And they who would find Him must watch for Him. Into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon He comes but now and then, or He comes but once. 2. Again, how many are the heart's sorrows! How often are they connected with family life? Happy they whose family sorrows bring them to the same place for healing—to the feet of Christ. 3. But at all events, if the home be ever so bright, if the life be ever so cloudless, there is a want deep down within, which is either keenly felt, or, if not felt, tenfold more urgent. If not for a child whom Satan hath bound; yet at least for ourselves we have all need to approach Christ with the prayer, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David." In some of us there is by habit a possession of the evil one: in all of us there is by nature a taint and an infection of sin. 4. Thus then we have all of us occasion to approach Him who has turned aside to visit our coasts. We have all a malady which needs healing, and for which He alone, alone in heaven or in earth, even professes to have a remedy. The less we feel, the more we need. My brethren, we do not believe that any real prayer was ever cast out for the unworthiness of the asker. 5. And doubt not, but earnestly believe, that as this miracle describes us in some of its parts, so shall it describe us also in all. It was written to teach men this lesson—that refusals, even if they were uttered in words from the heavenly places, are at the very worst only trials of our faith. Will we, that is the question, pray on through them? 6. And assuredly, this morning, we may take the history before us as a strongly encouraging call to Christ's holy Table. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The Syrophenician woman:*—I. A COMMENDATION OF THE WOMAN'S FAITH. But now what is it that Christ commends and admires? It is the greatness of the woman's faith. Now faith may be said to be great either in respect had to the understanding, or to the will. For the act of faith proceeds from them both; and it may be said to increase and be great, either as the understanding receives more light, or the will more warmth: as the one doth more firmly assent, and the other more readily embrace. In the understanding it it raised by certainty and assurance, and in the will by devotion and confidence. This woman's faith was great in both respects. She most firmly believed Christ to be the Lord, able to work a miracle on her daughter: and her devotion and confidence was so strongly built, that neither silence nor denial nor a reproach could shake it. And because we are told that "the greatness of virtue is best seen in the effects;" as we best judge of a tree by the spreading of its branches, and of the whole by the parts; we will therefore contemplate this woman's faith in those several fruits it brought forth,—in her patience, in her humility, in her perseverance; which are those lesser stars that shine in the firmament of our souls, and borrow their light from the lustre of faith, as from their sun. 1. We must admire

her patience. She endured much; misery, reproach, repulse, silence, and the name of a "dog." Her patience proves the greatness of her faith. 2. Next follows her humility, a companion of patience. "She worshipped Him." Not a humility which stays at home, but which "comes out of her coasts" after Christ. She cries after Him; He answers not. She falls on the ground; He calls her "dog." A humility that is not silent, but helps Christ to accuse her. A humility, not at the lower end, but under the table, content with the crumbs which fall to the dogs. Thus doth the soul by true humility go out from God to meet Him, and, beholding His immense goodness, looks back unto herself, and dwells in the contemplation of her own poverty; and, being conscious of her own emptiness and nihility, she stands at gaze, and trembles at that unmeasurable goodness which filleth all things. It is a good flight from Him which humility makes. For thus to go away from God into the valley of our own imperfections, is to meet Him: we are then most near Him when we place ourselves at such a distance; as the best way to enjoy the sun is not to live in his sphere. We must therefore learn by this woman here to take heed how we grace ourselves. For nothing can make the heavens as brass unto us, to deny their influence, but a high conceit of our own worth. If no beam of the sun touch thee in the midst of a field at noonday, thou canst not but think some thick cloud is cast between thee and the light; and if, amongst that myriad of blessings which flow from the Fountain of light, none reach home to thee, it is because thou art too full already, and hast shut out God by the conceit of thy own bulk and greatness. Certainly, nothing can conquer majesty but humility, which layeth her foundation low, but raiseth her building to heaven. This Canaanitess is a dog; Christ calls her "woman:" she deserves not a crumb; He grants her the whole loaf, and seals His grant with a *Fiat tibi*. It shall be to humility "even as she will." 3. And now, in the third place, her humility ushers in her heat and perseverance in prayer. Pride is as glass; "It makes the mind brittle and frail." Glitter she doth, and make a fair show; but upon a touch or fall is broken asunder. Not only a reproach, which is "a blow," but silence, which can be but "a touch," dasheth her to pieces. Reproach pride, and she "swells into anger;" she is ready to return the "dog" upon Christ. But humility is "a wall of brass," and endureth all the batteries of opposition. Is Christ silent? she cries still, she follows after, she falls on her knees. Calls her "dog?" she confesseth it. Our Saviour Himself, when He negotiated our reconciliation, continued in supplications "with strong crying" (Heb. v. 7), and now, beholding as it were Himself in the woman, and seeing, though not the same, yet the like, fervour and perseverance in her, He approves it as a piece of His own coin, and sets His impress upon it. And these three, patience, humility, perseverance, and an undaunted constancy in prayer, measure out her faith. For faith is not great but by opposition. 4. I might add a fourth, her prudence, but that I scarce know how to distinguish it from faith. For faith indeed is our Christian prudence, which doth "innoculate the soul," give her a clear and piercing eye, by which she discerns great blessings in little ones, a talent in a mite, and a loaf in a crumb; which sets up "a golden light," by which we spy out all spiritual advantages, and learn to thrive in the merchandise of truth. We may see a beam of this light in every passage of this woman; but it is most resplendent in her art of thrift, by which she can multiply a crumb. A crumb shall turn this dog into a child of Abraham. To our eye a star appears not much bigger than a candle; but reason corrects our sense, and makes it greater than the globe of the earth: so opportunities and occasions of good, and those many helps to increase grace in us, are apprehended as atoms by a sensual eye; but our Christian prudence beholds them in their just magnitude, and makes more use of a crumb that falls from the table, than folly doth of a sumptuous feast. "A little," saith the Psalmist, "which the righteous hath is more than great revenues of the wicked" (Psa. xxxvii. 16). A little wealth, a little knowledge, nay, a little grace, may be so husbanded and improved that the increase and harvest may be greatest where there is least seed. It is strange, but yet we may observe it, many men walk safer by starlight than others by day. Many times it falls out that ignorance is more holy than knowledge. 1. Shall we now take pains to measure our faith by this woman's? We may as well measure an inch by a pole, or an atom by a mountain. We are impatient of afflictions and reproaches. 2. But next, for humility: who vouchsafeth once to put on her mantle? 3. Lastly: For our perseverance and fervour in devotion, we must not dare once to compare them with this woman's. For, Lord! how loath are we to begin our prayers, and how willing to make an end! Her devotion was on fire; ours is congealed

and bound up with a frost. But yet, to come up close to our text, our Saviour mentions not these, but passeth them by in silence, and commends her faith. Not but that her patience was great; her humility great, and her devotion great: but because all these were seasoned with faith, and sprung from faith, and because faith was it which caused the miracle, He mentions faith alone, that faith may have indeed the pre-eminence in all things. 1. Faith was the virtue which Christ came to plant in His Church. 2. Besides, faith was the fountain from whence these rivulets were cut, from whence those virtues did flow. For had she not believed, she had not come, she had not cried, she had not been patient, she had not humbled herself to obtain her desire, she had not persevered; but having a firm persuasion that Christ was able to work the miracle, no silence, no denial, no reproach, no wind could drive her away. 3. Lastly; Faith is that virtue which seasons all the rest, maketh them useful and profitable, which commends our patience and humility and perseverance, and without which our patience were but like the heathen's, imaginary, and paper-patience, begotten by some premeditation, by habit of suffering, by opinion of fatal necessity, or by a stoical abandoning of all affections. Without faith our humility were pride, and our prayers babbling. For whereas in natural men there be many excellent things, yet without faith they are all nothing worth, and are to them as the rainbow was before the flood, the same perhaps in show, but of no use. It is strange to see what gifts of wisdom and temperance, of moral and natural conscience, of justice and uprightness, did remain, not only in the books, but in the lives, of many heathen men: but this could not further them one foot for the purchase of eternal good, because they wanted the faith which they derided, which gives the rest τὸ φίλτρον, "a loveliness and beauty," and is alone of force to attract and draw the love and favour of God unto us. These graces otherwise are but as the matter and body of a Christian man, a thing of itself dead, without life: but the soul which seems to quicken this body, is faith. They are indeed of the same brotherhood and kindred, and God is the common Father unto them all: but without faith they find no entertainment at His hands. As Joseph said unto his brethren, "You shall not see my face except your brother be with you" (Gen. xliii. 3); so, nor shall patience and humility and prayer bring us to the blessed vision of God, unless they take faith in their company. You see, our Saviour passeth by them all: but at the sight of faith He cries out in a kind of astonishment, "O woman, great is thy faith!" And for this faith he grants her her request: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt:" which is my next part, and which I will touch but in a word. II. *Fiat tibi* is A GRANT; and it follows close at the heels of the commendation, and even commends that to. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Suffering sends to Christ:*—No wind so powerful to drive us from Tyre and Sidon to Christ, from the coasts of sin to the land of the living, as calamity. (*Ibid.*) *Light drawn out of darkness:*—Here is a cloud drawn over her; yet her faith sees a star in this cloud; and by a strange kind of alchemy she draws light out of darkness, and makes that sharp denial the foundation of a grant. (*Ibid.*) *Prayer richly answered:*—"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Before, silence; now, admiration: before, a reproof; now, a commendation: before, a "dog;" now, a "woman:" before, not a crumb: now, more bread than the children. She cried before, and Christ answered not; but now Christ answers, and not only gives her a crumb, but the whole table; answers her with "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt!" (*Ibid.*) *Some prayers take long to answer:*—If God's chastisements make you better, thank God for them. Those unfeeling words, that cold look, and that indifferent way of Christ—what a gush of feeling they brought out of this woman's soul! That pushing away—how it brought the pleading hands out, as it were! How it caused every tendril and fibre of her heart to clasp and cling to the Saviour, and made her refuse to let Him go! It was out of the apparent winter of His face that her summer came. It was out of His repulsion that her blessing came. Any dealing that makes you better inside is beneficial. And do not feel when God is dealing with you severely that He has forgotten you. It takes a great while to answer some prayers. One day an acorn looked up and saw an oak tree over it, and did not know that this tree was its father, and pleaded with Nature, saying, "Make me such a one as that." So the squirrel took it, and raced off with it towards its nest; and on the way he dropped it on a ledge where there was a little soil, and lost it. There it germinated, and its roots struck down. And after a year the little whip cried, "I did not pray to be a little whip; I prayed to be like that oak tree." But God did not hear. The next year it grew and branched a little; but it was not satisfied; and in its discontent it said:

"O Nature, I prayed that I might be like that voluminous oak, and now see what a contemptible little forked stick I am." Another year came, and the winter froze it, and the summer storms beat on it, and it tugged away for its life, and its roots ran out and twined themselves around rocks and whatever else it could get hold of, and fed on the hillside. So it grew and grew till a hundred years had passed over it. Then behold how on the hillside it stands firm, and defies the winter storms and tempests. Then behold how it spreads itself abroad, and stands an oak indeed, fit to be the foundation of a prince's palace, or the keel of a ship that bears a nation's thunder round the globe! You cannot be transformed in an instant. You cannot be changed between twilight and sunrise. When, therefore, you pray that God will regenerate your nature, will you not give Him time to do such a work? When you pray for the reconstruction of your character, will you not wait till God can perform such an act of mercy? If, looking at the interior, He sees that the work can be expedited, He will expedite it; but you must be patient. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Great faith found amongst the Gentiles who were to gain the most by it:*—If it be through the special virtue and dignity of the grace of faith that the new dispensation is enabled to make itself commensurate with the world, it seems peculiarly appropriate, that the chief examples of that grace, which was thus to equalize the claims of all the races of mankind, should have been selected from among those who were to gain the advantage in this equalization. (*W. A. Butler, M.A.*) *A gradual transition from Jew to Gentile:*—Nor, perhaps, is it altogether unworthy of notice in this point of view, that when the Church was indeed to be declared a Church of Gentile no less than Jew, the first believer—the common ancestor of the world of evangelized heathen—was a man holding the same office, and, it would appear, similarly connected in habits and disposition with the Jews: for as it is said of the Centurion of the Acts, that he was "one that feared God, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway"—so it is likewise said of the Centurion of the Gospel, that "he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue." And I may add that this respectful attachment to the ancient people of Jehovah is very discernible in the language of our immediate subject, the believing Canaanite; for she not only addressed her Redeemer in her supplication as "the Son of David" (a title which could appear honourable only to one who sympathized with the feelings and prepossessions of a Jew), but even acceded to the justness of our Lord's strong expressions when He classed her nation as "dogs" in comparison with the long-adopted "children" of God. However this may be, the choice of the previous friends and reverers of Israel, as the special instances of Gentile faith in Christ, may be considered in a view beyond this; not merely as a striking exemplification of that law of gradual transition which seems to pervade all the works of God, spiritual no less than physical—the heathen being partially Judaized before he becomes wholly enlightened, but also as manifestly rendering these instances more appropriate types of the entire work of Gentile conversion—externally, of the preaching of the gospel to the heathen in all ages, which in all ages must include so large a Jewish element, must build itself upon Jewish history, authenticate itself by Jewish prophecy, and proclaim its great Subject the fulfilment of Jewish types; internally of the parallel story of the gospel life in the soul, which, perhaps, finds every man more or less a Jew in heart, in pride, self-reliance, spiritual ignorance, and formality—before it conducts him into the humility, the faith, the illumination, and the liberty of the gospel. (*Ibid.*) *A prayer that involved an argument:*—"I am not sent but to Israel," said Jesus. "She came," not with an argument, but a prayer that involved an argument, "and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!" She no longer calls Him Son of David, for her object was to rise from the Son of David to the Son of God, from the Messiah of the Jew to the Messiah of the world—to "the Lord" in the simple majesty of the name, yea, to "the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace." She, therefore, designates Him by the vaster and ampler title, and adds to her designation "worship." She insinuated that "the Lord" had power above His commission; that this plenipotentiary of heaven could at will transcend the terms of His instructions; and by that omnipotence which ruled the world it had created, she invoked Him, "Lord, help me!" But even this is ineffective. Faith must see more than power; and the Canaanite must pay a price for being the model of the Church to come. Like Him she implored, she must be "made perfect through sufferings." For, alas, omnipotence acts by mysterious and often exclusive laws; though the agent be almighty, the object may be unfit for its operation; the same power that bade Carmel blossom left Sinai a desert. "It is not meet to take the

children's bread, and to cast it to dogs;" "Let the children (St. Mark adds) first be filled!" But now for a bolder flight of the eagle-wing, and a keener glance of the eagle eye of faith. She springs from the supreme control to the benevolent equity of providence. She rises above the clouds of the Divine power, often, to us who can only see them from below, dark, disturbed, and stormy, into the holy serenity beyond them. She sees the calm Sovereign of the universe, partial, yet impartial too; preferring some, yet forgetting none. She knows that "His care is over all His works," and—deepest wonder of her heaven-sent enlightenment—she can see that He loves her, and yet accord His unquestionable right to love, if He please it, others more; allows she can ask but little, yet believingly dares to pronounce that little certain! She will permit (would to God we could always follow her in our speculations!) no mystery of dispensation to contradict the truth of the Divine character. "Truth, Lord," is her retort, for the calmness of her settled convictions left her power to point her reply: "Truth, Lord! yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Everything is here. All Christianity is concentrated in one happy sentence. She believes in her own lowliness: she believes in God's absolute supremacy; she believes in the secret propriety of the apparent inequalities of His providence; she believes that those inequalities can never affect the true universality of His love. God is all, yet she is something too, for she is God's creature. Men from deep places can see the stars at noon-day; and from the utter depths of her self-abasement she catches the whole blessed mystery of heaven: like St. Paul's Christian, "in having nothing, she possesses all things." (*Ibid.*) *The power of faith shown in the woman of Canaan:*—We may learn from this narrative—I. That misfortunes and calamities, however severe and painful they may appear, are the best, and often the only means of leading us to a sense of religious duty. II. That no want of present success should ever lead us to despair. III. That the lowest station, and even the vilest in heart, are still within the reach of the sanctifying mercies of their Redeemer. This woman belonged to an outcast race. (*R. Parkinson, B.D.*) *The woman of Canaan:*—1. Her faith had a good foundation. She called Jesus "the Son of David." 2. Her faith made her very diligent to seek out Christ, when she heard that He was in the country. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *The Syrophenician woman:*—"Jesus went thence." The persons and places that have been favoured with Christ's presence and instructions may not be always so; having delivered His message, and done His work, He will remove. The day is going away, and night will succeed. Happy they who, while they have the light, know how to use it; and, having Jesus with them, make sure of an interest in Him, before He go from them. 1. The suppliant. 2. The title she speaks to our Lord by—"O Lord, Thou Son of David." 3. The request. I. THE TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES THIS SUPPLIANT'S FAITH MET WITH. 1. Though she cries, Christ is wholly silent. How great a trial is this, to speak to the only Saviour, and have no return; to cry to a merciful Saviour, and meet no regard. Prayers may be heard, yet kept in suspense. A bitter aggravation of affliction (Lam. iii. 8; Cant. v. 6; Psa. xxii. 2, lxix. 3, lxxvii. 7, 8, 9). This a trial, considering the encouraging character under which God is made known to His people (Psa. lxv. 2, l. 15; Isa. lxv. 24). 2. Christ seems to intimate that He had nothing to do with her. He was able to save, but salvation was not for her. 3. When her request was renewed, Christ seems to answer it with reproach. II. Having spoken of the trial of this woman's faith, I COME TO CONSIDER HOW IT WAS DISCOVERED, AND WORKED THROUGH ALL. 1. Though Christ was silent she did not drop, but continued her suit. The eternal Word would not speak to her, the wisdom of the Father would not answer her, the compassionate Jesus would take no notice of her, the heavenly Physician would not yet help her; but all this does not discourage or sink her. How does the earnestness of this heathen in crying after Christ reproach the ignorance and ingratitude of the Jews, who generally made light of Him; and invite all that hear it, to admire her faith thus discovered, and the grace of God in general wherever it works. Faith enabled her to read an argument in Christ's silence, and by it she continued her suit. The same words that bid us pray, bid us wait too (Psa. xxvii. 14). 2. When Christ speaks, and seems to exclude her out of His commission to give help and relief, she passeth over the doubt she could not answer, and, instead of disputing, adores Him, and prays to Him still. Two or three things are here implied, as what she kept her eye upon, and by which she was quickened and helped on in praying to Christ amidst so many discouragements, which otherwise would have been enough to sink her. (1) Upon her deep necessity. It was a deplorable case her child was in, being grievously vexed with a devil, from subjection to which she earnestly desired

to see her set free. (2) Upon Christ's power, and His compassion joined with it, that He and He only could, and, as she hoped, would relieve her. Her faith as to this is manifested by her coming to Him, and by the title she gives Him, of Lord—"Lord, help me." (3) Upon Him, as the Messiah promised of God, the great Deliverer, and so worshipped Him, and cast herself upon Him, with this strong cry, uttered by a stronger faith, "Lord, help me." This was the discovery of this supplicant's faith under trials. Now followeth—III. THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THIS, in her faith's triumph. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." To how blessed an issue is the struggle brought! Christ's answer before was not so discouraging as this was comfortable. What consolation is it fitted to convey, as it is the testimony of one that knew the heart, and given after a manner most fit to revive it? 1. Her faith was owned, commended, and admired by the Author of it, whose words are always spoken according to truth, most clearly and certainly. 2. The reward of her faith was ample, as large as her desires were, to have it to be, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And how fast and far will a sinner's thoughts and desires fly after good things? What a compass will they take? Looking downward he will say, I desire to be delivered from the bottomless pit, that my soul may not be gathered with sinners, nor my portion be with them in their place of torment; and Christ will say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Looking inward, his language will be, O that I may be delivered from this body of death. Looking upward to the mansions of glory, the believer cries, O that heaven may be mine. (*D. Wilcox.*) *Power and efficacy of prayer*:—I. PRAYER IN ITS OPPORTUNITIES. Some are more highly favoured with opportunities of prayer than others. Many are early instructed in its nature, &c., others are destitute of such instruction: such was the case probably with the Canaanitish woman who so urgently presented her suit to our Lord. 1. Seasons of affliction furnish opportunities for prayer. 2. The special presence of Christ, either at times of public worship, or in the influence of His Spirit in private, furnish opportunity for prayer. It was the presence of the Saviour in the immediate neighbourhood of the Canaanitish woman that induced her to come to Him. II. PRAYER IN ITS OBJECTS. 1. It ought to be personal. "Lord, help me," is the language of true prayer. 2. It ought to be intercessory. III. PRAYER IN ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS. IV. PRAYER IN ITS SUCCESS. Prayer to be successful—1. Must be persevering. 2. Must be offered in faith. "O woman, great is thy faith." (*Anon.*) *This woman's nationality* is emphasized by the Evangelists with a variety of expressions. She is characterized vaguely as "a Greek," not in the limited sense with which we are most familiar, but as a genuine term for non-Jewish people, very much as the Turks and Asiatics adopt the designation of "Frank" for any European. Her personal name has come down through tradition as Justa, and that of her daughter as Bernice. She is called by St. Matthew "a woman of Canaan"—an inhabitant of the region into which those who escaped extermination had been shut up; and the title may have been selected to enhance the loving-kindness of the Lord, not without reference to her inheritance of the ancient malediction, "Cursed be Canaan." She is also called here a Syrophenician by descent, probably to distinguish her from those Libyo-Phenicians in the northern coasts of Africa, whom the fame of Carthage had made so widely known. She was, no doubt, in religion a heathen, but was possessed by principles which, when called into active exercise by the Great Teacher, served her in better stead than the orthodox creed did not a few of its professors. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) She was a heathen in religion, an alien in race, a dweller in a city hardly surpassable for antiquity, enterprise, wealth, or wickedness. She had been doubtless a worshipper of the Syrian goddess whose worship covered the Levant; the deity who personified the fulness of Divine life which fills the world; who was loved by the purest because they deemed her the giver of their children; and yet worshipped with loathsome devotion by the vilest because she was supposed to sanction all action of human lust. A Hindoo mother, worshipping Doorga, in her brighter aspect, reproduces exactly the sort of feeling and devotion in which this woman had been reared. She was thus ill-placed, for the favourite deity corrupted the morals of the people exactly in the degree they worshipped her. Yet her faith receives a tribute of highest praise from her Saviour, and she is, I suppose, the first heathen converted to the faith and the salvation of the Son of God. (*R. Glover.*) *The action of faith*:—Faith is a great mystery. To doubt, nothing is needed but weakness; to believe, requires great energy or great necessity. Observe the creed which has grown in this woman and now shows itself. 1. She believes in miracles. The lukewarm, who are rich and increased in goods,

are unbelieving; for, needing nothing, they cannot believe in what they see no need for. But the needy, whose case is desperate, have other thoughts. All the afflicted tend to settle in this creed, that there must be somewhere a cure for every trouble. So the miracle of healing a demoniac child seems quite possible to her. 2. She believes, in some measure, in the Divinity of Jesus—viz., that he can do what mere man cannot do; that He is omnipotent to save. 3. She believes in the love of Christ. Her mother-love has given her a new idea of God's love. If she were God, she thinks, she would succour the wretched and bind up the broken heart. And she feels that Christ's heart must be full of love—even to a helpless heathen. (*Ibid.*) *The Syrophenician woman:*—This story places before us a pattern of meekness and perseverance rarely equalled. 1. How many, even with privileges of teaching and education to which she was a stranger, would have taken offence at the apparent insult of such a reception as she met with. But with all the forbearance of the meek and quiet spirit, which disarms opposition, she discerned a smile beneath His frown, and won her petition. 2. How many, if not offended and full of resentment, would have turned away discouraged. To have hoped, as she had done, against hope, and then to have heard that there was One who could give her relief, and to have flung herself at His feet in the agony of supplication, and to be so received! Could we have been surprised if despair had taken possession of her, and she had hurried from His presence? 3. But faith triumphed over all disappointment, and her desire was granted. Whether it was given to her to understand it we cannot tell; but the seeming harshness of her Saviour's conduct was but a new revelation of his unfailing love. The same love which, when faith was weak, prompted Him to go forth to meet it, led Him to hold Himself back when faith was strong, that it might be yet further purified and made perfect through trial (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The dogs:*—She had often heard her people characterized as "dogs." It was a title by which the Jews, whose first care it was to hate, to mock, and to curse all besides themselves, disgraced the Gentiles. The noble nature of the dog finds no recognition in the history of the Old or New Testaments. Among Jews dogs were regarded as wild, savage, undomesticated animals, which prowled about cities as the scavengers of the streets, with no masters and no homes. But Jesus, by the use of a diminutive not to be expressed in English, softened not a little the harshness of the comparison, implying that the dogs to which He likened this woman were not excluded from the house. And the woman with the instincts of a Gentile, with whom the dog was not only a favourite but an almost necessary companion, having its place at the domestic hearth, turned it at once into an argument in her favour, and replied, "Yes, Lord, I accept the position; for the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." What she meant to convey must have been something like this: "I do not deny that the Jews are the first object of your care and ministration. They are the true children, and I am far from asking that they should ever be superseded in their rightful prerogative; but the very fact that you should speak of their being first fed seems to imply that our turn will come after them, and your mitigation of the harsh unfeeling by-word which the Jews adopt, encourages me to persevere in my petition. Let the full board, then—the plentiful bread of grace—be reserved for the Jewish children; but only let me be as the dog under the table, to partake of the crumbs of mercy and comfort that fall from it." (*Ibid.*) *Faith improved by trial:*—Compare with the testing of the Syrophenician woman's faith, God's trial of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 1–19), and note the rich reward which triumphant faith won in both instances. Pure gold loses nothing in the testing for alloys; the diamond shines all the more clearly for being rid of the rough surface which hid its light. *Dogs:*—Duff, the African missionary, was about to begin a gospel service in a Boer farmer's house, when he noticed that none of the Kaffir servants were present. To his request that they might be brought in, the Boer replied roughly: "What have Kaffirs to do with the gospel? Kaffirs, sir, are dogs." Duff made no reply, but opened his Bible, and read his text: "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "Stop," cried the farmer, "you've broken my head. Let the Kaffirs come in."

Vers. 31–37. **And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech.**—*The pattern of service:*—The "missionary spirit" is but one aspect of the Christian life. We shall only strengthen the former as we invigorate the latter. Harm has been done, both to ourselves and to this great cause, by seeking to stimulate compassion and efforts for heathen lands by the use of other excite-

ments, which have tended to vitiate even the emotions they have aroused, and are apt to fail us when we need them most. It may therefore be profitable if we turn to Christ's own manner of working, and His own emotions in His merciful deeds, as here set forth for our example. We have here set forth—I. THE FOUNDATION AND CONDITION OF ALL TRUE WORK FOR GOD, IN THE LORD'S HEAVENWARD LOOK. That wistful gaze to heaven means, and may be taken to symbolize, our Lord's conscious direction of thought and spirit to God as He wrought His work of mercy. Such intercourse is necessary for us too. It is the condition of all our power, and the measure of all our success. Without it we may seem to realize the externals of prosperity, but it will be an illusion. With it we may perchance seem to spend our strength for naught; but heaven has its surprises; and those who toiled, nor left their hold of their Lord in all their work, will have to say at last with wonder, as they see the results of their poor efforts, "Who hath begotten me these? behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" The heavenward look is—1. The renewal of our own vision of the calm verities in which we trust. 2. It will guard us from the temptations which surround all our service, and the distractions which lay waste our lives. II. PITY FOR THE EVILS WE WOULD REMOVE, BY THE LORD'S SIGH. It is a sharp shock to turn from the free sweep of the heavens; starry and radiant, to the sights that meet us on earth. Thus habitual communion with God is the root of the truest and purest compassion. He has looked into the heavens to little purpose who has not learned how bad and how sad the world now is, and how God bends over it in pitying love. And pity is meant to impel to help. Let us not be content with painting sad and true pictures of men's woes, but remember that every time our compassion is stirred and no action ensues, our hearts are in some measure indurated, and the sincerity of our religion in some measure impaired. III. LOVING CONTACT WITH THOSE WHOM WE WOULD HELP, IN THE LORD'S TOUCH. The would-be helper must come down to the level of those whom he desires to aid. We must seek to make ourselves one with those whom we would gather into Christ, by actual familiarity with their condition, and by identification of ourselves in feeling with them. Such contact with men will win their hearts, as well as soften ours. It will lift us out of the enchanted circle which selfishness draws around us. It will silently proclaim the Lord from Whom we have learnt it. The clasp of the hand will be precious, even apart from the virtue that may flow from it, and may be to many a soul burdened with a consciousness of corruption the dawning of belief in a love that does not shrink even from its foulness. IV. THE TRUE HEALING POWER AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF WIELDING IT, IN THE LORD'S AUTHORITATIVE WORD. That word is almighty, whether spoken by Him, or of Him (John xiv. 12). We have everything to assure us that we cannot fail. The work is done before we begin it. The word entrusted to us is the Word of God, and we know that it liveth and abideth for ever. Nothing can prevail against it. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Ephphatha*:—I. TEACHING FOR THOSE WHO WOULD FOLLOW THE LORD IN DOING GOOD. 1. Be considerate. Deal with each case according to its need. 2. Look up to heaven. It is the privilege of serving God to create correspondence with God. He who does good, enters into alliance with heaven. 3. Sigh. "Shall the heirs of sinful blood, seek joy unmixed in charity?" Doing good is lessening evils; contact with evils makes us serious—sad. Therefore many avoid it all they can—avert eyes from realities around them, attend only to what will please and amuse. Selfish creatures, children of world, who have not the Spirit of Christ. Those who have will, in this, share His experience. Sadness in sympathy: pain in disappointment. II. ADMONITION TO ALL TO WHOM THE WORD OF GOD COMES. Their case was before Christ's mind. The deepest cause of His sigh and sorrow was that they were spiritually deaf, and therefore spiritually dead. "Hear, and your soul shall live." (*T. D. Bernard.*) *Deaf mutes*:—I. Many cannot speak because they are deaf, so some souls are silent because they are dull of hearing. II. Christ sighs over faculties misused or destroyed. III. We need this miracle in our souls—the opening of the ear, and the loosening of the tongue. IV. When one was healed many sought healing (Matt. xv. 30), and found it, till the half-heathen people summed up their experience in a word which describes all Christ's action in miracles, providence, and grace—"He hath done all things well." (*R. Glover.*) *He took him aside*:—Thus it is that God's greatest works are performed. Crowds may admire the full-blown rose, but in silence and secrecy its leaflets have been folded in the bud. The broad river bears navies on its bosom, but amid the mosses and ferns of the lonely mountain it takes its rise. In this instance, when the man and his Saviour were alone together, there was as much care bestowed on him as if there were none else in the world. I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S UNI-

VERSE. How difficult to conceive that one individual can be of importance to its Ruler. Here we see each soul standing in His sight aside from all the rest; (1) Aside for responsibility; (2) Aside for affection. II. IN THE WORK OF SPIRITUAL HEALING, CHRIST DEALS IN THE SAME WAY STILL. 1. In childhood, by a mother's voice. 2. In after years, by books, sermons, friends, trials. The conscience is touched; we stand face to face with God. III. THE HEALED IN BODY MIGHT GO BACK TO THE MULTITUDE. The healed in soul must stay aside. In the world, but not of it. His objects of life, tastes, aspirations, are different from those of the multitude. He must be much alone with Christ in prayer, communion, and study. Alone, but not lonely. IV. THE FINAL TAKING ASIDE. Death. Aside from the earthly multitude, its toil, bustle, and sorrow: united with the great multitude whom no man can number. (*F. R. Wynne, M.A.*) *Healing the deaf and dumb man:*—Jesus speaks to him in signs. (1) Takes him aside from the multitude—alone with Jesus; (2) puts His fingers into his ears—these are to be opened; (3) touches his tongue with His saliva—Christ's tongue is to heal his; (4) looks up to heaven and sighs—God's help in man's sorrow; (5) speaks the word "Ephphatha"—and the man speaks plain. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *He took him aside:*—Teaching us by this act—1. To avoid vainglory in all our works of mercy to others. 2. That the penitent must separate himself from the crowd of worldly cares, tumultuous thoughts, and inordinate affections, if he would find rest for his soul in God. 3. That he must tear himself from the company of evil and frivolous companions, and from the bustle of incessant occupation. 4. That Christ alone can heal the soul. He took from the deaf and dumb man any trust that he might have had in those who stood by. 5. He leaves also this lesson to His ministers, that if they would heal the sinner by their reproof, they should do this when he is alone. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The successive steps in the conversion of the sinner:*—1. The departure from the multitude, *i.e.*, from evil companions, sinful desires, corrupt practices. 2. The favour which comes from Christ, who gives us both the sight of our sins, and the knowledge of God's will; and then streugthens us to obey His commands. 3. The confession of our sins which is given us when Christ touches our tongue with the wisdom which is from above, and gives us grace to acknowledge God by word and deed. (*Ibid.*) *Meaning of Christ's action:*—The whole action would seem to have been symbolical, and accurately suited to the circumstances of the case. Translate the action into words, and what have we but sayings such as these? "I have taken thee aside from the multitude, that thou mightest observe and remember Who it is to Whom thou hast been brought. Thine organs are imperfect: here are members of thy body, which are useless to the ends for which they were given, and I am about to act on them with a power which shall supply all defects. Yet I would have thee know that this power is but a credential of My having come forth from God, and should produce in thee belief of My prophetical character. Behold, therefore: I lift My eyes unto heaven, whilst I utter the word which shall give thee hearing and speech. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The abuses and uses of speech:*—I. WHY DID CHRIST SIGH? For us Christians, as well as for that poor Jew; because, when He looked up to heaven, He looked up to His home as God, and as God He had before His omniscience all the sins which, through ear and tongue, had brought, were bringing, and would bring, misery to man. II. IS THERE NOT STILL A CAUSE WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD SIGH WITH CHRIST? 1. For blasphemous words. 2. Unbelieving, sneering words, and flippant, irreverent words. 3. False words; the lies of society, of vanity, of business, of expediency, of ignorance. 4. Obscene, lascivious, wanton words. 5. Bitter, slanderous, and railing words. Of what does our conversation too often consist? First, there are self-evident platitudes about the weather (very often murmurings of discontent with that which comes so plainly and directly from God); then, the old Athenian craving either to tell or to hear some new thing, and that new thing, how commonly! an evil report about our neighbour. "Thou satest at thine ease," deliberately, in your home, at the table of your friend, in the railway carriage, in the news-room, in the office, "thou satest and spakest against thy brother." Instead of "every man shall give an account of himself," it might have been written, "every man shall give account of his neighbour unto God," so eager are we to detect and remember his infirmities, to ignore and forget our own. It never seems to strike us that, while we are so busy in spying and pointing out to others the thistles in our neighbours' fields, the tares are choking our own wheat. Our neighbours' idleness, lust, drunkenness, profanity, debt,—these are our theme; and we forget that there is such a thing as a judgment to come for our own misdeeds. III. THE CURE OF THE DISEASE. 1. Not

mere secular "education": that is only the pioneer, who saps and mines, not the artillery which destroys the citadel. If the fountain is poisonous, the filter may remove the dirt which discolours, but it will not make the water wholesome. No mental, no moral education, can directly act upon the soul. You may teach men to speak more correctly and politely, to think more cleverly, and to reason more closely; but this will not purify the heart. Lust and dishonesty are all the more dangerous, when they quote poetry, and converse agreeably. 2. Education is but a means to an end. It is the ambulance on which we may convey the wounded man to the surgeon—the couch on which we bring the sick man to Jesus. Regarded thus, education is a most useful handmaid to religion. Christ is the sole physician; to Him, and to none else, the sin-sick soul must come. IV. FAITH IN HIM, STRENGTHENED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, LEADS US TO CONSECRATE OUR POWER OF SPEECH TO HIS GLORY AND THE GOOD OF HIS CREATURES. V. THE FINAL ISSUE. The use we make of the tongue will decide our future (Matt. xii. 37). It is said that one who had not long been converted to Christianity, once came to an aged teacher of the faith, and asked instruction. The old man opened his Psalter, and began to read the Psalm which first met his eye, the thirty-ninth; but when he had finished the first verse, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue," his hearer stopped him, saying, "That is enough; let me go home and try to learn that lesson." Some time after, finding that he came no more, the elder sent to enquire the reason, and the answer was, "I have not yet learned the lesson"; and even when many years had passed, and the pupil became a teacher as full of grace as years, he confessed that, though he had been studying it all his life, he had not mastered it yet. (*Canon S. R. Hole.*) *Christ's sigh*:—What did that sigh mean? 1. Sympathy for the afflicted. The incarnation brings the heart of Jesus close to our own, and we know that He feels for our sorrows. 2. Grief at the effects of sin. Man, made in God's image, had become through sin the poor dumb creature on which Christ looked. The thought of Eden with its sinless inhabitants, and the sad contrast presented by the sight before Him, made Jesus sigh. 3. Apprehension for the future. What use would the man make of his restored faculties? Hitherto he had been unable to let any corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, and his ears had been sealed to the cruel, false, impure words of the world. What evil he might now do with his tongue; what poisonous words might now enter into his ears. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Sighs*:—It is by prayer, and the secret sighs of the heart, that Christ applies His merits, and that the Church does it after His example. If the conversion of a sinner cost Jesus Christ so many desires, prayers, and sighs; is it unreasonable that it should likewise cost the sinner himself some? Is it not necessary that His servants, called and separated to this work, should be men of desires, prayers, and sighs? That which Christ does here is the pattern which a minister of the Church ought to follow, who, in the exercise of his ministry, ought to lift up his heart toward heaven, to groan and sigh in behalf of those under his hand, and to expect everything from Him who is the sovereign Master of all hearts. (*Quesnel.*) *The sigh of disappointed desire*:—We may readily understand how, on the instant of working a miracle, a glance towards heaven might cause Christ to sigh. Wherefore had He descended from that bright abode if not to achieve its being opened to the lost race of man? And wherefore did He work miracles, if not to fix attention on Himself as the promised seed of the woman who, through obedience and death, was to reinstate our lineage in the paradise from which they had been exiled for sin? There was a sufficiency in the satisfaction which He was about to make, to remove the curse from every human being, and to place all the children of Adam in a more glorious position than their common parent had forfeited. But He knew too well that, in regard of multitudes, His endurances would be fruitless; fruitless, at least, in the sense of obtaining their salvation, though they cannot be in that of vindicating the attributes of God, and leaving the impenitent self-condemned at the judgment. Therefore, it may be, did Christ sigh; and that, too, immediately after looking up to heaven. I can read the sigh; it is full of most pathetic speech. "Yonder," the Redeemer seems to say, "is the home of My Father, of the cherubim and seraphim. I would fain conduct to that home the race which I have made one with Myself, by so assuming their nature as to join it with the Divine. I am about to work another miracle—to make, that is, another effort to induce the rebellious to take Me as their leader to yon glorious domain. But it will be fruitless; I foresee, but too certainly, that I shall still be despised and rejected of men." Then who can wonder that a sigh was interposed

between the looking up to heaven and the uttering the healing word? The eye of the Redeemer saw further than our own. It pierced the vault which bounds our vision, and beheld the radiant thrones which His agony would purchase for the children of men. And that men—men whom He loved with a love of which that agony alone gives the measure—should refuse these thrones, and thereby not only put from them happiness, but incur wretchedness without limit or end—must not this have been always a crushing thing to the Saviour? and more especially when, by glancing at the glories which might have been theirs, He had heightened His thought of their madness and misery? I am sure that were we striving to prevail on some wretched being to enter an asylum where he would not only be sheltered from imminent danger, but surrounded with all the material of happiness, a look at that asylum, with its securities and comforts, would cause us to feel sorer than ever at heart, as we turned to make one more endeavour, likely to be useless as every preceding one, to overcome the obduracy which must end in destruction. Therefore ought we readily to understand why the Redeemer, bent only on raising to glory a race, of which He foresaw that myriads would voluntarily sink down to shame, gave token of a distressed and disquieted spirit, between looking towards heaven and working a miracle—as though the look had almost made Him reluctant for the work. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christ the opener of locked doors:*—The Ephphatha of Christ was not spoken in Decapolis alone. It is heard also in history. He sighed "Ephphatha," and the conflict of His Church was revealed to His evangelist. He sighed "Ephphatha," and the tongue of Galileo and Kepler told of the wondrous order of the heavens. He sighed "Ephphatha," and buried monuments gave up their records of the past, and threw side-lights on higher truths. He spoke "Ephphatha," and Caxton gave new powers to the world. Knowledge stepped forth from her dust-covered shrine, and carried her rich bounties into every city and house. History unlocked her long-hidden lore. Science painted in noble colours the half-veiled face of Nature. The tongue of Europe was loosed. But well might a sigh have been heaved as the Ephphatha was spoken. It is not truth alone, or holiness alone, which has been unlocked. It is not Chaucer's "well of English undefiled," the pure song of Spenser, the heart-rousing vision of Dante, the chivalrous epic of Tasso, the stately and magnanimous verse of Milton alone which have been given to the world. A fouler current mingles with the bright, pure stream, and darkens the flood of knowledge—the unredeemed filth of Boccaccio, the unbridled licentiousness of Scarron, the stupid sensuality of Dancourt, the open indecency of Wycherley, the more fatal suggestiveness of Sterne. The press became indeed the voice of nations; but when it was loosed a sigh drawn from the pure heart of Christ, wounded by the misuse of a glorious opportunity, might have been heard by the Church of God. Yet Christ did not withhold the boon. Freely, ungrudgingly, were His miracles of love performed. To deny powers or privileges, or the free exercise of rights and faculties, on the ground that they may be abused, is to act according to the dictates of expediency, not of right. But there is a remedy for the evils which accompany this freedom. It is by conferring an additional and guiding gift. There is another "Ephphatha." He speaks, "Be opened," and the tongue is loosed; but the ear is unstopped also. While He bestows the faculty of speech, He bestows also the opportunity of hearing those glad and soul-elevating principles of righteousness, and forgiveness, and love, which will fill the loosened tongue with joy, and put a new song of praise in that long-silent mouth. (*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*) *His ears were opened:*—Christ first opened the man's ears, then untied his tongue; because we must hear well, before we can speak well. (*Pontanus.*) *The heavy ear and speech of faith:*—There are diseases of the soul as well as the body, and a man's spiritual nature often needs, in order to its perfection, as great and almost as miraculous a change as the gifts of speech and hearing to the dumb and deaf. What shall we say of those who have no ears to hear what our Father in heaven is always revealing to the hearts of those who love Him? There are sounds in nature which often arrest our attention in spite of ourselves; there are messages of grace which often touch the conscience in the midst of an ungodly course. Can the discontented churl walk abroad, on a fine morning in the early summer, and not find the joyous singing of the birds around him in some sort a condemnation and a solace of his unthankful spirit? Can the moments of solemn thought (though they be but moments) which are awakened by the heavy roll of thunder, pass away without our remembering how small and insignificant we ourselves are in the hands of Him who made all created nature? Is it possible that the old, old

story of Jesus Christ, our Brother and our God, can be repeated without stirring up some desire to be with Him? Or is it possible for us, who have our organs of speech perfect, to use that speech for every worldly object of profit or interest, and yet to have no voice, because we have no heart, to join in earnest prayer, or utter our songs of praise? Is it possible, in short, for a professing Christian to harden his heart, and to be deaf to the spiritual invitations which he listens to in God's Word, in God's providence, and in God's whispers to his soul? Alas, we know such things are possible; but we know also that He who imparted the gift of speech and hearing to the afflicted one near the lake of Galilee is waiting, by His Spirit, to impart a greater gift to every one of us, however careless and unfaithful and earthly has been our life. The Lord our Master is ready [to bestow the hearing ear and the speech of faith. (*Dean Bramston.*) *The sigh of Jesus*:—In all our Saviour's sorrows—I do not enter now into the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary—but in all the sorrows of our Saviour's life among men, there are two features characteristic, beautiful, and instructive. Our Saviour's recorded sadnesses were all for others. They were either, as at Bethany, sympathy with others' griefs; or as when He wept over Jerusalem, or when He encountered the opposition of the Sadducees, for our sins; the selfish element was unknown. Again, His sorrow was never an idle sentiment. There is a great deal of useless, impassioned feeling in the world. Thousands are pained by the wickedness and misery they see around; they descant upon it; they can even weep when they speak of it—but it leads to no action. There is no effort; there is no self-sacrifice. It is almost poetry. It is but little more than the luxury of a tragedy. How different His! We never read of a sigh or tear of Jesus, but it immediately clothes itself into a benevolent word, or a benevolent work. I question whether, if we were in a right state, there would ever be a sorrow which did not throw itself into an action. Some receive affliction passively and meditatively. They go into seclusion. But others at once go forth the more. They see in their trial a call to energy. The sigh of Jesus, as He healed the deaf and dumb man in Decapolis, has been made to speak many languages, according to the varied habits of mind of those who have interpreted it. I will arrange them under four heads, and we may call them:—the Sigh of Earnestness; the Sigh of Beneficence; the Sigh of Brotherhood; and the Sigh of Holiness. Let us note each: lest, by omitting one, we should miss our lesson. 1. Because it says that "looking up to heaven, He sighed," some connect the two words, and account that the sigh is a part of the prayer—an expression of the intensity of the workings of our Lord's heart when He was supplicating to the Father. And if, brethren, if the Son of God sighed when He prayed, surely they have most of the spirit of adoption—such a sense of what communion with God is—who, in their very eagerness, exhaust themselves; till every tone and gesture speak of the struggle and ardour they feel within. 2. But it has been said again, that He who never gave us anything but what was bought by His own suffering—so that every pleasure is a spoil purchased by His blood—did now by the sigh, and under the feeling that He sighed, indicate that He purchased the privilege to restore to that poor man the senses he had lost. 3. But furthermore, as I conceive of this, that sigh was the Sigh of Fellowship—the Sigh of Brotherhood. 4. But fourthly. All this still lay on the surface. Do you suppose that our Saviour's mind could think of all the physical evil, and not go on to the deeper moral causes from which it sprang? But, after all, what is worth sighing for, but sin? And observe, He only sighed. He was not angry. He sighed. That is the way in which perfect holiness looked on the sins of the universe. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The sigh of apprehension*:—Who among us has not sighed to look on his speechless child in its cradle, thinking what words those innocent lips might one day form? Who has not sighed when he first sent his boy to school, remembering what other lessons must enter into his ears besides those of the class-room? Jesus looked up to heaven as He performed the miracle of healing. Surely this was to teach the dumb man to look up also, and to learn that every gift comes from above. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Why Jesus sighed?*—1. This is not the only record of the sighs, and tears, and troubled heart of Jesus (Heb. v. 7; Mark viii. 12; John xi. 33). Truly He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." So, to some extent, have all His saints and children been. You must not suppose that our blessed Saviour had no bright and joyous hours on earth. This joy of Jesus—deep joy, though noble and subdued—is not our subject to-day, but I touch on it for one moment only, lest any of you should take a false view of the life of man, or fatally imagine that in this world the children of the devil have a monopoly of happiness.

Happiness?—they have none. Guilty happiness? there is no such thing! Guilty pleasure for a moment there is;—the sweetness of the cup whose draught is poison, the glitter of the serpent whose bite is death. Guilty mirth there is—the laughter of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. But guilty happiness there never has been in any life, nor ever can there be. True happiness, happiness in the midst of even scorn and persecution, happiness even in the felon's prison and in the martyr's flame, is the high prerogative of God's saints alone—of God's saints, and therefore assuredly, even in His earthly life, of Him the King of Saints; since there is in misery but one intolerable sting, the sting of iniquity, and He had none. 2. But you will not have failed to notice that on two of the occasions on which we are told that Jesus sighed and wept, He was immediately about to dispel the cause of the misery. He was about to heal the deaf. Why then should He have sighed? He was about to raise the dead. Why then did the silent tears stream down His face? The doing of good is not a work of unmixed happiness, for good men can never do all the good that they desire. They have wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for themselves; and this sort of happiness brings much pain. 3. My friends, there was in truth cause enough, and more than enough, why the Lord should sigh. In that poor afflicted man He saw but one more sign of that vast crack and flaw which sin causes in everything which God has made. When God had finished His work, He saw that it was very good; but since then tares have been sown amid His harvest; an alien element intruded into His world; a jangling discord clashed into His music. Earth is no longer Eden. 4. And alas, it is not only the unintelligent creation which groans and travails. We ourselves, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we ourselves also groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body. We are apt to be very proud of ourselves and of our marvellous discoveries and scientific achievements; but, after all, what a feeble creature is man! what a little breed his race! what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue! We fade as the grass, and are crushed before the moth. If we knew no more than Nature can tell us, and had no help but what Science can give to us, what sigh would be too deep for beings born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward? (*Canon F. W. Farrar, D.D.*) I. The NATURE of the miracle. One of the most wonderful ever wrought. It was both a physical and mental miracle, reaching the mind as well as the organs of the body. It not only conferred the wanting faculties of hearing and pronouncing words, but also supplied an acquaintance with the meaning and use of words. Long and laborious discipline of the tongue, and inward effects of memory, and association of ideas with particular inflections of sound, are still necessary to enable us to employ that language as a medium of communication. Here, however, was the impartation at once of both hearing, and understanding of what was heard. It has been compared to the work of creation; it had in it all the elements of creativeness, beneficence, and Divine power, from which we may see the majesty of our Saviour. II. THE ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES of this miracle. III. THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE of this miracle. There are disabilities upon every soul by nature akin to the deficiences of him whose ears were deaf, and whose tongue was tied. The Great Healer is now among us. He can help anywhere, on the highway. This Ephphatha is prophetic. It tells of the ultimate consummation of Christ's mediatorial work. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Impediment in speech:*—Notice, too, that those who are spiritually deaf have also an impediment in their speech. This is shown in many different ways. When I find persons who will not speak out boldly for the honour of Jesus Christ, who will not confess Him before the world, I know they have an impediment in their speech. When I find persons in church silent throughout the service, making no responses, singing no psalm, or chant, or hymn, I know they have an impediment in their speech: they will not put their tongue to its right use, which is to praise God with the best member that we have. If I find a man saying what is false, hesitating to give a plain, straightforward answer, I know that he has an impediment in his speech, his stammering tongue cannot utter the truth. If I hear a man wild with passion, using bad language, I know that he has an impediment, he cannot shape good words with his tongue. And so with those who tell impure stories, or retail cruel gossip about their neighbour's character, they are all alike afflicted people, deaf to the voice of God, and with an impediment in their speech. And now let us look at the means of cure. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Bringing men to Jesus:*—They brought the afflicted man to Jesus. That is the first step. If we would find pardon and healing, we must be brought to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit leads the sinner back in many different ways. It was the reading of one text of Scripture which turned Augustine from his evil life. It was the single word "Eternity" printed in the tract which a man had torn scoffingly in two, and which lay in a scrap of paper on his arm, that led him to repent. Sometimes it is a word in a sermon, or a verse in a hymn; sometimes it is the question of a little child, or the sight of a dead face in a coffin; but whatever it is which brings us back to Jesus, that must be the first step to finding pardon and healing. (*Ibid.*) *Love and Sorrow*:—I. THAT SIGH, THEN, WAS A PRAYER. Probably Jesus, when on earth, never did any great work without prayer. And how much of the real force of prayer was concentrated in this one sigh? Let us not measure the power of prayer by the time it occupies, or by the noise it makes. II. But while the sigh was a prayer, THE PRAYER WAS A SIGH. But what does the sigh suggest to us? 1. Not that He felt Himself incompetent to perform the task sought at His hands. 2. Not that He felt any reluctance to bestow the requested boon. Jesus was no miser in mercy. 3. Not that He felt that the performance of this miracle would be in any respect inconsistent with the principles and purposes of His mission to our world. I. IT REVEALS TO US THE REALITY AND INTENSITY OF THE SAVIOUR'S LOVE TO INDIVIDUAL SUFFERERS. II. IT SHOWS THE KEENNESS WITH WHICH THE SAVIOUR FELT THE EVIL OF SIN. III. MAY NOT THAT SIGH SUGGEST THAT THE SAVIOUR FELT THAT THE BOON HE WAS ABOUT TO BESTOW WAS A COMPARATIVELY TRIVIAL ONE? He is only one of millions of men, all of whom are victims of some misery, and all of whose miseries spring from the one cause—sin. What have I done towards the accomplishment of My work when I have cured this man? IV. THAT SIGH REMINDS US OF THE ESSENTIAL CENTRAL PRINCIPLE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SALVATION. Christ never relieves a man of any curse the misery of which He does not appropriate to Himself. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. This sigh was the price He paid for an opened ear and a loosened tongue. What spiritual blessing have you and I which He has not paid for in the sorrow of His own experience? V. THAT SIGH MAY WELL SUGGEST TO US THE HOLY SADNESS OF DOING GOOD. (*J. P. Barnett.*) *The Saviour's Sigh*:—"He sighed" when about to unstop deaf ears. Sighed when on the verge of opening the door by which the music of nature and the welcome sounds of the human voice would enter the hitherto silent regions within. Sighed when He was prepared to give power to the mute organ of speech. Why, we should rather have expected that He would have smiled, and, "looking up to heaven," rejoiced. We do not sigh when engaged in a mission of mercy. Far from it. When we take loaves to the famishing, or money to the wretched bankrupt, we feel a throb of sacred delight. As we mark the pallid invalid get stronger and better, or as we visit asylums for the deaf and dumb in order to witness the compensations offered by us for the defects of nature, we are filled with grateful happiness. Why did the Master sigh? I. THE ANSWER BRINGS BEFORE US THE MOST IMPRESSIVE AND TRAGICAL FEATURE IN THE SAVIOUR'S EXPERIENCE. His whole life was a sigh. So utterly was this the case that we find Him mournful even when about to perform a miracle of great mercy! Just as there are dark spots on the bright sun, so even when suffused with celestial glory on the Mount of Transfiguration the awful cross made its appearance, for "they spake of His decease." Hardly had the cheerful hosannahs of the multitude died away when He "beheld the city and wept over it." To quote from Jeremy Taylor, "This Jesus was like a rainbow; half made of the glories of light, and half of the moisture of a cloud." We speak often of Christ's sacrifice in a one-sided style. Too often we mean by His sufferings the death He endured. We think of Calvary. The accursed tree rises before our imaginations. All these were dreadful indeed, albeit they were not the sum but the consummation of His trials. They were the closing pages of a volume filled with like details. He looked "up to heaven," and what saw He there? Crowns prepared for men who would not seek them; thrones made ready for such as cared not to occupy them. II. WHAT OUGHT WE TO LEARN FROM THE SAVIOUR'S SIGH? 1. A lesson of consolation. Intense trouble seeks solitude. In great affliction men often wish to be alone. Even in inferior creatures something of this kind appears. The wounded deer retreats from the herd into the dark recesses of the forest. The whale, smitten by the harpoon, dives into the lowest depths of the sea. Human beings frequently prefer isolation when in trial. Peter "went out," when he saw the truth of his Master's prediction, and "wept bitterly." Of Mary, bereaved so heavily, the friends near her said, "She went forth unto the grave to weep there." Was there anything akin to this in our Lord? There was. Even in minor matters of such an order He was made "in all

points like unto His brethren." Where did He sigh? In company? In a crowd? No. We are distinctly informed He "took him aside from the multitude." No one heard Him sigh, not even the afflicted man, for he was unable to do so. The sigh was between the Son and the Father. "Looking to heaven," not to earth, "He sighed." Let us be comforted in sorrow. These incidents clearly show how qualified the Great High Priest is to sympatbize with His disciples. He was once as we are. 2. Is there not a lesson of stimulus? Jesus did more than sigh. He said, "Ephphatha," and thus restored sound and speech to the sufferer before Him. We must act as well as feel. Sighing will never reform the world, regenerate humanity. We must work. Our effort should be to bring men to Him who can still heal and restore. 3. There is also a lesson of caution. Possibly there were special reasons for sorrow on the part of Christ in reference to the man whom He healed. Perhaps the Redeemer foresaw that the bodily restoration would not lead to spiritual restoration, &c. Do we never sin with the ear? with the tongue? Alas, none is innocent herein. The golden rule bas not yet brought our words into subjection to it. "Keep the door of my lips." The grand thing is to have our hearts right, then all will be well. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *The sigh of Jesus*:—I. The general STUDY OF THE STORY would furnish several very excellent and edifying lessons suggested by our Lord's action in working this miracle upon the shore of Decapolis. 1. We might note, earliest, the wide reach of the Master's zeal: "And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis." Jesus had just come from Tyre and Sidon, clear across in a heathen land; He was now in the midst of some Greek settlements on the eastern shore of the Sea of Tiberias. We see how He appears thus going upon a foreign mission. 2. Then, next, we might dwell upon the need of friendly offices in apparently hopeless cases. "And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him." 3. We might also mention, just here, the manipulations of our Saviour as illustrating the ingenuity of real sympathy. "And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue." 4. Even better still is our next lesson: we observe our Lord's respect for every one's private reserves of experience. "And He took him aside from the multitude privately." We shall surely do better always, when we bring souls to the Saviour, if we respect the delicacy of their organization, and take them aside. 5. Now we notice the naturalness of all great services of good. "And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." At the supremely majestic moments of His life our Lord became simpler in utterance and behaviour than at any other time. He fell back on the sweet and pathetic speech of His mother-tongue. 6. Again: we learn here the risks of every high and new attainment. "And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." What will the restored man do with his gifts? II. The singular PECULIARITY OF THIS STORY, however, is what might be made the subject of more extended remark in a homiletic treatment. Three things meet us in their turn. 1. A question stands at the beginning: Why did our Lord sigh when He was looking up to heaven? 2. We are left in this case to conjecture. And, in a general way, perhaps it would be enough to say that there was something like an ejaculatory prayer in this sigh of Jesus' soul; but more likely there was in it the outbreaking of sad and weary sympathy with the suffering of a fallen race like ours. It may be He sighed because there was so much trouble in the world everywhere. It may be He sighed because there were many who made such poor work in dealing with their trouble. It may be He sighed because He could not altogether alleviate the trouble He found. Some worries were quite beyond the reach of His power. He did not come to change the course of human affairs. Men are free agents; Jesus could not keep drunkards from killing themselves with strong drink if they would do it. It was not His errand on earth to crush in order to constrain. It may be He sighed because the trouble He met always had its origin and its aggravation in sin. This was the one thing which His adorable Father hated, and against which He was a "consuming fire." It may be He sighed because so few persons were willing to forsake the sins which made the trouble. It may be He sighed because the spectacle of a ruined and rebellious world saddened Him. When the old prophet

came back from captivity and found Jerusalem in fragments; when Marius returned and sat down among the broken stones of Carthage, we are not surprised to be told that they wept, though both were brave men. But these give but feeble illustration of the passionate mourning of soul which must have swept over the mind and heart of Jesus, who knew what this earth had been when it came forth pure from the creating hand of His Father. No wonder He walked heavily depressed and mournful all through His career. 3. It is time to end conjecture, and come at once now to the admonition we find here in the story. Christians need more "sighs." Christians must follow sighs with more "looking up to heaven." Christians may cheer themselves with the prospect of a new life in which sighing shall be neither needed nor known. The Saviour shall then have seen of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Sorrow in healing*:—He sighed, and said, Be opened. The sigh therefore arose from no feeling of helplessness to remove the malady. The cure followed, as ever, that word of power. And yet He sighed as He said, Be opened. 1. He sighed, we cannot doubt, at the thought of that destructive agency of which He had before Him one example. Here was one whom Satan had bound. Here was an illustration of that reign of sin unto death to which the whole world bears witness. This deaf and dumb man reminded Christ of the corruption that had passed over God's pure creation: and therefore, looking up to heaven, He sighed. And it will be no light gain, my brethren, if this thought should teach you to see with your Saviour's eye even those bodily infirmities which you perhaps are tempted to regard almost with ridicule, but which are making life a burden and a weariness to so many of our fellow creatures. Remember whence these things come; from the power of him who has entered into God's creation to torture and to ruin God's handiwork. 2. But there was more than this, as we all feel at once, in that sigh. That outward bondage was but the token of an inward thraldom. Whether healed or not in this life, no bodily infirmity can have more than a temporary duration. Death must end it. But not so that spiritual corruption of which the other was but a sign. That inward ear which is stopped against God's summons; that voice of the heart, which refuses to utter His praise; these things are of eternal consequence. And while bodily infirmities and disorders are occasional and partial in their occurrence, spiritual disease is universal. It overspreads every heart. And, as a mere matter of doctrine, I suppose we all assent to this. Without God's grace, we all admit, we can know nothing and do nothing. But oh, how different our view of all this and Christ's! First of all, we shut out from our anxiety every case but our own. No one by nature feels the value of his brother's soul: it is well if he bestows a thought upon his own. But how differently did Christ view these things, when He sighed as He opened the deaf man's ears! Christ sees sin as it is; sees it in its nature, as a defiance of God; sees it in its effects, as leaving behind it in each heart that it enters defilement, and weakness, and hardness, and misery; sees it in its consequences, as bringing forth fruit unto death—a death not of annihilation, not of blank unconsciousness, but a death of unspeakable and interminable wretchedness. 3. He sighed therefore, we may say further, from a sense of the disproportion in actual extent between the ruin and the redemption. The ruin universal. All the world guilty before God. And yet the great multitude refusing to be redeemed. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The deaf man cured*:—I. Consider first THE MAN'S INTRODUCTION TO JESUS. Now, in contemplating a fellow-creature in such sad case, the thought may well occur how little are we affected by our common mercies! How little think we of such blessings as preserved senses, unshattered reason, the links unbroken which connect us with the outer world, and all the faculties unimpaired which fit us for the activities of life. And, though of all such privations, the *gift* of sight is perhaps the one we should least like to have taken away, yet bliudness even may be less to be deplored than loss of hearing and speech. For this calamity, unalleviated, and existing from birth, shuts up the soul of the sufferer in a perpetual prison-house. He has no outlet for communion with his kind; he has no medium for the interchange of sentiment or emotion, until wearied with treading for ever the same cycle of never-extending and never-wearied thought, he sinks into a condition of utter mindlessness—God's image on a dark cloud, a sad wreck of humbled and defaced humanity. It has been among the glorious achievements of a scientific philanthropy in our own day to have discovered means for abating somewhat the deep misery of this infliction; but any such alleviation was unknown then. So they bring him to Jesus. Brethren, is there not some light thrown by this fact on the part which our friends are permitted to perform for us in reference to

the more helpless and hopeless forms of spiritual malady? What does this prove but that there are no men whose case is so bad and hopeless as that we must not try to convert them, but rather in exact proportion to the hopelessness of a man's moral condition, is the obligation to do all we can for him. We are to pray for none so earnestly as for those who through the inveteracy of their soul's malady cannot pray for themselves. II. But I pass to our second portion, to observe SOME PECULIARITIES CONNECTED WITH THE METHOD OF THIS AFFLICTED MAN'S CURE. "And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." Why were the methods used by our Lord in working his miracles so diverse one from another? The only account to be given of these variations is, that they had reference either to something in the moral circumstances of the sufferer, or to some effect to be produced in the mind of the bystanders, or it might be, to some lesson of practical instruction which through these typical healings might be conveyed to believers to the end of time. Especially are we to suppose that in each case of the wrought miracle there was in the method chosen some express adaptation to the circumstances of the person benefitted—the state of his affections towards God, and his susceptibility to become a subject of the spiritual kingdom. For to this end we are sure our Divine Lord worked always. Indeed, the benefit had been no benefit otherwise. To what purpose had been the recovery of sight to a man only to look on the face of this outer world, while his soul was left to grope its way through mists of an everlasting blindness? The instances seem to suggest that there are some persons, who, in order to their learning holy lessons must be withdrawn from the world for a season. They cannot have their ears effectually opened in a crowd—not even in a crowded church. They must be forced into retirement. Anything Jesus might say to them while the bustle and stir of life was upon them, whilst its feverish excitements were drawing them hither and thither, would make no impression. On coming to some retired place, however, our Lord proceeds to the miracle, but still, observe, by a gradual process. He puts His fingers into the man's ears, then spits, and with the moistened finger touches his tongue. As to the reasons for the choice of these means, in preference to any other, it does not seem necessary to go further than the circumstances of the man himself. Questions he could not answer; verbal directions he could not understand; it was only by visible and sensible applications to the organs affected, that he could be made to perceive what was going on, or could connect Jesus with the authorship of his cure. All that we gather is, that the case was one in which it would not be well that the blessing to be bestowed should be instantaneous—that it was needful that time should be given for consideration of what all those processes were to lead to—that faith should be exercised, disciplined, taught to look up, expecting to receive something, and that the soul before coming into that which would be to it as a new world, should know who that Being was to whom it must dedicate all its restored faculties and powers. And it is certain, brethren, that the Great Healer has recourse to like protracted methods now. The ears of the deaf must be unstopped before the tongue of the dumb can sing. The heart must believe unto righteousness, before with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. But, then, how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear who are born deaf? Deaf to the calls of mercy; deaf to the alarms of danger; deaf to the warning of conscience; deaf to the voice of the Son of God. Must there not, I say, be an opening of the ears first? Must not the finger of Jesus be put into them, making a passage through, so that His word may reach the heart. Brethren, let us all pray for unstopped ears. It is for our life the prophet tells us—"Hear, and your souls shall live." Oh, how far is he on the way heavenward who has an ear ever open to the whisperings of the Divine Spirit! "And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." He looked up to heaven: so at the grave of Lazarus He lifted up His eyes. On the deep mystery of our Lord's prayers. They were as much prayers as yours or mine are prayers—and in connection with His miracles were petitions, not for Himself, that He might be able to work them, but for the people that they might be able to receive them, that the benefit might not be lost to them through the want of those moral dispositions, faith and love, without which He could not, according to the stipulations of the everlasting covenant, have performed any wonderful work. The same view gives a reality to His continued intercession for us at the throne of God. Christ does not pray for anything relating to His own work—for His blood that it may cleanse, for His

righteousness that it may justify, for His pardons and acquittals, that they may be endorsed and owned of God—these are among heaven's immutable things. What He does pray for is the removal of those hindrances in our hearts which prevent the free flowing of His mercy towards us, for the triumphs of His grace over all our unbelief and worldliness, for the unclosed ear that the voice of the charmer may pierce through, for the loosened tongue that it may magnify the grace of God. "And He sighed." Again our thoughts revert to Bethany, where, just before working the miracle it is said, He "groaned in spirit and was troubled." We may see many reasons for the distress of soul on the part of the Holy Saviour. He sighed over the spectacle before Him as evidence of the suffering and sorrow of our race; He sighed over it as a mournful defacement and distortion of God's moral image; but He sighed most of all over the stubborn unbelief, that miserable infidelity of the heart, the one solitary obstacle in the whole universe of God, to the instantaneous wiping of all tears from off all faces, and the saving of every soul of man. Yes, brethren, this last it was that wrung these bitter sorrows from the Saviour's heart. He could bear the scourge, disregard the mockery, endure the cross, despise the shame; that which next to the hidden face of God, rent His soul most was, to be obliged to say continually, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." "Ephphatha, Be opened." Here the Almighty power of God speaks. The taking him aside, the touching of the ear, the spitting and moistening of the tongue, the eye raised heavenwards, and the deep sigh, were all the human preparations; the man's heart was getting ready, the grace of Jesus making way for the demonstration of His power, the Spirit of God was moving upon the face of a dark soul before the irresistible word should go forth, "Let there be light;" and as irresistible was the word of Jesus to this poor sufferer, for it was the same word; so that it was no sooner uttered than straightway the man's ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. Our profit in the incidents we have been considering will be found in seeing how entirely our soul's health and life are in the hands of Christ. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Alone with Jesus*:—It is a great thing to be alone with nature; to be alone with a man of a noble heart; a greater thing by far to be alone with Jesus, "Aside from the multitude." I. THAT HE MIGHT QUICKEN HIS SENSE OF INDIVIDUALITY. God has made us persons; we lose ourselves in the crowd; trials depress, we lose hope and become more like things. But Jesus awakens us. II. THAT HE MIGHT AWAKEN HIM TO A TRUER CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS SPIRITUAL NEEDS. "Touched him." Where? Ears and tongue. There was the evil, there the cure. Some are touched through their fears, others through their hopes. III. THAT HE MIGHT CONCENTRATE ALL HIS HOPES ON CHRIST. IV. THAT HE MIGHT BIND HIM FOR EVER TO HIMSELF. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *Glimpses of Jesus*:—I. THE UPWARD LOOK. 1. Devout faith in heaven. 2. Conscious harmony with heaven. 3. Undoubting confidence in heaven. II. THE SIGH. 1. Holy grief. 2. Brotherly sympathy. 3. Anxious solicitude. III. THE WORD. 1. A word of love. 2. A word of power. 3. A word of prophetic meaning. An earnest of greater victories. Some sigh, but nothing more. Idle sentiment. Others sigh, but do not look up. No faith in God. (*Ibid.*) *Words not necessary to prayer*:—It is impossible fully to enter into the profound depths of the "sigh" which Jesus uttered on this occasion. We may learn from it, at least, two things:—It teaches us that words are not absolutely indispensable to the offering of prayer. This sigh doubtless contained a prayer, for in all things the Redeemer acknowledged the Father, saying: "I can of Mine own self do nothing." The sigh of Jesus, like some of the mightiest forces of nature that are silent, was charged with the power of God. Some of the sincerest, deepest, and most agonizing supplications that have ascended to the ear of God, have gone up with no more audible sound than that of a "sigh." (*G. Hunt Jackson.*) *The touch of Christ*:—How exquisitely delicate is the touch of those highly-gifted musicians who can sweep the keys or chords of their instrument and make it speak as with living voice, now melting the audience to tears, now stirring their souls with lofty thoughts or martial enthusiasm! With equally magic power does the master painter evoke life from the canvas, and impart to his creations those inimitable touches of form and colour that delight the eye and captivate the imagination. The tender manipulation of a wise and skilful surgeon or experienced nurse has almost a healing influence, as it soothes the overstrung nerves and infuses confidence into the sufferer. A friend's gentle pressure of the hand and touch of sympathy will often calm sorrowful hearts more than the most kindly and fitly chosen words of condolence. If it be thus with merely human beings, we might reasonably expect to find far more

wonderful effects connected with the touch of Him, in Whom, while a partaker of flesh and blood, dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Such we know from the Gospels to have been actually the case: His touch does hold an important place in our Lord's miracles, as well as in His ordinary ministry. He touched, and was touched, and through this medium there went forth blessings of various kinds. His touch was healing, creative, life-giving, enlightening, comforting. The fact that it was so during His life on earth will suggest the inquiry how far it may be so still. (*The Quiver.*) *Leading our friends to Jesus:*—I. IN VIEW OF THE GREAT MISERY IN WHICH MAN FINDS HIMSELF WITHOUT CHRIST (verse 32). Miserable condition of the dumb and deaf man. II. IN VIEW OF THE GREAT BLESSEDNESS INTO WHICH HE ENTERS THROUGH THE LORD. Especially since we thereby enter upon the greatest happiness of earth (verse 33). The treatment of this deaf man is an illustration of how Jesus treats those who are led to Him by friend or acquaintance. (*Dr. Arndt.*) *Leading our friends to Jesus:*—During the exhibition of 1867 in Paris, a minister met with an instance of direct labour for souls which he states he can never forget. In conversation with an engineer employed on one of the pleasure-boats which ply on the Seine, the discovery was made that the man was a Christian, and on the inquiry being put, by what means he was converted, he replied: "My mate is a Christian, and continually he told me of the great love of Jesus Christ, and His readiness to save, and he never rested until I was a changed man. For it is a rule in our church that when a brother is converted, he must go and bring another brother; and when a sister is converted, she must go and bring another sister; and so more than a hundred of us have been recovered from Popery to the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." This is the way in which the gospel is to spread through the whole world. (*Anon.*)

Ver. 37. **He hath done all things well.**—*Excellency of Christ's operations:*—I. THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST'S OPERATIONS. "He hath done all things well;" as is apparent—1. In the magnificence of His operations. Instance the sublime works of His creative energy; His infallible administration in the kingdom of providence; His stupendous miracles; His mediatorial achievements (Psa. lxxxvi. 8–10, ciii. 19; Col. i. 16, 17, ii. 15; Matt. xi. 4). 2. In the completeness of His operations (Deut. xxxii. 4). 3. In the harmony of His operations (Psa. civ. 24; cxlv. 10). 4. In the benevolent design of His operations (Psa. xxxiii. 19; Dan. vi. 27). II. THE DEVOUT SENTIMENTS WITH WHICH THEY SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED. 1. Devout admiration (Psa. lxxvii. 13–16). 2. Adoring gratitude (Psa. cxlviii. 13). 3. Zealous attachment (Jer. l. 1–5). Has Christ done all things well? Then—1. How flagrant the impiety of mankind! 2. How justly is Christ entitled to the worship of the whole universe! 3. Let Him be the subject of our song, and the object of our supreme regard. (*J. Burns, LL.D.*) *Christ's excellent doings:*—The text explains itself—but the truth of it is of vastly wider scope. I. It has a grand significancy in the creative works of Christ. II. In His Divine government of this and all worlds. III. Its climactaral glory belongs to redemption. He undertook the world's redemption, and effected it, by—1. Obedience to the law. 2. Suffering the penalty for sin. 3. Conquering the powers of darkness. 4. Bringing life and immortality to light. 5. Obtaining the Holy Spirit. IV. In the salvation He obtained and bestows. An entire salvation of the whole man—a free salvation of sovereign grace—a salvation for the whole race—and a salvation to eternal glory. "He does all things well." V. In the experience of His people. He sought and found them—He forgave and healed them—He renews and sanctifies them—He keeps and upholds them, and He glorifies them for ever. (*Ibid.*) *He hath done all things well:*—I. IN CREATION. 1. Order and regularity. 2. Adaptation. 3. Provision. 4. Happiness of creatures designed. II. IN REDEMPTION. 1. In design—vicarious suffering. 2. Development—Incarnation. 3. Application to individuals. 4. To Resurrection. III. IN PROVIDENCE. 1. Afflictions. 2. Persecution, which only wafts the seed of truth to distant lands. Conclusion: 1. Submit to Him. 2. Work with Him. (*E. Hargreaves.*) *The dumb to speak:*—Dr. Carey found a man in Calcutta who had not spoken a loud word for four years, having been under a vow of perpetual silence. Nothing could open his mouth, till happening to meet with a religious tract, he read it, and his tongue was loosed. He soon threw away his *paras*, and other badges of superstition, and became, as was believed, a partaker of the grace of God. Many a nominal, and even professing Christian, who is as dumb on religious subjects as if under a "vow of silence," would find a tongue to speak, if religion were really to touch and warm his heart. (*Anon.*) *On Christ's doing all things well:*—I.

Christ's actions were good in themselves. In His general conduct, as a man, He did all things well. II. Christ's actions were performed with good designs. III. Christ's actions were performed in an amiable and graceful manner. Learn—1. How unjust was the treatment our Lord met with in the world. 2. How worthy is Christ of our admiration, reverence, and love. 3. How fit is it that we imitate this excellent and lovely pattern. 4. Let it be our concern to do all things well. (*J. Orton.*) *All things well:*—I. THE FACT. Creation announces it. Providence announces it. Redemption announces it. II. THE TESTIMONY. Saints testify to it. Admirers astonished at it. Critics confess it. III. THE CONSEQUENCE. Those who oppose Christ are sure to perish, for the right must prevail. They will stand self-condemned. The universe will say "Amen" to their condemnation, for they have conspired against it. (*L. Palmer.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1–9. **In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat.**—*Christ knows and supplies our need:*—A little lad, during the American war, was his widowed mother's comfort and joy. One day, as the poor woman was trying to scrape the flour from the sides and bottom of the barrel to help out the day's supply, the lad cried, "Mother, we shall have some more very soon, I know!" Why do you say so, my boy?" asked the mother. "Why, because you've got to scraping the barrel. I believe God always hears you scraping the barrel, and that's a sign to Him you want another." And before the day was over the fresh supply had come. *Feeding the people:*—I. Now we read that some of our foremost scientists—men of learning and research, and I am not here to say one word against them or their noble labours—have, as it were, if not formally, TACITLY AGREED TO BANISH GOD FROM HIS OWN CREATION. They continually declare we have nothing to do with God. He is the Unknown, and must remain for ever Unknowable; we are Agnostics, we know nothing of Him. We summarise in a few words the net results of the development theory as applied to the food of man. Within the last ten years special investigations have been directed to the origin and growth of corn. I cannot now indicate the course and scope of these researches more than to say that we have two ways of prosecuting the inquiry—by the records of history, and by the deposits of geology. And their teachings in fine amount to this. Wheat has never been found in a wild state in any country in the world, nor in any age. It has no development, no descent. It has always been found under the same conditions as it is now—always under the care and cultivation of man—never existed where man did not cultivate it. Moreover, it has never been found in a fossil state. So, if we hearken to the teachings of geology, man existed long before his staff of life. The most minute investigations into the origin of wheat have failed to find it under any conditions in the least different from what it is with us to-day. The oldest grain of wheat in the world is in the British Museum, and this has been microscopically examined and subjected to the most searching analysis, but it is found to be in all respects exactly the same as the wheat you secured a fortnight ago in this parish in the Vale of Clwyd. So there has been no development within the records of history, and it has no existence in the deposits of geology. Again: the power and the means of perpetuating its own existence have been given to every living and growing thing, animal and vegetable, and this is carried on from age to age, without any interference on the part of man. The only great exception to this grand and beneficent law is the corn—the food of man. A crop of wheat left to itself, in any latitude or country, would, in the third or fourth year of its first planting, entirely disappear. It has no power to master its surrounding difficulties so as to become self-perpetuating. Thus it does not come under the law of the "survival of the fittest." And what is still more singular—we have never more than a sufficient supply for some fourteen months or thereabouts, even after the most bountiful harvest, and it has been calculated that we are often within a week of universal starvation should one harvest totally fail. And how near this awful catastrophe we may have been this year even, God only knows. A shade too much, or a shade too little; and oh how little, and it might have been! And science informs us that the wheat has untold millions of enemies peculiar to itself. And no wonder it is a matter of universal rejoicings when another harvest has been

secured, and the farmer's anxious labours have been crowned with success. II. MAN MUST WORK. And this is nowhere more evident than in the harvest. Man must plough and harrow, and sow and reap, and bind and gather into barns, and thresh and grind, and knead and bake, and the hundred and one other little things allotted as his honourable share in this grand concern; otherwise his body, with its mysterious relations to earth and sky, to time and eternity, to matter and spirit, will not receive the nourishment intended for its growth and work, though all the cycles of immensity were kept to shed their benign influences on field and meadow and homestead. And on the other hand, man may do all his part, and yet not one single grain could he gather into barn or rick if our heavenly Father did not cause the earth to revolve, the planets to move, the inconstant moon to wend its way along the star-bespangled firmament, the river to roll on its pebbly bed, the myriad-laughing ocean in its cradle to ebb and flow, the entrancing landscapes of the sun-tinted clouds to sail in the balmy air, and the barriers of the dawn to be loosened that the golden rays of the lord of day may dance on the petals of the flowering wheat, and kiss the dew from the lips of the lily. Now sublimate this thought into the domain of the gospel, and you will have our part—our bodily and mental part, little though it be—in the spiritual and eternal life. For instance, you have power over your own limbs to come here to God's house, to bow the knee, to blend your voice in psalm and litany, to kneel before the holy table and receive the visible symbols of His Divine presence, and demean yourselves in bodily and mental posture as men who feel that God is amongst you; but after all you will go away empty if the Holy Spirit be not here to carry the words from the lips of the preacher to the heart of the hearer, and your Holy Communion will be an ideal ceremony if God's presence be not here to bless and satisfy the faithful worshipper. In one and the truest sense, all is of God, but He will not take you to heaven in spite of yourselves. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." III. THESE MIRACLES ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR LORD HIMSELF, HIS LIFE, HIS WORK. Contrast this miracle of feeding the multitudes with our Lord's refusal, at Satan's bidding, to convert the stones of the desert into bread for His own sake. Our Lord's temptations and sufferings and death were all for the sake of others—of us—of me a sinner—of the human family. (*D. Williams.*) *God's food the only satisfaction:*—"And they were filled." No true wealth except the harvest. All the gold and silver are simply means of exchange: they have a purchasing power; nothing is true wealth but the harvest. The harvest alone enriches, the harvest alone satisfies. If the harvest once failed, your gold and precious stones would soon become only so much dross to be flung away. Riches, pleasure, fame, empires even, do not satisfy; these things only increase the hunger of the soul, created to have its enjoyment and satisfaction in God alone. The food in which God is present alone satisfies. If God be here you will not go away empty. The Divine presence gives eternal satisfaction. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." (*Ibid.*) *Fragment gatherers:* — The apostles — the agents who were chosen to distribute amongst the multitudes the food which Jesus blessed—were privileged to gather the fragments. Oh, what precious fragments all who help to administer bread to the perishing souls receive back themselves! The preacher, the teacher, the district visitor, if their own hearts be in the right place, what lessons of encouragement, self-discipline, and mutual love! what precious fragments in the respect, gratitude, and affection from those amongst whom they minister, do they not receive! Virtue is its own reward. Do good, and the basket of fragments is yours. The less the material, the greater the number fed, the more fragments. Strange arithmetic! But it is the rule of three and practice of God. This is true of all lives. Those who have large means, and do but little, have no fragments to gather. (*Ibid.*) *How many loaves have ye?*—The miracle was made less startling, less striking, by the actual manner of performing it. The moment of its beginning was veiled. The first recipients took common bread. The multiplication was imperceptible. It was only reflection which would convince. The transition was so gradual from the natural to the supernatural, from the common into the miraculous, that careless or superficial observers might rise from the meal half unaware that a Divine hand had been working. In all this we see much that is Christlike. As no man (Prophecy said) should hear His voice in the streets, so no man should be forced to track His path in the self-manifestation of His glory. There was nothing glaring or for effect, nothing (as we should now say)

sensational, even in His signs. Christ sought rather to show how alike, how consistent, are all God's acts; those which He does every day in Providence, and those which He keeps commonly out of sight in grace. When that which began in eating common bread changed imperceptibly into eating food multiplied by miracle, that was a type of God's "two worlds," the one seen, the other unseen, yet each the counterpart and complement of the other, and separated each from each by the thinnest possible veil of present mystery. Christ might have wrought this miracle without asking for, without making use of, the seven loaves. But He did not. In like manner, Christ might now, in His Church and in His world, dispense with everything that is ours; might begin afresh. Instead He asks for the seven loaves that we have. The applications of this truth are many and various. I. WE SEE IT IN INSPIRATION. When it pleased God to give us a book of light, it was in His power to have made it all His own. But the human element mixes with the Divine. Bring forth all your gifts, such as they are, of understanding and culture and knowledge and utterance; bring them forth, all ye holy and humble men of heart, Moses and Samuel, David and Isaiah, Ezra and Ezekiel, Paul and John, Luke and Mark, Matthew and Peter; and then Christ, taking them at your hands, shall give them back to you blessed and blessing, to be to generations yet unborn the light of their life and the consolation of their sleep and of their awakening. II. THAT WHICH IS TRUE OF THE BOOK IS TRUE ALSO OF THE LIFE. "How many loaves have ye?" Christ puts that question to the young man, whose course is not yet shaped definitely towards this profession or that, and who would fain so pass through things temporal that he finally lose not the things eternal. Christ bids him to ponder with himself each particular of his character and of his history; gifts of nature and of education, gifts of mind and body, gifts of habit and inclination, gifts of connection and acquaintanceship, gifts of experience and self-knowledge; and to bring these, like a man—not standing idle because he has not heard or felt himself hired: not excusing himself from obeying because his loaves are but seven, or because they are coarse or stale or mouldy—but to bring them to Him who made and will bless. How many loaves have ye? Nothing? Not a soul? not a body? not time? not one friend, not one neighbour, not one servant, to whom a kind word may be spoken, or a kind deed done, in the name, for the love, of Jesus? Bring that—do that, say that—as what thou hast; very small, very trivial, very worthless, if thou wilt: yet remember the saying, "She hath done what she could." There are others but too confident in their gifts and in their doings. It is not without its risk, even a life of charity, even a life of ministry. Are you quite sure, that, bringing out your seven loaves, you brought them to Christ for that blessing which alone gives increase? Nothing works of itself—nothing by human willing or human running—but only by the grace of Him who giveth liberally, and who showeth mercy. Most of all, that which would help Christ's own work—to seek and to save that which is lost. "How many loaves have ye?" The question is asked of the man—it is asked also of the community. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) Wherever there is anything new, unusual, or exciting going on, there the crowd is sure to collect. These people were in distressing bodily want. It seems a little singular that this multitude should have so forgotten themselves, as to hurry out thus unprovided into the empty wilderness. We should never see half the distress we do, if people were only a little more considerate and thoughtful. But it was to the credit of these people that the distress they suffered was incurred by what was commendable. With a right appreciation of Christ, it would be no unwisdom to perish in following after Him, rather than to live in ease by forsaking Him. There was no relief for the multitude in the common course of things. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. And what a picture is thus given us of the tenderness and goodness of our Lord! Jesus pities people in want of bread for the body, as well as those in want of food for their souls. He enters into our temporal as well as spiritual needs. Nor was His compassion a mere empty sentiment. It stimulated to action. It exhibited itself in deed. It set to relieve the distress that stirred it. It would not be right to expect such interpositions as a common thing. God has His own ways for dealing out to men their daily bread, which must be regarded; but his resources are not limited. But there is method in this marvellous relief. "*So* they did eat." 1. There were directions given which had to be obeyed. And so there are commands to be observed in order to get the bread of life. There must be a coming down, a sitting in the dust at Jesus' feet, a humiliation of self to His orders and institutes 2. He took what the people had, and added His power and blessing to

it, and thus furnished the requisite supplies. They had seven cakes and a few small fishes. Grace was never meant to supersede nature, but to work upon it, to help it, bless it, and augment it. God is a frugal economist. He never wastes what already exists. He is never prodigal in His creations. We have eyes, and ears, and hearts, and understanding wills, which can be of good service in our salvation. All that they need is to be brought to Christ, submitted to His handling, bathed in His words of blessing, and filled with His power, to serve most effectually. 3. But the food He furnished was given to these hungry ones only through second hands. The bread and the fishes He "gave to His disciples to set before them, and *they* did set them before the people." Christ has appointed a ministry—an office which is filled by men, who, by His authority and command, are set apart and ordained to officiate between Christ and their fellows. And where there has been no ministry, there has been no salvation. The bread of life no man can have, until it is ministerially conveyed to him. Be it through the living voice, or the written page, or the solemn sacrament, that voice implies a speaker, that page a writer, that sacrament an administrator, who is God's appointed agent for the carrying of it to him who gets it. (*J. A. Seiss, DD.*) *Faith in Christ helpful against hunger*:—There be those who make sport of the thought that faith in Christ can help against the pangs of hunger, or the pinchings of bodily need. That a religious sentiment should serve to put bread in the mouths of the destitute, is to them ridiculous. And even unfledged apostles are often in such unfaith as to be in perplexity and doubt if He who saves the soul can also feed the body. The world, in its wisdom, does not know Christ, and so it doubts Him, and laughs at trust in Him. Well-meaning people get wrong in their Christology, and it sets them wrong at every other point. Let men learn that Jesus is the Saviour of bodies, as well as of souls; that He is the Lord of harvests and of bread, as well as of moral precepts and spiritual counsels; that He lives not only in a system of doctrines and religious tenets, but also in sovereign potency over all the products of land and sea, as well as over all the hidden principles of production; that He is not only a marvellous prophet of truth who lived in the time long past, but also an enthroned king of the living present, swaying His potent sceptre over all worlds, all nations, and all affairs, and dispensing His comforts, blessings, and rebukes untrammelled by laws in nature or the economies of earth; and doubt will cease as to whether faith in Him may not bring bread to the destitute, as well as pardon to the guilty, or hope of heaven to the dying. (*Ibid.*) *A picture of man's life*:—In the desert of this world he is in continual want, hungering and thirsting in the midst of its transitory delights, and longing to be filled with food. Sin offers itself, and the world tempts him with its barren show, but these cannot satisfy. Only when he follows Christ, knowing that he is sick, and owning that he is blind in soul, and maimed in will, and attesting by his steadfastness in continuing with his Saviour the earnestness of his desire for the help which comes from above, will Christ give him that water which whosoever drinketh thereof shall never thirst, and that bread, even Himself, which came down from heaven. In this miracle we are taught—1. The promptness with which Christ succours us. We see this in His providing bread before the multitude hungered, and in His care lest afterwards they should faint by the way. 2. The motive causes for all God's mercies to us, viz., our needs and our dangers. 3. The true effects of God's mercy—what He gives us is that true food which really satisfies, and which alone can satisfy, the whole nature of man. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The multitude fed*:—Christ came into personal contact with human wants and woes. I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS MIRACLE AS CONTRASTED WITH OTHERS. 1. The desire to grant this blessing originated with Christ Himself. How comforting to know that He does not mete out His mercies in the scant measure of our prayers. 2. A striking instance of prevention, rather than cure. From how many ills unthought of, dangers unseen, woes unimagined, are we daily delivered by the preventing grace of God. 3. Human intervention employed. Christ the source of supply; the disciples privileged to dispense His bounty. 4. Unbelief in the innermost circle of disciples. 5. A vast multitude were benefited. II. THE MIRACLE ITSELF. 1. Illustrates Christ's care for the bodies of men. 2. The abundance of God's bounty. The more we feed upon Christ, the Bread of Life, the more there is to feed upon. 3. The need of daily feeding on Christ. The miracle falls short here. To feed once for all is not sufficient. It is because they think it is that so many are spiritually sickly and weak. (*R. W. Forrest, M.A.*) *On the encouragement which the gospel affords to active duty*:—I. One singular feature in the character of our Lord—HIS SUPERIORITY TO ALL THE SELFISH PASSIONS OF OUR NATURE.

This miracle demonstrated His power over nature, and taught those who witnessed it that if His kingdom were of this world He possessed the power to maintain it. They would naturally wish to assemble under such a Leader. It is at this moment, when all the vulgar passions of hope and ambition were working in the minds of the multitude, "that He sends them away;" to show them that His kingdom was spiritual. II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS RELIGION. The systems of pretended revelation which prevail in the world encourage either superstition or enthusiasm, and have often separated piety from morality. They have drawn men from the sphere of social duty to unmeaning devotions. Christ assembles the multitude that He may instruct them. III. WE ARE THE MULTITUDE DESCRIBED IN THIS PASSAGE OF THE GOSPEL. We have heard that there was a great Prophet come into the world for the purpose of spiritual improvement. He has spread before us, in the wilderness of human life, that greater feast, of spirit and of mind, which may save us "from fainting on our way." The services we are called to perform in the cause of humanity. "That they who had eaten were about four thousand." The number who have this day approached the same Lord, and heard the same accents of salvation, are countless millions of the family of God. (*A. Alison, LL.B.*) *Satisfaction for the food in the wilderness*:—I. SATISFACTION. Is not the Church tired out, fainting? Is not the world a wilderness to you? Does not the Spirit of God make you feel the nothingness of everything upon earth? Christ the only satisfaction. II. THE THING THAT SATISFIES A MAN. Bread. III. THE PLACE where these individuals were to have that satisfaction. (*J. J. West, M.A.*) *Second miracle of feeding the multitude*:—It could hardly have been without some special reason that the same miracle should have been worked twice by Christ with scarcely any variation of detail, and twice recorded with so very great attention to detail. In each case, too, Christ Himself drew from the miracle teaching of the highest importance. Notice these points of similarity. I. IN EACH CASE JESUS, BEHOLDING THE MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE, HAS COMPASSION ON THEM. That is the origin and source of help for man. Because of His compassion—1. He came from heaven to earth to bring to famishing men the Bread of Life. 2. He sends to us His Church, by and through the ministry of which He gives us all the means of grace. He takes just what we have, water, bread, wine—all insufficient of themselves—and by His power makes them more than sufficient for our needs. 3. He looks at us not in the mass, but one by one. It is the individual soul which is the factor in the mind of God. II. IN EACH CASE, BEFORE WORKING THE MIRACLE, HE DRAWS FROM THE DISCIPLES A DECLARATION OF THEIR INABILITY TO SUPPLY UNASSISTED THAT WHICH WAS NEEDED. III. IN EACH CASE HE TAKES, NEVERTHELESS, THAT WHICH THEY HAVE, AND MAKES IT SUFFICIENT. "How many loaves have ye?" "Seven." 1. The gift of baptismal grace—the germ of all graces. 2. The sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, bestowed in confirmation. 3. The Holy Communion. 4. All the means of grace. The Word of God. Opportunities of public worship. 5. The power of repentance. 6. The gift of prayer. 7. The ministry of the Church. So that we have, after all, a great deal: if we use these gifts faithfully, by God's blessing they will more than suffice for the wants of our souls. IV. IN EACH CASE HE COMMANDED THE MULTITUDE TO SIT DOWN. We must come to receive God's blessing obediently, quietly, calmly. Need of this lesson in a busy, energetic age, so restless and so excited. We need more repose of mind and character. It is good to be "up and doing," but there are times when it is well for us to sit still. The life most free from feverish excitement is the life most likely to profit by God's gifts. 1. "Sit down" before you say your prayers, if you would really have them answered. Recall your thoughts, be patient and quiet and humble, try to remember to Whom you are about to speak, and what it is you are going to ask, what you really need. 2. "Sit down" before your acts of public worship. Let there be more restfulness about your worship, more repose of thought, more concentration of thought on what you are about to do. 3. "Sit down" before each communion you make (1 Cor. xi. 28). (1) Let me calmly, honestly, and thoughtfully look into my past life, especially examining that part of it that has been lived since my last communion. (2) Let me see where I am, and what I am. (3) Let me try my best to see my sins as they really are, and as they are recorded in God's book. (4) Let me truly repent of past sins, and make my humble confession to God, honestly purposing amendment of life. V. IN EACH CASE, EITHER AT HIS COMMAND OR WITH HIS APPROVAL, THE FRAGMENTS ARE GATHERED UP. God's gifts, whether temporal or spiritual, are never to be wasted. He gives with a splendid liberality, but only in order that His gifts may be used. Gather up—1. Fragments of time. 2. Fragments of opportunities. 3. Fragments of tem-

poral goods. 4. Fragments of prayer, repentance, worship, grace. (*Canon Ingram.*) *Divine law of increase:*—Usually a single man needed three of these loaves for a meal, and here were more than a thousand supplied by each loaf. Nobody can tell how it was done, any more than we can understand how God began to make the world when there was nothing anywhere. It may be objected that the Lord does not feed us now in this way; that, if we want bread, we must work for it. But think about it, and you will see His power and kindness just as plainly in giving us food in reward for our labour. We plant single kernels of grain, and God makes each one grow into a great many. What is this but another way of multiplying the loaves? How hard and dead the seed looks when we put it into the ground. The rain and the sun find it there, and the yearly wonder begins. The seed swells and bursts; a wee pale root comes out and goes down into the earth; another shoots up to the surface. They look very tiny and weak, but a microscope shows that the tender cells are protected by tough coverings, sometimes even by particles of flint along the edges, so that they can push their way through the earth. One acre of soil, three inches deep, weighs a million pounds, and all that is stirred and lifted by these growing fibres. Up come the stalks, straight and slender, yet so tough and elastic that when the wind blows they can bend clear to the ground, and then spring back again, as the strongest tree can hardly do. Soon a spike of tiny flowers appears on top, then a cluster of kernels, and at last the whole gets yellow and ripe. Is not this work of God's stranger and more beautiful than turning one piece of bread into a thousand just like it? (*C. M. Southgate.*) *So they did eat, and were filled:*—In the original it is, "They were fed to satisfaction." That such a result followed, was the consequence of their being fed by Him alone who satisfies the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with gladness. There is need to be reminded of this in an age when men are pointed to other sources of satisfaction—to education, to culture, and to refinement, and bidden to find their highest enjoyment in these and such-like pursuits. If they bear no reference to Him towards whom all that is noblest and best in nature and art is designed to lead us, they will turn out to be but broken cisterns that hold no water. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Help in extremity:*—May we not learn from this miracle how Christ will exercise acts of special providence to help and succour those who are following Him? Dean Hook mentions a striking instance of this. There was an individual who gave up a profitable employment, acting under advice, and not from the mere caprice of his own judgment, because he thought, taking his temptations into account, he could not follow it without peril to his soul. And after many reverses he was reduced to such a state of distress that the last morsel in the house had been consumed, and he had not bread to give his children. His faith did not, however, forsake him; and when his distress was at its height, he received a visit from one who called to pay him a debt he had never hoped to recover, but the payment of which enabled him to support his family until he again obtained employment. *Man's food-supply:*—The question of the disciples has been the natural question of all thinkers at all times. The foremost difficulty to be encountered everywhere is the difficulty of getting daily bread for self or others in this wilderness, this land of thorns and thistles. We, indeed, raised above our fellows by centuries of civilization, only partially feel the direct pressure of bodily hunger, only occasionally realize the paramount necessity which governs the life of man—the necessity of procuring food. But, in fact, a vast proportion of all human effort and anxiety is directed to this one point; whatever else is left undone, this must be done: only if there is any time and vigour over when daily bread is secured can it be spent on other things, on comforts and adornments for the body, on learning and improvement for the mind. There is, perhaps, no animal that has to spend so large a part of his time in procuring the food he needs as man. And when he has got it, it will not satisfy him as their daily food will satisfy the other creatures. No sooner is he filled than he finds out that man cannot live by bread alone; that he cannot be satisfied from any earthly stores; that he wants something more, and has another kind of hunger. This is, of course, because God has made him with a soul as well as a body, and has so made this soul and body that each requires its own proper food. Indeed, we must acknowledge that we are the most dependent of all creatures; we cannot go a few hours without suffering pangs of hunger, which must be stilled at any cost or risk, or else we die; and when this craving is appeased, then the hunger of the soul awakes, and it demands to be satisfied with something—it knows not what, perhaps; for God has made us for Himself, made us to be satisfied with nothing less than Himself, made us to be entirely dissatisfied

and discontented without Himself. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *This world a wilderness:*—Men often talk about this life as being a wilderness, and they are right; but do you know why, and in what sense? What is the wilderness to which our earthly life is like, the wilderness in which our Lord worked this and other miracles? Is it a great howling expanse of sand and rock, with nought but blazing earth below and blazing sky above? Is it the vast and terrible desert, where fiery death pursues the steps of the unhappy traveller, where doleful creatures cry, and whitening bones lie all about? If this were the wilderness, then would our life be very unlike one. . . . The wildernesses of Palestine, like "the bush" in Australia, are not by any means always barren, or ugly, or desolate: often they are very beautiful, and very productive; only, their beauty and productiveness are so uncertain, so unreliable, so disappointing, that no one can live there or make his home there—unless, indeed, he receives his supplies from somewhere else. Now, our life is just like the wilderness in this sense: very often it is full of beauty, of grace, of life, of promise; there are times when every element of hope and contentment seems present in abundance. But all this beauty and promise will not satisfy the soul of man, however much it may please his fancy and his taste. Suppose you found yourself in the wilderness among the grasses and flowers, could you feed on them? Could you sustain life on them? No; however lovely and luxuriant they might be, however grateful as elements in a landscape, they would not appease your hunger; your limbs would grow weak, your eyes would fail, your head would swim, and you would fall and starve and die amongst the dewy grasses and the many-coloured flowers. Even so would it be if you tried to satisfy your immortal souls with the pleasures and beauties, and joys and riches, of this life. We should be other than human if we did not like them, we should be very ungrateful if we did not give thanks for them—but, all the same, we cannot be satisfied with them; the old craving would return—we should feel ourselves discontented, miserable, perishing, amidst all the abundance of this world. (*Ibid.*) *God alone can satisfy:*—It is easy enough to please people in the wilderness if you go at the right time; the beauty of the landscape, the buoyancy of the air, the exhilarating sense of freedom and expanse—all these are delightful. It is easy to amuse people in the wilderness, with so many new things to be looked at and admired; it is easy to lead them on further and further from home, into a region where there are no barriers and few landmarks. But to satisfy them—that we cannot do; that can only be done, in the wilderness, by the Divine power of Christ. He only can feed the myriads of famishing souls which, even in listening to His words, have only felt their hunger growing keener. He can and will, and it makes no difference to Him how many the people, how few the loaves, they shall all be satisfied and go home in the strength of that food; He can and will, and it makes no difference to Him how many millions of souls are waiting upon Him for spiritual food—how feeble, apparently, and paltry the means of grace by which He designs to feed them. (*Ibid.*) *Scattering yet increasing:*—Good husbandry does not grind up all the year's wheat for loaves for one's own eating, but keeps some of it for seed, to be scattered in the furrows. And if Christian men will deal with the great love of God, the great work of Christ, the great message of the gospel, as if it were bestowed on them for their own sakes only, they will have only themselves to blame if holy desires die out in their hearts, and the consciousness of Christ's love becomes faint, and all the blessed words of truth come to sound far off and mythical in their ears. The standing water gets green scum on it. The close-shut barn breeds weevils and smut. Let the water run. Fling the seed broadcast. Thou shalt find it after many days—bread for thy own soul. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The conditions of increase:*—The condition of increase is diffusion. To impart to others is to gain for oneself. Every honest effort to bring some other human heart into conscious possession of Christ's love deepens my own sense of its preciousness. If you would learn, teach. You will catch new gleams of His gracious heart in the very act of commending it to others. Work for God if you would live with God. Give the bread to the hungry, if you would have it for the food of your own souls. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 10–43. **Seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him.**—*Seeking a sign:*—I. THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THIS REQUEST. 1. In other matters they were not scrupulous of evidence—tradition. 2. They had the signs of the times—consisting in a combination of events giving fulfilment to their own Scriptures. 3. They had His miracles—unquestioned. 4. They had even signs from heaven—

at His baptism. 5. It was not evidence that was wanting. 6. Neither is it so yet. II. THE DENIAL OF THEIR REQUEST. 1. Not because such a request would, in other circumstances, have been sinful. Gideon. Hezekiah. 2. But because it was unnecessary, it would not have convinced them, it was asked out of malice. 3. Our request must be for necessary things, from right motives. III. ACCORDING TO THE OTHER EVANGELISTS, CHRIST POINTED THEM TO THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS. 1. There are several points of resemblance between Christ and Jonas. 2. The point referred to by Christ was, no doubt, His resurrection. (*Expository Discourses.*) *The refusals of Christ*:—We often speak of what He gave: we might also speak of what He withheld. The words of the Old Testament are applicable to Jesus Christ: "No good thing will He withhold," &c. The refusals of Jesus were governed by three considerations. 1. Religious curiosity is not to be mistaken for religious necessity. 2. Religious confidence is not to be won by irreligious ostentations. 3. Religious appeals are not to be addressed to the eye, but to the heart. In applying these points show what Christ gave in comparison with what He refused. He gave bread, sight, hearing, speech, health; He gave His life, yet He refused a sign! Understand that, in some cases, not to give a sign is in reality to give the most solemn and dreadful of all signs. (*Dr. J. Parker.*) *Tempting God*:—It is a wicked and sinful practice for any to tempt the Lord, *i.e.*, to make unlawful and needless proof of His Divine attributes, such as Power, Providence, Justice, Mercy, &c. This sin is committed—1. By limiting and restraining God's actions to ordinary means and secondary causes: tying Him to these, as if without them He could not or would not perform those things which He has promised to the godly or threatened against the wicked. 2. By neglecting the ordinary means appointed by God for the good and preservation of our souls and bodies, and relying upon God's extraordinary power and providence to provide for us. Apply this to such cases as—abandonment of earthly calling; needlessly exposing oneself to danger; rejecting the means of grace. 3. By living and going on in any sin contrary to the Word of God, thereby making proof of God's patience, whether He will punish or wink at disobedience. (*G. Petter.*) *Modern doubt*:—I. First of all, we discover the same SYCOPHANCY OF SPIRIT among sceptics now as was noticeable among the ancient Jews. The significant question those people asked concerning Christ was, "Have any of the rulers believed on Him?" 1. One of the maxims of the Talmud was this: "My son, give more heed to the words of the rabbis than to the words of the law." Thus they pressed human authority above inspiration, and exalted traditions above the revelation from God. 2. Our times are not much better. Little men appear to imagine their proportions are vaster when they stand in the awe-inspiring shadow of big men. Hence we find all the motley company of sceptics aping masterly leaders, and trying to make the majesty of their intellects show most impressively. 3. Rabbis (in this sense) ought not to count for much with Christian people: "One is our Master, even Christ." What God's children are examining is truth, and not men. It must be remembered that there never was a system of even confessed error, no matter how miserable or how vile, that did not for the time being have some able advocates. We do not need to go back to Marcion's day, nor to Basilides' day, to illustrate this. Gibbon was gifted, and Brigham Young was a man of power—and Satan himself was one of the brightest of God's angels. 4. Meantime, the cry lifted as to the supreme ability of not a few of these leaders of modern scepticism might as well be toned down to moderation. II. Next to this sycophancy of spirit, we discover that modern doubt has for its characteristic THE SAME DISPOSITION TO CRITICISE GOD'S WORD which prevailed in Herod's time. Our Saviour's charge was, "making the Word of God of none effect." 1. Those Pharisees and Sadducees had only the Old Testament, but they kept picking at it. The general principle of interpretation was very frankly avowed in those days: "The Bible is like water, the traditions are like wine; but the commentaries are like wine which has been spiced." 2. The modern attack is just like this. The combat with opposers is not now that of theological philosophy, but of biblical criticism. 3. It is impossible to stop the mouths of carpers. The apostles themselves had to deal with strong and inveterate opposers. There were persistent Pharisees and indefatigable Sadducees. Paul himself even could not put down these disputants at will so completely that they should not harangue the populace. He could refute every argument, and overturn every position; but when he had silenced sense they kept up the uproar. Thus they made their sorry exhibition at Ephesus (see Acts xix. 32-34). III. In the third place, modern doubt is characterized, like the ancient scepticism Jesus re-

buked, by an AIMLESS DRIFTING into a series of continual disbeliefs. This was the ground for our Lord's most terrible denunciation: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." 1. Those old sects seem all to have known this tendency to reckless wandering in speculation, for they tried to force a system of checks at each exposed point against free-thinking. 2. This generation of doubters in our time are as wandering in their purposes, and quite as devoutly blind in their career. The moment one begins to question, that moment he begins to travel. Yet is it seriously to be doubted whether he is going ever to reach that portal of God's truth he talks of so glibly. 3. There is no settled direction which modern scepticism chooses. If there were, we might welcome the drift as perhaps being in the line of the truth, and indicating progress. But it makes one think of the eddies over the meadows after a freshet; it is unsafe to try to sail because nobody knows the channel. A thoughtful man would like to know beforehand where he is going. 4. It is best, also, to settle the value of an argument drawn from an example. IV. This thought will find a further illustration, when we go on to consider a fourth characteristic of modern doubt: namely, THE EXTREME MALIGNANCY OF TEMPER with which those who turn from the Christian faith afterwards attack its defenders. 1. Renegades are always the most belligerent allies on the other side. 2. It is often to advantage to read up the antecedents of some of our most prominent unbelievers. "You know who the critics are?" asks a shrewd character in Lord Beaconsfield's story; "they are the men who have failed in literature and art." Find an extremely ill-tempered disputant anywhere nowadays, who begins with innuendo and continues with abuse, and the explanation may be given almost instinctively: this man did not succeed in the old life, and is angrily trying to retrieve his fortunes by attracting attention in a new. 3. For the temper of unbelief is simple selfishness. 4. Hence, there is no safety in yielding even just a little. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Belief will not suffer itself to be divided. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 14. **Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.** *The leaven of the Pharisees:*—Our Lord's warning against false doctrine. I. A SUGGESTIVE FIGURE OF SPEECH. "Leaven." (1) A suggestive figure of the power of influence, good or bad. (*a*) Aggressive. (*b*) Subtle in its aggressiveness. (*c*) Unless resisted, all-conquering in its subtlety. (2) Our Lord's suggestive use of this figure. (*a*) To represent the powerful influence of erroneous doctrine. (*b*) To represent the danger to which His disciples were exposed from erroneous doctrines, notwithstanding their superior advantages, arising from the instructions He gave them. II. A SUGGESTIVE EXAMPLE OF THE EXERCISE OF BAD INFLUENCE. (1) Its agency. Pharisees. (*a*) The secret of their power. i. Their ecclesiastical, social, and political position. ii. Their great pretensions to piety—in fasting and prayer. (2) Its method. Doctrine. (*a*) Public teaching a great power for good or evil. (*b*) As the respect felt for the Pharisees enhanced their power, so our respect for either the genius or supposed sincerity of a public teacher enhances his power. (3) An imperative duty in view of this fact. "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees:*—This caution was probably suggested by His late interview with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE PHARISEES chiefly hinged upon two tenets. 1. Acceptance with God on the ground of legal performances. 2. The obligation of the tradition of the elders. These led to multipled observances of a legal kind, pride and boasting, hypocrisy, laxity of morals. II. THE DOCTRINES OF THE SADDUCEES, here called the leaven of Herod, were opposed to these. Notice only three, as having a practical influence. They denied—1. The separate existence of the soul. 2. The resurrection of the dead. 3. The superintending providence of God. These led to the removal of restraint to vicious indulgences. Sadduceeism characterized the generation which has disappeared. Phariseeism the present. III. THEIR DOCTRINES ARE COMPARED TO LEAVEN. 1. They affect the whole character. 2. The whole mass of society. "Take heed," &c. The one, sanctimoniousness; the other, licentiousness. (*Expository Discourses.*)

Vers. 16–21. **And they reasoned among themselves.** *Nine sharp and pointed questions, turning the minds of the disciples back upon their own experience:*—Their reasonings very plainly and painfully proved how very little real benefit they had

yet derived from intercourse with Christ. What a display of ignorance, forgetfulness, and unbelief! So it always has been in the history of God's dealings with men. And so it is now, among ourselves, notwithstanding all the superior advantages we enjoy. How often do all of us misunderstand the meaning of our Master's words! How often do we distrust His Providence! And why is this? The main reason is that we are forgetful of the lessons of experience. Like the first disciples, we do not thoughtfully and prayerfully ponder what He has taught us, and what He has done for us. Consider the days of old. Remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee. Gather up into the basket of memory all the fragments of the past, carry them along with you, and make use of them day by day as occasion may require. (*A. Thomson.*) *Seeing, hearing, and understanding*:—"The first time I went to a Christian missionary," said a Chinese evangelist, "I took my *eyes*. I stared at his hat, his umbrella, his coat, his shoes, the shape of his nose, and the colour of his skin and hair; but I heard not a word. The next time I took my *ears* as well as my eyes, and was astonished to hear the foreigner talk Chinese. The third time, with eyes and ears intent, God touched my *heart*, and I understood the gospel." How is it that ye do not understand?—*Understanding prevented*:—With the disciples, as with the rich youth, it was things that prevented the Lord from being understood. Because of possession the young man had not a suspicion of the grandeur of the call with which Jesus honoured him. He thought he was hardly dealt with to be offered a patent of heaven's nobility—he was so very rich! Things filled his heart; things blocked up his windows; things barricaded his door; so that the very God could not enter. His soul was not empty, swept, and garnished, but crowded with meanest idols, among which his spirit crept about upon its knees, wasting on them the gazes that belonged to his fellows and his Master. The disciples were a little further on than he; they left all and followed the Lord; but neither had they yet got rid of things. The paltry solitariness of a loaf was enough to hide the Lord from them, to make them unable to understand Him. Why, having forgotten, could they not trust? Surely if He had told them that for His sake they must go all day without food, they would not have minded! but they lost sight of God, and were as if either He did not see, or did not care for them. In the former case it was the possession of wealth, in the latter the not having more than a loaf, that rendered incapable of receiving th Word of the Lord: the evil principle was precisely the same. If it be things that slay you, what matter whether things you have, or things you have not? The youth, not trusting in God, the source of his riches, cannot brook the word of His Son, offering him better riches, more direct from the heart of the Father. The disciples, forgetting who is Lord of the harvests of the earth, cannot understand His Word, because filled with the fear of a day's hunger. He did not trust in God as having given; they did not trust in God as ready to give. We are like them when, in any trouble, we do not trust Him. It is hard on God, when His children will not let Him give; when they carry themselves so that He must withhold His hand, lest He harm them. To take no care that they acknowledge whence their help comes, would be to leave them worshippers of idols, trusters in that which is not. (*G. Macdonald, LL.D.*) *The lessons of trivial loss*:—Let me suggest some possible parellels between ourselves and the disciples, maundering over their one loaf—with the Bread of Life at their side in the boat. We, too, dull our understandings with trifles, fill the heavenly spaces with phantoms, waste the heavenly time with hurry. To those who possess their souls in patience come the heavenly visions. When I trouble myself over a trifle, even a trifle confessed—the loss of some little article, say—spurring my memory, and hunting the house, not from immediate need, but from dislike of loss; when a book has been borrowed of me and not returned, and I have forgotten the borrower, and fret over the missing volume, while there are thousands on my shelves, from which the moments thus lost might gather treasures, holding relation with neither moth, nor rust, nor thief; am I not like the disciples? Am I not a fool whenever loss troubles me more than recovery would gladden? God would have me wise, and smile at the trifle. Is it not time I lost a few things when I care for them so unreasonably? This losing of things is of the mercy of God; it comes to teach us to let them go. Or have I forgotten a thought that came to me, which seemed of the truth, and a revealment to my heart? I wanted to keep it, to have it, to use it by and by, and it is gone! I keep trying and trying to call it back, feeling a poor man till that thought be recovered—to be far more lost, perhaps in a note-book, into which I shall never look again to find it! I forget that it is live things God cares about—live truths, not things

set down in a book, or in a memory, or embalmed in the joy of knowledge, but things lifting up the heart, things active in an active will. True, my lost thought might have so worked; but had I faith in God, the Maker of thought and memory, I should know that, if the thought was a truth, and so alone worth anything, it must come again; for it is in God—so, like the dead, not beyond my reach; kept for me, I shall have it again. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 22–26. **And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him.**—*Blindness common in the East*:—Blindness was and is more common in Egypt and Syria than in any other part of the world. The glare of light, the dust which is produced by a dry season, extending from May to November, in which rain rarely falls, and the fruit of the newly-ripe fig, all tend to produce inflammation of the eyes, and this, when severe or repeated, produces blindness. One-tenth of the population of Joppa to-day are blind. In a neighbouring town, Lydda, a traveller, probably exaggerating, said every other person was blind of one or both eyes. In Cairo, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, there are 4,000 blind. Accordingly, this was one of the commonest ills which the Saviour had to treat. (*R. Glover.*) *Sight for the blind*:—I. A SYMBOL OF THE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF HUMANITY. II. A SYMBOL OF SALVATION BY DIVINE CONTACT. III. A SYMBOL OF THE PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER OF SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT. IV. A SYMBOL OF THE POWER OF CHRIST TO EFFECT COMPLETE ILLUMINATION. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Christ's method of dealing with individual souls*:—I. HE ISOLATES FROM DISTURBING INFLUENCES. First *with* Christ, that afterwards he may be *in* Him. II. HE ENCOURAGES AND CONFIRMS FAITH. Personal contact and operation, and kindly words, evoking patient's inner freewill and power. III. HE EXACTS IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE. The first use of the restored vision is to avoid those upon whom the man had formerly depended—a hard task! The life Christ's people are bidden to lead may not commend itself to their judgment or desire, but it is best for their spiritual interests; and if Christ is to be a complete Saviour, He must be an absolute and unquestioned Lord. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Curing spiritual blindness*:—I. Deliverance from blind guides. II. Transfer of confidence to the true Guide. III. Revelation of the invisible power of God. IV. Exercising the soul's newly acquired powers of spiritual vision. V. Giving spiritual direction for the future. (*Ibid.*) *Earnestness and knowledge the parents of faith*:—The only progressed cure recorded in the New Testament. Why was it not instantaneous like the rest? Nothing our Lord did or left undone was without meaning; so there must have been a reason for this. That reason cannot have been in Christ. He was no respecter of persons; His tender sympathy yearned over this sufferer as tenderly as over the rest. It must be traced, then, to the man himself and his fellow-citizens. If the tone of morality had been higher in Bethsaida, if public opinion had been more upright, if the collective example of the citizens had been better, the probability is that the man would not have been so criminal. Now, what was WRONG? I. WANT OF FAITH. Why was there a lack of faith? 1. Because there was a lack of earnestness. Distinct evidence of this. His friends bring him to Christ, and from the fact that he does not speak except to answer a question, we infer that he was not particularly anxious to be brought. No such eagerness as in the case of Bartimæus. 2. Because there was a want of knowledge. This man was an inhabitant of Bethsaida Julius, which was within easy walking distance of most of Christ's great works. The people living there had heard His wonderful words of life; and surely if those who could see, and who therefore, were without excuse, had realized their privileges and acted up to them they might have taught this man; but they had not done so. They had not rejoiced in the good news from God; they had not realized that the promised Messiah had come; they had not hastened to be His witnesses to their neighbours. If they had done so, they would have brought home to the mind of this poor blind man such a sense of the power and love of Jesus Christ, that he would not have hesitated for one moment to believe that Christ was well able to restore him at once to perfect vision. And because they were so unworthy Christ sends the man to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town," &c. His fellow citizens were not worthy to hear the story of the great work which God had wrought in him. We must not cast our pearls before swine, or give that which is holy to the dogs. This man himself was the monument of their spiritual shortcomings; and if in the first hour of his faith in Christ and his own personal experience of the power of Christ, he had returned to his cold-blooded, indifferent, cynical neighbours, they might have quenched the little flame of grateful love which was springing up in his heart. (*Hugh Price Hughes.*) *Significant*

actions :—The profound and saintly Bengel calls our attention here to this touching spectacle, that significant fact—that Christ did not command his friends to lead him out of the town, but He led him out Himself. Oh, what a spectacle for men and angels—the Divine Son of God tenderly taking the hand of this poor blind beggar, and leading him out of the town Himself! And why did He lead him out of the town, away from the noise and confusion and pre-occupation of town life? Surely it was because solitude and silence are great teachers of earnestness. He needed to be alone with himself and with his great want. It has been well said by a great teacher of our own time, that solitude in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation and character; and at present there is very little meditation and depth of character in this man. It is necessary that he should be alone awhile, that he might realize the meaning of these things—his great need and the love of God. And then it is also very significant that, instead of speaking a word to him as usual, He moistens His finger and places it upon the sightless eyeball of the blind, in order that by palpable evidence He might bring home to this man that He is about to bestow upon him a supreme blessing. But, so far, the efforts of Christ are not entirely successful; for, after He had put His hands upon him, He asked him if he could see, and he looked up, and said, "I see men as trees"—I can see better than I ever saw before, but so vaguely, so dimly, the outline is so indistinct, that I confess I cannot distinguish between the men and the trees at the side of the road, except by the fact that the men are moving. Now, you will observe that Christ did not abandon His work when it was half done. Indeed, He asked the man whether he could see, in order to bring home to him the fact that he could see a little, and that so far hope might spring up within him; but, at the same time, that he might also bring home to him the fact that he could see only very little. And then Christ put His hands upon his eyes a second time, and after that second touch he saw clearly. (*Ibid.*) *Healing the blind* :—Men arrive at Christ by different processes: one is found by Christ Himself, another comes to Him, another is borne of four, and this blind man is led. This matters little, so long as we do come to Him. The act of bringing men to Jesus is most commendable. 1. It proves kindly feeling. 2. It shows practical faith in the power of Jesus. 3. It is thus an act of true wisdom. 4. It is exceedingly acceptable to the Lord; and is sure to prove effectual when the person himself willingly comes. In this case there was something faulty in the bringing, since there was a measure of dictation as to the method in which the Lord should operate. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Lord heals in His own way* :—We must not attempt to dictate to Him how He shall operate. While He honours faith, He does not defer to its weakness. 1. He does not consent to work in the prescribed manner. 2. He touched, but no healing came; and thus He proved that the miracle was not attached to that special form of operation. 3. He did nothing to the blind man before their eyes; but led him out of the town. He would not indulge their observation or curiosity. 4. He did not heal him instantly, as they expected. 5. He used a means never suggested or thought of by them—"spit on his eyes," &c. 6. When He did put His hands on him, He did it twice, so that, even in compliance with their wish, He vindicated His own freedom. (*a*) Thus He refused to foster the superstition which limited His power. (*b*) Thus He used a method more suited to the case. (*c*) Thus He gave to the people larger instruction. (*d*) Thus He displayed to the individual a more personal care. (*Ibid.*) *Man cannot chose his remedy* :—Is the sick man the doctor, that he should choose the remedy? (*Madame Swetchine.*) *Symbolism of touch* :—In the touching of the eyes with spittle, and laying on of hands, there was no inherent efficacy. They were means and channels of grace. Christ has established a Church in the world, and an ordained ministry therein, and holy sacraments, which only through Him become healing powers in the world. He could have spoken a word to the blind man at Bethsaida and all would have been accomplished that was sought for. He could save men's souls directly by fiats of omnipotent grace, but He has chosen a Church to embody and set forth the fulness of His love toward a lost world. He has used means. (*E. N. Packard.*) *Analogy to spiritual cures* :—Doubtless we are inclined to press the analogy between the gradualness of this man's cure and the gradualness of certain restorations to spiritual life; but this seems quite unauthorized. The cure was not an ideal type of all soul cures, but an instructive illustration of occasional Divine methods. The instant the blind eyes began to see, there was a miracle practically accomplished. The instant we turn to God in repentance and faith the new life begins; and regeneration, whenever it occurs, is instantaneous. Yet, for all that, our capacity to receive the fulness of Christ is at first but small,

and the light must wax stronger and stronger as we walk in it day by day. (*Ibid.*) *The gradual miracle:* — Variety is one mark of God's working, as order is another. There was a fertility of resource, and a diversity of administration, which bespoke the agency of One who from the beginning was with God and was God, the Doer of all God's acts and the Partner of all God's counsels. The spiritual eye is not utterly closed nor utterly darkened; but its sight is confused, its discernment of objects both misty and inaccurate. 1. It is so in reference to the things of God. We can speak but for ourselves: but who has not known what it is to say, I cannot make real to myself one single fact or one single doctrine of the Bible? I can say indeed—and I bless God even for that—Lord, to whom else can I go? where, save in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, is there either the hope or the peradventure of healing for a case like mine? And therefore I can cling to the Christian revelation with the tenacity of a shipwrecked sailor whose one "broken piece of the ship" is his only possibility of escape: I can just float upon that fragment, knowing that, torn from it or washed off from it, I am lost: but if the question is, whether I really see ought; whether I can discern with the mind's eye the sacred and blessed forms of a Father and a Saviour and a Comforter who are such to me; whether, when I kneel down to pray, I can feel myself to be apart with my God; whether, when I approach Christ's Table, I feel myself to be His guest; whether, when I ask to be kept this day from all sin, I feel myself to be the temple of a Holy Spirit whose indwelling is my safeguard and my chief joy; then I must answer that my hold upon all these things is precarious and most feeble; that seeing I see, but scarcely perceive; that my God is too often to me like the gods of the heathen, which can neither see, nor hear, nor reward, nor punish; that I too often conduct myself towards Him as though I thought wickedly that He was even such an one as myself, equally short-sighted, equally fallible, equally vacillating, equally impotent. More especially is this the case in reference to the distinctive doctrines of Divine grace. How little do any of us grasp and handle and use the revelation of an absolute forgiveness! What can we say more, in regard to all these things, than that at best we see men as trees, walking? that we have a dim, dull, floating impression of there being something in them, rather than a clear, bold, strong apprehension of what and whom and why we have believed? 2. And if this be so in the things of God, in matters of direct revelation and of Christian faith; it is scarcely less true in reference to the things of men; to our views of life, the present life and the future, and to the relations in which we stand to those fellow-beings with whom the Providence of God brings us into contact. We all profess as Christians to be "looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." And yet, when we examine our own hearts, or observe (however remotely) the evident principles of others, we find that in reality the world that is holds us all with a very firm gripe. We cannot appreciate the comparative dimensions of things heavenly and things earthly. The subject appears to suggest two words of application. First, to those who are truly in the position which I have sought by the help of this miracle to indicate. To those who are really under the healing hand of Christ, but upon whom as yet it has been laid incompletely if not indecisively. Many persons think themselves quite healed, when they are at best but half-healed. Many, having experienced a first awakening, and sought with sincerity the gift of the Divine forgiveness, rest there, and count themselves to have apprehended. The importance of going forward in the process of the healing. Secondly, and finally, a word of caution must be added to those who are too easily assuming that they are even half-healed. The hand is not laid without our knowing it, nay, nor without our seeking it. Even the first act of healing is a gift above gold and precious stone: despise it not! Power out of weakness, peace out of warfare, light out of darkness, sight out of dim, groping, creeping blindness, this it is to be the subject of the first healing. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The free agency of Christ:*—I. IT IS A COMMON WEAKNESS OF FAITH TO EXPECT THE BLESSING IN A CERTAIN WAY. They besought Him to touch him. II. WHILE OUR LORD HONOURS FAITH HE DOES NOT DEFER TO ITS WEAKNESS. He used a means never suggested by them—"spit on his eyes," &c. III. WHILE OUR LORD REBUKES THE WEAKNESS OF FAITH, HE HONOURS FAITH ITSELF. Faith ever honours the Lord, and therefore the Lord honours *it*. If faith were not thus rewarded, Jesus Himself would suffer dishonour. He who has faith shall surely see; he who demands signs shall not be satisfied. Let us for ever have done with prescribing methods to our Lord. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Seeing or not seeing, or men as trees walking:*—I. PICTURE THE CASE. A person with a darkened understanding, not a man who might

be pictured by a person possessed with a devil. II. NOTICE THE MEANS OF CURE. His friends brought him to Jesus. He first received contact with Jesus. A solitary position: Jesus led the man out of the town. He was brought under ordained but despicable means. Jesus spit on his eyes. Jesus put His hands on him in the form of heavenly benediction. III. CONSIDER THE HOPEFUL STAGE. The first joyful word is—"I see." His sight was very indistinct. His sight was very exaggerating. This exaggeration leads to alarm. There is to such people an utter loss of the enjoyment which comes from seeing beauty and loveliness. IV. NOTICE THE COMPLETION OF THE CURE. Jesus touched His patient again. The first person he saw was Jesus. Jesus bade him "look up." At last he could see every man clearly. (*Ibid.*) *Seeing men as trees walking*:—I. AN IMPROVEMENT UPON THE PAST. He was no longer blind—thus an immense change had taken place. There is an infinite distance between the lowest type of a Christian and the finest specimen of an unconverted soul. The most subtle animal and the barbarous savage may seem to resemble each other; but a gulf which only God can bridge separates them. Thus the most imperfect act of faith in Christ lifts a person out of the natural into the spiritual realm. II. A STATE THAT IS STILL UNSATISFACTORY. "Men as trees walking." Whilst an imperfect faith will save the soul, yet it will not prevent incorrect views of truth: exaggerated views; and many needless fears. Most of the theological contentions are through imperfect conceptions of truth. Two men with perfect sight would see an object alike—two with very dim sight would each see it to be different. III. A GUARANTEE OF PERFECT VISION. The blade is a prophecy of the ear: the morning twilight of the noon-day splendour: the buds of spring of the fruit of autumn. He which hath begun a good work within, will perfect it. He is the finisher as well as the author of our faith. How strange if Christ had left the poor man thus. "Now are we sons of God—therefore it doth not yet appear what we shall be." (*L. Palmer.*) *Three views of Christ's work*:—I. Christ's work as a SALVATION. The restoring of sight was a point on the brilliant line, the end of which was the salvation of mankind; so was every miracle of healing. II. Christ's work as a PROCESS. The good work was not accomplished in this case, as in others, by a word; it was done gradually. It is so in spiritual enlightenment. All good men do not see God with equal quickness or with equal clearness. III. Christ's work as a CONSUMMATION. "He was restored, and saw every man clearly." He will not leave His work until it be finished, if so be men beseech Him to go on to be gracious. (*Dr. Parker.*) *The cure of a blind man*:—I. A BLIND MAN BROUGHT TO CHRIST. Their faith. If those who are spiritually blind will not pray for themselves, let others pray for them. II. A BLIND MAN LED BY CHRIST. He did not bid his friends lead him. Never had the blind man such a leader before. III. A BLIND MAN MARVELLOUSLY CURED. 1. Christ used a sign. 2. The cure was wrought gradually, but—3. It was soon completed. He took this way because—1. He would not be tied to any one method. 2. It should be to the patient according to his faith, which at first was very weak. 3. He would show how spiritual light shines "more and more to the perfect day." (*M. Henry.*) *Get hold of sinners by the hand if you mean to get hold of them by the heart*:—Gough, the temperance orator, tells of the thrill of Joe Stratton's hand laid lovingly upon his shoulder, just at the time when he was reeling on the brink of hell; and of another gentleman of high respectability, who came to his shop when he was desperately struggling to disengage himself from the coils of the serpent, and almost ready to sink down in despair; and how he took him by the hand, expressed his faith in him, and bade him play the man. Gough said, "I will:" and he did—as everybody knows. *The gradual healing of the blind man*:—I. HERE WE HAVE CHRIST ISOLATING THE MAN WHOM HE WANTED TO HEAL. Christ never sought to display His miraculous working; here He absolutely tries to hide it. This suggests the true point of view from which to look at the subject of miracles. Instead of being merely cold, logical proofs of His mission, they were all glowing with the earnestness of a loving sympathy, and came from Him at sight of sorrow as naturally as rays from the sun. A lesson about Christ's character; His benevolence was without ostentation. But Christ did not invest the miracle with any of its peculiarities for His own sake only. All that is singular about it will, I think, find its best explanation in the condition and character of the subject, the man on whom it was wrought. What sort of a man was he? Well, the narrative does not tell us much, but if we use our historical imagination and our eyes we may learn something about him. First, he was a Gentile; the land in which the miracle was wrought was the half-heathen country on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. In

the second place, it was other people that brought him; he does not come of his own accord. Then again, it is their prayer that is mentioned, not his—he asks nothing. And suppose he is a man of that sort, with no expectation of anything from this Rabbi, how is Christ to get at him? His eyes are shut, so cannot see the sympathy beaming in His face. There is one thing possible—to lay hold of him by the hand; and the touch, gentle, loving, firm, says this, at least: "Here is a man that has some interest in me, and whether He can do anything or not for me, He is going to try something." Would not that kindle an expectation in him? And is it not in parable just exactly what Jesus Christ does for the whole world? Is not the mystery of the Incarnation and the meaning of it wrapped up as in a germ in that little simple incident, "He put out His hand and touched him"? Is there not in it too a lesson for all you good-hearted Christian men and women, in all your work? We must be content to take the hands of beggars if we are to make the blind to see. How he would feel more and more at each step, "I am at His mercy! What is He going to do with me?" And how thus there would be kindled in his heart some beginnings of an expectation, as well as some surrendering of himself to Christ's guidance! These two things, the expectation and the surrender, have in them, at all events, some faint beginnings and rude germs of the highest faith, to lead up to which is the purpose of all that Christ here does. And is not that what He does for us all? Sometimes by sorrows, sometimes by sick-beds, sometimes by shutting us out from chosen spheres of activity. Ah! brethren, here is a lesson from all this—if you want Jesus Christ to give you His highest gifts and to reveal to you His fairest beauty, you must be alone with Him. He loves to deal with single souls. "I was left alone, and I saw this great vision," is the law for all true beholding. II. WE HAVE CHRIST STOOPING TO A SENSE-BOUND NATURE BY THE USE OF MATERIAL HELPS. The hand laid upon the eyes, the finger possibly moistened with saliva touching the ball, the pausing to question, the repeated application. They make a ladder by which his hope and confidence might climb to the apprehension of the blessing. And that points to a general principle of the Divine dealings. God stoops to a feeble faith, and gives to it outward things by which it may rise to an apprehension of spiritual realities. Is not that the meaning of the whole complicated system of Old Testament revelation? Is not that the meaning of His own Incarnation? And still further, may we not say that this is the inmost meaning and purpose of the whole frame of the material universe? It exists in order that, as a parable and a symbol, it may proclaim the things that are unseen and eternal. So in regard of all the externals of Christianity, forms of worship, ordinances, and so on—all these, in like manner, are provided in condescension to our weakness, in order that by them we may be lifted above themselves; for the purpose of the temple is to prepare for the time and place where the seer "saw no temple therein." They are but the cups that carry the wine, the flowers whose chalices bear the honey, the ladder by which the soul may climb to God Himself, the rafts upon which the precious treasure may be floated into our hearts. If Christ's touch and Christ's saliva healed, it was not because of anything in them, but because He willed it so; and He Himself is the source of all the healing energy. III. LASTLY, WE HAVE CHRIST ACCOMMODATING THE PACE OF HIS POWER TO THE SLOWNESS OF THE MAN'S FAITH. He was healed slowly because he believed slowly. His faith was a condition of his cure, and the measure of it determined the measure of the restoration; and the rate of the growth of his faith settled the rate of the perfecting of Christ's work on him. As a rule, faith in His power to heal was a condition of Christ's healing, and that mainly because our Lord would rather have men believing than sound of body. "According to your faith be it unto you." And here, as a nurse or a mother might do, He keeps step with the little steps, and goes slowly because the man goes slowly. Now, both the gradual process of illumination and the rate of that process as determined by faith, are true for us. How dim and partial a glimmer of light comes to many a soul at the outset of the Christian life! How little a new convert knows about God and self and the starry truths of His great revelation! Christian progress does not consist in seeing new things, but in seeing the old things more clearly: the same Christ, the same Cross, only more distinctly and deeply apprehended, and more closely incorporated into my very being. We do not grow away from Him, but we grow into knowledge of Him. But then let me remind you that just in the measure in which you expect blessing of any kind, illumination and purifying and help of all sorts from Jesus Christ, just in that measure will you get it. You can limit the working of Almighty power, and can determine the rate at which it shall work on you. God fills the water-pots to

the brim, but not beyond the brim; and if, like the woman in the Old Testament story, we stop bringing vessels, the oil will stop flowing. It is an awful thing to know that we have the power, as it were, to turn a stopcock, and so increase or diminish, or cut off altogether the supply of God's mercy and Christ's healing and cleansing love in our hearts. You will get as much of God as you want and no more. The measure of your desire is the measure of your capacity, and the measure of your capacity is the measure of God's gift. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 27–30. **Whom do men say that I am?**—*This conversation may be taken in three points of view*:—I. JESUS CHRIST THE SUBJECT OF UNIVERSAL INQUIRY. He appeals to all men. 1. By the variety of His works. 2. By the vitality of His teaching. 3. As the "Son of Man." II. JESUS CHRIST DEMANDING SPECIAL TESTIMONY. His followers are called—1. To knowledge. 2. To profession. 3. To individuality of testimony. III. JESUS CHRIST IS REVEALED BY HIS WORKS RATHER THAN BY VERBAL PROFESSION. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Personal religion*:—I. CHRIST PUT TO THE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES THE QUESTION, "Whom say ye that I am?" 1. Christ would turn their thoughts from others to themselves. 2. He does not take for granted that because they externally follow Him, they know Him. 3. He examines them on the most important of all points. 4. He examines them through themselves. 5. He leads them to make a confession of their faith. 6. He puts them in a different class from the multitude. II. TO THIS QUESTION, PETER REPLIED FOR ALL THE DISCIPLES. Their answer was—1. Prompt. They had been convinced of His Messiahship. 2. Unanimous. The creed was very short—of one article—all held it. 3. Correct. 4. The result of Divine teaching. 5. On this answer the Church was to be built. III. CHRIST PROHIBITS THEM FROM PUBLISHING WHAT THEY KNEW OF HIM, IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. He would deal with them Himself. 2. The proof of His Messiahship was not complete. 3. The Jews were not prepared. 4. The apostles were not qualified. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Whom do men say that I am?*—I. THE OPINIONS THAT MEN ENTERTAINED RESPECTING CHRIST WERE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE. 1. According to these, they would act, and be dealt with, in this the day of their visitation. 2. Without a knowledge of Christ they could not rely on Him for their own personal salvation. 3. Their opinions respecting Christ indicated their own true state and character. What think ye of Christ? II. CHRIST WAS CONCERNED FOR THE OPINIONS OF MEN RESPECTING HIMSELF. 1. Having sown, He now looks for the fruit. 2. If He has not been a "savour of life unto life," He has been a "savour of death unto death." 3. He has shown us that we should not be indifferent as to human opinion respecting ourselves. III. CHRIST HELD MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OPINIONS RESPECTING HIM. As man's judge, He deals with their belief. IV. CHRIST APPLIES TO HIS DISCIPLES FOR AN ACCOUNT OF THE OPINIONS WHICH MEN HAD OF HIM. 1. Not because He was ignorant, &c. 2. But He taught the apostles that it was part of their duty to mark the state of their fellow-men. 3. We ought to look on the things of others, and especially their eternal interests. (*Expository Discourses.*) *The knowledge of Christ revealed by God*:—The claim of Jesus to be the Messiah should be examined. I. Such knowledge of Christ as the true Messiah CANNOT BE COMMUNICATED BY MAN TO MAN. We may have an acquaintance with ancient records of kingdoms and states that have passed away; we may acquire an intimate acquaintance with warriors, and heroes, and statesmen, and early monarchs, and yet be utterly uninfluenced and unaffected by what we learn; we may read of much that is heroic, and noble, and heart-stirring, in the achievements of many master-minds of days that are gone by, and only have our minds influenced, as by a bright and glowing dream. And so may it be with the Scripture records. We may be delighted, not only with the detail of ancient history, as recorded in the Bible, but we may be touched with the poetry and the pathos with which the Bible abounds, and we may acquire such an appetite for the Bible, in that sense, as shall induce us to come to it, as affording the most pleasant, and delightful, and intellectual study, and yet be unacquainted with Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and the one Mediator between our sinful souls and God; and instances are to be found, and ever have been, in which the mind has been stored with the truth, and the heart untouched by it. It is because we have reason to fear that this is too common, that we press upon you the fact that a merely intellectual acquaintance with the Bible is not such an acquaintance with Christ as will meet the necessity of your case. A speculative knowledge of Christ may be acquired by the exercise of the natural faculties; systems of theology may be con-

ceived, magnificent and striking views may be obtained; and yet the heart of a man, as a sinner, may be altogether unmoved. He may contemplate the wondrous plan of redemption, as centred in Christ, and as achieved by Christ, "in the fulness of time": but he may never feel the want of redemption. He may read, and be assured of the fact, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and yet never be in fear of perishing for want of Christ. He may read, and be well assured of the fact, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son"; he may go on, and read the next verse, in which it is affirmed, "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life," and yet remain destitute of the "life," which God has given in Christ, because he as yet knows not that he is "dead in trespasses and sins." He may know, and be ready to declare, without fearing contradiction, that Christ hath "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel"; but he may not know (or if he does, he is not influenced by the knowledge) that he is still subject to all the consequences of sin which Jesus came to remove. He may read in another place, that "the gift of God is eternal life," and yet be ignorant that all his life he has been earning "the wages of sin," which "is death." II. That revelation then, must be first general; and secondly, particular. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, BUT MY FATHER, WHICH IS IN HEAVEN." It is the prerogative of the Father in heaven to reveal His Son. Angels cannot tell what Jesus is; the highest intellect in heaven would fail to reveal it. But the Father does reveal it. But as we have seen that multitudes remain ignorant, though God has opened the page of revelation, we need a particular revelation. The Bible is a revelation from God the Father *to* us; but we need a revelation of Christ *in* us. During all lives, God has revealed Christ *to* us; but has He revealed Christ *in* us. It must be the result of an express revelation from God the Father, through His own blessed Spirit, to our inward souls; it must be the everlasting Spirit "taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us." III. THAT BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HAVE SUCH A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST, AS A REVELATION FROM GOD. "Blessed art thou, Simon," &c. There is no true state that can be deemed blessed, but that which results from a saving knowledge of Christ. He who has this revelation is blessed. 1. In the certainty of his knowledge. He hath the witness in himself. 2. In the reality of the effects of the truth. "The truth has made him free." He is "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ." 3. In the final and eternal results which follow. "Eye hath not seen," &c. (*G. Fisk, LL.B.*) *Who am I?*—I. THE POPULAR IMPRESSION CONCERNING JESUS. II. THE APOSTOLIC CONFESSION REGARDING JESUS. III. THE ACCEPTANCE BY JESUS OF THIS CONFESSION. 1. The immense importance of the answer given to this question. 2. The utter inadequacy of any answer to this question save one. 3. The complete satisfaction which the true answer affords. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *"Whom say ye that I am?":*—I. It is evident, from the history, that our Lord desired to awaken some sort of anxiety in the minds of His followers, and to excite their feelings of loyalty to truth and to Himself, so that they might be upon their guard against disaffection under any popular pressure, or any wild popular perversions of His character or mission. II. This, then, was the great confession of faith, which has come down to us through the ages. 1. First, it will follow from a story like this, that it is of vast consequence what a man believes, and all the more if he be sincere in his creed. 2. We learn also that it is not enough to admit the bare record, and so simply consent to an historic Christ. 3. Again, to a human soul, struggling for its immortal life, Jesus the Saviour is everything at once, or He is nothing for ever. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 31, 33. **That the Son of Man must suffer many things.**—*The rebuke of love:*—Let us not overlook this loving rebuke; for (1) it cures Peter's presumption; (2) sets him to learn a new lesson on the heavenliness of sacrifice; (3) prevents the greatness of his faith being spoiled by the earthliness of his hopes. Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the wounds which the Saviour inflicts are kindest of all. From Peter's weakness let us learn how hard it is to see all truth at once. From Christ's rebuke let us learn that the "heavenly thing" is not to seek for glory, but for usefulness, even if we can reach it only through a cross. (*R. Glover.*) *Peter rebuked Christ, and Christ rebuked Peter—an altercation of more than mere words:*—It is charged with practical truths. 1. Man's shortsightedness. 2. Man's sentiment exaggerated. 3. Man's audacity to think he can help or save Christ. On

Christ's side: 1. He rebukes the oldest. 2. He rebukes the wisest—it was Peter who said, "Thou art the Christ." 3. He shows that men are only worthy of Him in proportion as they enter into His spirit. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Christ's intimation of His sufferings:*—I. What there is TO MARK THE TIME which our blessed Saviour thus selected, for giving prominence to a new and unwelcome subject of discourse. In the third year of His public ministry. Up to this time our Lord left the great truth of His Godhead to work its way into the minds of His apostles. Now they had arrived at the conviction that He was none other than the ever-living God. What inducement led to, and what instruction may be gathered from, the recorded fact, that when Jesus had drawn from His disciples the acknowledgment of His Divinity, then, and not before, "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Now the apostles could have had none but the most indistinct apprehensions of the office and mission of our Lord, so long as they were ignorant of the death which He had undertaken to die. This made it appear remarkable, that our Lord should so long have withheld the express mention of His sufferings. As much as to say, "It will be of no avail to speak to them of My death till they are convinced of My Deity. So long as they only know Me as the Son of Man, they will not be prepared to hear of the cross; when they shall also know Me as the Son of the living God, then will be the time to tell of ignominy and death." "Oh, how strange," you may exclaim, "that the moment of discovering a Divine person in the form of a man should be the right moment for the being informed that this person should be crucified! To discover a Divine person is to discover what death cannot touch; and yet Christ waited till this discovery in regard of Himself, that He might then expressly mention His approaching dissolution." But do you not observe, my brethren, what a testimony our Lord hereby gives to the fact, that the truth of His Godhead alone explains—alone gives meaning or worth to—His having died on the cross? He will say nothing of His death whilst only believed to be man; He speaks continually of His death, when once acknowledged as God. Are we not taught by this, that they only who believe Christ Divine, can put the right construction on the mystery of His death, or so survey it as to draw from it what it was intended to teach? Then we perceive, that He must have died as a sacrifice; then we understand that He must have died as an atonement to be the propitiation for our sins, to reconcile the world unto God. He could not have died for such ends had He been only man; but being also God, such ends could be answered and effected by His death, though nothing less, so far as we can tell, could have sufficed. Therefore, again and again, we say, Christ's Divinity is the explanation of Christ's death. We seem quite justified in gathering from the text, that henceforward our Lord made very frequent mention of His cross. If you examine, you will find so many as nine instances spoken of by the evangelists; though it was a topic which He had not before introduced. And what is very observable is, that it seems to have been upon occasions when the disciples were likely to have been puffed up and exalted, that ever after our Lord took special pains to impress upon them that He must be rejected and killed. Ah! my brethren, ought we not to learn from this keeping the cross out of sight till faith had grown strong and high privilege been imparted, that it is the advanced Christian who has need of persecution; and that grace, in place of exempting us from, is to fit us for trial? The disciples must have well known that if suffering were to be their Master's lot, it would also be theirs. If, then and thence, Jesus spake of afflictions which should befall Himself, He must have been understood as likewise speaking of afflictions which would befall His apostles; and He abstained, you see, from dwelling on the tribulation which would be the path to His kingdom, till He found His followers strong in belief of His actual Divinity. And then take one more lesson from the peculiarity of the occasions on which, as we have shown you, Christ made a special point of introducing the mention of His sufferings; occasions on which the disciples were in danger of being puffed up and exalted. Learn to expect, and be thankful for, something bitter in the cup, when faith has won the victory, and you have tasted, in no common measure, the powers of the invisible world. You may say, however, that it militates against much that we have advanced, that in point of fact, Christ's mentioning His sufferings at the time when He did, produced not on the disciples the effect which our statement supposes. We have but too good proof, that though our Lord deferred so long as He did speaking of His sufferings, the apostles were still unprepared for the saying, and could neither understand it nor

receive it. Even St. Peter, who had just made the noble confession which proved him ready and willing to hear tidings from Christ, no sooner hears of his Saviour being rejected and killed, than he begins presumptuously to rebuke Him; saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." Yet let it not be thought that Christ chose an unseasonable time, or tried an unsuitable means. The medicine may be what we want; but we, alas! may reject it, as not being what we like. The case may be precisely such, that from that time forth, it is wholesome that we be admonished of appointed tribulation. We may only the more prove how the admonition is needed, by treating it with dislike, and trying to disbelieve it. When we find that there was such repugnance in St. Peter and his brethren to the cross, though Christ had waited so patiently for the fittest time to introduce it, we ought to learn the difficulty of taking part with the suffering Saviour, and submitting ourselves meekly, and thankfully, to the scorn and the trial of sharing His afflictions. And this lesson from man's aversion to, and how much more the bearing of, the cross, should bring home to us with great force, our need of being continually disciplined by the Spirit of God. And yet it is not to pure and unmingled sorrow, that Christ would consign the more faithful in His Church. As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." How beautiful is it in our text, that if Jesus then began to tell His disciples how He should die, He then began also to tell them how He should rise again from the dead. It is our unbelief, or our impatience, which makes us overlook the one statement in our eagerness to get rid of the other. If God lead you into the wilderness, it is, as He saith by the prophet Hosea, that there He may "speak comfortably to you, giving you vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 34. **Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself.**—*Following Christ*:—Here Christ very distinctly sets before all men the conditions of discipleship in His school, and of citizenship in His kingdom. It is not a kingdom of earthly splendour. If any would come after Him, they must expect hardships, self-denial, cross-bearing, and scorn. Their rest and reward were not yet. He was, indeed, the Messiah; but it was by a rough pathway that He would bring His followers to glory. Notice—I. THE UNHESITATING WAY IN WHICH JESUS ASSUMES TO BE OUR RIGHTFUL LEADER. Elsewhere He is man's Teacher, Master, Friend, Saviour. Here He invites followers, and offers and claims to lead. 1. Man needs a Leader; life's by-ways are many; the labyrinth is deep; its duration is short; the stake is great. Man's native tendency is not upward. 2. Jesus has a rightful claim to be our Leader. He proves it by the greatness, and wisdom, and perfection of His person and character. II. THE SOBERING WAY IN WHICH JESUS ANNOUNCES THE COST OF FOLLOWING HIM. "Whosoever will"—this points to obstacles to be overcome, and trials to be borne. To be a true follower of Christ one needs the courage of deep conviction and strong desire. This may seem stern. So it is. But it is not arbitrary or unfeeling. There are two reasons for denying self. 1. The "self" in us is to be denied, because it is wrong. Personal salvation, without the denial of the old nature, the sinful self in us, would be a contradiction. 2. The new spirit that is in us requires it. The follower of Christ has gone over to His side, and become His servant and soldier. But his new work is not easy. It was not easy to the Saviour, for it cost Him humiliation, and privations, and obloquy, and pains. III. THE CHEERING WAY IN WHICH JESUS SETS BEFORE US THE REWARDS OF FAITHFULLY FOLLOWING HIM. While Christ was the greatest of all preachers of self-sacrifice, He uniformly recommended it by pledges of future good. The reward He promises is not of any lower or sensual kind. It is that of activity, calling into right and glad exercise every power we possess. (*H. M. Grout, D.D.*) *Following Christ*:—I. ITS ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS. 1. It must be absolutely a voluntary choice—"Whosoever will." (*a*) This is a condition universally recognized in the New Testament. (*b*) It is a condition that underlies the whole plan of salvation. (*c*) It is a condition from which there can be no deviation. 2. It must be absolutely an entire surrender. (*a*) A surrender of every part of our being to Christ as Master. (*b*) A surrender of every object which He requires to be given up. II. ITS ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES. 1. Holiness, suggested by the necessity of the surrender of "self." 2. Implicit obedience is suggested by the necessity of taking up the cross. 3. To love Christ, suggested by the necessity of being ready to lose life for Christ's sake. 4. The avowal of Christ, suggested by the words of Jesus in ver. 38. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.* *The Master's summons to His disciples*:—Like

a commander addressing his soldiers. Full of clear vision and resolve. I. THE AIM. To overcome spiritual error and Satanic influence, and establish God's kingdom. II. THE CONDITIONS OF ITS ATTAINMENT. These are open to all. 1. Self-denial. 2. Cross-bearing. 3. Obedience and imitation. II. INCENTIVES. 1. Christ's example and inspiration. He says not "go" but "come." He goes before, and shows the way. 2. The endeavour to save the lower "self" will expose to certain destruction the higher "self"; and the sacrifice of the lower "self" and its earthly condition of satisfaction will be the salvation of the higher "self." 3. The value of this higher life cannot be computed. 4. Recognition of Christ on earth is the condition of His recognition of us hereafter. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Come after Me*:—There is a wonderful spell in such a call. All history, profane as well as sacred, has shown us this. The great Roman general realized its force when he called to his soldiers, who shrank from the hardships of the Libyan desert, and promised to go before them, and to command them nothing which he would not first do himself. Even so Christ designed to help His followers by the assurance that He would first suffer that which they would be called to bear (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Conditions of discipleship*:—There was an eagerness among many of the people to come after Him. The wistfulness of a considerable proportion of the northern population had been awakened. They were ruminating anxiously on Old Testament predictions, and filled with vague expectancy. They saw that the Rabbi of Nazareth was no common Rabbi. He was a wonderful Being. It is not strange, therefore, that they pictured out to themselves all sorts of possibilities in connection with His career. To what was He advancing? Whither was He bound? Was He on His way, or was He not, to the throne of the kingdom? The Saviour by and by gives sufficiently explicit indications of the ultimate witherhood of His career; but meanwhile He brings into the foreground the moral conditions of adherence to His person and His cause. "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself,"—let him be prepared to say No to many of the strongest cravings of his nature, in the direction more particularly of earthly ease, comfort, dignity, and glory. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Following Christ*:—I. THE MATTER WHEREIN WE MUST FOLLOW HIM. 1. His holy doctrine. 2. His holy life. Some of His actions were not imitable. (1) His miraculous works. (2) His mediatorial acts. The things wherein we must follow Christ. 1. In that He never sought His own praise and glory, but the praise and glory of God that sent Him (John vii. 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 31). 2. In that He contemned His own will for His Father's (Matt. xxvi. 39). 3. In daily and frequent prayer to His Father (Mark i. 35). 4. In fervent zeal to His Father's house (John ii. 17). 5. In His faith and confidence. 6. His charity and love of man, shown in many ways. II. THE MANNER WHEREIN WE MUST FOLLOW CHRIST. 1. We must follow Him in faith. 2. In ardent affection. 3. Sincerely. 4. Wholly. 5. Constantly. III. THE REASONS OR MOTIVES THEREUNTO. 1. The equity of the precept. 2. Great is the danger of not following Christ our Leader. (1) If we look at ourselves. (2) At danger of false guides. (3) At the world as a guide. 3. Argue from the safety of following Christ our Guide. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Essence of self-denial*:—In the parish where Mr. Hervey preached, when he inclined to loose sentiments, there resided a ploughman well-informed in religious matters. Mr. Hervey being advised by his physician, for the benefit of his health, to follow the plough in order to smell the fresh earth, frequently accompanied this ploughman in his rural employment. Mr. Hervey, understanding the ploughman was a serious person, said to him one morning, "What do you think is the hardest thing in religion?" To which he replied, "I am a poor illiterate man, and you, sir, are a minister. I beg leave to return the question." "Then," said Mr. Hervey, "I think the hardest thing is to deny sinful self;" and applauded, at some length, his own example of self-denial. The ploughman replied, "Mr. Hervey, you have forgotten the greatest act of the grace of self-denial, which is, to deny ourselves of a proud confidence in our own obedience." Mr. Hervey looked at the man in amazement, thinking him an old fool; but in after years, when relating the story, he would add, "I have since clearly seen who was the fool: not the wise old Christian, but the proud James Hervey." *Self-denial may be manifested* (1) in the subjection of our own opinions in religious matters to the authoritative announcements of Scripture. If we believe God only where we can see the truth and propriety of what He states, we do Him no honour. (2) In the renunciation of worldly and social advantages. If the Spirit dwelling in us be not mightier than that which is in the world, we cannot be Christ's disciples. If we have the true principle of Christianity, it will rise within us in proportion to the demand upon it. (3) In

foregoing the love of ease and quiet and wealth. The ignorant must be taught; the knowledge of Christian principles spread; the wiles of the devil exposed. In the spiritual army, all must be warriors, if they would be victors. (4) In the abnegation of our own honour. The end of all our actions and sufferings is, that every crown earned and won may be placed on the head of Him who wore for us the crown of thorns. (*J. Leifchild.*) *Incentives to self-denial:*—1. Necessity for salvation. Having become corrupt through apostasy, we must be wrought on a different mould. 2. Grateful imitation and return. Christ's love draws out ours. 3. Spiritual and eternal recompense. Even this world's goods will be restored, if God sees we would benefit by possessing them. But in most cases the reward is wholly spiritual—the favour of heaven instead of the friendship of mortals—the blessed experience of being on the side of God and right. (*Ibid.*) *Self-denial:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY "HIMSELF." 1. Things outward: things concerning the outward man, yet so near him, as they are, after a sort, himself; not only his riches, but his name, his liberty, his life; all of which must be denied rather than Christ and His truth. 2. Things inward, which can hardly be distinguished from himself. (1) He must deny the wisdom of the flesh, which is enmity to God. (2) He must deny his own corrupt will, which is contrary to God's will. (3) He must deny all his carnal passions and affections, as carnal love, hatred, fear. (4) He must deny all his own wicked inclinations. (5) He must deny all wicked habits and sins. II. THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS PRECEPT. 1. Consider the nearness of things to be denied. Were it only in things without us, as to part with riches, it were difficult enough; but when it leads us out of our own wisdom and judgment, what a hard province proves it. 2. Natural pride and self-love is such, that it is with us as with Solomon (Eccles. ii. 10). We are so far from crossing ourselves, that we endure not any other should cross us; Haman is sick on his bed because Mordicai denies him obeisance; if John deny Herod his Herodias, he will die for it; if Jonas his gourd, he will be angry to the death; such impatience is in our nature, if we be crossed in our wills. 3. Distrust in God, and trust in the means, makes the precept yet more difficult: we see not easily how we can do well without friends, wealth, liberty, favour, preferments. Wisdom is good with an inheritance (Eccles. vii.). We cannot live by promises, something we would have in hand. III. THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL. 1. The context affirms a twofold necessity: in the words going before—without it a man cannot be a disciple of Christ: and in the words following—no man can take up his cross who has not denied himself. 2. The true wisdom cannot be embraced before the other be displaced, no more than light can be manifest before darkness be chased away. 3. The gospel offers Christ as a Physician, man must therefore deny the means he can devise to help himself, before he come to see what need he hath of Christ. 4. No obedience can be acceptably performed to God without self-denial, for many commandments are hard and difficult. 5. Whence is all the denial of Christ at this day, but want of self-denial. IV. THE AIDS TO SELF-DENIAL. The Lord has not left us destitute of means, if we be not wanting to ourselves. 1. Strength to overcome ourselves is not from ourselves, therefore, we must remember that the Spirit is given to those who ask. 2. Consider what an advantage it will be to take ourselves in hand before our lusts be grown strong in us, and how they are far more easily denied in the first rising then when they have seated themselves with delight in the affections and members, and are grown from motions to acts, from acts to customs, from customs to habits, from habits to another nature. 3. As it must be the first, so also the continued acts of a Christian to stand in the denial of himself, seeing the enemy continually uses our own natural inclinations against us; he ploughs with our own heifer. 4. And because they are not denied till the contrary be practised, our care must be that the room of our hearts must be taken up with good desires, and the lustings of the Spirit which will keep out the desires of the flesh. 5. Whereas distrustfulness of heart riveteth us with the world, labour daily for the strengthening of faith in the providence of God, and bring thy heart to lean upon that and not upon inferior means. 5. THE MOTIVES TO SELF-DENIAL. 1. Look to Christ, He denied Himself for us, we cannot deny too much for Him. 2. Look to the world, it will leave and deny us. 3. Look to the examples of the saints who have denied themselves. 4. Look to hypocrites forsaking much for God's favour; we have Baal's priests tormenting themselves to uphold their idolatry. 5. Look to the end of our self-denial; there meets us God's promise with a full hand; all will then be made up with an infinite advantage. VI. THE MARKS OF SELF-DENIAL. 1. One in regard to God; it will cast a man wholly out of himself

(Psa. lxxiii. 25). 2. The second in respect of Christ, for Christ, he can want as well as abound (Phil. iii. 8). 3. The third, in respect of the Word of God, it is ready for all God's will. 4. The fourth, in respect to himself, he that hath denied himself will desire no way of prosperity but God's own, and will ascribe it all to God. 5. The fifth mark is, in respect to others; he that hath denied himself lives not to himself, but procures the good of others, and advances to his power every man's good. He looks not on men as they are affected to himself, but as he ought to be affected to them. 6. The last note of self-denial is the life of faith, beyond and without all means of help. As nothing gives more glory to God than faith, so nothing takes so much from man. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Self-denial*:—Self-denial is a Christian principle, and yet no new thing, since in some form it must form a part of the lives of most men. Thus, when Garibaldi was going out to battle, he told his troops what he wanted them to do, and they said, "Well, general, what are you going to give us for all this?" He replied, "I don't know what also you will get, but you will get hunger, and cold, and wounds, perhaps death." They stood awhile in silence, and then threw up their hands; "We are the men!" Faith in Christ puts in action, and strengthens a desire to conquer self, which seems inherent in human nature. *The disciple's cross*:—The world in general has got ready a cross for each of Christ's disciples. So determined is it in its opposition, and so remorseless in its hate. It has resolved that every Christian shall be crucified, in one way or another. If the body cannot be got hold of and transfixed, the heart may. Every true Christian must be willing to accept this treatment for Christ's sake. He must take up his cross, and walk with it, as it were, to the place of execution, ready for the last extremity. It is the dark side of the case; and the phase of representation under which it is exhibited was no doubt suggested to our Lord by the clear view He had of the termination of His own terrestrial career. "A Christian," says Luther, "is a Crucian." The Saviour pictures to His hearers a procession. He Himself takes the lead with His cross. He is the chief Crucian. All His disciples follow. Each has his own particular cross. But the direction of the procession, when one looks far enough, is toward the kingdom of heavenly glory. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *The cross to be expected*:—Be prepared for afflictions. To this end would Christ have us reckon upon the cross, that we may be forewarned. He that builds a house does not take care that the rain should not descend upon it, or the storm should not beat upon it, or the wind blow upon it; there is no fencing against these things, they cannot be prevented by any care of ours; but that the house may be able to endure all this without prejudice. And he that builds a ship, does not make this his work, that it should never meet with waves and billows; that is impossible; but that it may be light and staunch, and able to endure all weathers. A man who takes care for his body does not care for this, that he meet with no change of weather, hot and cold, but how his body may bear all this. Thus should Christians do; not so much to care how to shift and avoid afflictions, but how to bear them with an even quiet mind. As we cannot hinder the rain from falling upon the house, nor the waves from beating upon the ship, nor change of weather and seasons from affecting the body, so it is not in our power to hinder the falling out of afflictions and tribulations: all that lies upon us, is to make provision for such an hour, that we be not overwhelmed by it. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Necessity of discipline*:—When God built this world, He did not build a palace complete with appointments. This is a drill world. Men were not dropped down upon it like manna, fit to be gathered and used as it fell; but like seeds, to whom the plough is father, the furrow mother, and on which iron and stone, sickle, flail, and mill must act, before they come to the loaf. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Affliction, our present portion*:—The Christian lives in the midst of crosses, as the fish lives in the sea. (*Vianney.*) *Difficulty not confined to religion*:—Is religion difficult? and what is not so, that is good for anything? Is not the law a difficult and crabbed study? Does it not require great labour and perpetual drudging to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be master of any art or profession? In a word, is there anything in the world worth having, that is to be got without pains? And is eternal life and glory the only slight and inconsiderable thing that is not worth our care and industry? (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *The cross is a reality*:—The crusaders of old, it is said, used to carry painted crosses upon their shoulders; it is to be feared that many among us take up crosses which sit just as lightly; things of ornament, passports to respectability, a cheap exchange for a struggle we never made, and a crown we never strove for. But let us not deceive ourselves. None ever yet entered into the kingdom of heaven without tribulation; not, perhaps, the tribulation of fire, or rebuke, or blasphemy, but the

tribulation of a bowed spirit and a humble heart; of the flesh crucified to the spirit, and of hard conflict with the powers of darkness; and, therefore, if our religion be of such a pliable and elastic form as to have cost us neither pains to acquire, nor self-denial to preserve, nor effort to advance, nor struggle to maintain holy and undefiled—we may be assured our place among the ranks of the risen dead will be with that prodigious multitude who were pure in their own eyes, and yet were not washed from their filthiness. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Meaning of the cross*:—Carrying a cross after Christ means, for one thing, enduring suffering for Christ. "Cross" was the name once given to the most fearful engine of agony for the body; and the words "cross," "crucial," "excruciate," &c., have come into our language from that material cross, and they now point, in a general way, to what has to be suffered, not in the body, but in the soul. To carry a cross for Christ means, for another thing, having a great weight on the mind for Christ's sake. To carry a cross for Christ means, for another thing, that this suffering and heavily-weighted condition should be open, not secret; for the cross-bearer is seen. It means, for another thing, that the man who is willing to carry the cross for Christ is willing to suffer scorn for Christ. No one carried a cross in the old Roman days but one who was the very refuse of society. To be willing to carry a cross for Christ means willingness to suffer ignominy, willingness to "go forth without the camp, bearing His reproach." To carry a cross for Christ has another meaning. It means that for Christ's sake the person who does so takes up a trial that comes to him in the course of God's providence, and not through his own choice, or fault, or folly. A man does, from a sublime motive, some evil thing that good may come. Then he suffers the penalty. When he does so, that is not suffering a cross. When a man is a violator of the Petrine law; when he is a busybody and a meddler in other men's matters, and suffers the proper penalty; when a man does a right thing at a wrong time, or in a wrong place, or in a wrong way, and suffers the penalty; when a man tries to help out the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood by some nostrum of his own, as if the great Lord of the universe had mistaken the proportions in which health and sickness, light and darkness, fire and frost, ease and pain, should be distributed, and suffers a complicated penalty thereby and therefrom, that penalty is not a cross in any one instance. Penalty is penalty, and nothing else. Whatever the cause may be in which you are acting or suffering, penalty is penalty, not a cross taken up for Christ. But when, for the sake of principle, for the sake of profession, for the sake and in the course of carrying out the laws of a Christian calling, any man has to suffer something sharp, or to bear something galling, for Christ's sake, that is a cross. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *Taking up the cross*:—I. WHAT IS THIS CROSS? By the cross is not meant any affliction which belongs to the common calamities of nature; but that suffering which is inflicted for the profession of Christ and His truth. 1. From Him: His fan to sift and purge us. 2. For Him: endured for His cause and glory. 3. His in His mystical body; not natural. 4. Not in respect of merit, but of sympathy. II. WHY IS IT CALLED THE CROSS? 1. Because of the union between Christ and the Christian, so it is a part of Christ's own cross: for as all the members suffered with Christ on the cross, as their Surety; so He suffers with them as His members. 2. That we should never think of the troubles for Christ, but cast our eyes also upon the cross of Christ, where we shall see Him sanctifying, sweetening, and conquering all our sorrows. 3. That in all our sufferings for Christ we should support our faith and patience in beholding what was the end of Christ's cross, and to expect the same happy end of our crosses for Christ—the crown. III. WHAT IS IT TO TAKE UP THE CROSS? It is not to devise voluntary affliction for ourselves. Neither is it to pull the cross upon our shoulders. For—1. Christ did not carry His cross till it was laid upon Him. 2. Our rule is to use all good means for the preservation of our bodies, health, wealth, and comfort. 3. Every bearing of affliction must be an obedience of faith, and as such based upon a commandment of God. No soldier must of his own head raise war against his own peace, nor set fire upon his own house; this is not the part of a good soldier, but of a mutinous fellow. So no soldier of Christ must be superfluous in suffering. 4. We may not tempt God by running before Him, but follow Him going before us. If without sin and with good conscience we may escape danger, and do not, we run upon it, and it becomes our own cross, and not Christ's. It is enough to suffer wrong; we must not offer wrong to our own persons. We are not bound to seek the cross, nor make it, but to bear and take it up. Nor to fill the cup for ourselves, but to drink it when God reaches it. To take up the cross, therefore, is, when a cross meet us in our way, which we cannot without sin escape, we must now take knowledge of God's will, God's

hand, God's time, and God's voice calling us to suffer. Now God laying on the cross, we must not pull away the shoulder, nor hide ourselves from the cross under the covert of sinful shifts, nor avoid it by any unlawful means, but take it up, and buckle to the burden. IV. THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS. 1. To the godly afflictions are often as necessary as meat and drink; for prosperity is as a dead sea (Prov. i. 32). Standing waters contract mud, and breed vermin; a still body fills with bad humours. Fallow and unstirred grounds are fruitful in weeds; therefore God in great wisdom by trials shakes them out of security, and makes them more watchful of themselves; scouring makes metals brighter and more useful. 2. Another reason why the Lord hath yoked the Christian to the cross is, because He will thence fetch a strong argument to confound Satan (Job i. 9); He will have it appear that His servants love Christ and religion for itself, not for wealth or ease. 3. Comfort to the saints in their suffering. (1) In that they have such a partner. (2) In that we have Christ Himself at the other end of the cross, helping and supporting us. He is of power to carry the heavy end, and bear off the weight from us. (3) In that we have all the saints our companions. How can we sink having so many shoulders under our burden. V. WHAT IS REQUIRED IN TAKING UP THE CROSS? 1. A continual expectation and a standing unfearfully in the station wherein God hath set us, with a strong resolution not to be discouraged, though crosses come never so thick. Expected evils smart less. 2. A contentedness to abide under a great burden, as a man stands under the burden he hath taken up. 3. Love of God, notwithstanding the cross. 4. Humility and silence; not disputing the matter with God. 5. Joy and rejoicing, not in the smart of the cross, but in waiting the sweet fruit of it. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 35. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.**—*Bearing the cross*:—A threefold inducement is here held out. I. EACH MAN HAS TWO LIVES—A lower and earthly, and a higher and heavenly. If any man thinks only of the former, and makes everything bend to that, with all its temporal enjoyments and self-pleasing, he will forfeit all right to the latter. If, however, he learns to sit loosely to that, and is prepared to resign it whenever a strong sense of duty prompts the resignation, he carries in his hand a passport into a higher and nobler existence. II. THERE IS A VAST DISPROPORTION BETWEEN THE TWO LIVES. 1. He pictures to His hearers a man placed upon trial for his conduct, and condemned to forfeit all claim to eternal life, because he has thought only of the present, and taken his fill of its pleasures; and then He weighs in the balance one against the other, what he has gained and what he has lost, and the former flies up at once and kicks the beam, for it is altogether lighter than vanity itself. 2. There are many things which may be recovered by ransom or won back by exchange; but eternal life, once forfeited, is past recovery; at least no corruptible things, such as silver and gold, neither thousands of rams nor ten thousands of rivers of oil, can effect a redemption or offer the least compensation. III. HE APPEALS TO THE REQUITAL AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Meaning of the term "life"*:—The first thing for us to do is to settle the meaning of the word "life." In this the Lord helps us. He calls it in one place our "life in this world" (John xii. 25). The term is the very same which is used in Genesis, where it is said that "man became a living soul." Again, it is a word which the Hebrews used as a synonym for happiness. A happy life in this world; perhaps that phrase might do by way of beginning our definition. But that definition is not complete. A good Christian life is a happy life; nay, it is the happiest of all; and it is led in this world; so that one might lead a happy life in this world, and yet lose nothing in the world to come. Let us go on then to take in other elements. "Life in this world" appears to mean life which has no reference to any other; a worldly life only—no more; a life which is regarded as a complete and finished thing in itself; which needs no rounding and filling out by aught to come after it; a life which has in its activities, in its aims, in its felt necessities, no relation to any other: that seems to be the life here spoken of . . . God Almighty, when He made man, made him at first the tenant of this natural world, which was to him, for a time, a home, and, during that time, gave him all that the natural man requires: nor was it till God proposed to him a supernatural end, and an eternal life of glory and felicity like that of God Himself, that the natural earthly life sank away out of sight, and man, reaching forth towards the heavenly prize, lost his relish for visible and temporal joys. This, then, is what we understand by that "life" which we are bidden not to love, nor save, nor find. It is this natural existence, this earthly state, this present life, alone and by itself, with nothing in it

prophetic of the world to come, with nothing in it to sanctify, hallow, bless; a life, perhaps of toil, perhaps of pleasure, yet marked by no holy signs, secular, social, and domestic; wherein all is for time and man, and nothing for God. That is our natural state; we began that way; and there should we have remained, but for some act on God's part calling us away; as the scripture calls it, "electing" us; giving us a new birth unto another and wholly different condition; and begetting us again unto a lively hope which has its spring and centre in a supernatural region. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *Life saved, yet lost*:—Let us force again upon our thoughts the danger of getting back into the bondage from which the Lord has made us free. This common natural life of ours; the life of those who are "conceived and born in sin;" the life which is so loaded down with divers kinds of trial and sorrow; the life which has, no doubt, much that is bright and pleasant in it, but also much that is very hard and bitter; this life which can be abstracted from any practical relation to aught that is to come hereafter, and made to look as if it came out of nothing and went back into nothing; why should we love it so dearly as to care for nothing else? why should we be so wrapped up in it as to feel almost as if it sufficed to our necessity? Men thus love it; and a cold shudder passes through the soul when they think, "After a little while, comes an end, and then what shall become of me?" And some men are like persons seeking to find what is lost. You lose a piece of silver, and you give your whole thought to searching for it. You mislay a book, or an important paper, and you give yourself no rest till you find it again. A name is gone from your memory, or the details of an incident from your recollection, and you think, and think, and try to get hold of the lost idea, the impression which you cannot trace. So do some men search the world through, fix their whole thoughts on their life, and try to get out of it the pleasure they miss, and of it to fill the void in their hearts. And think what it is to save: the double sense that is here. You save a thing from destruction: you rescue a drowning man, you run in haste to snatch something from the flames. Or again, you save things by putting them away and making no use of them. You hide things in dark closets or on top shelves, and there they remain, unused, till the dust settles on them, and the moth or the worm consume them. Or so might one hide grain away, instead of sowing it in the ground, and what might have produced the bright green leaf and the rich full fruit in the ear, lies there sterile and valueless. Thus do some men save their lives; they never will take any risk; they never do one brave, unselfish thing; they are always in alarm for consequences, afraid of compromising themselves or their interest, afraid of losing the earthly possession. Or they bury their talents and skill, their ideals and ambitions, so that when they come to die no one can recollect one single thing they ever did in all their lives, that others might be thankful for, or for which society was the better. (*Ibid.*) *Insecurity of this life*:—Some years ago a vessel lay becalmed on a smooth sea in the vicinity of an iceberg. In full view the mountain mass of frozen splendour rose before the passengers of the vessel, its towers and pinnacles glittering in the sunlight, and clothed in the enchanting and varied colours of the rainbow. A party on board the vessel resolved to climb the steep sides of the iceberg, and spend the day in a picnic on the summit. The novelty and attraction of the hazardous enterprise blinded them to the danger, and they left the vessel, ascended the steep mountain of ice, spread their table on the summit, and enjoyed their dance of pleasure on the surface of the frosty marble. Nothing disturbed their security, or marred their enjoyment. Their sport was finished and they made their way down to the water level and embarked. But scarcely had they reached a safe distance before the loud crash of the crumbling mass was heard. The scene of their gaiety was covered with the huge fragments of the falling pinnacles, and the giant iceberg rolled over with a shock that sent a thrill of awe and terror to the breast of every spectator. Not one of that gay party could ever be induced to try that rash experiment again. But what is this world with all its brilliancy, its hopes, and its alluring pleasures, but a glittering iceberg, melting slowly away? Its false splendour, enchanting to the eye, dissolves, and as drop after drop trickles down its sides, or steals unseen through its hidden pores, its very foundations are undermined, and the steady decay prepares for a sudden catastrophe. Such is the world to many who dance over its surface, and in a false security forget the treacherous footing on which they stand. But can any one who knows what it is, avoid feeling that every moment is pregnant with danger, and that the final catastrophe is hastening on? Is it in a merely fanciful alarm that we warn you to flee from the wrath to come, that we tell you that every moment of life is full of the deepest solemnity, and that we admonish you of the treacherous character of hopes

that glitter like the pinnacles of the iceberg in the sunlight, which a moment may crumble to ruined fragments, strewn over your grave? If it is solemn to die, is it not solemn to live, when any moment may be the door through which you may pass into eternity? What are all the objects upon which you rely—health, strength, youthful vigour—but the frozen marble beneath your feet, that may yield in an hour when you dream not, and leave you to sink in a river which no plummet can fathom? Could you be so secure, so heedless of warning, if you realized your true condition? (*Homiletic Encyclopædia.*) *The shroud of Saladin*:—Who has not heard, or rather read, of that famous Asiatic warrior, Saladin? After subjugating Egypt, establishing himself as Sultan of Egypt and Syria, taking towns without number, and retaking Jerusalem itself from the hands of the crusaders, this Moslem hero of the Third Crusade, and beau ideal of mediæval chivalry, had at length to yield to a still mightier conqueror. A few moments before he breathed his last he ordered a herald to suspend on the point of a lance the shroud in which he was to be buried, and to cry as he raised it, "Look, here is all that Saladin the Great, the conqueror, the emperor, bears away with him of all his glory." Thus all the honours and riches of this world, all bodily pleasures and gratifications, all earthly greatness, are reduced by death to the shroud and the winding-sheet; but the soul, immortal in its nature, and secure in its existence, "smiles at the drawn dagger" or other implement of death. Who, then, can estimate the untold value of the soul? (*J. J. Given, M.A.*) *Men burn for goods, who will not for Christ*:—Richard Denton, a blacksmith, was the means of converting the martyr, William Woolsey. When told by that holy man that he wondered he had not followed him to prison, Denton replied that he could not burn in the cause of Christ. Not long after, his house being on fire, he ran in to save some of his goods, and was burnt to death! *And the gospel's*:—These words, peculiar to St. Mark, are written for those who in this day cannot follow Christ personally, as the apostles did. They teach us that those who now forsake the comforts of home and intellectual society, and the prospects of preferment in a wealthy Church, to preach the gospel amongst uncivilized or savage tribes, in so doing lose their lives, or all that worldly men esteem life worth living for, not only for the gospel, or for the Church's sake, but for Christ Himself. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Life lost and saved*:—It is a riddle to flesh and blood, that the same life should be both saved and lost: For the resolving whereof we must know that there is a two-fold tribunal, the court of the world, and the court of heaven; and as he that saves himself in the common law, may be cast in the Chancery; so he that saves himself here in the consistories of men, may elsewhere lose himself, namely, in the court of heaven. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Loving Christ best*:—I. If we look at Christ, He is to be loved best of all, and all things must be accounted "dross and dung in comparison of Him" (Phil. iii. 7, 8). Again, if we look on His merit and desert, he loved not His life unto death for us, but readily offered it up on our behalf (Luke xii. 50). How then should we hold ourselves bound in way of thankfulness, if we had a thousand lives, to give them up for Him? shall the Just for the unjust, and not the unjust for the Just? II. If we look to the truth and gospel, it is far more worthy than all we can give in exchange for it; it cost Christ dear: He thought it worthy of His life, and bought with His precious blood, which was the blood of God (Acts xx. 28); and should we think much to buy it with our last blood? III. If we look on ourselves: 1. We are soldiers under Christ's colours. A soldier in the field sells his life for a base pay, and is ready for his king and country to endure blows, gashes, and death itself. How much more ought the Christian soldier for the love of his Captain, and honour of his profession, contemn fears and perils, and think his life well sold in so honourable a quarrel and cause as Christ's is? 2. This is indeed rightly to love ourselves, when we can rightly hate ourselves. We must learn to love ourselves by not loving ourselves. (*Ibid.*) *Thought no test of love*:—I grant we have callings, and earthly affairs, which tie us ordinarily to speak and think of such things; but the special calling of a Christian must be ever subordinate to the general, and in all earthly business a man must carry a heavenly mind. God gives no leave to be earthly-minded, even while a man is earthly employed. Again, the speaking and thinking more of a thing upon necessity doth not ever argue more love unto it, but the speaking and thinking of things out of the valuation of judgment: for instance, a workman thinks more of his tools, and an husbandman speaks more of his husbandry, than of his wife or children, because these are the objects of his labour; but it follows not he loves them better, because he does not in his judgment esteem these better. Now let a Christian preserve in

his judgment a better estimate of Christ and heavenly things, and his speeches in things earthly will still prefer that, and run upon it. (*Ibid.*) *Life saved by losing it*:—And this is, if we believe our Lord, to save and preserve our life by thus casting it away. A man that will save his seed, and not cast it away into the ground, loseth it by such saving; but if he sow it, he reneweth it, and multiplieth it, some times an hundredfold. So to lose thyself for Christ, is to save thyself, and to reap an hundredfold. For it is but sown to spring out unto the eternal harvest. Ever remember that the right love of a man's self is in and for Christ. *Objection.* You speak of nothing but hindrance and loss, and as if a Christian may not have riches, friends, life and comforts of it. *Answer.* 1. Yes, he may have them, and must save them; but not in Christ's cause when he is called from them. 2. Divorce not the parts of the text: as there is loss in the text, so there is a greater gain by it; as the harvest makes him a gainer, who in seed-time seemed a loser. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 36, 37. **For what shall it profit a man?**—*The worth and excellency of the soul*:—The soul of man is of inestimable value. 1. In respect of its capacity of understanding. 2. In respect of its capacity of moral perfection. 3. In respect of its capacity of pleasure and delight. 4. The high price which God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have set upon our souls. (*Dr. Scott.*) *The gain of the world compared with the loss of the soul*:—I. THE GAIN SUPPOSED. 1. It is an uncertain gain—"If." 2. It is a difficult gain. 3. It is a trifling gain. 4. It is an unsatisfactory gain. 5. It is a temporary gain. II. THE LOSS SUSTAINED. 1. The loss of heaven. 2. The loss of happiness. 3. The loss of hope. III. THE INQUIRY PROPOSED. 1. Will the pleasures of sin compensate you for eternal pain? 2. Will any worldly gain compensate you for the loss of the soul? 2. Christ shunned the offer, you accept less. 4. Or will you ask, "What must I do to be saved?" (*H. F. Pickworth.*) I. THE MANNER OF PROPOUNDING THIS TRUTH. The manner of propounding is by a continued interrogation, which not only carrieth in it more strength than an ordinary negation, but stirreth up the hearer to ponder and well weigh the matter, as if he were to give his judgment and answer; as if the Lord had said in larger speech, "Tell me out of your own judgments and best understanding, let your own consciences be judges whether the whole world were a reasonable gain for the loss of the soul, or whether the whole world could recover such a loss, or no." 2. In the manner note another point of wisdom, namely, in matters of much importance, as is the losing of the soul; or else of great danger, as is the winning of the world, to use more than ordinary vehemence. 3. Our Saviour in the manner teacheth how naturally we are all of us inclined to the world, to seek it with all greediness, and so have need of many and strong back biasses. II. THE MATTER AFFORDS SUNDRY INSTRUCTIONS:—1. The more a man is addicted to gain the world, the greater is the danger of losing his soul. They that will be rich fall into many temptations and snares. 2. Desire to be rich and gain the world stuffeth the soul with a thousand damnable lusts, every one able to sink it to hell. 3. Desire of gain threatens danger and singular detriment to the soul; because it brings it almost to an impossibility of repentance and salvation; Matt. xix. 20: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to be saved." 4. As it keeps out grace in all the means of it, so it eats out and casteth it out of the heart, as the lean kine ate up the fat, and were lean and ill-favoured still. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Gaining the world*:—What a man loses this side of the grave by this unholy bargain. 1. A good conscience. 2. His communion with God. 3. His hope in the future. Some are selling their souls—1. For pleasure. 2. For the world. 3. For business. 4. For fear of ridicule. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *A sum in gospel arithmetic*:—I propose to estimate and compare the value of the two properties. I. The world is A VERY GRAND PROPERTY. Its flowers are God's thoughts in bloom. Its rocks are God's thoughts in stone. Its dew-drops are God's thoughts in pearl. How beautiful the spring with bridal blossoms in her hair. "Oh," you say, "take my soul! give me that world." But look more minutely into the value of this world. You will not buy property unless you can get a good title. You cannot get a good title to the world. In five minutes after I give up my soul for the world, I may have to part with it. There is only one way in which I can hold an earthly possession, and that is through the senses: all beautiful sights through the eye, but the eye may be blotted out—all captivating sounds through the ear, but my ear may be deafened—all lusciousness of fruits and viands through my taste, but my taste may be destroyed—all appreciation of culture and of art through

my mind, but I may lose my mind. What a frail hold, then, I have upon any earthly possession! Now, in courts of law, if you want to get a man off a property, you must serve upon him a writ of ejectment, giving him a certain time to vacate the premises; but when death comes to us and serves a writ of ejectment, he does not give us one second of forewarning. He says, "Off of this place! You have no right any longer to the possession." We might cry out, "I gave a hundred thousand dollars for that property"—the plea would be of no avail. We might say, "We have a warrantee deed for that property"—the plea would be of no avail. We might say, "We have a lien on that storehouse"—the plea would be of no avail. Death is blind, and he cannot see a seal, and cannot read an indenture. So that first and last, I want to tell you that when you propose that I give up my soul for the world, you cannot give me the first item of title. Having examined the title of a property, your next question is about insurance. You would not be silly enough to buy a large warehouse that could not possibly be insured. You would not have anything to do with such a property. Now, I ask you what assurance can you give me that this world is not going to be burned up? Absolutely none. Geologists tell us that it is already on fire, that the heart of the world is one great living coal, that it is just like a ship on fire at sea, the flames not bursting out because the hatches are kept down. And yet you propose to palm off on me, in return for my soul, a world for which, in the first place, you give no title, and in the second place, for which you can give no insurance. "Oh," you say, "the water of the oceans will wash over all the land and put out the fire." Oh no, there are inflammable elements in the water—hydrogen and oxygen. Call off the hydrogen, and then the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans would blaze like heaps of shavings. You want me to take this world for which you can give no possible insurance. Astronomers have swept their telescopes through the sky, and have found out that there have been thirteen worlds, in the last two centuries, that have disappeared. At first, they looked just like other worlds. Then they got deeply red—they were on fire. Then they got ashen, showing they were burned down. Then they disappeared, showing that even the ashes were scattered. And if the geologist be right in his prophecy, then our world is to go in the same way. And yet you want me to exchange my soul for it. Ah no, it is a world that is burning now. Suppose you brought an insurance agent to look at your property for the purpose of giving you a policy upon it, and while he stood in front of the house, he would say, "That house is on fire now in the basement"—you could not get any insurance upon it. Yet you talk about this world as though it were a safe investment, as though you could get some insurance upon it, when down in the basement it is on fire. I remark, also, that this world is a property, with which everybody who has taken it as a possession, has had trouble. Now, between my house and this church, there is a reach of land which is not built on. I ask what is the matter, and they reply that everybody who has had anything to do with that property got into trouble about it. It is just so with this world; everybody who has had anything to do with it, as a possession, has been in perplexity. How was it with Lord Byron? Did he not sell his immortal soul for the purpose of getting the world? Was he satisfied with the possession? Alas, alas, the poet graphically describes his case when he says:

> "Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
> Of fame; drank early, deeply drank; drank draughts
> Which common millions might have drank. Then died
> Of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

Oh yes, he had trouble with it, and so did Napoleon. After conquering nations by the force of the sword, he lies down to die, his entire possession the military boots that he insisted on having upon his feet while he was dying. So it has been with men who had better ambition. Thackeray, one of the most genial and lovable souls, after he had won the applause of all intelligent lands through his wonderful genius, sits down in a restaurant in Paris, looks to the other end of the room, and wonders whose that forlorn and wretched face is; rising up, after awhile, he finds that it is Thackeray in the mirror. Oh yes, this world is a cheat. Talk about a man gaining the world! Who ever gained half the world? If. Now, LET US LOOK AT THE OTHER PROPERTY—THE SOUL. We cannot make a bargain without seeing the comparative value. The soul! How shall I estimate the value of it? Well, by its exquisite organization. It is the most wonderful piece of mechanism ever put together. Machinery is of value in proportion as it is mighty and silent at the

same time. You look at the engine and the machinery in the Philadelphia Mint, and as you see it performing its wonderful work, you will be surprised to find how silently it goes. Machinery that roars and tears soon destroys itself; but silent machinery is often most effective. Now, so it is with the soul of man, with all its tremendous faculties—it moves in silence. Judgment without any racket, lifting its scales; memory without any noise, bringing down all its treasures; conscience taking its judgment-seat without any excitement; the understanding and the will all doing their work. Velocity, majesty, might; but silence—silence. You listen at the door of your heart. You can hear no sound. The soul is all quiet. It is so delicate an instrument, that no human hand can touch it. You break a bone, and with splinters and bandages the surgeon sets it; the eye becomes inflamed, the apothecary's wash cools it; but the soul off the track, unbalanced, no human power can re-adjust it. With one sweep of its wing it circles the universe, and over-vaults the throne of God. Why, in the hour of death the soul is so mighty, it throws aside the body as though it were a toy. It drives back medical skill as impotent. It breaks through the circle of loved ones who stand around the dying couch. With one leap it springs beyond star, and moon, and sun, and chasms of immensity. Oh, it is a soul superior to all material things. I calculate further the value of the soul by the price that has been paid for it. In St. Petersburg, there is a diamond that Government paid two hundred thousand dollars for. "Well," you say, "it must have been very valuable, or the Government would not have paid two hundred thousand dollars for it." I want to see what my soul is worth, and what your soul is worth, by seeing what has been paid for it. For that immortal soul, the richest blood that was ever shed, the deepest groan that was ever uttered, all the griefs of earth compressed into one tear, all the sufferings of earth gathered into one rapier of pain and struck through His holy heart. Does it not imply tremendous value? I argue also the value of the soul from the home that has been fitted up for it in the future. One would have thought that a street of adamant would have done. No, it is a street of gold. One would have thought that a wall of granite would have done. No, it is the flame of sardonyx mingling with the green of emerald. One would have thought that an occasional doxology would have done? No, it is a perpetual song. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The chief thing forgotten:*—So short-sighted and foolish is man! I once read of a woman whose house was on fire. She was very active in removing her goods, but forgot her child, who was asleep in the cradle. At last she thought of the poor babe, and ran, with earnest desire, to save it. But it was now too late; the flames prevented her from crossing the threshold. Judge of the agony of mind which wrung from her the bitter exclamation: "Oh, my child! my child! I have saved my goods, but lost my child!" So will it be with many a poor sinner, who spent all his life in the occupations of the world, while the "one thing needful" was forgotten. What will it then avail for a man to say, "I secured a good place, or a good trade, or profession, but I lost my soul? I made many friends, but God is my enemy. I heaped up riches, but now they must all be left." *Profit and loss:*—What is the good of life to us if we do not live? what is the profit of being a man in form and not a man in fact? what is the worth of existence if its worth is all, or, for the most part, outside of us and not in us? There are two remarks which might be made in illustration of this question, in the sense in which I take it. I. The gain here spoken of is nominal, imaginary. II. The loss is real, and it is the greatest conceivable. I. I shall only have time here to say a few words with regard to the latter point. As to the former I will only say, that to lose the soul, not to live man's higher life, is really also to lose the world, whether you mean by it the material world, or the activities and pleasures of human life. It is only in an imaginary, entirely illusory way that any man who loses his soul gains the world. We gain as much of the world as really enriches us, really enters in the shape of thought and feeling into the current of our existence, really affords us unmixed and enduring satisfaction, and we gain no more of the world than this. We have of the world not what we call our own, but what we are able to enjoy and no more. It is not to gain the world, to gain riches which can buy anything the world contains, unless you can buy along with it the power to enjoy it. Thus rich men gain the whole world and do not gain it at all. They have no delight in books, no interest in public affairs, no zest for amusements. They have gained the world, and do not possess it. Their world is almost the poorest conceivable. It does not enrich them. It does not occupy their affections, or fill up their idle hours; it does not lend stir or variety or charm or value to their existence. Cultivate and expand the mind: in proportion as

you do so, though your fortunes remain stationary, you gain the world. On the other hand, an educated man may be poor—the inhabitant of a garret or of a cottage; but the world which exists for him, in which he lives, is rich and spacious. In the observation of nature, in the study of books, above all in the study of man, he finds deep, unfailing delights. The seas which break on the shores of other lands, the storms that sweep over them, the streams that flow through them, the people who inhabit them, are all full of interest to him, and possess him and are possessed by him. In comparison with that of a man devoid of intellectual life, his world is one full of a thousand various pleasures, and occupations, and possessions. Without something higher and better than even intellect and mental culture and activity, you cannot gain the world, except in a poor and illusory manner. Only if you have the soul to scorn delights and live laborious days, not for fame but for the good of others, to spend riches and health and intellect and life, not in ministering to selfish tastes, be they either fine or coarse, but in doing good, helping others to be better and happier, in being to them a minister of the things which God has given you, and a herald to them of the glad tidings of God's love, and man's fellow-feeling and charity;—only if you have such a soul can you truly gain the world, enjoy its best, purest, most various, and abundant pleasures and satisfactions, and also have the sting taken out of its worst trials and afflictions. The luxury of doing good in the love of goodness, of giving rather than receiving, is the best and richest which the world affords. It was a luxury to enjoy which the Son of Man advised one whom He loved well, one who had gained the world and had large possessions, to sell all that he had and give it to the poor, and come and follow Him. The gain here spoken of, then, is illusory. II. The loss is real and immense. 1. In the first place, the soul is lost by not being exercised. Life which is not effort, growth, increase, is not life at all; it is life lost. Souls are not *in danger* of being lost when they are without such light as we enjoy. They *are* lost. There is no contingency in the matter. Where man's higher life has not been called forth, the loss is not what *may be*, but what *is*—it is condemnation and death. Only compare a savage of any country with a Christian of your own land, and see if the loss is nothing or little. I speak of the heathen abroad, because what is to be said of them has its application at home. Use the body, exercise your limbs, observe the laws which govern the use of your physical nature, and you will thus best secure its health and soundness. In the same way it does not save the soul to entertain, as many do, a constant and worrying anxiety as to the soul. Use the soul, exercise your higher life, and you will thus save the soul, thus promote your higher life. 2. I remark, in the second place, that the soul is lost when it is perverted and corrupted. It is perverted and corrupted in the sphere of the lower life. In this sphere souls are doubly lost, as a citadel for which contending armies strive for weeks and months is doubly lost when those who ought to hold it are driven out and those who ought not to hold it enter in. They are lost as a friend is lost who becomes a foe; they are lost as guns are lost in battle when they are turned upon their retreating owners. When, instead of a man having passions and commanding them, passions possess the man and and command him, all human life, all higher life is lost; it is gradually or rapidly narrowed, curtailed, darkened, debased, emptied of its worth and value. The soul is perverted in the sphere of the lower life. It is more important, perhaps, to remark that it is perverted and corrupted in its own sphere. It reminds us that souls are perverted in their own sphere—perverted not only by passion but by religion. If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! If your religion is false, where can you be in contact with truth? Souls lost through passion often keep a mysterious reserve of goodness in which there is hope. It is not so where religion is not love, but sect and party, selfishness, spiritual pride, bigotry; where religion, instead of demolishing every wall of partition between man and man, and between man and God, erects new barriers and new divisions. Man's higher life of faith and goodness is here under a double curse—it is cut off at once from nature and from grace, it is severed at once from the world and God, it has neither pagan health nor Christian beauty, neither natural bloom nor spiritual glory. 3. It is easy, I remark in conclusion, to exhaust the world and life in all directions but one. As for the great mass of men, they are by their very condition denied all, or almost all, that makes life attractive, beautiful, enjoyable. Even much study itself is a weariness of the flesh. As we think of all this, we are tempted to say—Surely every man walketh in a vain show; they are disquieted in vain. Other life is vain—man's true life is not vanity, nor vexation of spirit. For all men, rich and poor, learned and ignorant,

for the drudge toiling in darkness in a mine, for those whose labours are in the lofty fields of science, there is a life possible, not remote, far off, unnatural, but their own life, man's true life, life of faith and goodness, Christ's life in the unseen and eternal, from which vanity is remote, to which vexation cannot come, in which the rich find the true use of riches, the learned and gifted of their gifts, the poor an untold wealth in poverty, all men the grandeur, worth, sacredness of this mortal existence. In the same way, I will add, is immortality brought to light also. Flesh and blood may turn again to clay, all human glory may fade; but truth and righteousness and love are Divine and cannot die. A life which is filled by these is a part of the life of God, who inhabiteth eternity. (*J. Service, D.D.*) *Selling one's soul*:—I. Let us examine, in the first place, THIS FINE HUMAN POSSESSION, which the devil wishes to obtain, called, by all of the evangelists who report Jesus' words, a man's "own soul." 1. Think of this: Each of us has a whole soul to himself. There is that within us which has measureless capacities. There is within us, too, that which has marvellous susceptibilities. A human heart can weep and sing, groan and laugh, shudder and shiver. There is, also, that within us which has untold possibilities. Each birth begins a history, the pages of which are not written out at once. It can be a Nero or a Paul, a Saul or a David, a Bunyan or a Byron, a star or a shadow. 2. Think of this next: This soul is entirely each man's own. We might have expected such a thing, for all God's gifts and creations are perfect. He gave each human creature one soul, and then he placed the individual owner in dominion over it. Hence, He respects the property-title in all His dealings with it. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (see Rev. iii. 20). Even the devil has no power to steal away a man's soul unawares. 3. Then think of another thing: Great estimates have been set upon the value of a human soul. 4. Then, again, think of this: If lost, this soul of ours is all lost at once. When a soul is sold to the devil, it resembles real estate, in that it carries all improvements with it. For the sale of soul transfers all the powers of it. The intellect enters perdition unchanged. Moreover, this ruin carries with it all the soul's sensibilities. We can suffer here; but no one can picture with language how the finally lost at last learn to suffer. The sale of the soul, furthermore, carries with it all its biographies. Our souls are our biographies incorporated in existence. Each fibre of being is a thought, a word, or a feeling. He who sells his soul to the devil sells his father's tenderness and his mother's tears, his chances of good, his resolutions of reform, his remembrance of Sabbaths, his own fruitless remorses over sin, his educations, his embellishments—his all. II. Now let us, in the second place, turn to consider the DEVIL'S PRICE FOR A SOUL, called, by the evangelists all alike, "the whole world." 1. Observe the rather fine show it makes. 2. But now, on the other hand, it is just fair that men should note some delusive reserves concealed in this luring price. For example, remember that the devil never offered the entire world to anybody except Jesus Christ (see Matt. iv. 8, 9). He never said anything like that to a common man. Let us give even Satan his due. One lie there is he has not yet told upon this earth. He has offered no man the whole world. Nor has any one person ever had it. Nor does anybody keep what he gets. 3. Still further: observe as you contemplate this lure of the devil, which he calls his price, the painful drawbacks one meets in the enjoyment of it after it is attained. The world we get attracts jealousy the moment we have it in possession. Mere possession of "the world" brings satiety. One of the kings in Europe, it is recorded, wearied and disgusted with luxurious pleasures, offered a vast reward just for the discovery of what he called "a new sensation." The princes of the earth are not contented. Rasselas was restless even in the Happy Valley. The gain of this world engenders a fresh craving for more. Poetic justice at least was that when the Parthians rewarded Crassus for the infamy of his avarice by pouring melted gold down his throat until he was full of it; then he had enough, and died. Then love is lost in the strife of desire. III. All that remains now to be considered, IS THE GRAND OFFER OF CHRIST, as He attempts to arrest the ruinous bargain He sees going rapidly on toward its consummation. 1. First, What does the Saviour say? The answer is found in the context. From this we learn that Christ's offer for a man's soul, is the soul itself. It is as if He said, "Give Me your soul, and I will secure the everlasting possession of it to yourself; if you will lose your life—or soul—to Me, I will see that you shall save it." He will take nothing away in this transfer but our imperfections and our sins. 2. Then what will the Saviour ask? Only this: "Come to Me; repent of sin; trust Me for an atonement; enter upon My service; try to do good; rest in My love; perfect yourself for heaven." 3. Can

the Saviour be actually in earnest? The Son of God became the Son of man in order to make this offer for human souls. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Loss of the soul—its extent:*—I. IT IS AN ENTIRE LOSS. When Francis I. lost the important battle of Pavia, he described it by saying, "We have lost all but honour." But there is nothing to qualify or mitigate the loss of the soul. It is the loss of losses, the death of deaths—a catastrophe unequalled in extent, and unparalleled in its amount through all the universe of God. II. A LOSS WITHOUT COMPENSATION. The great fire of London consumed six hundred streets, thirteen thousand dwellings, and ninety churches, and destroyed property to the amount of seven and a half millions of pounds sterling. Yet that calamity was in some sort changed into a blessing; for the rebuilding of the city, in a superior style of architecture, and with more regard to sanitary arrangements, banished for ever the fearful plague which had previously made such havoc. But for the loss of the soul nothing can countervail so as to make amends for it. III. IRREPARABLE. Other losses may be repaired. Lost friendships may be regained or replaced; lost health may be restored; lost property recovered; but the loss of the soul can never be retrieved. When Sir Isaac Newton had lost some most important and complicated calculations, the result of years of patient thought and investigation, by the burning of his papers, the loss to him was immense; and yet, with patience equal to his genius, he could say to the favourite animal that caused it, "Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the labour thou hast cost me!" But what is the loss even of years of patient philosophic investigation and profound mathematical research, compared with the loss of a human soul, capable of conducting, in some degree, similar investigations, and of repeating and repairing them if lost? IV. CAST AWAY. The second death. (*J. J. Given, M.A.*) *How awful the charge of souls:*—Ministers have taken even the care of immortal souls, their education for eternity, their discipline for heaven! Have we ever essayed, however vain the effort, to take the dimensions of a soul, to sound its depths, and explore its vast capacities? Look at the infant child that appears but little raised above the level of mere vegetable life. Mark the gigantic strides by which he rises in a few short years to such wonders of intelligence, that he dives into the hidden mysteries of nature, calculates the distance of the stars, and, by the magic of his telescope, sees world ascending above world, and system towering above system, up to the footstool of the throne of God! Into what, then, may a soul expand, when, free from the prison-house of flesh, it is let out to expatiate amidst its native heavens! Or, what may such a nature be in its ruins, in a fall corresponding to such a height! These, then, are the mighty concerns with which we have professedly engaged to intermeddle. For the perdition or salvation of beings on so immense a scale, we shall have to render an account. (*H. Woodward, M.A.*) *All gain is loss when a man does not save his soul:*—He who possesses all things without God, has nothing. No man is so foolish as to be willing to purchase an empire at the price of his life; and yet the world is full of those pretenders to wisdom, who give up salvation and immortal life for a vain pleasure, a handful of money, or an inch of land. How much are the greatest conquerors to be pitied, if, whilst intoxicated with their victories and conquests, they ravage and lay waste the earth, their own souls are laid waste by sin and passion, and destroyed to all eternity. (*Quesnel.*) *The price of the soul:*—An appeal to the instincts of common sense, which comes specially home to a commercial nation like the English. The selling price—the market value of everything is challenged. All schemes and proposals—whether in the realm of politics or of commerce—are met with this question. The eager desire for profit carries men away till there is no room left for any other purpose in life. For money men will almost dare to die. There are men who for money's worth will sell others' lives—shipowners the lives of their sailors, mothers the happiness of their daughters. But there are more precious treasures at stake sometimes than even flesh and blood. Some will tamper, for money's worth, with what involves the loss of the soul. This is a gain which it is dead loss to win; a price which it is suicidal to pay—selling for money that which no money can buy again; giving—like the foolish Glaucus—golden armour for brazen; trading on capital; embarking, with rotten securities, on a bubble scheme. No amount of earthly gain can free the soul from death and judgment. The moral life once gone—its vitality not destroyed but ruined and turned against itself—how shall it be recovered? Even now there is a foretaste of this awful state. At times there is within the heart a very hell of sin; jealousy, covetousness, cruelty, selfishness, all combining to make such a hell within the breast as a man would shrink from disclosing even to his most lenient friend. Plain sober reason, then, obliges us to consider

Christ's question. (*H. B. Ottley, M.A.*) *What shall it profit . . . ?*—To be good, nay, to pursue goodness as our ruling aim, is to make, or gain our souls. To be bad, or not to follow after that which is good, is to unmake or lose the soul. And hence, whatever other aims we may lawfully, or even laudably, place before us, this should stand first with us all. For what are we profited if we should achieve the highest distinction—what are we profited should we become great poets or artists, great scholars or statesmen, if we did not use our powers for good ends? Or, to use the sacred familiar words, "What is any man profited if he should gain the whole world only by the loss of his own soul?" Nay, more; what is the world profited if he should lose that? I often think of Sir Walter Scott kissing Lockhart, that bitter man of the world, and saying to him with his dying breath, "Be good, my dear, be good." For Scott had gone far both to gain the world, and to lose it; only to discover at last—as sooner or later you will discover—that nothing but goodness is of any real worth. To be good, to do our duty in a dutiful and loving spirit, is the crown and top of all performance. And nothing short of this, nothing apart from this, will be of much comfort to us through life or in death. For, whatever England may do, it is very certain that God "expects every man to do his duty"—his duty to himself, to God, and to his neighbour—not only on this exceptional day or that, but every day. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Losing the soul*:—If you yield to temptation and fail in the hour of trial, if you cease from the work and retire from the strife, whatever else you may gain, you will be losing your soul—losing possession of it, losing command of it, losing hope for it. You will be adjudging yourself unworthy of the life eternal, condemning yourself to live in the flesh and walk after the flesh, instead of living and walking in the spirit. All that is noblest, purest, best in you will die for want of sustenance or want of exercise. All that is loftiest and noblest in thought, in morality, in religion, in life, will lose its power over you, its charm for you, and will fail any longer to quicken responses of love and desire within you. If you would know to what depths you may sink should you relinquish your aim, you have only to recall an experience which can hardly be strange to any man of mature years who has kept his soul alive. For who has not met an early friend, after long years of separation, only to find that by addicting himself to sensuous or selfish aims, by cherishing a vulgar and worldly spirit—or, in a word, by walking after the flesh—he has belied all the fair promise of his youth, and grown insensible to the charm and power of all that you still hold to be fairest, noblest, best? Speak to him of the open secrets of beauty, of purity, of truth, of love, and he stares at you as one who listens to a forgotten dream; or perhaps—as I once saw a poor fellow do—bursts into tears, and exclaims, "No one has spoken to me like that for an age!" If you would waken any real interest in him, elicit any frank response, your whole talk must take a lower range; you must come down to the level on which he now lives and moves. What has the man been doing with himself all these years? He has been losing his soul, suffering it to "fust in him unused." He has exchanged his "immortal jewel," not for the whole world—though even that were a losing bargain—but for a little of that which even the world confesses to be vile and sordid and base. To that base level even you may sink, if, amid all trials and temptations and defeats, you do not steadfastly pursue the high spiritual aim which Christ invites and commands you to cherish; if you do not seek above all else to be good, and do not therefore follow after whatsoever things are just, true, pure, fair. Hold fast to that aim, then; that by your constancy you may gain and possess your soul. (*Ibid.*) *Loss of the soul*:—And what is it to lose a soul? It is to let weeds grow there instead of flowers. It is to let selfishness grow, suspicious, curious tempers grow, wantonness grow, until they have all the field to themselves. Set these in full force within a being, and add, if you will, a whole universe of possession: it is hell. You may think that these are only strong rhetorical words. It is just as simple literal fact as that two and two make four. I do not think that you will need to look far around you in the world for the proof of it. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Monuments of soul ruin*:—Often, when travelling among the Alps, one sees a small black cross planted upon a rock, or on the brink of a torrent, or on the verge of a highway, to mark the spot where men have met with sudden death by accident. Solemn reminders these of our mortality! but they led our mind still further; for, we said within us, if the places where men seal themselves for the second death could be thus manifestly indicated, what a scene would this world present! Here the memorial of a soul undone by yielding to a foul temptation, there a conscience seared by the rejection of a final warning, and yonder a heart for ever turned into a stone, by resisting the last tender appeal of love. Our places of worship would

scarce hold the sorrowful monuments which might be erected over spots where spirits were for ever lost—spirits that date their ruin from sinning against the gospel while under the sound of it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lost, in seeking for gain* :—One summer afternoon, a steamer crowded with passengers, many of them miners from California, was speeding along the Mississippi. Striking suddenly and strongly against the wreck of another vessel which, unknown to the captain, lay near the surface of the water, her bow was stove in, and she began to fill rapidly. Her deck was a scene of wild confusion. Her boats were launched, but did not suffice to carry off one-fourth of the terrified passengers. The rest, divesting themselves of their garments, cast themselves into the river, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land." Some minutes after the last of them had quitted the vessel, another man appeared on her deck. Seizing a spar, he also leaped into the river, but instead of floating as the others had done, he sank instantly as if he had been a stone. His body was afterwards recovered, and it was found that he had employed the quarter of an hour, in which his fellow-passengers had been striving to save their lives, in rifling the trunks of the miners. All around his waist their bags of gold were fastened. In one short quarter of an hour he had gained more gold than most men earn in their lifetime; but was he advantaged thereby, seeing that he lost himself? And though you should gain power, or rank, or fame, or learning, or great wealth; though your life should be one prolonged triumphal procession, all men applauding you; though all your days you should drink unrestrained of the cup of the world's pleasures, and never reach its bitter dregs; yet what shall you be advantaged if, nevertheless, you lose yourself, and, at last, instead of being received into heaven, are cast away? (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Great loss for momentary gratification* :—When Lysimachus was engaged in a war with the Getae, he was so tormented by thirst, that he offered his kingdom to his enemies for permission to quench it. His exclamation, when he had drunk the water they gave him, is striking. "Ah, wretched me, who for such a momentary gratification have lost so great a kingdom!" *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*—Think what a solemn question these words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain! What a mighty sum they propound to us for calculation! I. EVERY ONE OF US HAS AN UNDYING SOUL. This is not the only life we have to do with—we have every one of us an undying soul. . . . There is a conscience in all mankind that is worth a thousand metaphysical arguments. What though we cannot see it? Are there not millions of things which we cannot see, and of the existence of which we have nevertheless no doubt? I do ask you to realize the dignity and the responsibility of having an immortal soul; to realize that in your soul you have the greatest talent that God has committed to your charge. Know that in your soul you have a pearl above all price, the loss of which nothing can ever make up. II. ANY ONE MAY LOSE HIS OWN SOUL. Weak as we are in all things that are good, we have a mighty power to do ourselves harm. You cannot save that soul of yours, remember that. We are all by nature in great peril of losing our souls. But some one may ask, How may a man lose his soul? The answers to that question are many. Just as there are many diseases which assault and hurt the body, so there are many evils which assault and hurt the soul. Numerous, however, as are the ways in which a man may lose his own soul, they may be classed under these three heads. 1. You may murder your own soul by open sin, or serving lusts and pleasures. 2. You may poison your own soul by taking up some false religion. 3. You may starve your own soul to death by trifling and indecision. But, does it take much trouble to ruin a soul? Oh, no! There's nothing you need do! You have only to sit still, &c. But are there many, you ask, who are losing their souls? Yes, indeed, there are! But, who is responsible for the loss of your soul? No one but yourself! But, where does your soul go when it is lost? There is but one place to which it can go. III. THE LOSS OF ANY MAN'S SOUL IS THE HEAVIEST LOSS HE CAN SUFFER. No man living can show the full extent of the loss of the soul, nor paint it in its true colours. Nothing can ever make up for the loss of the soul in the life that now is. The loss of property and character are not always irreparable; once lost the soul is lost for evermore. The loss of his soul is irretrievable! Does any one of you wish to have some clear idea of the value of a soul? Then go and see what men think about the value of a soul when they are dying. Go and read the sixteenth chapter of St. Luke. Measure it by the price that was paid for it eighteen hundred years ago. We shall all understand the value of a soul one day. Seek to know its value now. Do not be like the Egyptian queen, who, in foolish ostentation, took a pearl of great value, dissolved it in some acid, and then drank it off. Do not, like her, cast away that precious

soul of yours, that pearl above all price, that God has committed to your charge. IV. ANY MAN'S SOUL MAY BE SAVED. I dare say the proclamation is startling to some; it was once startling to me. "How can these things be?" No wonder you ask that question. This is the great knot the heathen philosophers could never untie—this is the problem which sages of Greece and Rome could not solve—this is a question which nothing can answer but the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. Because Christ has died upon the cross to bear men's sins. 2. Because Christ still lives. 3. Because the promises of Christ's gospel are full, free, and unconditional. Application: 1. Do not neglect your own soul. 2. Come to Christ without delay. 3. To all who have sought to have their souls saved, and have found Jesus a Saviour, "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," &c. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *The soul:*—The soul is excellent in its nature. It is a spiritual being, "it is a kind of angelical thing." The mind sparkles with knowledge, the will is crowned with liberty, and all the affections are as stars shining in their orbs. How quick are the motions of a spark! How swift the wings of cherubim! So quick and agile are the motions of the soul. What is quicker than thought? How many miles can the soul travel in an instant? The soul being spiritual moves upward; it has also a self-moving power, and can subsist when the body is dead, as the mariner can subsist when the ship is broken; it is also immortal—a bud of eternity. (*T. Watson.*) *Preciousness of the soul:*—It is a misapplication of forces for the nobler to spend itself upon the meaner. Men do not usually care to spend a pound in the hope of getting back a groat and no more, and yet, when the soul is given up for the sake of worldly gain, the loss is greater still, and not even the groat remains. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Soul a jewel:*—The soul is a jewel, a diamond set in a ring of clay; the soul is a glass in which some rays of the divine glory shine; it is a celestial spark lighted by the breath of God. (*T. Watson.*) *Winning the world:*—I do verily believe, that the winning of the whole world of power, is in itself so slight a gain, that it were fair to strike the balance, and say there is little left; for even Alexander himself envied the peasant in his cottage, and thought there was more happiness on the plains among the shepherds than in his palace amongst his gold and silver. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A witness to the worth of the world:*—Alexander, I summon thee! what thinkest thou: is it worth much to gain the world? Is its sceptre the wand of happiness? Is its crown the security of joy? See Alexander's tears! He weeps! Yes, he weeps for another world to conquer! Ambition is insatiable! The gain of the whole world is not enough. (*Ibid.*) *Profit and loss:*—I. WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED IF HE SHOULD GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD? Power over extensive empires. Power over great riches. Treasures of knowledge and pleasures. What will it profit him when he comes to die? In the day of judgment? when he gets to hell? II. THE LOSING THE SOUL. Its intrinsic value. Its capabilities. Where the soul must go to that is lost. III. THE PRACTICAL LESSON. (*Ibid.*) *Gaining the world pretty sport:*—This world is like the boy's butterfly—it is pretty sport to chase it; but bruise its wings by an over-earnest grasp, and it is nothing but a disappointment. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 37. **Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**—*The folly of setting the heart on things below, and not on things above:*—No ransom can purchase life. You may remember, as I do, the dying hours of a monarch who emphatically lived to pamper the flesh, to serve lusts and pleasures, but not for God or his fellow-men. When he knew the fatal hour was approaching, he said to the medical men about him, "Oh, I would give any sum you name, if you would but give me another year of life." But it was of no use. They could not; they could but shake their heads and tell him that One only could give life, and when He saw fit He would take it away—God, even God. There is nothing in this world that a man can find, which will bribe death to stop away. Kings die, and their sceptre and crown roll in the dust. Philosophers succumb, and all their busy chambers of the brain, which have been occupied by deep researches, become occupied by the worms of the earth. The young man, glorying in his beauty and strength, succumbs to death, and his sun sets at noonday. And the pretty babe, which is just opening like a bud in all its infantine beauty—ah, how often does death lay its cold hand on that! There is no conceivable thing capable of saving a man, woman, or child, whom God has appointed to die. By the question in the text, our Lord means this; and He means more than this. He refers also to the life of the world to come. What ransom shall a man give for that life? There is such a ransom. There is One who has found a ransom. It is Jesus. He is the life of the world. He that

hath the Son hath life. Have you found this ransom? (*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*) *The soul's ransom*:—What is the world, but the means of having food and raiment and ease, in greater variety and abundance than others have them—a distinction which, if viewed narrowly, is not worth half the pains and labour by which only it can be obtained. But what is the soul? It is the immortal and everlasting principle of all thought and feeling in man's nature—the subject in which abide all hope and fear, all joy and sorrow, all happiness and all misery. It is that part of our intellectual frame which cannot die, forget, cease to be conscious, or fly from itself; but which lives for ever, either beloved and cherished by its Almighty Creator, or expelled from His presence in horror and despair. If threescore years and ten were to bring it to an end, and make all its thoughts perish; if, after death, there were no judgment; if the worm of remorse were to become extinct on the bed where the last breath goes forth, and to cease its gnawings with the mortal pains of the body,—then might we hesitate between the interests of the present and the future, and adopt the maxim of the atheist, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But, as these things cannot be; as the soul, which sinneth and repenteth not, has to die a death which will never be completed, a death of horror and despair, of which the sighs and agony and groaning ascend up perpetually; the question which should now interest us the most is, "What shall we give in exchange for our souls?" We must, in the first place, present before God, on the altar of faith, the Atonement which He Himself has provided, the sole procuring cause of human salvation; we must offer up to Him a broken and contrite heart, weaned from the world, and devoted to His service; we must solicit His mercy with the tears of penitence and vows of reformation, entreating that His grace may be sufficient for us, and His strength made perfect in our weakness;—and these are the things which the Lord will accept in exchange for our souls. (*Bp. Russell.*) *Incomputable value of the soul*:—What would a man not give? If he had the whole world, would he not willingly give it, provided he really knew, believed, or felt, that otherwise he would be utterly lost? King Richard, in Shakespeare, says, "My kingdom for a horse!" How many kingdoms would be surrendered—if man were not utterly infatuated—for the safety of the soul? The Saviour has gone forward in thought, and takes His standpoint in eternity. It is from that standpoint that He puts His question. It is implied that the time will come, in the experience of the persistently infatuated, when kingdom upon kingdom—were they available—would be an insufficient exchange for the soul. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Nothing can compensate for loss of soul*:—"I was called upon," says an American clergyman, "some years ago, to visit an individual, a part of whose face had been eaten away by a most loathsome cancer. Fixing my eyes on this man in his agony, I said, 'Supposing that Almighty God were to give you your choice, which would you prefer, your cancer, your pain, and your sufferings, with a certainty of death before you, but of immortality hereafter; or health, prosperity, long life in this world, and the risk of losing your immortal soul?' 'Ah, sir!' said the man, 'give me the cancer and the pain, with the Bible and the hope of heaven, and others may take the world, long life, and prosperity.'" *Gain cannot satisfy the heart*:—Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, a pious minister, mentions the case of a rich man who, when he lay on his death-bed, called for his bags of money; and, having laid a bag of gold to his heart, after a little he bade them take it away, saying, "It will not do; it will not do." *Exchange for his soul—Cost of an estate*:—"What is the value of this estate?" said a gentleman to another with whom he was riding, as they passed a fine mansion surrounded by fair and fertile fields. "I don't know what it is valued at; I know what it cost its late possessor." "How much?" "*His soul.* Early in life, he professed faith in Christ, and obtained a subordinate position in a mercantile establishment. He continued to maintain a reputable religious profession, till he became a partner in the firm. Then he gave less attention to religion, and more and more to business; and the care of this world choked the Word. He became exceedingly rich in money, but so poor and miserly in soul, that none would have suspected he had ever been religious. At length he purchased this large estate, built a costly mansion, and then sickened and died. Just before he died, he remarked, "My prosperity has been my ruin!" *No satisfaction from the world at death*:—The dying tell us that earthly possessions cannot satisfy us in death. Philip II. of Spain cried, "O would God I had never reigned! O that I had lived alone with God! What doth all my glory profit, but that I have so much the more torment in death." Albert the Good said, "I am surrounded with wealth and rank, but if I trusted only to them, I should be a miserable man." Salmasius

declared, "I have lost a world of time. Oh, sirs! mind the world less, and God more." Bunsen exclaimed, "My riches and experience is having known Jesus Christ. All the rest is nothing."

Vers. 38. **Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words.**—*Ashamed of Jesus*:—I. INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF THE CRIME OF BEING ASHAMED OF CHRIST, AND OF HIS WORDS. The duty opposed to the crime is expressed by confessing Christ before men; therefore to be ashamed of Christ and of His word, is to deny or disown Christ and His doctrine before men. There have not wanted some in all times to justify the prudence of concealing our religious sentiments, and to encourage men to live well with the world in an outward compliance with its customs, provided the heart be right with God. It is also added that to suppose it necessary for men to own their religious sentiments at the peril of their lives, is making God a hard master. What does our confession avail Him who can see the heart? But yet these are but excuses, and founded in ignorance of the nature of religion, and of the great ends to be served by it. Were we to estimate our religion by the service or benefit done to God, we might part with it all at once. He gets no more by the sincerity of our hearts than by our outward professions; and therefore upon this view we may bid adieu to both. If you think, however, that there is something in inward sincerity that is agreeable in His sight, that renders men acceptable to Him, I wonder, at the same time, you should not think hypocrisy and dissimulation with the world odious in His sight, and such vices as will render us detestable to Him. To suppose inward sincerity consistent with an external hypocrisy toward the world, is itself a very great absurdity. For what is hypocrisy? But how comes it to be necessary for a man to say anything about his religion? To a clear resolution of this question we must consider the nature of religion, and the ends to be served by it. The duties of religion respect God but also the well-being of the world. Religion is a principle of obedience to God, as Governor of the world. It cannot therefore possibly be a mere secret concern between God and every man's conscience, since it respects Him in so public a character, and must extend to everything in which God, as Governor of the world, is supposed to be concerned. For surely it is impossible to pay the proper respect and obedience which is due to the Governor of the world, whilst we deny Him, in the face of the world, to be the Governor of it. But further: if any religious obedience be due to God as Governor of the world, it must principally consist in promoting the great end of His government. Again: if it be really, as it is, impossible for us to do God any private service by which He may be the better, it is very absurd to imagine that religion can consist, or be preserved by any secret belief or opinion, how cordially soever embraced. What thanks can be due to you for silently believing God to be the Governor of the world, whilst you openly deny it, and in your actions disclaim it? Even this principle, which is the foundation of all religion, has nothing of religion in it, so long as it is inactive, and consists in speculation, without bringing forth fruits agreeable to such a persuasion. Lastly: if it be any part of religion to promote religion and the knowledge of God's truth in the world, it cannot be consistent with our duty to dissemble, or to deny our faith. The man who hides his own religion close in his heart, tempts others, who suspect not his hypocrisy, to throw theirs quite out; and whilst he rejoices in this sheet anchor of a pure inward faith, he sees others who steer after him make shipwreck of their faith and their salvation. Under this head I have one thing more to observe to you, that there are in this vice, as indeed in most others, very different degrees. While some were contented to hide themselves, and dissemble their acquaintance with Christ, St. Peter openly denied Him, and confirmed it with an oath, that he knew not the Man. Thus some for fear in those days of persecution, denied their Lord; and some in these days, such is our unhappy case, are so vain and conceited, as to be ashamed of the Lord who bought them. Among these, some openly blaspheme Him; others are content to make a sport of His religion; whilst a third sort profess a pleasure in such conversation, though their hearts ache for their iniquity, but they want the courage to rebuke even by their silence the sin of the scorner. All these are in the number of those who are ashamed of Christ. Secondly: TO INQUIRE INTO THE SEVERAL TEMPTATIONS WHICH LEAD MEN TO THIS CRIME OF BEING ASHAMED OF CHRIST AND OF HIS WORDS. The fountain from which these temptations spring is plainly enough described in the text, "This adulterous and sinful generation." And we know full well, that there is not a natural fear lurking in the heart of man, but the world knows how to reach it; not a passion, but it has an enchantment ready for

it; no weakness, no vanity, but it knows how to lay hold of it: so that all our natural hopes and fears, our passions, our infirmities, are liable to be drawn into the conspiracy against Christ and His word. But the other kind of temptations come upon our invitation: we make our faith a sacrifice to the great idol, the world, when we part with it for honour, wealth, or pleasure. In this circumstance men take pains to show how little they value their religion, and seek occasions to display their libertinism and infidelity, in order to make their way to the favour of a corrupt and degenerate age. This behaviour admits of no excuse. But whenever infidelity grows into credit and repute, and the world has so vitiated a taste, as to esteem the symptoms of irreligion as signs of a good understanding and sound judgment; that a man cannot appear to be in earnest concerned for his religion without being thought a fool, or suspected to be a knave; then there arises another temptation to make men ashamed of Christ, and of His word. No man likes to be despised by those about him. There is a contagion in ill company, and he who dwells with the scorner shall not be guiltless. Had our Lord been merely a teacher of good things, without any special commission or authority from the great Creator and Governor of the world, it would have been highly absurd to assume to Himself this great prerogative of being owned and acknowledged before men. When, therefore, we read that our Lord requires of us to confess Him before men, the true way to know what we are to confess, is to reflect what He confessed Himself; for it cannot be supposed that He thought it reasonable for Himself to make one confession, and for His disciples and servants to make another. Look, then, into the gospel, and see His own confession. He confessed Himself to be the only Son of God, to come from the bosom of the Father to die for the sins of the world; to have all power given to Him in heaven and earth; to be the Judge of the world. (*The Practical Pulpit.*) *Our great work for Christ is to confess Him*:—But this confession of Christ—this not being ashamed of Him and of His words—is different in different generations and different societies. In the earliest age of all, the offence was the offence of the cross—that men should not be ashamed to confess that they believed that He who was crucified was the Son of God, and that they hoped to be saved by His very cross. Since then, this offence has ceased in outward form, but in reality it has reappeared under different forms of religious cowardice. In licentious ages and societies men have been ashamed of the self-denying words and example of the Lord; in superstitious ages, of upholding the purity of His religion; in heretical ages, of manfully contending for the faith of His true godhead; in later periods of our history men seem to have been ashamed of confessing that we are saved through Christ alone; and in this age, and in learned and scientific societies, are not men ashamed of confessing those words of Christ, and of His servants, which assert the supernatural in our holy religion? (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Ashamed of Jesus*:—I. THE PERSONS DESCRIBED. Those who, from shame—(1) Decline to assume a profession of the gospel; (2) Do not maintain a consistent profession of the gospel; (3) Abandon the profession of the gospel. II. THE DOOM THREATENED. It is certain, awful, just. (*Plans of Sermons.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1–10. **And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter.**—*Man's transformation*:—The transfiguration of our Lord admonishes us of a change which we are to undergo in this life. We must be conformed in our souls and spirits, and the use of our bodies, to the image of the Son of God (Rom. viii. 29), while we are here, so that we may be conformed to the body of His glory hereafter (Phil. iii. 21). O, then, what a stake have we in our treatment of this body. We must keep it in all holiness, even on its own account, and not only because it ministers to soul and spirit. In this same body we are to meet the Lord, and upon the use of it depends the condition in which we shall meet Him, in glory or contempt. We must serve Him, and do His work in it now, if we hope to serve Him in it in His heavenly and everlasting kingdom hereafter. But how can we serve Him in it, if we employ it in the service of a different and contrary master? And how can we keep it pure and undefiled as His peculiar vessel, if we be not watchful against the advances of that master, who has so many natural friends in its house? For has not Satan fast friends in its corrupt affections and sinful passions? Look at the man who has clouded his reason, palsied his limbs, by strong drink. See the disgusting, degrading

spectacle of his helplessness; hear the revilings, the folly, the blasphemings of his imperfect speech. Can such a one entertain any serious thoughts about the body that shall be? Can he be living in the hope of being glorified together with Jesus Christ? See another man. His body is seen anywhere else but in this place, where is the assembling of the body of Christ in one body, one spirit, to give glory and worship to our great Head, with one mind, with one mouth; to stand before that throne where sits the Son of Man at the right hand of God, in that body which suffered and rose again. What can he care about the most precious privilege of the body that shall be; the standing face to face before his Saviour in a like body, amid the company of His saints in glorified bodies? In the same manner we may go on and deal with sins less open and gross than these, and show how inconsistent they all are with any hope of a joyful resurrection in a glorified body; and how necessary is the bath of tears of repentance to all who commit them, that so their sins may be washed out for the sake of Jesus Christ, and they may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Now, therefore, while yet it is the season, let us do the things which concern the body that shall be. Our present body is the seed of the body to come. It may be as unlike it, as the small black shapeless seed of the tulip is to that beautiful flower. Still it is the seed, and according as we sow it, we shall reap. If it go into the ground laden with sin, ignorant of God's service, the mere corrupt remains of what has been expended in folly, in idleness, in unprofitableness, in rebellion against the commandments of God, in neglect of duties, in abuse of privileges, then it will come out of it a vile and noxious weed, which shall be cast into the everlasting fire. But if the sinner shall turn away from his sin, and by a change of heart and life conform to the example of Christ; if he will take his body out of the service of sin, and conformity to the world, and use it in the service of righteousness; if he will thus, in this world, be transformed into the likeness of the body of Christ, in all temperance, in all purity, in all deeds of holy living, then he will have "sown to the Spirit"; and of the Spirit he shall, through the Lord and Giver of life, reap life everlasting. In a body, no longer of flesh and blood (which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven), in a spiritual body, compared with the glory and powers of which the most beautiful body in the flesh is corruption, the strongest and most healthy is the impotence of death; he shall stand on the everlasting mount of heaven, transfigured from this mortal body in the raiment of a body shining as the sun, white as no fuller on earth can white, and gathered into the company of the sons of God, such as Moses and Elias, and beholding the Son of God in eternal glory face to face, shall say with the joyful cry of the song of the full sense of thankful blessedness, "Master, it is good for us to be here." (*R. W. Evans.*) *On the Holy Mount:*—I. THAT SECLUSION IS NEEDED FOR THE HIGHEST DEVOTION. II. THAT A DEVOTIONAL SPIRIT SEES NEW GLORY IN CHRIST AND IN HIS WORD. III. THAT DEVOTION IS NOT THE WHOLE LIFE. IV. THAT DEVOTION FURNISHES SUPPORT FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTIES AND THE ENDURANCE OF THE TRIALS OF LIFE. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Christ the light of the body:*—There were other wonders in that glorious vision besides the countenance of our Lord. His raiment, too, was changed, and became all brilliant, white as the light itself. Was not that a lesson to them? Was it not as if our Lord had said to them, "I am a king, and have put on glorious apparel, but whence does the glory of My raiment come? I have no need of fine linen, and purple, and embroidery, the work of men's hands; I have no need to send My subjects to mines and caves to dig gold and jewels to adorn My crown: the earth is Mine, and the fulness thereof. All this glorious earth, with its trees and its flowers, its sunbeams and its storms, is Mine. I made it—I can do what I will with it. All the mysterious laws by which the light and the heat flow out for ever from God's throne, to lighten the sun, and the moon, and the stars of heaven—they are Mine. I am the light of the world—the light of men's bodies as well as of their souls; and here is My proof of it. Look at Me. I am He that 'decketh Himself with light as it were with a garment, who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, and walketh upon the wings of the wind.'" This was the message which Christ's glory brought the apostles—a message which they could never forget. The spiritual glory of His countenance had shown them that He was a spiritual king—that His strength lay in the spirit of power, and wisdom, and beauty, and love, which God had given Him without measure; and it showed them, too, that there was such a thing as a spiritual body, such a body as each of us some day shall have if we be found in Christ at the resurrection of the just—a body which shall not hide a man's spirit when it becomes subject to the wear and tear of life, and disease, and decay; but a

spiritual body—a body which shall be filled with our spirits, which shall be perfectly obedient to our spirits—a body through which the glory of our spirits shall shine out, as the glory of Christ's Spirit shone out through His body at the transfiguration. "Brethren, we know not yet what we shall be, but this we do know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 3). (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *The influence of heaven here below*:—The spirits, good and bad, are all about us. There are no communications from the spirits, but they are here and interested in our affairs. The angels are here. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And the fallen spirits are here as well. Who dare say that there are not demoniac possessions to-day? They are not common in Christian lands, but I cannot regard them impossible. Men sometimes become satanically ugly from no other apparent cause than that they give loose rein to their passions, gratify them without restraint, and so lose, in time, all power of controlling their passions by any consideration of self-interest. The assassin Guiteau was such a man, and there is little doubt that Guiteau was possessed of devils. We are told that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." No doubt that the unseen world enwraps us, while we must guard ourselves most sedulously from the superstition and deception too often connected with the truth. (*A. P. Foster.*) *Ecstasy cannot be continued*:—Be patient in the darkness; you cannot have the light all the time. Peter would have three tabernacles. No, no! it was not best. We can have no continuing ecstasy. It would rack the soul to pieces. Many have glimpses, but no eye can look steadily on the sun. We must console ourselves with memories and anticipations. These supreme moments which come to us occasionally in the Christian life are foretastes of the heavenly bliss. (*Ibid.*) *A vision of home*:—Years ago, after a weary climb up the flank of a high mountain, a friend led me by a path through the woods to the head of a gorge. On either side, to right and left, stood the huge mountain, while before us, at the end of a mighty gulf, was an enchanting vista. Five or six miles away a village was full in sight, nestling among the hills, surrounded with lovely green, and encircled with glories such as only a setting sun can paint on the western sky. There was our home. Now, beyond doubt, the vision on Tabor was to the wearied disciples, whose feet already had begun to tread a dark and dangerous road, far more wonderful and delightful. It was to them a glimpse of home. Far off, indeed, it seemed, and yet there at the end were glories ineffable. *The transfiguration and its teachings*:—God leaves not His people in the midst of many and sore trials, without vouchsafing to them occasional periods of spiritual refreshment. The sight then given to them of the King in His beauty left a heavenly savour upon the souls of the disciples, which abode with them to their dying day. I. THE GLIMPSES OF CHRIST OBTAINED, AND THE FORETASTES OF GLORY EXPERIENCED, IN THE SANCTUARY. Between that holy mountain and a Christian sanctuary many points of resemblance are discoverable. 1. The mountain summit is a secluded spot, removed from the din and turmoil of the earth; the house of God is a spot from which worldly affairs and associations are excluded; where the things of time and sense fall into the background. 2. The holy hill was made by Jesus a place of prayer. God's house is a house of prayer. It is chiefly in the holy converse with God which is there carried on that the furrows of care and sorrow are obliterated from his brow, the earthliness of his spirit is worn away, and its features made to glow with a tinge of heavenly lustre. 3. The holy hill was a mountain of testimony. A twofold testimony was here borne to Jesus. Jesus alone remained: a token that He fulfilled the Law and Prophets. Also, "This is My beloved Son." In the preached word in the sanctuary man bears his testimony to Christ: a suffering Redeemer should be presented to the mind of the people in God's house of prayer. Also the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ—"He shall testify of Me." 4. In both places alike slumberers are awakened—"Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake they saw His glory": a beautiful emblem of the Word of God reaching down to the sinner's heart through the joints of a harness of insensibility, and rousing him from the death-like trance of sin to an apprehension of spiritual truth. When such an one is awakened, his attention is first engaged with the Saviour's glory. The Light of the World is the central object on which his eye fastens. But after the soul has once apprehended the beauty and excellency of Christ, its views of Him in all His offices are continually enlarged. Fresh glimpses of the King's beauty are vouchsafed to it from time to time in the sanctuary. II. THE DESIGN WITH WHICH SUCH GLIMPSES OF

CHRIST AND FORETASTES OF GLORY ARE VOUCHSAFED. 1. One main design of the transfiguration in reference to the apostles was to strengthen their faith in their Master's Divinity. 2. Another design was, doubtless, to nerve and prepare the apostles for endurance in the cause of Christ. III. THE TEMPORARY AND TRANSIENT CHARACTER OF THESE GLIMPSES OF CHRIST AND FORETASTES OF GLORY WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD EXPERIENCE HERE BELOW. 1. Much as we could wish to retain that enjoyable sense of God's presence, yet it is God's will that after we have refreshed our spirits by these foretastes of glory, we should, "in the strength of that meat," descend once again to the plain and encounter, for a few years more, the buffetings of the world. The soul cannot always be in its pleasant places, nor, while this life lasts, does God intend that it should. There is a daily round of duty which it is the Lord's will that we shall execute as His appointed task. Genuine apprehensions of Christ's love are incentives to exertion, not to sloth and self-indulgence. 2. The questioning which, when our Lord approached the multitude, was being carried on between the scribes and His disciples. The first sounds which greeted His Divine ear on reaching the plain were sounds of debate. Nothing grates with more harshness on the ear of one accustomed to hold communion with God, and to live much in a spiritual atmosphere, than religious controversy. Those who are called to controversy should be much in the sanctuary, and submit a willing ear to the testimony of Jesus. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The transfiguration of Christ*:—I. WHAT THE DISCIPLES SAW—"He was transfigured before them." 1. The unveiled glory of Christ. 2. The glorified attendants from the world of spirits. 3. The bright cloud of the Divine Presence. Not a dark cloud as under the old dispensation, but a cloud of light. II. WHAT THE DISCIPLES HEARD. 1. An affecting conversation. 2. An approving testimony. 3. An authoritative command. III. WHAT THE DISCIPLES FELT. 1. The blessedness of heavenly society. 2. A solemn awe—"sore afraid." 3. The Saviour's touch. IV. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS. 1. This manifestation was given to disciples. 2. This communication was given whilst they were praying. 3. To prepare them for future trials. (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*) *Transfiguration of Christ*:—1. One design of the transfiguration, undoubtedly, was to give the disciples some idea of Christ's future appearance, when He should come in His kingdom. 2. But, again, another purpose of the transfiguration was probably to honour Christ and His gospel. 3. But, again, we have in this narrative, in strong contrast with the glories of the transfiguration, the weakness of poor humanity. 4. But why, let us again ask, has our Church selected such a portion of Scripture as this to be read at this season? It seems, at first view, very inappropriate. What have we to do in Lent with the glories of the transfiguration? Why, when we are called to humble ourselves in prayer and confession of sin, are we directed to such a portion of God's Word as this? Because the most remarkable feature in this transaction was, that amid the splendours of that transfiguration, the death of Christ has the most prominent place. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *The use of religious excitement*:—Vivid emotions are, by the law of their being, transient. They cannot last. Possibly, their very intensity is, roughly speaking, the measure of their evanescence. Souls cannot live and work on day by day with the emotions at high pressure. Now, what is to be said of these occasional times of excited feeling? I. THAT NO MAN MUST TAKE RELIGIOUS FEELING FOR RELIGION. But after that, what? That all such excited feelings are false, and hollow, and perilous, and must, therefore, be at once suppressed? That plain, simple obedience to God's will is all in all, and, therefore, all deep emotions are evil and to be avoided? Surely, no. Surely, the true thing to be said is this, that God gives these periods of strong feeling as mighty helps to our weak and wavering courage; that they are a spur to the halting obedience, and a goad to the reluctant will. True, these feelings must be guided and regulated and led into practical channels, else, of course, they will run to waste, and leave behind them only the barrenness of a field, over which the flood has rushed headlong in its devastating course. I am not speaking of ungoverned and fanatical excitement, but of deep and powerful religious emotion, when I say that God gives it to carry us by its force over the earlier difficulties of the new and converted life, or to nerve us to resolutions and set us upon courses of action, which would, probably, be impossible to the calculating calmness of dispassionate reason. But I think, my brethren, these times of unusual religious fervour have another use. They open to the soul visions of a state of love, and joy, and heavenly mindedness, which, if afterwards they turn into nothing but regret and longing, nevertheless, leave behind them a blessing. It is good for the weary toiler, conscious of his cold, shallow heartedness, the poverty of his faith, and love,

and hope, to be able to say, though sighing as he says it:—"I have known the blessedness of a bright, triumphant faith. I have understood what it is to pray with holy fervour." Can it be well to say, "I have known," when it were so much better to be able to say, "I know"? Yes, I think it is well; for, if he be wise who says it, he will know that these higher, deeper, keener feelings cannot be always with him. He will gather up the truths and the duties they have brought to him, as we gather up the bright shells and gem-like pebbles on the sea-shore when the spring tide has ebbed. Those will be kept, when the surging waves that bore them to our feet have retired. He will regard the swelling of his emotions, when the sun of God's grace has melted the snow of his chilled heart as the overflow of a river; and he will no more expect the flow of his religious feeling to maintain the fulness and force to which it has at times risen, than he would expect a river to be always at the flood. Let us once realize that these more vivid religious emotions are occasional helps and not permanent states, that they reveal to us what might be, but for the weakness and earthliness of our nature, and are in themselves no proofs of high attainments of grace, and then we may thank God for them, and not be afraid or ashamed to say, "I have known," when we dare not say, "I know." II. How FAR IS RELIGIOUS EMOTION TO FORM ANY PART OF OUR DAILY RELIGIOUS LIFE; OR, IN OTHER WORDS, HOW FAR ARE THE FEELINGS TO BE REGULARLY EMPLOYED IN THE SERVICE OF GOD? What shall we say as to ordinary religious emotion? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Assuredly, as I repeat, our feelings were not given us for the purpose of being crushed out. Our religion is not one of mere dry duty. The very fact that love holds so prominent a place in it is a proof that, at least, some amount of religious feeling is necessary for a true religious life. But I would ask this: If we read our Bibles candidly, does it not seem that a greater amount of religious emotion is expected to find place in the daily life of Christian men than is commonly felt or commonly supposed? St. Paul was a most thoroughly practical man, eminently a man of action, always up and doing. He surely was one who would scorn to let feeling take the place of obedience, or to suffer the simple daily duties of life to escape under the cloak of heavenly aspirations and high-flown sentiment; yet, if anything is plain in his Epistles, it is that the life of duty, however rigid and self-sacrificing, without love, joy, peace—a life of obedience, in other words, without emotion, would utterly fail to satisfy him. Has, in a word, even excitement no work to do, no end to answer, in the daily Christian life? Take any keen, eager, impulsive, excitable person, may I not believe that God gave such person the power of quick impulse and eager aspiration for some worthy end? What is that end, my brethren? Is it to enjoy a ball, or a novel, or a sport? One would really think so when one hears of so many people who, themselves keenly enjoying all manner of worldly amusements, and throwing themselves into them heart and soul, as we say, when they see others as keenly and engrossingly giving themselves to religious occupations, settle the matter with a self-satisfied smile by saying, "Oh, it is all excitement!" Might it not be a better way of looking at it if they should think and say, "I don't know how such an one can enjoy so much religion. I only know I don't and can't. I wish I could. I wish I could take delight in high and holy things. (*Bishop Walsham How.*) *The lessons of the transfiguration*:—The practical question for us to consider is this—How does the transfiguration fit into our lives? What should be its effect on us? I. IT CONFIRMS OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AS THE TRUE REDEEMER OF MEN. II. IT SHOULD ANIMATE US TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN THE WAY OF THE CROSS. Our Lord, after announcing that *He* must needs die, taught His disciples that *they* must die with Him and like Him; that they, too, must deny themselves and take up the cross; that they must lose their life in order to save it; that to gain the whole world and lose their own souls would be but a sorry exchange; and that, if they were afraid or ashamed thus to follow Him, He would be ashamed of them when He came in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels (St. Matt. xvi. 21–28; St. Mark viii. 31–38; St. Luke ix. 21–26). Self-sacrifice is the law of the highest life; we can only rise into the life of love as we deny and crucify the self in us; we must die to the flesh if we would live and walk in the spirit; the body must die before we can rise into a sinless and perfect life. In one word, religion must be a life-long effort, a life-long sacrifice. Not in mere enjoyment, even though it be an enjoyment of worship, of growth in knowledge, or of quick spiritual response to fine thoughts and pure impulses, but by toil, by self-denial, by really spending ourselves in the service of God and man, by a constant reaching forth after still higher and nobler aims, do we rise into the life and follow the example of Christ Jesus our Lord. Try your-

selves by this test, then. Ask yourselves whether your religion has yet become a sacred and inspiring reality to you, making toil, pain, sacrifice, death itself, welcome to you, if you may thus win Christ and be found in Him. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Elias with Moses* :—Reasons are not far to find why these two should be brought back together from the other world to take part in the scene. I. THEY WERE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE QUICK AND DEAD. Moses had died; Elijah had ascended alive into heaven. They were types of the two great divisions which shall appear before the same Lord when He comes in the glory of which that was a glimpse and foretaste, the dead and the living both standing before the judgment-seat of Christ. II. BOTH HAD PASSED FROM EARTH IN MYSTERY: the first buried by the hand of God in some unfrequented valley apart from his countrymen; the other not dying, but vanishing instantaneously in the midst of life. Both had disappeared, no more to be seen by mortal eye till, in far-distant times, the same Hand that had carried them away should bring them back on the Mount of Transfiguration. It suggests the mighty truth, that, however we are taken, whether lost to men in the depth of the sea, or consumed by the devouring fire, it matters nothing to the Great Keeper of His people, Who will bring all back again at the last day. III. But the chief motive, no doubt, WAS TO UNITE TOGETHER THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE GREAT DISPENSATIONS OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT—the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The transfiguration gives us a pledge and earnest of our personal identity in the risen state* :—And doubtless one reason for the preservation of our identity is for mutual recognition—that we may know hereafter those whom we have known in the flesh. It puts before us a powerful incentive to make friends on earth with whom we may spend not only the life here, but the eternal life in heaven. Again, the scene opens up a further field of thought, when we recall the fact that St. Peter was able to recognize Moses and Elijah, though he had never seen them in the flesh. Shall we, then, recognize the great saints in the world to come, whom we have learnt by the study of their lives and work to know as though we had seen them face to face? There was clearly something—it may have been some lingerings of the splendour which illumined his face after communing with God, which painters have tried to express by the familiar "horns of light"—we cannot tell what it was, but it satisfied the apostle that the form was none other than that of Moses. Will there be nothing by which, in like manner, we shall recognize the Baptist, or the Beloved Disciple, or the Blessed Virgin, or Mary of Magdala? Will the student of theology, who has read the mind of St. Augustine, or pictured the fiery Athanase, with his feeble frame but lion heart, confronting the world for the great mystery of the Blessed Trinity, find no means of identifying them when they meet hereafter? Will there be nothing to mark painters like Fra Angelico or Raphael, or poets such as Dante, or Tasso, or Milton? It must surely be that marks of recognition, in all who have witnessed for God and moulded the minds of men by their words or works, will not be wanting. (*Ibid.*) *It is good for us to be here* :—If any earthly place or condition might have given warrant to Peter's motion, this was it. 1. Here was a hill—the emblem of heaven. 2. Here were two saints—the epitome of heaven. 3. Here was Christ—the God of heaven. (*Bishop Hall.*) Peter and his fellows were so taken with the sight of the felicity they saw, that they desired to abide on the mount with Jesus and the saints. What moved them shows what will delight us when this transient world is over, and God will gather His people to *Himself*. 1. Here was but Hermon; and there will be heaven. 2. Here were but two saints; there, the mighty multitude no man can number. 3. Here was but Christ transfigured; there, He will sit at the right hand of God, enthroned in the majesty of heaven. 4. Here was a representation for a brief interval; there, a gift and permanent possession of blessedness. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) The transfiguration teaches us that (1) Special manifestations of favour attend entire submission to the Divine will; (2) outward splendour is the proper accompaniment of inward excellence; (3) Christ is attested to men as the object of Divine approval and delight; (4) therefore they should love and trust, honour and obey Him; (5) first lessons are to be retained, that further may be received; (6) prophecy teaches that suffering belongs to the present service of God. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *The transfiguration* :—The Saviour was strengthened for conflict. Moses and Elias talked with Him, not concerning the dark aspects of His death, but its wonderful effects. I. THE TRANSFIGURATION WAS A PREPARATION FOR THE DISCIPLES. They saw some manifestation of their Master's glory. How greatly this would strengthen them. Was a source of comfort in after times. II. The transfiguration has its PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR US. 1. The mountain of prayer is always the mountain of

transfiguration. If we would have our trials and sorrows transfigured, we must get up into the mount of converse with God. Here we see them in their dark aspect, only there can we learn how to glory in tribulation. 2. The hour of prayer is often a foretaste of future joy. 3. Let us always remember the decease which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem. Christ's death is our one all-powerful argument with God. All blessing to the world, and to us, comes through that precious death. In heaven much of our converse will be of "the decease," &c. (*J. W. Boulding.*) *The glorified saint:*—Every faculty, thought, and emotion shall reflect His holiness, truth, and love. The leafless tree, trembling in the cold blast of the winter winds, is the image of what we now are; the same tree covered with foliage, blossoms, and fruit, is the symbol of what the sanctified soul shall be. The dark sorrowful cloud hanging heavily in the atmosphere represents our present state; that cloud penetrated by the rays of the morning light, fringed with gold, made luminous and beautiful by the splendour of the rising sun, is the expression of the glory that shall be revealed in the spirits of redeemed men. The mind shall be illumined with the pure light of knowledge unmingled with error; the heart shall be filled with all the emotions which constitute perfect bliss; the imagination shall soar to the highest regions and present nothing to the soul but visions of truth and beauty. The whole nature shall be in harmony with itself, with God, with the holy intelligences of the spirit-world, and with all the circumstances in which it shall for ever exist. (*Thomas Jones.*) *Dust of gold gathered from a variety of authors:*—The decease was the keystone of the arch of glory. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) In the interior of Christ's being there must have been an infinite fulness of heavenliness, of all that constitutes the essential glory of heaven. (*Ibid.*) "Hear ye Him," for His words embody the very thoughts, desires, and determinations of the Divine Mind. (*Ibid.*) The name of the mountain is not mentioned, and thereby superstition is prevented. (*Bengel.*) The cloud shows that human nature cannot bear the glory of God without admixture or interposition. (*Ibid.*) Ah! bright manifestations in this vale of tears are always departing manifestations. (*Dr. Brown.*) How can we hope ever to be transfigured from a lump of corrupt flesh if we do not ascend and pray? (*Hall.*) *Exceptional hours in life:*—There are exceptional hours in human history, when men utter words which attest the grandeur of the human mind, when the countenance burns with the fire of intelligent enthusiasm, and the voice reaches a tone of purer music than is born of earth; and in those exceptional hours we see somewhat of the dignity of human nature. Multiply this by infinitude, and we shall know something of what the disciples saw when Christ's "face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The hiding of the higher life:*—The hiding of the higher life will be in proportion to its compass and elevation. The young Christian talks more of his experience than the old Christian, just as a rill may make more noise than a river. An ordinary mother talks much of her child; but the mother of Christ "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." (*Ibid.*) *Secrecy enjoined till the Son of Man be risen from the dead:*—I. CHRIST'S LIFE NOT TO BE TOLD IN FRAGMENTS. II. THE PARTS OF CHRIST'S LIFE ARE MUTUALLY EXPLANATORY. III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THE GREAT RECONCILING AND ALL-EXPLAINING FACT IN HIS MINISTRY. His profoundest words would have had no meaning had He not known that He would rise again from the dead. (*Ibid.*) *Moses and Elias talking with Jesus:*—I. DEPARTED MEN ARE STILL LIVING. II. DEATH DOES NOT DESTROY THE INDIVIDUALITY OF MEN. III. THE GREATEST OF DEPARTED MEN ARE INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF CHRIST. IV. IMMEDIATE PERSONAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEPARTED SPIRITS AND MEN YET IN THE FLESH IS POSSIBLE. (*Ibid.*) *The transfiguration of Christ:*—To what may we compare this wonderful change? Suppose you have before you the bulbous root of the lily plant. You look at it carefully, but there is nothing attractive about it. How rough and unsightly it appears! You close your eyes upon it for a brief space. You open them again. But what a change has taken place! That plain, homely-looking bulb has disappeared, and in its place there stands before you the lily plant. It has reached its mature growth. Its flower is fully developed, and blooming in all its matchless beauty! What a marvellous change that would be! And yet it would be but a feeble illustration of the more wonderful change that took place in our Saviour at His transfiguration. Here is another illustration. Suppose we are looking at the western sky, towards the close of day. Great masses of dark clouds are covering all that part of the heavens. They are but common clouds. There is nothing attractive or interesting about them. We do not care to take a second look at them. We turn from them for a little while, and then look at them again. In

the meantime the setting sun has thrown his glorious beams upon them. How changed they now appear! All that was commonplace and unattractive about them is gone. How they glow and sparkle! Gold, and purple, and all the colours of the rainbow are blending, how beautifully, there! Are these the same dull clouds that we looked upon a few moments before? Yes; but they have been transfigured. A wonderful change has come over them. And here we have an illustration of our Lord's Transfiguration. The first wonder about this incident in His life is the wonderful change which took place in His appearance then. (*Dr. Newton.*) *How we know there is a heaven:*—A Sunday-school teacher was talking to one of her scholars about heaven, and the glory we shall have when we reach that blessed place. He was a bright boy, about nine or ten years old, named Charlie. After listening to her for a while, he said: "But you have never been there, Miss D., and how do you know there really is any such place?" "Charlie," said the teacher, "you have never been to London; how do you know there is such a city?" "O, I know that very well," said Charlie, "because my father is there; and he has sent me a letter, telling me all about it." "And God, my Father, is in the heavenly city," said Miss D., "and He has sent me a letter, telling me about the glory of heaven, and about the way to get there. The Bible is God's letter." "Yes, I see," said Charlie, after thinking awhile, "there must be a heaven, if you have got such a nice long letter from there." The lesson of hope is the first lesson taught us by the transfiguration. (*Ibid.*) *The decease at Jerusalem; or, the power of the cross:*—A heathen ruler had heard the story of the cross, and desired to know its power. When he was sick, and near his end, he told his servants to make him a large wooden cross, and lay it down in his chamber. When this was done, he said: "Take me now and lay me on the cross, and let me die there." As he lay there dying, he looked in faith to the blood of Christ that was shed upon the cross, and said: "It lifts me up: it lifts me. Jesus saves me!" and thus he died. It was not that wooden cross that saved him; but the death of Christ, on the cross to which He was nailed—the death of which Moses and Elias talked with Him, that saved this heathen man. They knew what a blessing His death would be to the world, and this was why they talked about this death. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **This is My Beloved Son: hear Him.**—*Hearing Christ:*—I. We should hear the Lord Jesus WITH RESOLUTION. "I will go." Nothing shall prevent me; no employments, no pleasures; no solicitations, no difficulties. The Son of God calls me, and I must go. Thus we ought all to feel. II. We must hear Him WITH SUBMISSION. Not the pride of the world only, but our own pride, is to be resisted. We have no right to say how much or what part of His message we will receive, or when or where we will follow Him. III. We must hear Him WITH ATTENTION, with serious and concentrated heed. IV. We must hear Him not so much from the principle of fear, as of DEEP AND EARNEST AFFECTION. He came to speak to us because He loved us. V. We must hear Him WITH SINGLENESS OF MIND, placing no other instruction on a footing with His, far less yielding them the precedence. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *The ministry of Jesus:*—I. CHRIST IS GOD'S MESSENGER TO MAN. He came forth and proceeded from the Father. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He had (1) a Divine commission; (2) a Divine message; (3) Divine credentials, divinely authenticated. He spake with authority. He revealed mysteries. II. MAN'S DUTY TO GOD'S MESSENGER. Hear Him—1. Because His ministry is the supercessor of the ministries of Moses and Elias. 2. Because this ministry contains matters of universal importance. 3. Because the rejection of this ministry leaves no moral instructor available. Christ is the truth of God, through whom the Father's latest will is made known to man. Hear Christ's words, catch Christ's spirit, obey Christ's law, and you shall inherit Christ's promises. (*J. F. Porter.*) *Hear Him:*—I. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS DIVINE. II. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS UNDIVIDED. III. MEN ARE TO BE HEARD ONLY SO FAR AS THEY REPEAT CHRIST'S WORDS. (*J. Parker, D. D.*)

Ver. 8. **Save Jesus only.**—*Jesus only:*—I. When the workman is tempted to waste his employer's substance, or the time which is his property, and says to himself, "There is nobody to see; nobody will know," he would be checked if he remembered and realized that in absolute fact he owes his duty to no man, save to Jesus only, Jesus who for thirty years shared the workman's lot, and put dignity for ever upon honest handiwork. II. But not alone for this world's business and behaviour, and temperament, is this thought true: in the matter of the soul's salvation

blessed are they who see no man save Jesus only. 1. There is danger for the young in letting their religion be based on mere love or regard for a minister or a religious friend. 2. Others there are who allow their religion to be unduly influenced by particular places and circumstances. 3. In the days when we feel burdened with a sense of our sin, may we then look to no man, save to Jesus only. 4. In the hour of death you will have the one Friend to go with you, when all others must leave you. (*Canon Erskine Clarke.*) *Jesus only in death*:—When Bishop Beveredge was on his death-bed, his memory so failed that he did not know even his nearest relative. His chaplain said, "Do you know me?" "Who are you?" was the answer. His own wife asked him, "Do you know me?" "Who are you?" was the only answer. On being told that it was his wife he said that he did not know her. Then one standing by said, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" "Jesus Christ," he replied, reviving as if the name acted on him like a cordial, "yes, I have known Him these forty years: He is my only hope." Brethren, when our time cometh to depart to the place of peace, may we in like manner see no man, save Jesus only. But if the presence of Jesus is to abide with us when flesh and heart and mind are failing, it must be cherished in the days of health and strength and vigour. *None missed if Jesus be present*:—Love brings to the Saviour a flaming heart; obedience comes on willing feet; patience bows down to receive its load: while faith stretches out an empty hand, to be filled with His free gifts. A faithful Sunday-school teacher lay dying. The light of heaven was in his eye, and seraphic smiles played upon his thin lips, as he thought of his mighty Redeemer. Just before he sank away, he turned to his daughter, who was trying to anticipate his every wish by her loving care, and said, "Bring—" More he could not say, for strength was too far gone. "What shall I bring, dear father?" asked the anxious child. "Bring—" "Dear, precious father, do tell me what to bring!" The dying man rallied for a last effort, and feebly murmured—

> "Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown Him Lord of all!"

If, in the closing hour of life, the Saviour is as near to us, we cannot complain of the lack of other comforters. We shall be sure to awake at last to His likeness, and shall shine forth as the sun, in our Father's kingdom. (*J. H. Norton.*) *Man's abiding Friend*:—Whoever and whatever vanishes, Jesus remains with His disciples. I. THOUGH PHYSICAL HEALTH DEPARTS, HE ABIDES. When heart and flesh fail, He is present to succour and strengthen the soul, and to bear it to one of the many mansions He has prepared. II. THOUGH WORLDLY POSSESSIONS DISAPPEAR, HE REMAINS. Secular wealth, rightly used, is an incalculable blessing; it not only serves to relieve from all worldly anxieties, and minister to bodily comfort and intellectual enjoyment, but also gives us power to help our fellowmen both temporally and spiritually. But how often do riches take wings and fly away! But Christ is the true riches: He is of more value than untold gold; and nothing can deprive us of Him. III. THOUGH DEAREST FRIENDS DEPART, HE ABIDES. Good men are constantly losing from their social sphere those who have charmed them with their presence, and inspired them with their talk. When listening to them either in the sanctuary, the club, or on the domestic hearth, they have felt it good to be there. But one by one they vanish; the time comes when the best is gone, and all is social desolation; and like the disciples, they look around, and see no man any more, save Jesus only, with themselves. He is the abiding Friend, and having Him we have all. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Jesus only with themselves*:—I. It was a symbolical intimation that WHEN HE THAT IS PERFECT AND ETERNAL HAD COME, ALL THAT WAS IMPERFECT AND PREPARATORY SHOULD VANISH AWAY. And that this latter was the character both of the Law and the Prophets is obvious. Moses had Christ constantly in view, and the entire scheme of Levitical worship which he was inspired to draw up, looked forward to Him. So, too, the prophets in various ways predicted an age of surpassing glory, which should culminate at the Messiah's coming. II. Not only was all prophecy fulfilled in Christ, BUT THE PROPHETIC CHARACTER ALSO RECEIVED ITS PERFECT DEVELOPMENT IN HIM. He not only announced, He was, the Word of God. The lesson of this mysterious scene was this: that Moses and Elias and Christ were three no longer, no more separated, but made one by God. Legislator and prophet both were summoned to the scene of the transfiguration, and both symbolically (by vanishing away, leaving Jesus only with the disciples) consigned their finished work into Christ's

hands, knowing that henceforth there was but one dispensation, one tabernacle, one gospel. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **What the rising from the dead should mean.**—*The Resurrection: its moral meanings:*—Men heard them gladly, because they preached the resurrection; and because the truth was so purely human as well as purely Divine, it overran and mastered the world. I. IT SEEMS TO EXPLAIN MAN'S PLACE IN THE CREATION. Man's position at the head of this creation places him on the threshold of a higher creation, in which the true sphere of his royalty lies. Such a world as this is too small, too poor, to be the home and the realm of his manhood; its true function is to train him for his royalty beyond. The risen man, by rising, enlarged quite infinitely the field of man's vision, activity, interest, and hope. The risen man explained every propulsive movement and yearning in man's nature—all his kinglike form and instinct: while the weakness, the poverty, the pain, the dread, belonged to his mortal and transitory sphere. Men heard the doctrine gladly, for they saw the true form and stature of the human in the man Christ Jesus; in the risen Christ God's idea of humanity was for evermore unveiled. II. IT SEEMED TO UNFOLD THE MEANING OF THE MYSTERY OF MATTER—THE MORTAL BODY IN WHICH THE SOUL FINDS ITSELF ENSHRINED, OR, AS IT IS CEASELESSLY TEMPTED TO CRY, ENTOMBED. The mystery of embodiment is the essential mystery which perplexes and bewilders the world. Men found it hard to see how there could be fair room for the flesh in any scheme of the world which should include the rule of a wise, righteous, and beneficent Lord. The gospel of Jesus and the resurrection flashes at once a flood of light on man and on his constitution. There is One, a man, "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh," who has borne the body through death, who took it again joyfully when death had slain its mortality, and bore it with Him to the spiritual and eternal world. The revelation of a glorified human body in the world behind the veil was the sanctification, not of the body only, but also of all material things on this side the veil; it was the sign from heaven that they were originally and essentially not of the devil, but of God. We cannot in these days measure the range of that emancipation — man freed from the tormenting thought that he bore a devilish part about with him, a body which could never be tamed to a true subjection, never trained to a Divine use. III. IT SEEMED TO CAST LIGHT ON THE STILL DEEPER AND DARKER MYSTERY OF EVIL; IT EXPLAINED THE MEANING BY UNVEILING THE END OF MAN'S MORAL DISCIPLINE. It proclaimed, as nothing else that we can conceive of could proclaim, God's mastery over all that was dark and malign in nature and in life. Thenceforth man could fight the battle in hope, and was saved. It was the flashing out of a victorious force over sin and death, which lit up the world and made it radiant with hope, when the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Questionings concerning the resurrection set at rest:*—I see the force of all this; I admit that the death and burial of a seed, while it suggests the bare possibility of man surviving that dissolution which we call death, by no means raises the presumption that it is so to the height of a proof. All we can say is that there are certain analogies for it from plant life, and other analogies against it from animal life; and who can tell which way it will ultimately turn? It is at this stage of the argument that the resurrection of Jesus Christ comes in to decide our wavering minds. Until Easter-day we stand with the disciples, questioning what the resurrection of the dead should mean; but now we question no longer. In this respect we are as the contemporaries of Columbus were when he boldly set sail from Palos in August, 1492, and in less than three months set at rest the problem of ages. His return from the voyage to the Bahamas turned presumption into proof. It was no longer a question on which sides might be taken. In a sense it was now set at rest. It admitted no further argument. Those who continued obstinate, and held out for the old opinion, as some of Columbus' contemporaries did, in spite of evidence to the contrary, could only be left to their own obstinacy. (*J. B. Heard, M.A.*)

Vers. 14-29. **And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them.**—*The evil spirit cast out:*—Learn from this narrative—I. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF TRUE FAITH IN GOD. It is not so much the amount of one's faith as the kind, and the fact that one really has it (Matt. xvii. 20). II. THE POWERLESSNESS OF CHRISTIANS WITHOUT TRUE FAITH. III. THE DISCREDITABLENESS OF CHRISTIAN INEFFICIENCY, LEADING TO QUESTIONINGS AND DISCUSSIONS THAT DO MORE

HARM THAN GOOD. IV. THE INEFFICIENCY OF CHRISTIANS THEIR OWN FAULT. In Christ they may be complete (Col. ii. 10). V. THE DUTY OF EVER LIVING NEAR TO CHRIST, RELYING ON HIM ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE. (*Anon.*) *The secret of power*:—Christ's reply taught the disciples that—1. Miracles needed force to work them. 2. Soul forces are the highest class of forces, and faith force is the highest of all soul forces. 3. Faith force needs cherishing (1) by consecration watchfully kept up, *i.e.*, fasting; (2) by communion with God carefully maintained, *i.e.*, prayer. Indulgence of the body enfeebles the soul; living apart from God is living apart from omnipotence. 4. Earnest love is the secret of all miracles. Had they made this sorrow their own—fasted as for their own trouble, prayed as for their own mercy—their love would have "believed all things," and been triumphant in its faith. (*R. Glover.*) *The afflicted child*:—This miracle stands inseparably connected with the transfiguration. I. THE CHRISTIAN IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF CHRIST. The father came to consult Christ, but in His absence appealed to His disciples. It should have been a safe appeal. So, everywhere and always, the Christian represents Christ. He holds in his hands the great trust of Christianity. Coming to him should be equivalent in the healing, saving result to coming to Christ. II. THE FAILURE OF THE DISCIPLE IS CHARGED AS THE FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY. We do not claim the continuance of the power of miraculous healing, but we do claim the presence of Divine power in the Church. The Christian is entrusted with it. He should be always in possession of it. Let our ideas be clear, our claims carefully scriptural, but let it concern us when Christianity is without *manifested* power. Men will be turned astray and led to question and despise religion. III. CHRIST ALWAYS MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO PROTECT HIS CHURCH AND TO ASSERT HIS POWER. It may be after delay. But He comes. He cannot fail. IV. IF ONE FAILS WITH A DISCIPLE, LET HIM GO DIRECTLY TO JESUS. The petitioner who fails with the captain, goes to the colonel. If he fails again, an earnest petitioner will not stop until he has appealed, if necessary, at headquarters, to the commander-in-chief. V. PARENTS SHOULD KNOW THE CONDITION OF THEIR CHILDREN. Make the moral nature of your child as careful a study as his physical nature. Do not assume too readily that, because young, he is innocent, and good, and harmless. VI. THE DIFFICULTY IN THE WAY OF HEALING IS NOT WANT OF POWER IN GOD, BUT WANT OF FAITH IN MAN. Faith all must have who would receive benefits from Christ. The blessing given is in proportion to the degree of faith. No faith, no blessing; little faith, partial blessing; great faith, great blessing. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *The disciples nonplussed*:—Like some mighty general who, having been absent from the field of battle, finds that his lieutenants have rashly engaged in action and have been defeated, the left wing is broken, the right has fled, and the centre begins to fail; he lifts his standard in the midst of his troops, and bids them rally around him; they gather; they dash upon the all-but triumphant foemen, and soon they turn the balance of victory, and make the late victors turn their ignominious backs to the flight. Brethren, here is a lesson for us. What we want for conquest is the shout of a King in the midst of us. The presence of Christ is victory to His Church: the absence of the Lord Jesus entails disgraceful defeat. O armies of the living God, count not on your numbers, rely not on your strength; reckon not upon the ability of your ministers; vaunt not in human might; nor on the other hand be discouraged because ye are feeble; if He be with you, more are they that are for you than all they that are against you. If Christ be in your midst, there are horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The afflicted son*:—I. THE MAN'S AFFLICTION. 1. It was not personal: not in himself, but through his child. 2. It was the consequence of affection. Our love is the source of joy; it is also the cause of pain. Our relationships are a blessing; they often become a curse. 3. It was very terrible. A son not only imbecile, but who could do nothing for his own support. II. THE MAN'S ADVANTAGE. Affliction is not an unmixed evil. On the contrary, God often makes it a means of the greatest blessings. In this particular case it led to two great mercies. (1) It led to the lad himself being brought to Christ, and (2) it led to the father going as well. How often are parents led to Christ through the sufferings and death of their children. III. THE MAN'S MISTAKE. Instead of going to the Master at once, he went to the servants. They tried to afford relief, but they tried in vain. This course is very natural to mankind. 1. Our pride induces it. Naaman was too proud to simply obey the Divine command; he wanted the prophet to come and touch him with adulation and respect. 2. Our carnality causes it. We are of the earth earthy. We do not apprehend spiritual things, and

will have nothing of them. 3. Our faithlessness produces it. We don't believe in the power of an unseen God. It is a painful tendency of the human mind to make gods of men, a tendency which in ancient times developed into idolatry. IV. His APPLICATION. Finding no other help, the man was obliged to go at last to Christ. We may see here, however—1. His persistency. Although not relieved by the disciples, he was not deterred by their failure; and probably the disciples, when they failed, did as they ought to do—pointed him to their Master. 2. His small amount of faith. Apparently he was so disheartened that he did not know what to do. Faith differs in degree. How strong was that of the centurion—"Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed." 3. The training of his understanding. Christ first rebuked him—"O faithless generation," &c.—and then encouraged him—"All things are possible to him that believeth." V. His DEVELOPING FAITH. 1. He acknowledges his conviction. He began to realize the truth of what the Master said. The germs of belief had existed before; otherwise he would not have approached at all. 2. He confesses his imperfection—"Help my unbelief." There are degrees in everything—in growth, health, wealth. 3. He regrets his weakness—"He said, with tears." 4. He applied for succour. We may bring all our weakness to the Saviour. VI. His SUCCESS. Jesus saved the son. There is help for the weakest. (*B. L.*) *Sinful men may be looked upon as possessed of the devil*:—In a hundred ways he tears them, and throws them down; he stops their intelligent speech, and sends them wallowing and foaming in sin. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Even disciples fail. No priest can offer sufficient sacrifice; no man can redeem his brother. "Bring him unto Me!" Faith is in every case of instrumental usefulness positively indispensable. There are times when Christ Himself will do no mighty works because of unbelief. "O faithless generation!" How quickly this explains the coldness and backwardness of the churches. When faith is feeble, what faith there is may well be employed in securing more faith. "Help mine unbelief." Pray to the "Lord," even if the word be not in this verse; and pray "with tears" too! (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The dumb man possessed with a devil*:—I. THE CASE OF THIS MAN. 1. This does not appear to be an ordinary case of dumbness. 2. It was not due to mental ecstasy, such as occasionally produced a temporary suspension of speech. The father of Baptist. 3. The man is described in simple and instructive language as having "a dumb spirit." (1) There is the dumbness of a careless heart. (2) The dumbness of formalism. (3) The dumbness of shame and disappointment. (4) The dumbness of despair. II. THE INTERVENTION OF THE MAN'S FRIENDS. III. THE POWER OF JESUS. 1 absolute supremacy. 2. The manner of the exercise. 3. The mystery of its power. (*L. H. Wiseman, M.A.*) I. THE APPLICATION ITSELF. 1. It was made by an afflicted parent. The child mentally afflicted in mind and body—"Oftimes the evil spirit." Every sinner is so far under the power of the devil. 2. It was made by a party that deeply felt the circumstances in which he himself and his suffering child were placed. 3. That the person who made it stood ready to do whatever our Lord should direct. For this readiness to obey a truly humble heart prepares us, softened by grace. 4. He despaired of help from any other quarter. He was on the verge of despair previous to our Saviour's administering help. Our minds must be brought off from every other dependence. 5. The party before us had a little faith, and was pleading for more. II. THE RECEPTION WHICH THIS APPLICATION TO OUR SAVIOUR MET WITH. 1. Jesus administers reproof to His disciples and to all around Him. Christ often has to reprove us; we deserve it. 2. Jesus directs the sufferer to be brought to Him. 3. Jesus proceeds to correct the views, and inform the mind of the suppliant. Light is given with grace. 4. Jesus gives the party before us the warrant or authority for that faith which He called him to exercise. 5. He strengthens the confidence of the party, whom He thus authorizes to draw near to Him for the blessing requested. 6. The earnestness with which we should draw near to the Great Physician for spiritual help. 7. In some cases of healing special means are to be employed—"Prayer and fasting." (*Joseph Taylor.*)

ver. 19. **O faithless generation.**—*Christ's lament over faithlessness*:—I. The first thing that seems to be in these words is not anger, indeed, but a very distinct and very pathetic expression of CHRIST'S INFINITE PAIN, BECAUSE OF MAN'S FAITHLESSNESS. The element of personal sorrow is most obvious here. It is not only that He is sad for their sakes, that they are so unreceptive, but He feels for Himself, just as we do in our

humble measure, the chilling effect of an atmosphere where there is no sympathy. There never was such a lonely soul on this earth as His, just because there never was another so pure and loving. The plain felt soul-chilling after the blessed communion of the mountain. For once the pain He felt broke the bounds of restraint, and shaped for itself this pathetic utterance, "How long shall I be with you?" I do not know that there is one in which the title of "The man of sorrows" is to all deeper thinking more pathetically vindicated than in this—the solitude of the uncomprehended and the unaccepted Christ—His pain at His disciples' faithlessness. And then do not let us forget that in this short sharp cry of anguish—for it is that—there may be detected by the listening ear not only the tone of personal hurt, but the tone of disappointed and thwarted love. Because of their unbelief He knew that they could not receive what He desired to give them. We find Him more than once in His life hemmed in, hindered of His purpose—simply because there was nobody with a heart open to receive the rich treasure He was ready to pour out. Here I would remark, too, before I go to another point, that these two elements—that of personal sorrow and that of disappointed love and baulked purposes—continue still, and are represented as in some measure felt by Him now. It was to disciples that He said, "O faithless generation!" He did not mean to charge them with the entire absence of all confidence, but He did mean to declare that their poor, feeble faith, such as it was, was not worth naming in comparison with the abounding mass of their unbelief. There was one light spark in them, and there was also a great heap of green wood that had not caught the flame, and only smoked instead of blazing. And so He said to them, "O *faithless* generation!" Do not we know that the purer our love, and the more it has purified us, the more sensitive it becomes, even while the less suspicious it becomes? Is not the purest, most unselfish, highest love, that in which the least failure in response is felt most painfully? Though there be no anger, and no change in the love, still there is a pang where there is an inadequate perception, or an unworthy reception, of it. And Scripture seems to countenance the belief that Divine Love, too, may know something, in some mysterious fashion, like that feeling, when it warns us, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." So we may venture to say, Grieve not the Christ of God, who redeems us; and remember that we grieve Him most when we will not let Him pour His love upon us, but turn a sullen, unresponsive unbelief towards His pleading grace, as some glacier shuts out the sunshine from the mountain-side with its thick-ribbed ice. II. Another thought, which seems to me to be expressed in this wonderful exclamation of our Lord's, is—THAT THEIR FAITHLESSNESS BOUND CHRIST TO EARTH, and kept Him here. As there is not anger, but only pain, so there is also, I think, not exactly impatience, but a desire to depart, coupled with the feeling that He cannot leave them till they have grown stronger in faith. And that feeling is increased by the experience of their utter helplessness and shameful discomfiture during His brief absence. That had shown that they were not fit to be trusted alone. He had been away for a day up in the mountain there, and though they did not build an altar to any golden calf, like their ancestors, when their leader was absent, still when He comes back He finds things all gone wrong because of the few hours of His absence. They were not ready for Him to leave them; the full-grown tree was not strong enough for the props to be removed. Again, here we get a glimpse into the depth of Christ's patient forbearance. We might read these other words of our text, "How long shall I suffer you?" with such an intonation as to make them almost a threat that the limits of forbearance would soon be reached, and that He was not going to suffer them much longer. But I fail to catch the tone of indignation here. It sounds rather like a pledge that as long as they need forbearance they will get it; but at the same time, a question of "How long that is to be?" It implies the inexhaustible riches and resources of His patient mercy. There is rebuke in His question, but how tender a rebuke it is! He rebukes without anger. Plainly He names the fault. He shows distinctly His sorrow, and does not hide the strain on His forbearance. That is His way of cure for His servants' faithlessness. It was His way on earth. It is His way in heaven. To us, too, comes the loving rebuke of this question, "How long shall I suffer you?" Thank God that our answer may be cast into the words of His own promise: "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven." Bear with me till thou hast perfected me; and then bear me to Thyself, that I may be with Thee for ever, and grieve Thy love no more. So may it be, for with Him is plenteous redemption, and His forbearing "mercy endureth for ever." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 23. **If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.**—*Omnipotence of faith*:—I. The NATURE of faith. "Taking God at His Word," is perhaps one of the best definitions ever given. The truths connected with salvation, which require to be cordially believed, may be stated in the following manner. 1. That all have sinned. 2. I am a guilty sinner, and exposed to the just punishment of sin. 3. That Jesus having died for all, is the Saviour of all that truly believe on Him. II. The PROVISIONS for faith. You are authorized to believe. God has made rich provision that you might believe. That you cannot believe in Christ without being saved is evident—1. From the character of God. 2. From the Word of God. 3. From the assurance God has given to attest His word. 4. From the promises of God. 5. From the covenant of God (Heb. vi. 13, 18). 6. From the experience of His people in all ages. III. The EXERCISE of faith. Includes—1. Attention to the great objects of faith. 2. Knowledge (Matt. xiii. 16; Acts xxvii. 27). 3. Reason. 4. Memory (1 Cor. xv. 1, 4). 5. The affections. 6. The will—the determined exercise of the affections, aided by the understanding. What shall hinder the exercise of faith? Answer objections. IV. The MIGHTY POWER of faith. Examples—Abraham, three Hebrew children, Daniel, the man with the withered hand, the dying thief, &c. 1. Let every impenitent sinner believe that he is on the very brink of ruin, &c. 2. Let every penitent believe the record God has given of His Son, and apply it to himself. 3. Let every child of God in distress, &c., "trust, not be afraid." 4. Let the Christian who is seeking full salvation, believe, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth from all sin." Be it unto thee according to thy faith. Believe now. Continue to believe. (*A. Weston.*) I. ALL REAL GOODNESS IS TO BE ATTAINED BY THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IN CHRIST. This implies the absence of (1) distrust; (2) presumption; (3) indifference. II. FAITH MUST ALWAYS BE LIMITED BY THE PROMISES OF GOD. III. FAITH MUST HAVE REFERENCE TO THE PARTICULAR BLESSING SOUGHT. We must therefore be well versed in (1) the particular promises God has given, and in (2) the method in which God bestows them. (*B. Noel.*) *All things possible to faith*:—I. YOU WILL OBSERVE THE EXPRESSION, "If thou *canst* believe!"—not, if thou *dost* believe;—"If thou *canst* believe." Cannot, then, every one believe? Is or is not a man responsible for the character of his faith, and its degree? I want to examine that a little carefully. I lay down two broad first principles. Every man—at least, every man who has not, by his own wilfulness, destroyed it—every man who has not made himself lower than a man, and so lost the position of our common humanity—every man has some faith. And secondly, every man who uses the faith he has, will increase its power, and acquire more. If you deny either of those two premises, I do not see how a man can be brought in accountable for his faith. But admit them, and observe what follows. Can every one, at every moment, believe every thing which he ought to believe? I think not; I think not at any moment. But then, had that man lived altogether as he ought to have lived, then he would, at that moment, have been able to believe a great deal more than he can believe now. The faith would have been in a stronger and clearer exercise. Probably, he would have been able to believe everything which at that particular time he was called upon to believe. And now, if that man will be true to his convictions, his faith will be sure to rise up to the level of believing what at that time he is unable to believe. For faith is progressive: faith must go to school, as patience must, or holiness must. Our Lord's words imply attainment—the difficulty of the attainment—and they sympathize with the difficulty of the attainment. But the power of believing is a moral thing, which a man holds in his own hands. We all know indeed, that there cannot be a believing thought, nor one true conception, or any spiritual thing, without the inworking of the Holy Ghost. But then, the Holy Ghost is always inworking. All that is contingent is our reception of the Holy Ghost. II. THE OUTSIDE BOUNDARY-LINE OF THE PROVINCE OF FAITH, PROPERLY SO CALLED, IS PROMISES. Faith is laying hold: I do not say of what God is, for God may be and is much which we cannot understand enough even to believe—but it is laying hold of what God has covenanted Himself to us—what God is to His people. The promises are what God is to His Church—therefore faith confines itself to promises. III. I must not, and I need not, stop now, to show THAT WITHIN THAT CIRCUMFERENCE, THE RANGE OF GOD'S UNDERTAKINGS FOR US, IS LEFT ENOUGH, BECAUSE IT IS LEFT STILL INFINITE. But how to get this faith? What is the road to it? First, be sure that you are living a good, moral life. Secondly, do God's will, whatever, in your conscience, you feel God's will is. Thirdly, cherish convictions, and obey the "still small voices." Fourth, act out the faith you have, and

let it be a constant prayer, "More faith, Lord; more faith." Fifth, go up and down among the promises, and be conversant with the character and the attributes of God. Sixth, wrestle with some one promise in spirit every day, till you get it. Seventh, take large, loving views of Jesus, make experiments of His love,—and always sit and wait, with an open heart, to take in all that He most assuredly waits to give. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Faith omnipotent*:—I. SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH. 1. We will consider faith in its relationship to guilt. 2. Let us also observe faith in the midst of those constant attacks of which the heir of heaven is the subject. 3. The obtaining of eminence in grace. 4. The power of faith in the service of God. II. WHERE LIES, THEN, THE SECRET STRENGTH OF FAITH? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies what the promise is—an emanation of Divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God. Faith thinketh WHO gave this promise. She remembereth WHY the promise was given. She also considers the amazing WORK of Christ. She then looks back upon the PAST. She remembers that God never has failed her. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The power of faith*:—Faith is not only a grace of itself, but is steward and purveyor of all other graces, and its office is to make provision for them, while they are working; and therefore as a man's faith grows either stronger or weaker, so his work goes on more or less vigorously. There is no grace, nor supply, nor mercy, laid up in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is all in the hands of a believer's faith; and he may take from thence whatsoever he needs, to supply the present wants and necessities of his soul. (*Bishop Hopkins.*) *The sphere of faith's power*:—The expression does not mean, in this connection, "It is possible for the believer to *do* all things," but "It is possible for the believer to *get* all things." Omnipotence is, in a sense, at his disposal. But the universality of things contemplated by our Lord was not, as the nature of the case makes evident, the most absolute conceivable. We must descend in thought to the limited universality of things that would be of benefit to the believer. We must, indeed, descend still farther. We must consider the benefit of the believer not absolutely, or unconditionally, but relatively to his circumstances, thus relatively to the circumstances of the other beings with whom he is connected. With these limitations—inherent in the nature of the case—"all things" are possible for him that believeth. But why only for him that believeth? Because faith in the fact of Christ's Divine power or authority, or, at all events, in the propitiousness which is involved in that fact, is, in the nature of things, absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the highest spiritual blessings. By making it a pre-requisite for the obtaining of material blessings, Christ made His visible life a parable of high invisible realities, and flashed light on the inner by the reflective power of the outer. It was the perfection of symbolism. (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

Ver. 24. **Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.**—*Faith unto salvation*:—This incident will show us what believing presupposes and consists in. I. The text shows A MAN THAT IS IN EARNEST. He cried out with tears. They were tears that told how his heart was moved. II. We look at this man, and we find that there is more than a general earnestness about him. We see the tokens of a special and active desire to have the blessings which faith was to secure for him. So he who is awakened to flee from the wrath to come. 1. He seeks forgiveness. Sin is not a light thing in his eyes. 2. He longs for healing of the disease of his soul. 3. To say all in a word, his desire is set upon salvation. III. The operation of this desire. It is an active desire. 1. It makes a man pray and cry to God. It is a time of felt need. 2. It may cast into an agony, which may evince itself in tears. There is a melting power in strong desires that agitate the soul. 3. The desire for salvation will cause you to seek for faith. We are justified by faith; no holiness without it. 4. There will be an effort to believe. It is not God that believes; *we* have to believe. He would not command you to believe, if it were idle for you to try. IV. HE FEELS HIS NEED OF GRACE FOR THE EXERCISE OF FAITH—"Help mine unbelief." My own resources are not sufficient for it. A true sense of the need of grace to believe is a great step towards the act of believing. V. THE MAN BETAKES HIMSELF TO CHRIST. I need grace and I look to Thee for it. So is it with all those that are about to believe. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help." The fulness of Christ is unlimited. VI. THE MAN HAS A DISTINCT CONCEPTION OF THE GRAND OBSTACLE WHICH GRACE MUST REMOVE—"Unbelief." Why is it that unbelief has so great an ascendancy? Because it possesses the heart. VII. WE FIND THAT THE MAN DOES BELIEVE—"Lord, I believe." "I must believe" is the first step. The next, "I can believe." The third, "I will believe." The last

step, "I do believe." (*Andrew Gray.*) *Works of faith:*—We have often heard of George Müller, of Bristol. There stands, in the form of those magnificent orphan houses, full of orphans, supported without committees, without secretaries, supported only by that man's prayer and faith, there stands in solid brick and mortar, a testimony to the fact that God hears prayer. But, do you know that Mr. Müller's case is but one among many. Remember the work of Francke at Halle. Look at the Rough House just out of Hamburg, where Dr. Wichern, commencing with a few reprobate boys of Hamburg, only waiting upon God's help and goodness, has now a whole village full of boys and girls, reclaimed and saved, and is sending out on the right hand and on the left, brethren to occupy posts of usefulness in every land. Remember the brother Gossner, of Berlin, and how mightily God has helped him to send out not less than two hundred missionaries throughout the length and the breadth of the earth, preaching Christ, while he has for their support nothing but the bare promise of God, and the faith which has learned to reach the hand of God, and take from it all it needs. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Dealing directly with God:*—Pastor Harms, in Hermaunsburg, desired to send missionaries to the Gallas tribe in Africa, and in his life he is reported to have said: Then I knocked diligently on the dear Lord in prayer; and since the praying man dare not sit with his hands in his lap, I sought among the shipping agents, but came to no speed; and I turned to Bishop Gobat in Jerusalem, but had no answer; and then I wrote to the Missionary Krapf, in Mornbaz, but the letter was lost. Then one of the sailors who remained said, "Why not build a ship, and you can send out as many and as often as you will." The proposal was good; but, the money! That was a time of great conflict, and I wrestled with God. For no one encouraged me, but the reverse; and even the truest friends and brethren hinted that I was not quite in my senses. When Duke George of Saxony lay on his death-bed, and was yet in doubt to whom he should flee with his soul, whether to the Lord Christ and His dear merits, or to the pope and his good works, there spoke a trusty courtier to him: "Your grace, straight forward makes the best runner." That word has lain fast in my soul. I had knocked at men's doors and found them shut; and yet the plan was manifestly good, and for the glory of God. What was to be done? "Straight forward makes the best runner." I prayed fervently to the Lord, laid the matter in His hand, and as I rose up at midnight from my knees, I said, with a voice that almost startled me in the quiet room, "forward now in God's name!" From that moment there never came a thought of doubt into my mind! *Weak faith clinging to a mighty object:*—There was once a good woman who was well known among her circle for her simple faith, and her great calmness in the midst of many trials. Another woman, living at a distance, hearing of her, said, "I must go and see that woman, and learn the secret of her holy, happy life." She went; and accosting the woman, said, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," replied she, "I am not the woman with the great faith; but I am the woman with a little faith in the great God." (*Milman.*) *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief:*—I. FAITH MAY BE WEAK AND PARTIAL IN A REAL BELIEVER. However much some persons may talk of our religious faith being the result of inquiry and evidence, and depending solely on the power of the intellect, or on its feebleness, we know well that passion and prejudice, not only in religious matters, but in all other matters where our interests or our passions are involved, have a powerful influence on the formation of our opinions; and wherever prejudice or excited passion exists, a much stronger degree of evidence is required to fix our belief of a thing, than were our minds perfectly calm. So in religion. II. TO BECOME STRONG IN FAITH, WE MUST PERSEVERE IN PRAYER. Increase of faith does not come by argument or evidence, but by direct influence on the heart, sweeping away prejudice and calming the impetuous passions. He who gave can alone increase our faith. Let us ask of Him who is so willing to bestow. (*B. Noel.*) *The balance and the preponderance:*—I. It was so with the suppliant of this text. THERE WAS IN HIM THIS CO-EXISTENCE OF FAITH AND CREDULITY. It was not so much a suspended or a divided feeling, as of one who was postponing the great decision, or in whom some third thing, neither belief nor disbelief, was shaping itself; as we hear now of persons who can accept this and that in Jesus Christ, but who also refuse this and that, so that they come to have a religion of their own, of which He is one ingredient, but not the one or principal one. This man's state was not one of mixture or compromise; it was the conflict of two definite antagonists—faith and unbelief—competing within. He was not a half-believer. He was a believer and an unbeliever, in one mind. The "father" of this story saw before him a Person

who was evidently man, and yet to whom he was applying for the exercise of Deity. Brethren, if we can succeed in making the condition clear, there is a great lesson and moral in it. Many men in this age, like the well-known Indian teacher, are framing for themselves, without for a moment intending to be anything but Christians at last, a Christianity with the supernatural left out of it — miracle, prophecy, incarnation, resurrection, the God-man Himself, eliminated; and it is much to be feared that this kind of compromise is likely to be the Christianity of the educated Englishman in so much of the twentieth century as the world may be spared to live through. It will be a Christianity very rational, very intelligent, certainly very intelligible. But it will have parted with much that has made our Christianity a discipline; it will have got rid of that combination of opposite but not contrary and certainly not contradictory elements, which has been the trial yet also the triumph of the Divine Revelation which has transformed, by training and schooling, mind, heart, and soul. It will have done with that characteristic feature of the old gospel which made men suffer in living it; which made a man kneel before Jesus Christ as a Saviour to be wondered at as well as adored, with the prayer on his lips, "Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief." II. There is a second thing to be noticed in the condition of this suppliant. He was one who knew and felt that, in all matters, whether of opinion or of practice, THE SOUND MIND ACTS UPON A PRINCIPLE OF PREPONDERANCE. He believed and he disbelieved. He did not conceal from himself the difficulties of believing; the many things that might be urged against it. He was not one of those rash and fanatical people, who, having jumped or rushed to a certain conclusion, are incapable of estimating or even recognizing an argument against it—who bring to their deliberations upon matters of everlasting importance minds thoroughly made up, and count all men first fools, and then knaves, who differ from them. No; the father of this demoniac boy saw two sides of this anxious question, and could not pretend to call its decision indisputable, whichever way it might go. He himself believed and disbelieved. But he was aware that, as nothing in the realm of thought and action is literally self-evident—nothing so certain, that to take into account its alternative would be idiotcy or madness—a man who must have an opinion one way or the other, a man who must act one way or the other, is bound, as a reasonable being, to think and to act on the preponderance, "if the scale do turn but in the estimation of a hair," of one alternative over the other. This man was obliged to form an opinion, in order that he might accordingly shape his conduct, on the mighty question, What was he to think of Christ? But he had a more personal, or at least a more urgent, motive still. In the agony of a tortured and possessed home, he could lose no chance presented to him of obtaining help and deliverance. If Jesus of Nazareth was what he heard of Him there was help, there was healing, in Him. The father's heart beat warmly in his bosom, and it would have been unnatural, it would have been unfeeling, it would have been impossible, to leave such a chance untried. Action was required, and before action opinion. Therefore he only asked himself one question. Which way for me, which way at this moment, does the balance of probability incline? There is on the one side the known virtue, the proved wisdom, the experienced benevolence, the attested power—so much on the side of faith. There is on the other side the possibility of deception, the absence of a parallel, the antecedent improbability of an incarnation. III. There is yet one more thought in the text, which must be just recognized before we conclude. THIS FATHER TESTED TRUTH BY PRAYING. He was not satisfied with saying, "I believe and I disbelieve." It was not enough for him even to carry his divided state to Christ, and say, "Lord, I believe and I disbelieve." No; he turned the conflict into direct prayer—"Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief!" Many persons imagine that, until they have full and undoubting faith, they have no right and no power to pray. Yet here again the principle dwelt upon has a just application. If faith preponderates in you but by the weight of one grain over unbelief, that small or smallest preponderance binds you, not only to an opinion of believing, and not only to a life of obeying, but also, and quite definitely, to a habit of praying. Faith brings unbelief with it to the throne of grace, and prays for help against it to Him whom, on the balance and on the preponderance, it thinks to be Divine. "Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief." It is the prayer for the man who is formulating his faith, and has not yet arranged or modelled it to his satisfaction. It is the prayer for the man who is shaping his life, and has not yet exactly adjusted the principles which shall guide it. It is the prayer for the man in great trouble—who cannot see the chastening

for the afflicting—who feels the blow so severe that he cannot yet discern the Father's hand dealing it. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The only help for unbelief*:—I. THE NECESSITY OF A FULL BELIEF IN THE SAVIOUR. 1. It is necessary as the foundation of all our Christian privileges and blessings. Our Lord continually laid it down as the condition of bestowing His favour; His apostles insisted upon the same holy doctrine. 2. It is clear in the very nature of things: we can do nothing of ourselves, by any independent effort, for our own salvation; we are estranged from God without the means of reconciliation. II. OUR NATURAL INABILITY TO ATTAIN THAT BELIEF, AND THE METHOD BY WHICH IT IS CERTAINLY ATTAINABLE. If it required nothing more than the assent of the understanding, it would be clearly within own reach; it implies a disposition to receive all the doctrines of revealed truth, a submission to the law and love of God. It is idle to beseech of God a living faith, when we have no intention to imbibe those principles, to form that character, which a true faith implies. Look at the case of this man: there were no earthly prejudices which he resolved to keep; no earthly hindrances which he desired to set up; all he wanted was further light in his understanding, and a complete conviction in his heart; hence he honestly prayed his prayer to Him, in whose hand was the bestowal of these blessings. III. THE EFFECT AND TRIUMPH OF IT, WHEN ATTAINED. It is the only means by which the enemies of our peace can be vanquished, and we prepared for our crown of rejoicing (1 John v. 4). (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *The spirit of faith amid uncertainties*:—Let us take comfort in this wonderful saying. Never fear; whatever thoughts may from time to time move through the listening spirit. Deal firmly and bravely with your intellectual and spiritual tempters; repel them; cast yourself on God. Assert, in terms, the principle of faith. Say, "I believe." Thus, at length, all shall be well. For the hour is at hand when doubt shall end for ever, and when the Eternal Truth shall stand out clear before our eyes. Doubt and uncertainty belong to this life; at the end of the world they will sink to long burial, while the world also sinks away, and then we shall see all things plainly in the "deep dawn beyond the tomb." In this dim life we see spiritual things imperfectly, yet ever draw we on to full, clear knowledge. Even so, a man might be led, step by step, through darkness, till he came out and stood on a narrow line of sandy beach hemming the border of the immeasurable deep, whose depth and majesty were hidden from his eyes by the cold veil of fog. But once let the winds arise and blow, and the dull, grey curtain, swaying awhile, shall be gathered into folds, and as a vesture shall it be laid aside; while, where it hung, now rolls the sea, clear, smooth, and vast, each wave reflecting the sunbeam in many-twinkling laughter; the broad surface sweeping back, to where the far horizon line is drawn across, firm and straight from one side of the world to the other. Faith sees already what we are to see for ourselves by-and-by, when God's time is come. And, meanwhile, though we be here, on this narrow border of the world beyond, and though we cannot see far, and though the fog do sometimes chill, yet let us be men and shake ourselves, and move about; yea, let us build a fire as best we may on the wild shore, to keep off the cold and to keep us all in heart; and let us believe and trust, where we can neither see nor prove, and let us encourage one another and call to God. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *The struggle and victory of faith*:—I. FAITH AND UNBELIEF ARE OFTEN FOUND IN THE SAME HEART. The picture which Milton gives of Eve sleeping in the garden is true of us all. There is the toad-like spirit whispering evil dreams into the heart, and the angel is standing by to keep watch on the tempter. So the two worlds of faith and unbelief are close to the soul of man. When he is in the dark, gleams from the light will shoot in as if to allure him; and when he is in the light, vapours from the dark will roll in to perplex and tempt him. II. WHENEVER FAITH AND UNBELIEF MEET IN AN EARNEST HEART THERE WILL BE WAR. The question raised by faith and unbelief presses on the whole nature, and will not be silenced until settled one way or the other. III. WE CAN TELL HOW THE WAR WILL GO, BY THE SIDE A MAN'S HEART TAKES. When a ship is making for the harbour, there is a set in the tide which may carry it straight for the entrance, or to the treacherous quicksands, or to the boiling surf. Such a set of the tide there is in a man's own heart. It is acted on by his will, therefore he is responsible for it. A man cannot use his will directly, so as to cause himself to believe or not to believe, but he can use it in "those things which accompany salvation." We cannot reverse the tide, but we can employ the sails and helm, so as to act upon it. Let us seek to have (1) a sense of reverence proportioned to the momentous character of the issue at stake. The weight of the soul must be felt if we are to decide rightly on its interests.

(2) A sense of need: a care for the soul, leading us to look out, and up, and cry for help. (3) A sense of sinfulness, a conviction of the gulf between what we should be and what we are. The way to God begins in what is most profound in our own souls, and when we have been led by God's own hand to make discoveries of our weakness and want and sin, it is not doubtful how the war will go. IV. THE WAY TO BE SURE OF THE VICTORY OF FAITH IS TO CALL IN CHRIST'S HELP. Full deliverance from doubt and sin is only to be procured by personal contact with the Saviour's person and life. So long as we turn our back on Him, we are toward darkness; as soon as we look to Him, we are lightened. If there are any who have lost their faith, or fear they are losing it, while they deplore the loss, let them cry toward that quarter of the heavens where they once felt as if light were shining for them, and an answer will in due time come. Christ is there, whether they see Him or not; and He will hear their prayer, though it has a sore battle with doubt. This short prayer of a doubting heart comes far down like the Lord Jesus Himself, stretches out a hand of help to the feeblest, and secures at last an answer to all other prayers. If men will use it truly, it will give power to the faint, and to them that have no might it will increase strength, till it issues in the full confidence of perfect faith. (*John Ker, D.D.*) This act of his, in putting forth his faith to believe as he could, was the way to believe as he would. (*John Trapp.*) *Faith and unbelief:*—Take these words as—I. THE VOICE OF ONE SEEKING SALVATION. Give Christ your whole confidence. Don't lose time in excuses, or lamentations, or in seeking fuller conviction. Cast yourself at once on the Rock of Ages—"Lord, I believe." But you say, "I seem to slip off the Rock again." Well, that is surely a sign that you are on, if you are afraid of slipping off. Then add, "Help Thou mine unbelief," *i.e.*, "Hold me on the Rock; do Thou keep me from rolling off." No man is quite a stranger to the Lord, or an utter unbeliever, who with tears entreats Christ to put away his unbelief. II. THE VOICE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN SOME ANGUISH OF SPIRIT. In adversity, when your faith is slipping away, bow before Jesus, saying—"Lord, I believe; I cling to Thee; I hang on Thee. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." What did I say? Who am I, to utter such mighty words of confidence? And yet, at such an hour, I take them not back; but with tears I haste to add, "Lord, help Thou mine unbelief." III. THE WORDS OF THE BELIEVER IN VIEW OF DUTY, OR OF SOME HOLY PRIVILEGE. IV. THE VOICE OF THE WHOLE CHURCH ON EARTH, ANXIOUS FOR THE SALVATION OF HER CHILDREN. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *Mine unbelief:*—Unbelief is an alarming and criminal thing; for it doubts—(1) The power of Omnipotence; (2) the value of the promise of God; (3) the efficacy of Christ's blood; (4) the prevalence of His plea; (5) the almightiness of the Spirit; (6) the truth of the gospel. In fact, unbelief robs God of His glory in every way; and therefore it cannot receive a blessing from the Lord (Heb. xi. 6). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The strife of faith and doubt in the soul:*—This was the cry of a soul in distress; it was a frank, honest exclamation, showing what was in the man; it was spoken to God. It was a cry of agony: the agony of hope, of love, of fear, all pouring out and upward, trembling and expecting: the cry of a solitary soul indeed, yet, substantially, a cry from all humanity summed up together. Nor did it meet rebuke; no fault was found with it; but in the granting of the prayer, assent and approval were implied; assent to the description, acceptance of the state of mind it disclosed. I. DOUBT AND FAITH CAN CO-EXIST IN THE HEART, AND ACTUALLY DO. Natural to believe; we cannot but cling to God; cannot live without Him. Yet natural to doubt; because we are fallen; the mind is disordered, like the body: Divine truth is not yet made known to us in fulness. So it follows that the mere existence of doubts in intellect or heart is not sinful, nor need it disquiet the faithful. The sin begins where the responsibility begins, viz., in the exercise of the will. II. THE WILL HAS POWER TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO. This is the sheet-anchor of moral and intellectual life. No man need be passive, or is compelled to be all his life long subject to bondage under the spirit of doubt. The will can control and shape the thoughts, throwing its weight on one side or the other when the battle rages in the soul. Because it can do this, we are responsible for the strength or weakness of our faith. III. IF WE CHOOSE TO BELIEVE, GOD WILL HELP. Lift thy poor hand upward, and another Hand is coming through the darkness to meet it. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief:*—If a man can say this sincerely, he need never be discouraged; let him hope in the Lord. Little grace can trust in Christ, and great grace can do no more. God brings not a pair of scales to *weigh* our graces, and if they be too light refuseth them; but he brings a touchstone to *try* them; and if they be pure gold,

though never so little of it, it will pass current with Him; though it be but smoke, not flame—though it be but as a wick in the socket—likelier to die and go out than continue, which we use to throw away; yet He will not quench it, but accept it. (*Anon.*) We give a beggar an alms (says Manton), "though he receives it with a trembling palsied hand; and if he lets it fall, we let him stoop for it." So doth the Lord give even to our weak faith, and in His great tenderness permits us afterward to enjoy what at first we could not grasp. The trembling hand is part of the poor beggar's distress, and the weakness of our faith is a part of our spiritual poverty; therefore it moves the Divine compassion, and is an argument with heavenly pity. As a sin, unbelief grieves the Spirit; but, as a weakness, mourned and confessed, it secures His help. "Lord, I believe," is a confession of faith which loses none of its acceptableness when it is followed by the prayer, "help Thou mine unbelief." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Weakness of faith no sin:*—A friend complained to Gotthold of the weakness of his faith, and the distress this gave him. Gotthold pointed to a vine, which had twined itself round a pole, and was hanging loaded with beautiful clusters, and said, "Frail is that plant; but what harm is done to it by its frailty, especially as the Creator has been pleased to make it what it is? As little will it prejudice your faith that it is weak, provided only it be sincere and unfeigned. Faith is the work of God, and He bestows it in such measure as He wills and judges right. Let the measure of it which He has given you be deemed sufficient by you. Take for pole and prop the cross of the Saviour and the Word of God; twine around these with all the power which God vouchsafes. A heart sensible of its weakness, and prostrating itself continually at the feet of the Divine mercy, is more acceptable than that which presumes upon the strength of its faith, and falls into false security and pride." *Weak faith may be effectual:*—The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and this the weakest faith can do as well as the strongest, if it be true. A child can hold a staff as well, though not so strongly, as a man. The prisoner through a hole sees the sun, though not as perfectly as they in the open air. They that saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, yet were healed. The poor man's "I believe," saved him; though he was fain to add, "Lord, help mine unbelief." So that we may say of faith, as the poet did of death, that it makes lords and slaves, apostles and common persons, all alike acceptable to God, if they have it. (*T. Adams.*) *Prayer is the cure for unbelief:*—One said to me, "I have not the faculty of belief or faith in God, or in a book-revelation." Answer: "Have you prayed with your whole heart and strength—as for dear life—for light and faith?" He said, "I cannot; for a man who does that already half believes." Answer: "No; for a man might be rescued from a shipwreck, and be watching the attempt to save that which was dearest to him—dearer than life—which had been swept from his side: putting aside conscious prayer, his whole being, his very heart and soul would go out into the wish and the hope that his treasure might be saved: yet it would not involve any belief that the rescue would be accomplished. Many a time an agony like that has been followed by the bringing in of the lifeless body. But after a true heart-agony of prayer for light, no lifeless soul has ever been brought in. (*Vita.*) *Faith without comfort:*—The soul's grasp of Jesus saves even when it does not comfort. If we touch the hem of His garment we are healed of our deadly disease, though our heart may still be full of trembling. We may be in consternation, but we cannot be under condemnation if we have believed in Jesus. Safety is one thing, and assurance of it is another. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faith without assurance:*—As a man falling into a river espieth a bough of a tree, and catches at it with all his might, and as soon as he hath fast hold of it he is safe, though troubles and fears do not presently vanish out of his mind; so the soul, espying Christ as the only means to save him, and reaching out the hand to Him, is safe, though it be not presently quieted and pacified. (*T. Manton.*) *Faith only in God:*—He did not believe in the disciples; he had once trusted in them and failed. He did not believe in himself; he knew his own impotence to drive out the evil spirit from his child: He believed no longer in any medicines or men; but he believed the man of the shining countenance who had just come down from the mountain. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faith under difficulty:*—Happy is the man who can not only believe when the waves softly ripple to the music of peace, but continues to trust in Him who is almighty to save when the hurricane is let loose in its fury, and the Atlantic breakers follow each other, eager to swallow up the barque of the mariner. Surely Christ Jesus is fit to be believed at all times, for like the pole star, He abides in His faithfulness, let storms rage as they may. (*Ibid.*) *Faith's dawn and its clouds:*—

I. THERE IS TRUE FAITH. It was faith in the Person of Christ. It was faith about the matter in hand. It was faith which triumphed over difficulties. (*a*) Case of long standing. (*b*) Considered to be hopeless. (*c*) Disciples had failed. (*d*) The child was at that moment passing through a horrible stage of pain and misery. II. THERE IS GREVIOUS UNBELIEF. Many true believers are tried with unbelief because they have a sense of their past sins. Some stagger through a consciousness of their present feebleness. Others are made to shiver with unbelief on account of fears for the future. The freeness and greatness of God's mercy sometimes excites unbelief. A sacred desire to be right produces it in some. It may also arise through a most proper reverence for Christ, and a high esteem for all that belongs to Him. III. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO. He regards it as a sin and confesses it. He prays against it. He looks to the right Person for deliverance. (*Ibid.*) *Feeble faith appealing to a strong Saviour*:—I. The suspected difficulty. The father may have thought it lay with the disciples. He probably thought the case itself was well-nigh hopeless. He half hinted that the difficulty might lie with the Master. "If Thou." II. The tearful discovery. Jesus cast the "if" back upon the father—then—1. His little faith discovered his unbelief. 2. This unbelief alarmed him. 3. It was now, not "help my child," but "help my unbelief." III. The intelligent appeal. He bases the appeal upon faith—"I believe." He mingles with it confession—"help my unbelief." He appeals to One who is able to help—"Lord." To One who is Himself the remedy for unbelief—"Thou." (*Ibid.*) *Unbelief*:—Nothing is so provoking to God as unbelief, and yet there is nothing to which we are more prone. He has spoken to us in His Word; He has spoken plainly; He has repeated His promises again and again; He has confirmed them all by the blood of His own dear Son; and yet we do not believe Him. Is not this provoking? What would provoke a master like a servant refusing to believe him? Or, what would provoke a father like a child refusing to believe him? The man of honour feels himself insulted if his professed friend refuses to believe his solemn protestation; and yet this is the way in which we daily treat our God. He says: "Confess, and I will pardon you." But we doubt it. He says: "Call upon Me, and I will deliver you." But we doubt it. He says: "I will supply all your needs." But we doubt it. He says: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But who has not questioned it? Let us seriously think of His own words: "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar"; and His question, "How long will this people provoke Me?" Lord, forgive, and preserve us from it in future. (*James Smith.*)

Vers. 28, 29. **But by prayer and fasting.**—*Fasting*:—"Why could not we cast him out?"—"because of your unbelief." "All things are possible to him that believeth." But how is such faith to be attained? It is God's gift. God gives by means—by means of prayer. Whatever tends to increase the fervour of prayer tends to increase the energy of faith. Fasting also has this effect. In the Christian way are many hindrances; arising both from the agency of fallen spirits, and from the inveteracy of besetting sins. It appears from this narrative, that some spirits are more difficult to cast out of men than others—"this kind;" and it is certain, as a matter of fact, that some sins are more tenacious, more stubborn; and that for their expulsion, a more active and energetic exercise of faith is required, than for the subduing of other sins. "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." He will conclude, therefore, that these things were intended to strengthen faith—that by these means he should assail his unbelief, in order that by changing his unbelief into faith, he may get rid of this cleaving stain that distresses his soul. He will therefore be exceedingly anxious to ascertain what "fasting" means. He ascertains what "prayer" is—public, private, social; he will be as anxious to ascertain with the same distinctness what "fasting" means; to see what in his particular case it means. I suppose the case of a man, whose tendency before he was converted was to luxurious feeding. This is not confined to the rich, as is commonly supposed, who can afford to multiply varieties and pamper their appetites. It is found in all classes, though variously indulged. There is a sort of animal delight which men take in their food, and even in the anticipation of their food. There are men, not a few, who dine more than once a day, by indulging an eager, fleshly avidity in anticipation; and when the reality comes, they yield themselves to reckless animal excitement, even without any check of reason; and they persevere until animal repletion demands a pause. It is descriptive of such, and it is not too much to say, that instead of eating to live, they seem to live to eat. Now this is a

disease. We suppose a man of this description converted. By his conversion the disease is not then and there—at one stroke—eradicated; but a counteracting power is supplied to him. This counteracting power is to be brought to bear on this disease; and certainly this is a case in which the action of this counteracting power might well take the direction of abstinence from food. Here he would directly mortify the deed of the old body; for that was its tendency, that was its snare, that was its disease. But now I suppose the case of another sort of man. There are such people in this world as misers. I do not refer to that love of money, which, in a greater or less degree, is common to every man—but to a disease, a sort of mania, an idolatry for the hoarded heap. There are some men who so idolize their savings, that they absolutely deny themselves the common necessaries of daily animal support. Now suppose such a man converted; this disease is not entirely cured by his conversion; but a counteracting power is supplied to him. And how is it to be exercised? How is that man to fast? To abstain from food? No; he has been doing that already, in the service of his idol. That is a part of his disease. What, then, in this case, would occupy the scriptural place of fasting? Let him take from the store; let him draw out the pound, or the hundred, from the fostered heap; let him take his check book, and order something to clothe the naked and feed the hungry. That would be fasting. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? saith the Lord; to clothe the naked and to feed the hungry?" Now, suppose another case, of a man or a woman of a highly imaginative turn of mind, and of a romantic tone of affection. She has indulged in reading works of fiction; so that all her imaginations are drawn off from the realities of life, and engaged in the luxuries of fictitious scenes of pleasure or of pain. What is fasting, in her case? Not abstaining from food. What then? Putting away her novels, burning her romances, and turning to the practical walks of life; "drawing out her soul to the hungry;" instead of weeping, in the luxury of ease, in her armchair, over a fancied sick person, to visit a real sick person, and carry something with her; go to the stern reality of cellars and garrets, instead of luxuriating over the pages of a novel. This is a fast, in her case; and by this, she will help her prayers, and increase her faith, and so advance in overcoming the besetting sin. These illustrations will, I hope, help to show you the true scriptural nature of this duty, varying with various cases because of the object in view. We are called "by the spirit to mortify the deeds of the body," not to mortify the body. This is the mistake that has been made. We are nowhere called on to mortify the body for the sake of the mortification, but to mortify the deeds of the body for the sake of the sanctification. And then, what is the object of our Church in such fasting? That you will learn by her collect for the first Sunday in Lent. "Give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions, in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end." The object is sanctification. (*H. McNeile, M.A.*) *Prayer and fasting:*—Staying at Hastings a few months since I was much interested in watching the building of a breakwater just opposite my lodgings. It was done by driving massive piles of wood into the shingle. They were driven by a huge mass of metal being let fall upon them from a great height. True, the blows were not very quick one upon another, for it took some time to raise the weight to the necessary elevation; but when it did fall it accomplished something. Now suppose an on-looker had suggested that time was being wasted in hauling the herculean hammer up, and had offered to tap the iron-bound pile with a child's spade, saying he could give a hundred taps to the one blow, what would have been thought of his suggestion? It would have been laughed to scorn, and he would have been told that one of their blows would do more than a whole century of his tapping; that there was no waste of time in raising the iron thunderbolt, for the power of its blow was in proportion to the height from which it fell. So, believer, your power and mine to affect men is in exact proportion to the elevation of our soul-life, and this elevation can only be obtained by secret communion with God, and abstinence from all that panders to the flesh and hinders the spirit's fellowship. Oh for a higher ambition to be made meet for the Master's use; a more intense longing for that secret power with God in private, that shall make us more than conquerors over hell in public. (*A. G. Brown.*) *Union of faith and prayer:*—I am thankful that these words concerning prayer have stood the ordeal of the late Revision. One seems to crave a reference to prayer after a lesson on the importance of faith. Prayer seems to be the voice by which faith must express itself; it is almost, or even quite, impossible to conceive of faith

coming into action except in connection with and by means of the utterance of prayer. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*)

Vers. 30–32. **And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee.**—*Christ teaching His disciples*:—I. HE EXPLAINED TO THEM HIS PRESENT STATE. He was about to be delivered by a traitorous disciple, &c. II. HE TOLD THEM THE PARTIES INTO WHOSE POWER HE HAD BEEN GIVEN. 1. To be delivered into the hands of men, is to be put into their power—to do to Him, and with Him, as they chose. 2. They could have this power only by special permission—from the Father, and Himself. 3. It is marvellous that He should have been so delivered. God in humanity! It brought out their desperate wickedness, proved the voluntariness of His obedience, showed how blind sin is in its supposed triumphs, &c. III. HE TOLD THEM WHAT MUST BEFALL HIM AT THE HANDS OF MEN. 1. That Christ was to die, was not now foretold for the first time, predicted, &c. 2. This death of Christ was necessary, &c. IV. HE FURTHER REVEALED TO THEM THE FUTURE, BY TELLING THEM OF HIS RESURRECTION. The result of an agency, neither human nor satanic, but Divine; prophecy, &c., called for it. Conclusion: 1. Christ had His sufferings ever in view (Luke xii. 50; John xii. 27). 2. In His sufferings and resurrection He saw His people. 3. He unveiled the future to His disciples. They were contending for honour—on the brink of sufferings—understood not the warning of Christ. (*Expository Discourses.*) *The complete truth*:—About this announcement there are two things remarkable—Christ's care in preparing His disciples for the cross, and the confidence with which Christ affirms His own resurrection. To have spoken of the betrayal alone, would have been to have put before His disciples a fragmentary truth; over the darkness of death Christ sheds the light of resurrection. The revelation of Christ's purposes can occasion grief only when it is incompletely apprehended; sorrow attaches to some of the intermediate points, but never to the issue; "the Lamb slain" is a part of the process; the Lamb slain, but seated in the midst of the throne, is the sublime consummation. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The utility of truth not understood*:—It is not to no purpose, to speak things that are not immediately understood. Seed, though it lies in the ground awhile unseen, is not lost or thrown away, but will bring forth fruit. If you confine your teacher, you hinder your learning; if you limit his discourses to your present apprehensions, how shall he raise your understandings? If he accommodate all things to your present weakness, you will never be the wiser, than you are now; you will be always in swaddling clothes. (*Dr. Whichcote.*) *Understood not*:—When I was a little girl I had a sovereign given to me. If it had been a shilling I might have put it in my own little purse, and spent it at once; but, being a sovereign, my dear father took care of it for me, and I expect I forgot all about it. But one day when I was quite grown up, he called me into his study and gave me the sovereign, reminding me how it had been given me when I was about as high as the back of a chair. And I was very glad to have it then, for I understood how much it was worth, and knew very well what to do with it. Now, when you come to some saying of the Lord Jesus that you do not understand or see how to make any use of yourself, do not think it of no consequence whether you read it or not. When you are older you will find that it is just like my sovereign, coming back to you when you want it and are able to make use of it. (*Frances Ridley Havergal.*)

Ver. 33–37. **What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?**—*The true child our pattern*:—What is the true child like? I. HE IS UNCONSCIOUS OF HIMSELF; self-dissection or analysis is unknown to him. II. HE LIVES IN THE PRESENT. 1. He never worries or is anxious about the future; sufficient to the day, for him, is the evil thereof. 2. So also, though always aspiring, he is never discontented in the ungrateful or peevish sense; sufficient likewise for the day is the good thereof; he would not have it otherwise. III. HIS PLEASURES ARE SIMPLE, pure, natural, fresh from the hand of God. The least of His gifts, even a cup of cold water, has value in his eyes, so that he wastes not wilfully. IV. HE LOOKS FORWARD WITH BOUNDLESS HOPE TO A GREATER, MORE COMPLETE LIFE (*i.e.*, to be "grown up"). V. HE KNOWS NOT HOW TO SNEER OR BE CYNICAL: but instinctively shrinks from a sneer as from a blow or a sting. VI. HIS AVERSIONS AND DREADS ARE TRUE AND SYMBOLICAL (until, like his tastes and likings, made artificial by example and training). *E.g.*—(1) Darkness and all that is black; (2) bitterness, sourness, all that is acrid or sickening; (3) all that wounds and kills. VII. HIS OBEDIENCE IS NOT RELUCTANT, BUT FAITHFUL. VIII. HIS HEART RESPONDS TO THE TOUCH OF

TRUTH, if honestly and faithfully appealed to. (*Vita.*) *The lesson of humility*:—Children are patterns of humility in these respects. 1. They are not so puffed up as older people with conceit of themselves, or of their own good parts and gifts; they do not think the better of themselves because they possess these advantages, nor do they boast of them. 2. They do not disdain or despise others, but think as well of them as of themselves, even if inferiors. 3. They are not ambitious in seeking after vain-glory. 4. They are not given to strife and contention, but are of a quiet and peaceable disposition. 5. They do not envy the good fortune of others, but rejoice in each other's prosperity. 6. They are tractable to admonition and reproof, ready to submit to it, and easily reclaimed from a fault. (*G. Petter.*) *Lesson against pride*:—I. The humility and trustfulness of children should be preserved by men. II. They who have most power should render most service. III. They who descend most in love will rise most in honour. IV. God is served by obedience to Christ, and Christ by kindness to the least and lowest who belong to Him. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *Disciples disputing*:—I. THOSE WHOSE CONDUCT IS BEFORE US ARE THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. Externally, really and spiritually; hence, this spectacle is one within the bosom of the Church. II. THEY DISPUTED AMONG THEMSELVES BY THE WAY. How fitly did the College of Apostles foreshadow the state of the Church in after ages. III. THE CAUSE OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG THEM—"Who should be the greatest." Worldly ambition was the root of bitterness. The secret of most of the contentions of seeming Christians. IV. CHRIST DID NOT INTERFERE TO PREVENT THESE CONTENDINGS. V. CHRIST, THOUGH HE SUFFERED THEM TO END THEIR CONTEST, CALLED THEM TO ACCOUNT. Divisions are most offensive to Him. He will call the sowers of division to account. VI. TO THE INQUIRY OF CHRIST AS TO THE GROUNDS OF THEIR DISPUTE, THEY MADE AT FIRST NO ANSWER. VII. CHRIST TAKES ADVANTAGE OF WHAT HAD OCCURRED, IN ORDER TO INCULCATE THE DUTY AND RECOMMEND THE GRACE OF HUMILITY. Beware of disputes, and therefore of pride. Cultivate true Christian greatness—Christ's example. (*Expository Discourses.*) *Ambition*:—I. WHAT IS IT? II. PROOF THAT IT IS EVIL. III. MEANS OF CURE. I. AMBITION IS TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE DESIRE OF EXCELLENCE. II. THAT AMBITION IS EVIL IN ITS NATURE, AND THEREFORE DEGRADING IN ITS INFLUENCE, IS EVIDENT. 1. Because it is inconsistent with our relation to God as creatures. 2. It is inconsistent with our relation to God as sinners. 3. Because Christ always reproved this desire of pre-eminence. 4. This trait of character did not belong to Christ. 5. We always approve of the opposite temper whenever we see it manifested. 6. It is inconsistent with our being governed by right motives and affections. III. MEANS OF CURE. 1. Cultivating a sense of our insignificance and unworthiness. 2. Having our hearts filled with Christ. 3. By constantly refusing to yield to this evil desire; refusing to cherish it or to obey its dictates. By uniformly avoiding to seek the honour which comes from men. (*Chas. Hodge, D.D.*) *Who is the greatest*:—I. THE WORLD'S OPINION. The world's great men are usually great conquerors, or great philosophers, poets, &c. Many of them small men, viewed in their moral relations. Alexander wept for another world to conquer. "Greater is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." See the world's great ones described (Matt. xx. 25, 26). Haman was one such, yet a very little man. It is said there are three classes of great men. 1. Those who are born great. 2. Those who have greatness thrust upon them. 3. Those who achieve greatness. The world sees no greatness in lowliness. II. THE DISCIPLES' WISH. Even they wished to be great. Not, indeed, after the world's fashion, but each one wanted to be above the rest. Each one might think he deserved to be first, or had qualities that fitted him for pre-eminence. III. THE MASTER'S LESSON. Note—1. The kindness of His manner. "Speak the truth in love." 2. The simplicity and clearness of illustration. Might have argued, but took a little child in His arms. 3. The nature of the lesson. Goodness is greatness. Learn: 1. Not to be deceived by the world's notions of greatness. 2. Not to give place to ambitious desires. 3. To aim after goodness, and let the greatness follow if it may. (*J. C. Gray.*) *A child for a text*:—I. Let us begin with THE MISTAKE SOMETIMES MADE, WHICH WILL CERTAINLY NEED CORRECTION. Our Lord does not teach by any implication that children are sinless little creatures. 1. For the argument and illustration of the discourse He gave are all against such a supposition. According to the authorized version, Christ says that they are "lost," that the Son of Man needed to come to "save" them, and without the will of the Father they would "perish" (Matt. xviii. 11–14). 2. The story offers no proof of any innocence even in the child He chose. Ecclesiastical tradition, not reliable,

states that this boy became afterwards the martyr Ignatius, and was in the subsequent persecutions thrown to the wild beasts at Rome. That is the best which could be said of him, and we do not know even so much to be true. Surely, he was never offered as a model child, and we do not suppose he was born unlike others. II. So now let us inquire WHAT IS THE TRUE SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE OF THE PASSAGE. It is evident that our Lord was rebuking His disciples for a foolish dispute they had had "by the way." And he did this by commending to them a child-like disposition. 1. A child is remarkable for his considerateness of others. It is the hardest thing we ever try to do to teach our children to be aristocratic and keep up "style." They are instinctive in their fondness for what is agreeably human. It was asked of the good Cecil's daughter what made everybody love her? She thought a moment with a curious sort of surprise, then answered with her own kind of logic, "Because I love everybody." 2. A child is remarkable for his obedience to rightful authority. His subjection is instinctive as his charity is. He accepts the parental will as law. So his fidelity is spontaneous; he does not recognize any merit in it. He does the exact thing he was set to do. When the young girl in the class heard the teacher say, "How is the will of God done in heaven?" she answered, "It is done without anybody's asking any questions." 3. A child is remarkable for his contentment in the home circle. There is only one mother in the world, and where that mother is, there is home. Disturb him, wound him, frighten him, maltreat him, and his earliest wish is, "Please let me go home." 4. A child is remarkable for his persistency of trust. Children are the most logical creatures in the world. A lady asked the small daughter of the missionary Judson, "Were you not afraid to journey so far over the ocean?" And the reply was, "Why, no, madam: father prayed for us when we started!" Do a boy a real kindness, and nothing on earth can keep him from insisting to all the others that you are a kind man. Help him once, and he will keep coming with a pathetic sort of confidence that you like to help him. For one, having stumbled around a good deal in this muddle of a world, in which nobody seems to stick to anything, I am ready to say I know nothing more beautiful than the sweet forgiveness, and renewal of confidence, which a child shows when, having met a rebuff once and been turned away, it sits wondering and waiting, as if sure you would come round by and by and be good again. III. Thus, now, having studied the real meaning of this incident, let us try to find out ITS PRACTICAL BEARING. 1. In the first place, consider how it would modify our estimates of human greatness. Here is the point at which our Lord meant His instruction should be felt earliest. These disciples had been contending about pre-eminence. Perhaps Peter began the jealous dispute, reminding them that he kept the house where Jesus was entertained. Perhaps John asked him to remember the place Jesus usually gave him at the table. Perhaps Andrew suggested that Simon might as well bear in mind that he had led him to Jesus down in Bethabara. Perhaps Matthew hushed them imperiously, declaring that none of them were business men as he had been. And perhaps James insisted that age and experience had some rights in the reckoning of precedence. Thus they worked themselves up into a passion. All this petulance was met by the spectacle of a tranquil little boy, who possibly wondered how he came to be put into show: and while they were looking curiously at him, Jesus said, calmly: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." 2. Next, let us consider how this teaching would modify our aims for attainment. We need more of this child-spirit in our hearts. Does any one ask how it may be attained? In the old fable which the Hebrews used to teach their children about the fallen angels, they said that the angels of knowledge, proud and wilful, were cast down hopelessly into hell; but the angels of love, humble and tearful, crept back once more into the blessed light, and were welcomed home. 3. Again, let us consider how these words of Christ would modify our intellectual processes of study. Yes: but the Bible says do this thing like a child. Study with your faith rather than your intellect. A man needs conversion, not conviction. Our Lord here reverses human terms of counsel. We say to a child, "Be a man," but Jesus says to a man, "Be a child." That is the way to enter the kingdom. 4. Once more: let us consider how this doctrine will modify our formulas of belief. There is something for the great divines to learn also. Do we never force our theories beyond the confines of the gospel? A child's theology is frequently wiser for real human need than a man's. It often comes to pass that when a mature intellect has been worrying itself into most discouraging confusion, it is startled by the keen penetration and almost oracular deliverance of

an infant trust. Ask one of our young girls, "What is God?" Perhaps she will give answer, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." And perhaps she will reply, "God is my father in heaven." For all availableness to deep experience of need, some of us think that, little as this seems to say, really it says more than the other does. Faith cannot climb up on the north side of a doctrine in the shade. She took her notion out of the prayer, and not out of the catechism; that is all. These great formulas ought to be explained in the very warmth and light of the figures and relationships of the gospel. 5. Let us consider likewise how Christ's teaching would modify our advice to inquirers. Some of those who claim to be honest seekers after truth completely invert the order of relation between belief and duty. Much of the difficulty they profess to find in the gospel is irrelevant in the matter of obligation, and entirely illogical in the matter of faith. Any sensible child is aware that its father's relationship by marriage, social standing in the community, form of daily occupation, political influence in the party, or citizenship by naturalization, has nothing to do with the question of its own obedience to his just commands. To reckon how much money he owes or owns, does not come before minding what he says. But inquirers will often insist on having the Trinity made clear, before they will take up repentance. They say they are stumbled about praying, because they cannot understand the Incarnation. Now the child-spirit knows that taking the yoke comes even before learning of Christ (see Matt. xi. 29). Jesus says, Do My will (John vii. 17). 6. Finally, let us consider how this teaching will modify our tests of experience in grace. It is only a strange perversity which makes us seem to prefer the more subtle evidences of a change of heart. Here a plain test is proposed. The last result, the positively completed picture, of regeneration, is found in a child's temper and disposition. Any one ought to know whether he possesses that or not. He can find out. His life will answer his questions, when possibly he cannot exactly find out about so mysterious a thing as his heart. Nobody is going to be excluded from heaven because he cannot find out his election or his regeneration, if he is holy, and truly believes in Christ, "as this little child." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The desire to be first*:—If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last (v. 35). There is no way in which men are surer to outwit themselves than in looking out for themselves over everybody else. The poorest servant in the world is the one who always puts himself before his employer. The poorest place to buy anything is where the dealer never regards the interest of his customers. He is less than nothing as a friend who gives his friend the second place in his plans and course. No politician can be a leader while it appears that he cares only for his own advancement, and nothing for the voters. What would a soldier be worth whose aim was to look out for his own safety and comfort in times of service and battle? And if this principle be applicable in other fields, how much more does it apply to Christian service! He who is intent on what he can gain out of his religion, will be behind the poorest servant of Christ who is a servant in truth as well as in name. Self-seeking is self-destroying in the kingdom of God. (*H. Clay Trumbull.*) *In My name*:—This means, for My sake, and it includes (1) because they belong to Christian parents; (2) because they partake of the nature which Christ took upon Him; (3) because they belong to the race which Christ redeemed; (4) because, like Christ, they are poor; (5) because Christ may be honoured in their after-life. Such children are received in Christ's Name, not only in orphanages or in Sunday schools, but by many of the Christ-loving poor, who have children of their own, and yet take into their homes some poor waif or stray, and cherish it as their own flesh and blood, for no reward except the Lord's approval. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Receiveth Me*:—The grace of this promise seems almost incredible. What an honour would any Christian have esteemed it, if he had been permitted to receive Christ under his roof for a single hour, and yet that receiving might have been external and transitory; but the Lord here undoubtedly promises that to receive a little one in His Name is to receive Him effectually. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 38–40. **And we forbade him.**—*Christian toleration*:—I. THAT POWER TO DO GOOD IS NOT MONOPOLIZED BY ONE CLASS OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. We can only conjecture, but there is strong reason for supposing, as many have done, that this man who was encountered in his work by our Lord's disciples, was a disciple of John Baptist. It is not unlikely that he may have been but partially enlightened as to the mission of our Lord; or have fully believed in Him as the Messiah, but

have preferred an independent course of action for himself. We have seen, and we see to-day, similar deeds of helpful charity being performed by men not of *our* party, who do not worship at the church or chapel which we are accustomed to attend. The essentials of a good deed are alike in both cases. These neighbours of ours are engaged in casting out the demons of ignorance, vicious habits, vile passions, and despairing poverty. Some of them have confronted difficulties which we have not dared to face, and solved problems which we had pronounced impossible of solution. All Christian parties and all Christian men can bear testimony to the universal existence of this fact. II. WE REMARK THAT THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES IS NOT SINGULAR FOR ITS INTOLERANCE. The clannish feeling was very strong amongst these men. There is something really good at the bottom of this feeling. It implies and involves a binding principle of fealty, which is one of the truest feelings of noble natures. But unless it is checked in some of its tendencies, and regulated by judicious reflections, it becomes exclusive and illiberal. We can hardly imagine the meek, gentle, and tender-spirited John joining in the exclusive conduct of this severe proceeding. It is difficult to conceive of the censure which he could pass upon a man who was doing good. But the meekest men become severe where privileges of a certain order are concerned. III. WE OBSERVE THE TOLERANT SPIRIT OF CHRIST. "Forbid him not!" Let him alone; leave him to his work! "Forbid him not!" for two reasons: first, because "there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name that can lightly (or 'easily,' 'quickly,' readily') speak evil of Me." Secondly, "He that is not against us is on our part." He that cannot speak against me may be regarded as my friend. In a matter like this the absence of opposition may be accepted as a proof of support. Tacit approval of our work must be welcomed as next in importance, if no more, to definite co-operation. Do we not wait for men to join our ranks before we acknowledge them as followers of Christ? We have devoted too much of the energy and earnestness of our life to the little matters that absorb us as denominations rather than to the grander and mightier subjects that concern us as Christians. Between us and those from whom we stand aloof there may exist no real barrier to a happy and hearty recognition of our common interest in the same dear and blessed Lord. Everything which tends to rend away the veil that separates the follower of Jesus Christ from his brother is to be hailed with devout and fervent gratitude, and every spirit should yearn to join the prayer of that great heart while yet upon the earth, "That they all may be one." (*W. Dorling.*) *The line of conduct we should adopt towards those who follow not with us:*—I would remark—I. THAT IT BECOMES US CAREFULLY TO OBSERVE THEIR SENTIMENTS, PROFESSIONS, CHARACTERS, AND CONDUCT. "They follow not with us;" therefore, says one, they must be wrong. Let them alone, says another. We have sufficient to do to mind our own concerns, replies a third. Am I my brother's keeper? observes a fourth. Truth and charity require that we should ascertain the sentiments and practices of those who follow not with us, before we forbid them; and that we should ascertain those sentiments from authorized and acknowledged statements and records, as far as we can obtain access to them. II. Such inquires naturally lead to a second remark; namely, that where we have not opportunity of thus precisely ascertaining the sentiments and conduct of those who follow not with us; and where it is necessary, notwithstanding, to give some advice with respect to them, THAT ADVICE SHOULD BE GIVEN IN AS FAVOURABLE A MANNER AS THE CIRCUMSTANCES WITH WHICH WE ARE ACQUAINTED WILL ALLOW. They follow not with us; but are they casting out Satan in the name of Christ?—They follow not with us. Now, we are convinced of being right, and this affords a legitimate presumption that those who differ from us are in some respects wrong; but, at the same time, it is not a necessary conclusion. The presumption, therefore, of criminality being disposed of, the next inquiry is, Do they cast out Satan in the name of Christ? or, in plainer terms, Are they, on Christian principles, endeavouring to diminish the sum of crime and misery—to promote the cause of peace and purity, to lead men from sin to holiness? and if so, the answer must be—"Forbid them not." Observe—It must be in the name of Christ. Men come continually with this and that ingenious device and philosophical contrivance; the cant of liberalism, the virtues of universal suffrage, the abolition of the poor laws—this panacea for all that is wrong, and the patent for the production of all that is right. I say not, there is nothing in these things; I say not that politicians and legislators may not do well to consider such topics; but, as a Christian man and a Christian minister, I say—All these are mere trifles. The philosopher may say—With this machine, and this standing-place, I will move the world. True, says his opponent; in the longest

space of human life you will move the world some thousandth part of an inch—and what then? Such is the whole value of the labours of many. It must be in the name of Christ, the dignity of His character, the power, the mercy, the atonement, the intercession, the grace of Christ. All other means, brethren, of casting out devils, of overcoming sin, of producing holiness, are utterly in vain; the evil spirit will return. He will say—Jesus I know, and Paul I know—but who are ye? Even moral precepts, moral suasion, the terrors of the law, the solemnities of death, the eternal consequences of judgment, are found ineffectual to break the bondage of iniquity. (*T. Webster, M.A.*) *The degrees of Christianity*:—I. THE DEGREE OF SERVICE. "He that is not against us is on our part." That man of whom St. John tells us in our text that he had cast out devils in Jesus's name, was mightily stimulated by the appearance of Jesus and His wonderful works. He was no disciple, for how could he else have taken his own way, if in his heart he truly belonged to Jesus. His heart was far from Jesus, but his understanding perceived the importance of Jesus, and he believed in the power of His name which he had often experienced. Thus he was a servant, though not a child, of God; in Jesus's service, but not in His commission. The name of Jesus exercises an overwhelming authority even upon those who in heart are far from Him, even on the things of natural human life, law, science, art, &c. These are not Christianized in the proper sense of that word, and yet we call them Christian; they are in the service of the cause of Jesus. Christians ought not to disparage outward Christianity, or call it hypocrisy; it acknowledges the name of Christ and is serving His cause. When the point in question is our adoption and salvation, then we must be *for* Him. But he already serves Him who is not exactly against Him and His cause. That is the first degree, the degree of serving His cause. But saving His believing people has a higher value. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water," &c. However, nobody has an eye for this hidden beauty, but he who in the spirit perceives the beauty of Jesus, and nobody has a hearty love for the poor saints of Jesus but he who in love has shut up the Lord Jesus in his heart. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." The Lord does not speak of friendly services such as man renders to man from natural sympathy, but of the service rendered to His disciples, and rendered to them because they are His disciples. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in *My name*, because *ye belong to* Christ." Such a serving of the saints is not without communion with Jesus in faith and love. II. That is the other degree. THE DEGREE OF COMMUNION, OF COMMUNION OF HEART. For communion of the heart with Jesus is that, and that only, which constitutes the disciple of Jesus the Christian. My beloved brethren, there are many things which we find and win in Jesus—wisdom, holiness, glory—but what we have to seek in Him, in the first place, is the pardon of our sins; what we have to see in Him is the Lamb of God which takes away our sins. Then all other things will be added to us; that is the communion with Jesus, the following of Jesus, as St. John narrates it of himself, for our example and stimulation. That is his meaning when he tells Jesus of one "who followeth not us." But that is not all. That man of whom St. John speaks exercised an activity which had a certain resemblance to the working of the apostles. Thus St. John did not only recognize an imitation of Jesus Christ in faith and love, but also in good works, not only a communion of the heart, but also of the life. He thought of this not less when he spoke that word. And though we be no apostles, and though we are not all ministers of the gospel, we yet have all a share in the one great work of helping to build up and hasten the full glory of the kingdom of Christ. But our entering into that communion of working with Jesus is only effected by prayer, by His prayer and ours. In the communion of the love of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit begins every prayer, and we carry it out in the words of our lips. That prayer sends down upon us the fulness of the Spirit while our prayer plunges us into the depth of the Divine spiritual life, that we may emerge from it filled with the powers of a higher world. Therein the communion with Jesus Christ is finished. (*C. L. E. Luthardt.*) *The fellowship of the apostles*:—It is argued that as the apostles were not allowed to forbid this stranger, neither may the Church forbid strange preachers; that all have a right to preach, whether they follow the Church or no, so that they do but preach in the name of Jesus. Such is the objection, and I propose now to consider it. 1. First, then, this man was not preaching; he was casting out devils. This is a great difference—he was doing a miracle. "There is no man which shall do *a miracle* in My name," &c. *Man* cannot overcome the

devil, Christ only overcomes him. If a man casts out a devil, he has power from Christ; and if he has power from Christ, he must have a commission from Christ; and who shall forbid one, to whom God gives commission to do miracles, from doing them? That would be fighting against God. But, on the other hand, many a man may preach without being sent from God and having power from Him; for Christ expressly warns us against false prophets. 2. But it may be said, "The effects of preaching *are* a miracle. A good preacher converts persons; he casts out devils from the hearts of those whom he changes from sin to holiness. This he could not do without power from God. But what seems good, is often not good. 3. But, again, even if sinners *are* converted upon such a one's preaching, this would not show that *he* did the work, or, at least, that he had more than a share in it. The miracle might after all belong to the Church, not to him. They are but the occasion of the miracle, not the instrument of it. Persons who take up with strange preachers often grant that they gained their first impressions *in* the Church. To proceed. (1) It should be observed, then, that if our Saviour says on this occasion, "He that is not against us is on our part"; yet elsewhere He says, "He that is not with Me is against Me." The truth is, while a system is making way against an existing state of things, help of any kind advances it; but when it is established, the same kind of professed help tells against it. It was at a time when there was *no* church; we have no warrant for saying that because men might work in Christ's name, without following the apostles, before He had built up His Church, and had made them the foundations of it, therefore such persons may do so lawfully since. He did not set up His Church till after the resurrection. Accordingly, when the Christians at Corinth went into parties, and set up forms of doctrine of their own, St. Paul forbade them. "What!" he said, "came the Word of God out from you?" (1 Cor. xiv. 36). That Church made you what you are, as far as you are Christian, and has a right to bid you follow her. And for what we know, the very man in the text was one of St. John's disciples; who might lawfully remain as he was without joining the apostles *till* the apostles received the gift of the Holy Ghost, then he was bound to join *them*. (2) And here, too, we have light thrown upon an expression in the text, "In My name." Merely to use the name of Jesus is not enough; we must look for that name where He has lodged it. He has not lodged it in the world at large, but in a secure dwelling-place, and we have that name engraven on us only when we are in that dwelling-place (Exod. xxiii. 20, 21). Thus the stranger in the text might use the name of Jesus without following the apostles, because they had not yet had the name of Christ named upon them. Nothing can be inferred from the text in favour of those who set up against the Church, or who interfere with it. On the whole, then, I would say this; when strangers to the Church preach great Christian truths, and do not oppose the Church, then, though we may not follow them, though we may not join them, yet we are not allowed to forbid them; but in proportion as they preach what is in itself untrue, and do actively oppose God's great Ordinance, so far they are not like the man whom our Lord told His apostles not to forbid. But in all cases, whether they preach true doctrine or not, or whether they oppose us or not, so much we learn, viz., that we must overcome them, not so much by refuting them, as by preaching the truth. Let us be far more set upon alluring souls into the right way than on forbidding them the wrong. Let us be like racers in a course, who do not impede, but try to outstrip each other by love. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *Party spirit*:—I. ATTEND TO A FEW GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PASSAGE. 1. On the introduction of a new dispensation the power of working miracles was necessary, in order to establish its Divine authority; and this power consequently attended the first ages of Christianity. 2. Some who profess a sacred regard for the name of Jesus, and the doctrines of the gospel, may nevertheless not follow Him in all things as we do, or as they themselves ought to do. This may arise from ignorance, indolence, and inadvertence. 3. In the conduct of the disiciples we may see our own aptness to imagine that those do not follow Christ at all who do not follow Him with us. II. INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES OF THAT UNCHARITABLE JUDGMENT, WHICH PROFESSED CHRISTIANS ARE DISPOSED TO PASS UPON ONE ANOTHER. 1. An immoderate degree of self-love. 2. Bigotry and party spirit are another source of uncharitable judgment. 3. An idle and pragmatic temper is another of these causes. 4. A liberty taken to censure and condemn others, is often vindicated by the appearance of a similar disposition on the other side. Let us not judge of men's thoughts and intentions when there is nothing reprehensible in their conduct. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The spirit of intolerance and sectarianism*:—Note the "us." Although no exegetical

emphasis is lying on it, yet it is well to read it with some doctrinal intonation. It is the point at which the principle of exclusiveness crops up—that spirit of intolerance which so easily develops itself into fagot and fire. It was rife in the Jewish nation. It had been rife among other peoples. And although it was nipped in the bud by the Saviour the moment it sprang up among His disciples, yet by and by it rose again within the circle of Christendom, and grew into a upas tree that spread its branches, and distilled its blight, almost as far as the name of Christ was named. The tree still stands, alas—though many a noble hatchet has been raised to cut it down. It stands; but the hatchets have not been plied in vain. It is moribund. And here and there some of its larger boughs have been lopped off, so that the sweet air of heaven is getting in upon hundreds of thousands of the more favoured of those who were sitting in the shadow of death. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Working with Christ outside the apostolate:*—The complaint brought by the disciples against the man was, "he followeth not us,"—us, the apostles; the complaint says nothing about following Christ. There was a spirit of envy and selfishness in this remark, which would have restrained Christ's favours to the persons of the apostles and their immediate adherents. But our Lord reminds the complainants that the man wrought miracles in their Master's name, as they themselves had owned; *i.e.*, he wrought miracles in conformity to Christ's will, and for the promotion of Christ's glory—*i.e.*, in union with Christ—and not for any private end; therefore the man was *with Christ*, though he did not personally follow in the company of the apostles, just as John Baptist was *with Christ*, though not in person; and as all the apostles preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments of Christ in Christ's name in all parts of the world were with one another and with Christ, after He had ascended into heaven. The man was not neuter in the cause, and therefore was not against them; and their Master had authorized him openly by enabling him to work in His name; and therefore the man was with Him, and consequently with His apostles, in heart and spirit, though not in person and presence, and was not to be forbidden or discouraged by them. Thus our Lord delivered a warning against that sectarian spirit which is eager for its own ends rather than for Christ's; and would limit Christ's graces to personal communion with itself, instead of inquiring whether those whom it would exclude from grace are not working in Christ's name—that is, in obedience to His laws, and for the promotion of His glory; and in the unity of His Church, and in the full and free administration of His Word and Sacraments, and so in communion with Him. Besides—even if the man was separated from their communion, and worked miracles in separation (which does not appear to have been the case, for he worked in the name of Christ), what they ought to have forbidden was the being in separation, and not the working miracles. If a man, separated from Christ and His Church, preaches Christ, then Christ approves His own Word, preached by one in separation; but He does not approve the separation itself, any more than God approved the sins of Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas, and Judas, when He prophesied and preached by their mouths. (*Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.*) *Intolerance rebuked:*—There lived in Berlin a shoemaker who had a habit of speaking harshly and uncharitably of all his neighbours who did not think quite as he did about religion. The old pastor of the parish in which the shoemaker lived heard of this, and felt that he must try to teach him a lesson of toleration. He did it in this way. Sending for the shoemaker one morning, he said to him, "John, take my measure for a pair of boots." "With pleasure, your reverence," replied the shoemaker, "please take off your boot." The clergyman did so, and the shoemaker measured his foot from toe to heel, and over the instep, noted all down in his pocket-book; and then prepared to leave the room. But, as he was putting up the measure, the pastor said to him, "John, my son also requires a pair of boots." "I will make them with pleasure, your reverence. Can I take the young gentleman's measure this morning?" "Oh, that is unnecessary," said the pastor; "the lad is fourteen, but you can make my boots and his from the same last." "Your reverence, that will never do," said the shoemaker, with a smile of surprise. "I tell you, John, to make my boots and those for my son, on the same last." "No, your reverence, I cannot do it." "It must be done—on the same last, remember." "But, your reverence, it is not possible, if the boots are to fit," said the shoemaker, thinking to himself that the old pastor's wits must be leaving him. "Ah, then, master shoemaker," said the clergyman, "every pair of boots must be made on their own last, if they are to fit, and yet you think that God is to form all Christians exactly according to your own last, of the same measure and growth in religion as yourself. That will not do, either." The shoemaker was abashed. Then

he said, "I thank your reverence for this sermon, and I will try to remember it, and to judge my neighbours less harshly in the future."

Ver. 41. **A cup of water to drink in My name.**—*The smallest gift and the largest reward:*—I. THE DESCRIPTION which is here given of the disciples of Christ, is exceedingly interesting and instructive. They "belong" to Christ; they are peculiarly and emphatically His; speaking of them, he calls them "My sheep," "My people," "My disciples;" and addressing His heavenly Father respecting them, He says, "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them." And the Scriptures, which thus represent Christians as the property of Christ, teach us also the way in which they become so entirely His. It is evident from Christ's own language, that His disciples belong to Him primarily by the gift of His Father. "Thine they were," says He, "and Thou gavest them Me. My Father which gave them to Me, is greater than all. All that the Father hath given to Me shall come to Me." And if they thus belong to Christ by His reception of them from the Father, and by His redemption of them by His blood, they are also His by their own voluntary dedication of themselves to Him, as the result of His electing and redeeming mercy. II. THE GIFT which Jesus Christ asks on behalf of these His disciples, is a cup of water. When we consider believers as belonging so peculiarly to Christ, we might suppose that He would solicit for them the most costly and munificent donations that the most wealthy could bestow; but it is a remarkable and an interesting fact, that He never either sought great things for Himself, or led His disciples to expect great things from others. An impostor, or a mere enthusiast, would in all probability have acted differently, and have said to his disciples, "Whosoever shall give you thousands of gold and silver; whosoever shall exalt you to worldly dignity and honour; and whosoever shall clothe you in purple and fine linen, and cause you to fare sumptuously every day;"—but His language was, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink." And let not such a gift, small as it is, be despised. In our circumstances, we are mercifully unable to estimate its worth; but a man may be brought into such a situation that even a cup of water would be the most valuable and acceptable present that he could receive. When Samson had slain, single-handed, a thousand of his Philistine foes, he cried unto the Lord and said, "I die for thirst." But when a little water was procured, "his spirit came again, and he revived." The smallness of the gift which Christ solicits in our text, may, however, suitably admonish His disciples to be satisfied with little. III. THE MOTIVE by which you should be influenced in the bestowment of this gift, seems to include both love to Christ and to His disciples; for, says He, "whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, and because ye belong to Christ." Such is the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, that an action productive of good to others may be done merely for the purpose of thereby accomplishing some selfish and unhallowed object, merely because they are following with you, and adhering to the sect or party to which you belong. But, to return to the consideration of the motives by which our gifts are to be influenced—the greatest and the purest is love to Christ. To Him we are laid under unspeakable obligations for the love with which He loved us, when He died for our sins, and to secure the complete and eternal salvation of our souls. Love to Christ cannot exist, however, without love to Christians, who belong to Christ, and who bear His image; "for every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of Him." IV. The reward by which the bestower of this gift will be honoured and enriched is secured to him by the Saviour's faithful promise, "Verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." 1. He shall be rewarded by the pleasurable feelings which the exercise of benevolence and kindness to others never fails to produce. 2. He shall be rewarded with the prayers, and blessings, and sympathy of the disciple on whom he has bestowed the gift. 3. He shall be rewarded with the approbation and blessing of Christ Himself. (*J. Alexander.*) *A cup of water:*—There is something very economical about the generosity of kindness; a little goes a long way. (*Faber.*) *A right motive:*—It is said that when Andrew Fuller went into his native town to collect for the cause of missions, one of his old acquaintances said, "Well, Andrew, I'll give five pounds, seeing it's *you*." "No," said Mr. Fuller, "I can take nothing for this cause, seeing it's *me*":—and handed the money back. The man felt reproved, but in a moment he said, "Andrew, you are right. Here are ten pounds, seeing it is for the Lord Jesus Christ." *An act, a motive, and a reward:*—Here is an act, a motive, and a reward, calling for thought. As to the act, it is both suggestive and comprehensive. A man may live without food for many days; but he cannot exist without water for

the body's cooling and circulating fluids. So there is a moral life that is kept up by the interchange of little acts; the kind salutation, the smile, the "kiss of charity," the word "fitly spoken and in season," which cost nothing to the giver, but are invaluable to the receiver. So the little acts of giving, the "mites" of poor widows, the full carrying out of Paul's universal appointment, "let every one of you lay by him in store as the Lord hath prospered him"—it is these gathered drops that fill the exhaustless reservoirs of world-wide Christian charities. The motive, too, like that which sees in a child the lineaments of an esteemed parent, that recognizes in the livery the servant of a liege-lord, it is this recognition of Christ in His disciple that at once honours the Master, and which permits Him to honour the service. The reward, too, is in keeping with the act and its motive. The little badge a prince bestows is more than a life-estate. To find true what Jesus declares shortly after (Matt. xxv.), that the rewards of the final judgment turn on these little acts and their motive, that Jesus will say of forgotten trifles, "Ye did it to Me," the realization of this fact, so as to make it the rule of every-day life—this is to learn the lesson of giving a "cup of cold water" in the name of Christ. (*G. W. Samson, D.D.*) *Give in Christ's name—humanity not Christianity*:—"That man has given more to the poor than any man in the town; now that's what I call being a noble Christian," is the remark that a friend made a few days ago. This is also a sample of the opinion of quite a large class of people; they hold that because a man is benevolent he must naturally be a Christian; but this does not necessarily follow. A man may love the poor, sympathize with those in distress, and in the fulness of his heart relieve the wants of the pauper, and yet not be a Christian. He gives for humanity's sake, while the Christian gives only for Christ's sake. Humanity must not be mistaken for Christianity. Many noted highwaymen have given largely to the poor out of what they robbed from the rich. That they possessed humanity no one will doubt, but there was not a particle of Christianity about them. The virtue in humanity's gift lies in the amount given, but the test in Christianity's gift lies in the amount that's left behind; and while humanity rejoices in having given so much, Christianity will weep because she has no more to give. The gift for humanity's sake is good, but to give for Christ's sake is better. The Pharisee who ostentatiously cast in of his abundance pales into insignificance before the poor widow who cast in her all. Says Christ: "For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always." Christ first, the poor afterward. Had Mary given the money to the poor, she would have done well, but in that she gave it to Christ she did better. Had she given for humanity's sake, three hundred souls would each have the temporal satisfaction of a pennyworth of bread; but in that she did it for Christ's sake millions have been cheered and encouraged while reading of her devotion and tenderness of Christ. This is all expressed by Paul in a single sentence: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity, I am nothing." To feed the poor is humanity, but charity is Christianity. Humanity is transitory and passes away. Christianity is eternal, and, like a river, is continually fed by countless tiny tributaries that, however small and powerless in themselves, all combine to form one golden current that flows into a far more exceeding and eternal sea of glory. (*Frank Hope.*) *Whose am I*:—"Ye belong to Christ." These thoughts are suggested by this phrase. I. PROPRIETORSHIP. There is a sense in which it may be said that all men belong to Christ. 1. This claim to us is based primarily on His Creatorship. 2. All are His by redemption. 3. Baptism is a confirmation of all this. 4. But believers belong to Christ in a more peculiar sense by an act of personal consecration. In the case of many this act of consecration has been repeatedly renewed. 5. Believers are Christ's by adoption. The soul surrendered all its powers to Christ, and He graciously accepted the offering, and smiled upon the oblation. II. TO BELONG TO CHRIST IMPLIES PRIVILEGE. 1. Special care. 2. Identity of interests. If I am Christ's my joys are His joys, my sorrows are His sorrows. (1) Things done against the saints, Christ regards as done against Himself. (2) Things done for the saints Christ regards as done to Himself. The act of doing good to you will add to the felicity of the doer for ever. 3. Dignity. III. Belonging to Christ involves RESPONSIBILITY. 1. We are to live for Christ. 2. We are to live like Christ. 3. We are to confess Christ. (*R. Roberts.*) *Belonging to Christ*:—I. THE CONNECTION WHICH CHRIST CLAIMS WITH HIS PEOPLE. 1. They belong to Him by separation and surrender. 2. They possess some spiritual worth. There are in Scripture some hints respecting the Divine estimate of men. 3. They are appointed to high and sacred ministries. 4. They engage the interest

of Christ in their improvement. 5. They enjoy the honour of spiritual association. II. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FROM THE SUBJECT. 1. The difficulty of holding this truth firmly is seen. 2. It should encourage consistency of Christian life. 3. It invites us to consider the personal signs of connection with Christ. (*J. S. Bright.*)

Ver. 43. **And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off.**—*Stumbling-blocks*:—After stating the fearful punishment in store for those who impede the spiritual progress of others, our Lord proceeds to warn men not to place stumbling-blocks in their own way. He selects the chief instruments of sin—the hand, the foot, the eye—and counsels their immediate destruction, if need be, rather than allow them to work the threatened mischief. It is the hand which men lift up to do violence, as Cain did to his brother; or to appropriate what does not belong to them, like Achan. It is the feet which hurry us into forbidden paths, as they hurried Gehazi, or the old man of God whom the lion slew for his transgression. It is the eye which excites the lust to desire, in the spirit of Eve, something which God has seen fit to withhold. To hurt, to trespass, and to covet: what a common triple cord of sin it is! (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The price of salvation*:—The gentleness of the gospel is not toward sin, but only to win from it. It is love that lays down life for enemies, which makes these demands on friends. Jesus continually put before those who heard Him the price of salvation. It is a pearl, bought by selling all we have; the call which requires us to leave—hate in comparison—houses, lands, and dearest friends. It brings a sword to divide, a cross for us to bear. To lose a foot will make you walk slow and painful, to lose a hand will halve your power for gain or usefulness, to lose an eye is darkness and disfigurement. Precious are they, part of ourselves; bloody and anguishing the cutting off and plucking out. But it must be, it should be. Reckon it with our worldly arithmetic, and eternal life is cheap at any price. A career, however marred and maimed, which ends in heaven, is better than a painless and brilliant passage to the fire that shall never be quenched. Are things most sweet and necessary occasions of sin? Be rid of them at any cost. Spare not thyself, and God shall spare thee. Cripple thyself for holiness' sake, and everlasting life shall make thee whole. Fling away ecstatic delights to embrace purifying pains, for God has infinite stores of blessings, and eternity in which to give them. It is a wondrous thing to know that the pains and chastisements of this life are fitting us to bear the awful test of God's devouring fire, that the light which flashes from the face of God shall strike our souls, and the flames not kindle upon us. Compared with this, there are no joys, no sorrows; all other experiences get character from their power to affect this consummation. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Excision of offending members*:—The hands, the feet, the eyes, are set forth in God's Word as the instruments of the soul in compassing the gratification of certain distinct evil lusts: the hand is the instrument of covetous grasping and of violence; the feet are the means of evil companionship, and running into the ways of temptation and sin; through the eyes the soul covets what is not her own, and lusts after what is forbidden and polluting; through the eyes also the soul envies and hates, and the Lord classes "an evil eye" amongst the things that defile. But it may be asked, seeing that the members are but the instruments of the evil will, why does not the Lord denounce that, and that only? So He does when occasion serves; but in this instance He is setting forth the all-important truth that the evil will is mortified and slain, not by arguing with it, but by starving it; *i.e.*, by forbidding the members to yield themselves to its gratification. When the Lord bids a soul, for the sake of eternity, mortify its members, its outward members, He necessarily speaks to one who has two wills, an evil will belonging to the old man, and a better and holier belonging to the new. The evil will would gratify its lusts through its members, but the better will can forbid the members to lend themselves to the evil within, and can call to its aid the Spirit of God by prayer, and can mortify the flesh, and use in faith the means of grace. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Personal maiming*:—There are many persons who are ready to cut off other people's offending hands and feet, forgetting that the command is to cut off their own. At all costs save the life! Hands, feet, eyes may be cast away, but let the soul be held in godly discipline. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Mortification of sin a reasonable duty*:—I. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee," &c. To offend, in the language of Scripture, frequently means to put anything in the way of a person, which may cause him to fall or stumble (Rom. xii. 21; Matt. xi. 6, xvi. 23). Even servicable things must be removed if an occasion of evil. II. THE ARGUMENT

BY WHICH HE ENFORCES IT. It is shortly this: that it is *better* for us to do what He enjoins. Why better? Because not to do it will certainly bring on us greater evils hereafter. It is better to suffer a present evil, however great, than by avoiding it to incur a greater evil in the end. Thus men reason in common things. They endure present loss in hope of future gain; they lose a limb to save a life. To feel the force of this argument we must see what these consequences are. 1. We shall be shut out from heaven. "It is better to enter into life maimed," &c. Without mortifying sin now we can never be admitted there (Gal. v. 21; Rev. xxi. 27; Heb. xii. 14). 2. What it is to be cast into hell. 3. I remind you that if you seriously desire to set about the work, there is a powerful Friend who is ready to assist you with all needful strength and health. It is only "through the Spirit" that you can mortify the deeds of the body. (*E. Cooper.*) *Mutilation or fire*:—The mutilation of the body ordered by Jesus Christ. As Lord of the body He has the right to issue such requirements; common sense tells us that they cannot be meant to be without exception. His "if" prefacing each instance is enough to prove that He does not make them binding on everybody who enters His army. The soldier in the battle, having on the whole armour of God, does not need to be told to mutilate himself. He is not obstructed by wrongful occupation with any of the prominent members of his body. I. A due consideration of the threefold repetition will show THAT ALL OF US ARE SOMEHOW AFFECTED. Jesus means to single out every person who feels reluctant to give his all up to Him as Lord and Saviour. II. THAT THESE ORDERS CANNOT REQUIRE MUTILATION OF THE BODILY FRAME. The hand, the foot, and the eye are nothing, except as they are the instruments of a person. What benefit could there be in cutting off, in plucking out, merely a member of the body? He would be utterly unfit to be a judge who sentenced the umbrella, which thrust out a man's eye, to six months' imprisonment, and let the man who pushed the umbrella go free! He would be counted more idiotic than an idiot who found fault with the door of the cellar down whose steps he had fallen, and not with the careless servant who had left the door open. When you had cut off a hand, you might still wish to do the unworthy action which your hand would have carried out. When you had plucked out an eye, your imagination might still revel amid the unholy things which the eye would have gloated on. III. The Lord backs up His appeal for our energetic action with an exhibition of THE AWFUL LAW UNDER WHICH OUR NATURE IS CONSTITUTED. The word, which is translated "hell-fire" is Gehenna. It was the name given to a narrow valley close to Jerusalem. Offal and filth were usually thrown into it, and fires were lighted in it to burn all the sorts of refuse which were consumable. So the sinner is separated from the society of Jerusalem, and cast into corruption; he is exposed to burning now, and if not converted from the error of his ways, will go into corruption and fire hereafter. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) *Desire sacrificed to duty*:—Soldiers have dislodged their enemy from a town. They scatter themselves about its streets; some dashing into shops, and some into houses, seizing any valuable thing which the lust of their eyes prompts them to seize. Suddenly their bugles sound an alarm. The enemy is returning in force; and, whatever else the sound may suggest, it suggests this—that they must throw everything out of their hands, no matter how valuable, no matter how eagerly they long to retain it. Otherwise it would be an obstruction; they would not be free to handle their rifles, and be driven out instead of driving their foe back again. With like purpose does the Lord Jesus give forth those orders, which seem to many of us so unnecessarily harsh and stringent. (*Ibid.*) *Hell-fire in the present life*:—At any rate multitudes have come to regard hell as a place to be afraid of, not because of its wickedness, but because of its suffering. Theirs is a bitter mistake. It is a grotesque and misleading interpretation of that state of which Jesus tells the nature. His words assuredly point to the conclusion that a man may be in hell here as well as yonder; may be gnawed by its worm and burned by its fire now as well as hereafter. You do not lack proofs of this present truth in human life, perhaps within the range of your observation, if not of your own experience. It may be that no more striking illustration can be supplied than that of Lady Macbeth, as painted by our great dramatist. After the murder of Banquo she cannot rest. She rises from her bed and walks about. She rubs, and rubs, as if washing her hands, and continues it for a quarter of an hour. She fancies she sees a spot of blood on them. She cannot take it out; her hands will not be clean, and she cries, "Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh! oh!" That sigh and cry show how "sorely her heart is charged." Yet there is no repentance in her anguish. She argues in

defence of the evil deed still. She is suffering mentally; she is in agony—not for the vileness of the crime she has urged on, but for its interference with her comfort and peace. Thus her case affords an instance of how a soul may be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing the teeth before it goes, with the uncleansed spots of sin, into the shadow of death. (*Ibid.*) *The members of the body reported in their deeds*:—"Do you know," said a young lady to her brother, "there is a reporter to be at the ball to which we are going to-morrow, and a full account will be given in the newspapers of everybody who is there?" Ah! yes, there was a Reporter there whom she little thought of—a Reporter who is in every place to which you can go, whether it be to the house of feasting or the house of mourning, to the resort which defiles you or which purifies you, to the place of cursing or the place of prayer; and the day is coming when that Reporter shall publish, before the myriads amid whom you shall stand at the judgment seat of God, what "every one has done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." What will be disclosed as to the paths on which your feet have been made to go? Will you expect to hear that you have never been, in thought or purpose, in any place but where Christ's footprints were known to be before you? (*Ibid.*) *What the hands can do*:—Just glance at what may be operated by the hands. Would you care to hold out your hands, before any number of your acquaintances, and say, "These hands have never been soiled by touching an unholy thing. They have not once written a deceiving figure or an unbecoming word. They have never held any instrument in order to accomplish a selfish and impure object." No neighbour might shrug his shoulders at your assertion; no voice might call out, "I saw you use the shaking glass of drunkenness, the cards of gambling, the jemmy of burglary!" But would their inability to accuse you be a satisfactory acquittal? Would you not, as brave and honest souls, even if no human being could say that your hands were offensive to the holy God, would you not confess they are or were? Your tongue would not utter boastful things. Why? Because you are well aware that, though you have never been a drunkard, a gambler, or a burglar, you have put aside a service of self-denial, or you have grasped in your heart at an evil enjoyment. Knowing, as you do, that wishing and planning to escape from any Christ-like duty must be a grief to the Saviour, you would not like to hear His voice announce His sentence as to all your failures; you would not like to receive the due award of what your hands have done or been thought capable of doing! (*Ibid.*) *Stumbling-blocks*:—I. THE STUMBLING-BLOCKS HERE MENTIONED. II. WHETHER A CLASSIFICATION OF STUMBLING-BLOCKS BE SUGGESTED OR NOT, IMPORTANT LESSONS, AS TO THE CAUSES OF FALLING, ARE HERE TAUGHT. 1. May be part of ourselves—personal appearance, &c. 2. May be in our occupation—sinful, engrossing, &c. 3. May be in that which delights us—conversation, music, &c. 4. May be in persons and society sought after by us. 5. May be in useful and lawful things. 6. Every one must judge for himself. III. THE COMMAND OF CHRIST. 1. Most peremptory. The cause must be removed—however valuable, painful, &c. 2. Most pressing and weighty reasons are assigned. Such conduct is indispensable to life. To act otherwise is to perish. At how dear a price sinners purchase their pleasures! (*Expository Discourses.*) *Maiming and life*:—The New Testament revisers have rightly substituted the words "cause to stumble," for "offend;" for the popular conception of offend is misleading. It means that which is annoying or distasteful to another, but not necessarily hurtful. But the word in the New Testament habitually means something dangerous. That which offends in the gospel sense may be neither annoying nor distasteful; but agreeable and seductive. St. Paul speaks of "meat" as an offence to a brother. In these hard words about cutting off, our Lord is not speaking of things that are simply troublesome, for in God's moral economy a good many troublesome things are retained as permanent factors of life. Self-sacrifice, hard duty, are troublesome things, yet they enter into every genuine Christian life; while many agreeable things are of the character of stumbling-blocks. The truth here stated by Christ appears a cruel one. It is simply that maiming enters into the development of life, and is a part of the process through which one attains eternal life. We shall find that this law is not so cruel after all. There is an aspect in which we all recognize this truth; namely, on the side where it is related to our ordinary life. No life is developed into perfection without cutting off something. The natural tendencies of the boy are to play and eat and sleep. Left to themselves, those things will fill up the space allotted to thought and culture, so that they must be controlled and restricted. The law indeed holds, from a point below human life, that every higher thing costs; that it is won by the abridgment

or suppression of something lower. The corn of wheat must die in order to bring forth fruit. The seed-life and the seed-form must go, so that the "full corn in the ear" may come. This fact of limitation goes along with the entire process of human education. The man who aims at eminence in any one department of life must close the gates which open into other departments. In order to be a successful merchant, he must abridge the pleasures of literary culture. He may have equally strong affinities for medicine and for law, but he cannot become a successful lawyer without cutting off the studies and the associations which go to make a successful doctor. And success in any sphere necessitates his cutting off a large section of self-indulgence. He must sacrifice pleasant leisure and pleasant society, and needful rest and recreation. Moreover, it is true that men love life so much that they will have it at the expense of maiming. A man will leap from a third story of a burning house, and will take the chance of going through life with a crippled limb or a distorted face, rather than stay and be burned or suffocated. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Mæcenas, the prime minister of the first Roman emperor, said that he preferred life with the anguish of crucifixion to death. Where is the man who will not lie down on the surgeon's table, and have his right hand cut off or his right eye plucked out rather than die? The most helpless cripple, the blind man, the mutilated and disfigured man, will say, "It is better for us to live maimed than to die." So that, on one side at least, the truth is not so unfamiliar or so cruel, after all. It represents, not an arbitrary decree, but a free choice. Now, our Lord leads us up into the region of spiritual and eternal life, and confronts us with the same alternative. Cut off anything, sacrifice anything, be maimed and crippled so far as this life is concerned, rather than forfeit eternal life. Life in God's kingdom, like life in the kingdom of nature and sense, involves a process of education and discipline. A part of this discipline is wrought through the agency of the man himself; that is, by the force of his own renewed will. A part of it is brought to bear on him from without, through no agency of his own. And here, as elsewhere, development implies limitation, suppression, cutting off. Have you never known a woman on whom the door of her father's house was closed from the moment that she went out of it with the husband of her choice, and who gave herself to him, knowing that, in taking his part, she was cutting off and casting from her parental sympathy and all the dear associations of childhood? In our great civil war, was it not true that many a man, by taking a side, became an outcast to those whom he had loved best? Has it not been so in all the great issues of history? In Christ's own day, and much more in the early days of the Church, that happened again and again which Christ's words had foreshadowed. He who went after the despised Galilean or His apostles, must forfeit home and friends and social standing, and be called an ingrate and a traitor. He could not keep father and mother and old associates who hated his Master. They would be only stumbling-blocks to him; and he must therefore cut them off, and go after Christ maimed on that side of his life. This text tells us that this cutting off and casting away must be our own act. "If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off,"—thou thyself. We are not to presume on God's taking away from us whatever is hurtful. Our spiritual discipline does not consist in merely lying still and being pruned. That must do for a vine or a tree, but not for a living will. The surrender of that must be a self-surrender. The forced surrender of a will is no surrender. The necessary abridgement or limitation must enlist the active co-operation of the man who is limited. "Ye are God's husbandry," says Paul; but, almost in the same breath, he says, "Ye are God's fellow-workers." There are, however, two aspects in which this self-cutting is to be viewed. On the one hand, there is, as just noted, something which the man is to do by his own will and act. On the other hand, there is a certain amount of limitation applied directly by God, without the man's agency. In this latter case, the man makes the cutting off his own act by cheerful acceptance of his limitations. Let us look at each of these two aspects in turn. In Christian experience, one soon discovers certain sides on which it is necessary to limit himself; certain things which he must renounce. The things are not the same for all men. They are not necessarily evil things in themselves, but a sensitive and well-disciplined conscience soon detects certain matters which it is best to lay violent hands upon. Another conscience may not fix upon the same points; but to this conscience they are stumbling-blocks, hindrances to spiritual growth, inconsistent with entire devotion to Christ. It is enough that they are so in this particular case. It is right to have hands and feet and eyes, and to use them. But in certain cases there is an antagonism between these and eternal life. The whole question centres

there. Whatever interferes with the attainment of eternal life must go. Thus much for the self-applied limitations, for conscious hindrances in the march to eternal life. But there is another class of limitations, the need of which we do not perceive. They belong in the higher and deeper regions of character, and are linked with facts and tendencies which our self-knowledge does not cover. Such limitations we cannot apply to ourselves: they are applied to us by God: and all that our will has to do is to concur with the limitations and meekly to accept them. In this region the discipline is more painful. God cuts off and takes away where we can see no reason for it; but on the contrary, where we think we see every reason against it. There are multitudes of Christian people who are going through life maimed on one side or another. There is a man with the making of a statesman, ruler, painter, or poet. He is maimed by no opportunity of culture. But every true disciple of Christ enters His school with absolute self-surrender, and will trust that God will cut off nothing that makes for eternal life. We could not win eternal life as well with these gifts as without them. And so it will be better if we can but enter into life. Better, far better, to go maimed all the way than to lose eternal life. It matters little that those stately masts had to be cut down in the raging gale. No one thinks what splendid timbers were thrown overboard, on that day when the ship, battered and mastless, and with torn sails and tangled cordage, forges into the land-locked port with every soul on board safe. Better maimed than lost. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

Vers. 44, 46, 48. **Where their worm dieth not.**—*The punishment of the wicked, dreadful and interminable:*—Some will say that this doctrine has no tendency to do good; it is idle to think of frightening men into religion. It is my duty not to decide what doctrines are likely to do good, but to preach such as I find in the Scriptures. I dare not pretend to be either more wise or more compassionate than our Saviour; and He thought it consistent, both with wisdom and compassion, to utter the words of our text. These expressions allude to the manner in which the Jews disposed of the bodies of the dead; placed in tombs they were consumed by worms; or on a funeral pile it was consumed by fire. You have seen this, but there is another death, of the soul. Those who die this death shall be preyed upon by worms which will never die, and become the fuel of a fire that will never be quenched. The language is indeed figurative, but not on that account less full of meaning. I. In dilating upon these truths, I SHALL SAY LITTLE OF THE CORPOREAL SUFFERINGS WHICH AWAIT IMPENITENT SINNERS BEYOND THE GRAVE. Such sufferings will certainly compose a part of the punishment; for their bodies shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation; as it is the servant of the soul, its tempter to many sins, and its instrument in committing them, there seems to be a manifest propriety in making them companions in punishment. But to the sufferings of the soul, the Scriptures chiefly refer. The clause—"where their worm dieth not"—intimates that the soul will suffer miseries, analagous to those which would be inflicted on a living body, by a multitude of reptiles constantly preying upon it; that as a dead body appears to produce the worms which consume it, so the soul dead in trespasses and sins, really produces the causes of its own misery. What are those causes, what is the gnawing worm? 1. Its own passions and desires. That these are capable of preying upon the soul, and occasioning acute suffering, even in this life, need not be proved. Look at a man who is habitually peevish, fretful, and disappointed. Has he not gnawing worms already at his heart? Look at the envious, covetous, ambitious, proud; these passions make men miserable here; even while in this world there are many things calculated to soothe or divert men's passions. Sometimes they meet with success, and this produces a transient calm; at another time, the objects which excite their passions are absent, and this allows quietness. Men have not always the leisure to indulge their passions; they are under the operations of causes which tend to restrain them, such as sleep. But suppose all these removed, deprived of sleep, success, and the objects which excite his strongest passions constantly before him, and all restraints gone. Would not such a man be miserable? Nothing inflames the passions of men more than suffering. 2. The gnawing worm includes the consciences of sinners. Conscience has inflicted terrible agony, as in the case of Judas. Here she speaks only at intervals; there without intermission. Here she may be stifled by scenes of business or amusement, sophistical arguments; but there will be no means of silencing her; she will see everything in the clear light of eternity. What a God she has offended, Saviour neglected, heaven lost. Well may this be compared to a

gnawing worm. II. Our Saviour speaks not only of a gnawing worm, but of AN UNQUENCHABLE FIRE. So far as the soul is concerned, this refers to a keen and constant sense of God's presence and righteous displeasure. He says of Himself, "I am a consuming fire." III. We learn from the passage before us, that THOSE SUFFERINGS WILL BE ENDLESS. Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. The passions and consciences of sinners endure as long as the soul of which they are a part. God lives for ever, He must for ever be displeased with sinners. "It is impossible that I should deserve it." You know nothing of your sins, or of what sin deserves. As well might a man, who should put vipers into his bosom, complain of God because they stung him. Christ died to save them from their misery. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Preserving fire*:—Preserving fire, or salting with fire. Decay is a species of burning; and only those things that have been burnt, or cannot be burnt, will not decay. I. TEMPTATION IS A PRESERVING FIRE. The boy who has been sheltered at home is honest; but his integrity is not as firm as that of the honest merchant. The clay (Isa. lxiv. 8) is soft and plastic; but after it has been burnt in the furnace it will break before it will bend. All must pass through the fire of temptation. If you are to be a vessel of honour fit for the heavenly palace, the Lord must be your potter. II. AFFLICTION IS A PRESERVING FIRE. The metal comes forth from the furnace more useful (Mal. iii. 3). III. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT IS ALSO COMPARED TO A FIRE (1 Cor. iii. 13). Fire is a searching test. All paint, enamel, pretence of every kind, will melt before it. Its results are enduring. All must pass through the fiery ordeal. Only such works can stand as proceed from gospel love. IV. ANOTHER PRESERVING FIRE IS THE FIRE OF HELL. The misery of hell is two-fold: sin and its punishment. (*J. B. Converse*). *Their worm dieth not—Conscience in hell*:—It has been discovered that there are worms which eat and live upon stone. Many such have been found in a freestone wall in Normandy. So there is a worm in hell—conscience—which lives upon the stony heart of the condemned sinner, which gnaws with remorse all whom grace has not softened.

Ver. 49. **For every one shall be salted with fire.**—*The salt and the fire*:—The Lord's people are represented as being themselves offered up to Him, as His spiritual sacrifices, both by Isaiah and St. Paul. It was a custom ordained of God in the Levitical code (Lev. ii. 13) that "Every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt." Collecting, then, the points to which we have adverted, we have seen that believers are represented as the Lord's sacrifices: that His sacrifices were anciently purified by the typical salt; that the object of the salt, or grace, is to preserve them from the corruption of the worm of indwelling sin and the fire of ultimate judgment; and that in the whole chamber of imagery is inculcated the duty of sacrificing the lusts of the flesh in order to our being edified in the spirit, and promoting the edification of others. We recognize in the text a force and a beauty not discernible to the superficial student, in the declaration of the gracious effect of those sanctifying trials and mortifications in which all believers have their share; "for every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Let us, therefore, consider the teaching of the Spirit in this text to imply, first, an awful denunciation on the man of unmortified lusts—"Every" such "one shall be salted with fire;" secondly, the gracious result of fleshly mortification—"every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;" that is, every believer who "presents his body a living sacrifice," "shall be salted with salt"—that is, not with fire to consume, but with salt to preserve. This is the contrast: on the one hand penal destruction; on the other, gracious preservation. I. THE CAREER OF UNMORTIFIED LUST ENTAILS A FEARFUL PENALTY. This declaration of Scripture is continually receiving fearful illustrations in the premonitory dealings of Providence. Days of indulgence are succeeded by nights of pain; a youth of profligacy, if not prematurely cut short, entails a feeble, diseased, and miserable old age. Sin receives judgment by instalments; the salting fire of the Divine displeasure falls upon the wretched sinner, in many a striking instance, even in this life, presenting, like the shock before the earthquake, prelusive warning of the catastrophe about to follow. It is admitted that the expression in the text is figurative. But the figures of Scripture never exaggerate the facts of reality. The lost, unransomed soul, exposed to the searching and protracted agonies of a fire that salts, that is, perpetuates the anguish of its miserable victims, exhibits the torments of the unbelieving in a broad glare of horror, as if the letters were illuminated by the reflection of "the lake that burneth." II. THE GRACIOUS EFFECTS OF FLESHLY MORTIFICATION. The believer is to be also salted, but with constraining love, with preserving grace, with sancti-

fying trial. The grace of mortification is that to the soul which salt is to the body; it preserves it from putrefaction, and renders it savoury. Inferences: 1. That there is in every believer some lust to be subdued—for "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." We do not apply salt except to those things which have a natural tendency to corruption. If believers must have "salt in themselves," it follows that there is in them the principle of corruption. One man is attacked through the medium of his ambition; the lust of secular distinction desolates his heart of all piety. Another man is drawn aside by his avarice. Another man is seduced by his animal lusts, and the unchecked vagrancy of the eye. Another man is tempted through the medium of temper, and his ebullitions of frightful rage shock the ears of his household. Another man is led astray by his pride. Lastly, the figure suggests the doctrine, that the spiritual health of the believer is to be promoted and attained by fleshly mortification. It is by this means that the soul is to be clarified from sin and preserved in grace. (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) *A double salting, either with fire or with salt*:—Every man that lives in the world must be a sacrifice to God. The wicked are a sacrifice to God's justice; but the godly are a sacrifice dedicated and offered to Him, that they may be capable of His mercy. The first are a sacrifice against their wills, but the godly are a free-will offering, a sacrifice not taken but offered. The grace of mortification is very necessary for all those who are devoted to God. I. THAT THE TRUE NOTION OF A CHRISTIAN IS THAT HE IS A SACRIFICE, OR A THANK-OFFERING TO GOD (Rom. xii. 1). Under the law, beasts were offered to God, but in the gospel men are offered to Him; not as beasts were, to be destroyed, slain, and burnt in the fire, but to be preserved for God's use and service. In offering anything to God, two things were of consideration. 1. There is a separation of ourselves from a common use. The beast was separated from the flock or herd for this special purpose (2 Cor. v. 15). 2. There is a dedicating ourselves to God, to serve, please, honour, and glorify Him. We must be sincere in this—1. Because the truth of our dedication will be known by our use; many give up themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there is no such matter; they carry it as though their tongues were their own (Psa. xii. 4). 2. Because God will one day call us to account. 3. Because we are under the eye and inspection of God. II. THAT THE GRACE OF MORTIFICATION IS THE TRUE SALT WHEREWITH THIS OFFERING AND SACRIFICE SHOULD BE SEASONED. 1. Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction by consuming that superfluous and excrementitious moisture, which otherwise would soon corrupt: and so the salt of the covenant doth prevent and subdue those lusts which would cause us to deal unfaithfully with God. Alas! meat is not so apt to be tainted as we are to be corrupted and weakened in our resolutions to God, without the mortifying grace of the Spirit. 2. Salt hath an acrimony, and doth macerate things and pierce into them; and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to the carnal nature. We either must suffer the pains of hell or the pains of mortification; we must be salted with fire or salted with salt. It is better to pass to heaven with difficulty and austerity, than to avoid these difficulties and run into sin, and so be in danger of eternal fire. The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin. 3. Salt makes things savoury, so grace makes us savoury, which may be interpreted with respect either to God or man. We must be seasoned by the grace of Christ, and so become acceptable in the sight of God; the more we are salted and mortified, the more we shall do good to others. III. THERE IS A NECESSITY OF THIS SALT IN ALL THOSE THAT HAVE ENTERED INTO COVENANT WITH GOD, AND HAVE DEDICATED AND DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO HIM. 1. By our covenant vow we are bound to the strictest duties, and that upon the highest penalties. The duty to which we are bound is very strict. 2. The abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvellous activity of it in our souls. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till our tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay tumbled into the dust. Well, then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified. 3. Consider the sad consequences of letting sin alone, both either as to further sin or punishment. If lust be not mortified, it grows outrageous. Sins prove mortal if they be not mortified. The unmortified person spares the sin and destroys his own soul; the sin lives, but he dies. Now to make application. I. For the reproof of those that cannot abide to hear of mortification. The unwillingness and impatience of this doctrine may arise from several causes. 1. From sottish atheism and unbelief. 2. It may come from libertinism. And these harden their hearts in sinning by a mistaking the gospel. (1) Some vainly imagine as if God by Jesus Christ were made more reconcilable to sin, that it needs not so much to be stood upon, nor need we to be so exact, to keep such ado to mortify and subdue

the inclinations that lead to it. They altogether run to the comforts of the gospel and neglect the duties thereof. Christ died for sinners, therefore we need not to be troubled about it. (2) Another sort think such discourses may be well spared among a company of believers, and they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins; that they have such good command of themselves that they can keep within compass well enough. (3) A third sort are such as think believers are not to be scared with threatenings, but only oiled with grace. 3. It may arise from another cause, the passionateness of carnal affections. There is no hope; it is an evil and I must bear it. Consider the doleful condition of those that indulge their carnal affections; and that either threatened by God, or executed upon the wicked. (1) Consider it as it is threatened by God. If God threaten so great a misery, it is for our profit, that we may take heed and escape it. There is mercy in the severest threatenings, that we may avoid the bait when we see the hook, that we may digest the strictness of a holy life, rather than venture upon such dreadful evils. (2) Consider which trouble is most intolerable—to be salted with salt, or to be salted with fire; with unpleasing mortification, or the pains of hell; the trouble of physic, or the danger of a mortal disease. Surely to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest pill, take the most loathsome potion. Better be macerated by repentance, than broken in hell by torments. Which is worse, discipline or execution? Here the question is put: you must be troubled first or last. Would you have a sorrow mixed with love and hope, or else mixed with desperation? Would you have a drop or an ocean? Would you have your souls cured or tormented? Would you have trouble in the short moment of this life, or have it eternal in the world to come? (*J. Manton, D.D.*) *The church the salt of the earth*:—The first expression demanding our attention is "salt." Salt is an object of external nature, endued with certain properties. It possesses the property of penetration into the masses of animal matter, to which it shall be applied in sufficient abundance and with sufficient perseverance; and it possesses the property of extending a preserving savour as it pervades the mass. Here is the basis of its suitability to represent Christ's church on the earth. A characteristic of the population of this fallen world is, moral corruption. The men of this world, even those who are most advanced in morals and in respectability amongst their fellows, are nevertheless described in the Word of God as being corrupt according to their deceitful lusts and defilements. Selfishness, ostentation, envy, jealousy, taint their boasted morals; and as surely as a mass of animal matter left to its natural tendencies in our atmosphere would proceed from one degree of corruption to another, until it reached the putrefaction of dissolution, so surely would the population of this world, left to its own natural tendency, make progress from one degree of moral corruption to another, until they all reached the putrefaction of damnation. Christ's church is the salt of the earth; it is the Lord's preserve and the Lord's preservative. This brings us to the next word here, which is "fire." Fire is another object of external nature possessing certain properties. It possesses the properties of penetrating and melting, and separating the dross from the pure ore; and so in this respect it becomes suitable as an emblem of sanctified affliction, which separates a man from the common and downward course of a heedless and worldly population, and causes him to pause and meditate, and take himself to task, and look around and look before him, and to fall upon his knees and cry to God to have mercy upon him. I have said sanctified affliction; because affliction itself, considered apart from the special use made of it by the Spirit of God, has no such power over a man's character. "The sorrow of this world worketh death;" mere trouble considered in its natural operation upon man, however it may subdue him for a season, however it may make him pause in his course, does not change him. But this is not all, the Lord says in our text. "Every one"—not every Christian only, but—"every one shall be salted with fire." This leads us to remark, that fire possesses other properties, the power of consuming the stubble and all the rubbish; and it is thereby suitable to express those tremendous judgments, which shall overwhelm the adversaries at the second glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus, when, as the apostle sublimely tells us, "The Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flames of fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Every ungodly man shall, as it were, be salted with fire—shall be seasoned with fire—rendered unconsumable in the fire that burneth—preserved in burning. Salted with fire! This is a tremendous saying, a dreadful thought. Immortalized in endurance! preserved from

burning out! Salted with fire! Well, well might He call upon them to cut off right hands, pluck out right eyes, to separate themselves from the dearest lust, from the most fostered and cherished indulgence, rather than be cast into that eternal fire. But how shall this exhortation be obeyed? There is no native power in man whereby he can rescue himself from what he loves. He must love something; and except he be supplied with something better to love, he must go on to follow what he now loves. It is only the power of something he loves better, that can separate him from what he loves well. What can induce him to part with his sin, which is as precious to his corrupt heart as his eyes are to the enjoyment of his body? What can induce him to do it? Every one then, both he that believeth and he that believeth not, shall be salted with fire. He that believeth shall be purified by affliction, and he that believeth not shall be immortalized in the endurance of agony. "And every sacrifice shall be salted with fire." Here is another figure, not derived from external nature, but derived from the Mosaic ritual—a sacrifice. A sacrifice is an offering devoted to God. Hence a sacrifice is suitable to represent a member of Christ's Church. He is not separated from the common actions and lawful actions of the world, for that would be to take him out of the world; but he is separated from the common state of mind in which those actions are performed. Instead of withdrawing from the duties of life, it engages him in them for conscience' sake, as well as for convenience or reputation or gain. It makes every action of his life religious; it invests the very drudgeries of the lowest grade of life with a sanctity, as being done in the service of God. So then, a believer becomes a sacrifice, and so the Apostle Paul having enlarged upon the glorious blessings of the gospel, whereby men are so separated, improves the statement thus: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." All the sacrifices of the Jewish ritual were seasoned with salt. In the second chapter of the book of Leviticus and at the thirteenth verse you will find the commandment, "And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering: with all thy offerings thou shalt offer salt." "Every sacrifice," every true believer, "shall be salted with salt." Now what is the force of this expression, "salted with salt"? We have seen that to be salted with fire signifies to be personally purified; to be salted with salt signifies to be made relatively a blessing. The Christian is salted with fire for his own personal purification, and he is salted with salt for his extended usefulness among others. "He shall be blessed and he shall be a blessing," as was said of the father of the faithful, Abraham. We inherit this blessing of Abraham, to be salted with fire and to be salted with salt. To this our Lord clearly refers, when He calls His church "the salt of the earth." (*H. McNeile, M.A.*) *How is the body, it may be said, to become a sacrifice?*—Let the eye look upon no evil thing, and it has become a sacrifice; let the tongue speak nothing filthy, and it has become an offering; let thy hand do no lawless deed, and it has become a whole burnt-offering. Or, rather, this is not enough, but we must have good works also. Let the hand do alms, the mouth bless them that curse one; and the hearing find leisure evermore for the lections of Scripture. For sacrifice allows of no unclean thing. Sacrifice is a firstfruit of the other actions. Let us then from our hands, and feet, and mouth, and all other members, yield a firstfruit unto God. (*Chrysostom.*) *Preservation from corruption:*—Christ is not, in either of these terms (salted, fire), referring to the literal realities. It is salting and fire, metaphorically viewed, of which He speaks. Among the various uses of salt, two are popularly outstanding—seasoning and preserving from corruption. The reference here is to the latter. In hot countries, in particular, killed meat hastens to a tainted condition, and could not be preserved from spoiling, for any appreciable length of time, were it not for salting. It is on this antiseptic property of salt that Christ's representation is founded. Every one of His disciples shall be preserved from corruption by fire. The fire referred to, however, is not penal, like the inextinguishable fire of Gehenna. It is intentionally purificatory. But, though not penal, it is painful. It scorches, and pierces to the quick. What, then, is this fire? It is the unsparing spirit of self-sacrifice—the spirit that parts, for righteousness' sake, with a hand, a foot, an eye. Every disciple of Christ is preserved from corruption, and consequent everlasting destruction, by unsparing self-sacrifice. (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

Ver. 50. **Salt is good.**—*Have salt in yourselves*:—This is only another form of exhorting Christians to have strength of character as Christians. But since a strong character, in the spiritual as in the natural man, is apt to come into collision with others equally strong, our Lord cautions His disciples against any breach of the law of love. Staunch they must be in their adherence to principle; but they may not be quarrelsome. "Have peace one with another." 1. The salt of self-denial. 2. The salt of energy. 3. The salt of truthfulness. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Salt*:—I. LOOK AT WHAT IS HERE SO EXPRESSIVELY SYMBOLIZED. Salt is necessary to sacrifice. 1. Christ is the symbol of the covenant of everlasting mercy, but of everlasting mercy as the basis of a sinner's new life. 2. Salt symbolizes not only God's covenant of mercy with man, but man's covenant with God. The life of the animal was devoted and offered with salt to signify—not only the Divine fact of atonement, but the human fact of self-surrender: and the worshipper said, "I have given the life of the animal to Thee to signify that henceforth my own life is for ever Thine." 3. Salt is also the principle of counteractive grace—"Have salt in yourselves." 4. Salt signifies the preventive, corrective, life-nourishing power of the Christian society in the world—"Ye are the salt of the earth." 5. Salt is also the principle of peace. It destroys the unbenevolent passions. II. The Saviour's lesson concerning the deterioration of the salt. 1. The possibility of deterioration—"If the salt have lost its savour." 2. Christ marks here three things as characteristic of men in this state. (1) They are useless. (2) They are contemptible. (3) They are rejected with disdain. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *True, yet tender—Tender, yet true*:—The two principal terms are salt and peace. I. THE MEANING OF EACH. Salt as a metaphor applied to human character in the New Testament, signifies in general the grace of God sanctifying the whole nature, and in particular the sterner virtues—faithfulness, boldness, righteousness, truth, purity. The term indicates holiness on its harder side; and holiness has a hard side, for it must needs be strong. In this use of the analogy the preserving power of salt is the predominating idea. Salt appears here as the stern, sharp antagonist of all corruption. Christians baptized into the Spirit of Christ act as salt in a tainted world. In union with the virtue that preserves, there is a pungency that pains. You may observe, however, that salt does not irritate whole skin. Apply it to an open sore, and the patient winces; but a healthy member of a living body does not shrink from its touch. A similar distinction obtains in the moral region. Stringent faithfulness in the conduct of his neighbour will not offend a just man: but those who do not give justice do not like to get it. Purity in contact with impurity makes the impure miserable. *Peace.* Surely it is not necessary to explain what this word means. You may comprehend it without the aid of critical analysis. It is like the shining sun or the sweet breath of early summer; it is its own expositor. Wherever it is, it makes its presence and its nature known. As the traveller who has missed his way thinks more of the light, and understands it better, while he is groping in the dark than he did in the blaze of noon; so those best understand and value peace who suffer the horrors of war. You know the worth of it when you know the want of it. The greatest peace is, peace with the Greatest; the greatest peace is, peace with God. The Mediator who makes it is the greatest Peacemaker. Peace—including all the characteristics of a Christian which make for peace—is holiness on its softer side; and holiness has a soft side, that it may win the world. II. THE RECIPROCAL RELATION BETWEEN SALT IN OURSELVES AND PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER. To a certain extent these two are opposites; peace maintained with your neighbour is antagonist to the vigour of salt in yourselves. Accordingly error appears in two opposite directions. One man has so much salt in himself that he cannot maintain peace with his neighbours; another man is so soft and peaceable towards all that he manifests scarcely any of the faithfulness which is indicated by salt. It is instructive to examine the limits and extent of this antagonism. Faithfulness does sometimes disturb peace; and peace is sometimes obtained at the expense of faithfulness. It is not inherent in the nature, but is introduced by sin. When Christ has made an end of sin the contradiction will disappear from the new world. In heaven all are peaceful and yet pure; pure and yet peaceful. There the salt does not disturb, because there is no corruption; peace does not degenerate into indifference, for there is no vile appetite to be indulged. Meanwhile, that which comes as a curse is, under the arrangements of Providence, converted into a blessing. As toil to keep down thorns and thistles is a useful exercise for physical health, so effort to maintain faithfulness without breaking peace keeps the spirit healthful and fits for heaven. Every effort made by the disciple of Christ to soften his own

faithfulness and invigorate his own tenderness goes to increase the treasures which he shall enjoy at God's right hand. Watch on the right side, and on the left. 1. On the side of peace. There cannot be too much gentle peace-making in the character and conduct of a man. But if the folds of our peace are so large, and thick, and warm, as to overlay and smother our faithfulness, the peacemakers are not blest by God, and are not blessings to the world. 2. On the side of truth and faithfulness. There cannot be too much of faithfulness in the character of a Christian; but even faithfulness to truth may become hurtful, if it is dissociated from the gentleness of Christ. Similar antagonisms in the system of nature constitute at once the exercise and the evidence of the Creator's skill. Results are frequently obtained through the union of antagonist forces neutralizing each other. A familiar example is supplied by the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which insure the stability of the solar system. Take another case, equally instructive, though not so obvious. In the structure of a bird, with a view to the discharge of its functions, two qualites, in a great measure reciprocally antagonistic, must be united; these are strength and lightness. As a general rule, strength is incompatible with lightness, and lightness incompatible with strength. You cannot increase the one without proportionally diminishing the other. The body of the bird must float in the air, therefore it must be proportionally lighter than quadrupeds or fishes; but the creature must sustain itself for long periods in the atmosphere, and perform journeys of vast length, therefore its members must be strong. The structure of a bird, accordingly, exhibits a marvellous contrivance for the combination of the utmost possible lightness. Every one is familiar with the structure of the feathers that compose the wing. The quill barrel gives you an example of a minimum of material so disposed as to produce a maximum of strength. The bones of birds are formed on the same plan. They are greater in circumference than the corresponding bones of other animals, but they are hollower in the heart. In iron castings we repeat the process which we have learned from nature. This union of antagonists for the production of a common beneficent result is like the labour of a Christian life. Let the timid and retiring nature stir up his soul to a greater measure of truthful courage, without letting any of his gentleness go. Let the vine of his tenderness cling to an oak of stern faithfulness; it will thus bear more fruit than if it were allowed to trail on the ground. The arms that impart strength to the chair only hurt the occupant if they lack the cushion that ought to cover them. For strength, there should be an iron hand in the velvet glove; but for softness, a velvet glove should be on the iron hand when it grasps the flesh of a brother. Self-love, like a huge lump of iron concealed under the deck right below the ship's compass, draws the magnet aside; thus the life takes a wrong direction, and the soul is shipwrecked. Self-love draws the life now to the right and now to the left; the errors lie not all on one side. One man, soft from selfishness, basely sacrifices truth and duty for ease; another, hard from selfishness, bristles all over with sharp points, like thorns that tear the flesh of the passenger, and when he has kindled discord among brethren, calls his own bad temper faithfulness to truth. There is no limit to the abberration of a human judgment under the bias of self-interest. It will not scruple to dispute the distinction between black and white, if it can thereby hope to gain its selfish end. Oh, how precious are these words of our Lord, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." It is easier to explore the sources of the Nile, than to discover the true motives whence our own actions spring; and easier to turn the Nile from his track, than to turn the volume of thoughts and purposes which issue from a human heart and constitute the body of a human life. We cheat ourselves and our neighbours as to the character of our motives and the meaning of our acts. Some people mistake acid for salt; their own passions for godly zeal. Jehu drives furiously forward to purify the administration of the kingdom; but it is a cruel, selfish ambition that spurs him on. When such a man scatters a shower of acid from his tongue, and sees that his neighbours are hurt by the biting drops, he points to their contortions, and exclaims, See how pungent my salt is! The true savour is in my salt; for see how these people smart under its sting! Ah, the acid, in common with salt, makes a tender place smart in a brother; but it possesses not, in common with salt, the faculty of warding off corruption. Itself corrupts and undermines; it corrodes and destroys all that it drops upon. "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God." (*W. Arnot.*)

Saltless salt:—In the Valley of Salt, which is about four hours from Aleppo, there is a kind of dry crust of salt, which sounds, when the horses go upon it, like frozen

snow when it is walked upon. Along on one side of the valley, viz., that towards Gibul, there is a small precipice about two men's lengths, occasioned by the continual taking away the salt; and in this you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which the part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour. The inner part, which was connected with the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof. (*Maundrell.*) *Seasoning characters*:—Whatever may be the case with literal salt, Christ is referring to spiritual salt, which undoubtedly, in so far as it consists of a phase of character, may be metamorphosed into its negative or contradictory. Such metamorphic changes of character are possible in two directions. They may be realized upwardly, in bad beings becoming good; or downwardly, in good beings becoming bad. Hatred may be transformed into love, or love into hatred. In either case there is "conversion" from contrary to contrary. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Salt is good*:—Every Christian requires as a sacrifice the salt of fire; the salt of fiery trial, the salt of searching, fiery self-restraint, refusing sin, breaking off from evil, cutting off the right hand, plucking out the right eye, preferring the fire of self-denial on earth to the terrible fire reserved for impenitent sinners in hell. Such salt, such searching, pungent, self-purifying salt is good; but, if it have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? If those who are bound in covenant with God to refrain from sin, and offer themselves holy sacrifices to Him, yield instead of resisting, there is no acceptableness in them, God will not receive them; shunning the earthly fires of self-government and self-denial, there is nothing for them to look forward to but that awful hell fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. This seems to be the true and just method of paraphrasing our Lord's words about salt, with their context, as they occur in the ninth chapter of St. Mark. (*G. Moberly, D.C.L.*) *The victory of holiness*:—Do they not show that to be a Christian, a Christian such as God approves and will accept, there needs heroism? Yes, not less than a true heroism of spirit, maintaining a visible or secret strife against evil, and conquering it, even to the loss of hand, foot, or eye, even to the destruction of friendship, if so be, the loss of love, the relinquishment even of life. Does it not show that this heroism of spirit, this clear, bright, searching salt of hearts, is required of all? (*Ibid.*) *A bargain of salt*:—I. THAT AN INWARD SEASONING WITH RELIGION AND GRACE IS SUCH A THING AS ALL THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST JESUS MUST ENDEAVOUR FOR. 1. Teaching disciples, ministers must be well seasoned within with the power of godliness. (1) A teacher who is himself well seasoned is the most fit to season others. There is ever most life in that man's teaching who teaches from experience. (2) An unseasoned minister cannot choose but break forth into some outward scandal. His inward rottenness cannot possibly be so smothered or tempered, but it will make his course to be unsavoury. 2. The same is to be endeavoured for by every Christian, that is, every Christian must labour so as to have a name and a show of godliness without, so that he feels the power of godliness within. (1) Until this holy salt has fretted out the evil from the heart the Lord can have no pleasure therein; until this is done a man does not know what true religion means; there can be no constancy in religion where this wants. It is not possible for a man to hold out his profession unless he is well seasoned. (2) These duties, required of each Christian, admonishing, comfuting, &c., can never be practised aright but by a man who is able and willing to do them out of personal feeling. That which is in itself unsavoury can never make another thing to be sweet. (*Samuel Hieron.*) *The salting process in the soul*:—For thine own particular, learn of the housewife; if there be anything in the house needs seasoning, she falls to work with the salt forthwith. Look into thyself, see what corrupt affections there be in thee, what careless desires, what inordinate motions, what crookedness of will, what barrenness of spiritual grace, a thousand to one if the salt were good which thou broughtest home, it will do thee service for the bringing of those corrupt humours to a better temper; chiefly take note of this. I am not ashamed to use this household kitchen similitude still. She that powdereth meat to keep it sweet, look what places are most bloody and moisty; there she ever puts in most salt, such parts are most apt to putrify. So do thou, consider with thyself what is thy chiefest sin, thy most prevailing fault, thy most strong corruption, that which thou mayest call by David's phrase, "My wickedness"; thou shalt soon know it by the strength of the affection to it, and thy unwillingness to forego it. Oh, clap in, put on store of salt there; rub it in hard. If thou hast heard of any judgment, or reproof, thrust it on close, it may be it may smart a little; it is no matter, better so than ever ache, this will soak out the rank humours,

and make thee become a sweet lump before the Lord. It is a fault many times, men sprinkle a little salt of doctrine upon themselves here and there superficially, they consider not what be their master, their bloody, their reigning sins, they search not within and without to see where salt needs especially, and so they become loathsome through the lack of an effectual powdering. Neither is this all required in the use of this salt for one's own particular, but there is also a more general and an universal use to be made thereof. What day is there in the family, wherein there is no use of common salt? Truth is, there is neither day in the life of a Christian, nor action in that day, wherein this spiritual salt can justly be thought superfluous. Every sacrifice must be salted with salt, it was a rule of the ancient law. (*Ibid.*) *Home salting*:—Good it were if masters of families would think themselves bound to carry home some of this salt, and bestow it on those that are of their household charge. (*Ibid.*) *That amongst the disciples of Christ there must be mutual peace*:—Our God is the God of Peace. Our Saviour is the Prince of Peace. The gospel which is preached amongst us, is the gospel of peace. The substance of it is glad tidings of peace. Our calling is in peace. They which are the Lord's are called the sons of peace; so we ought all to endeavour to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"; and to live in peace. Christians must follow peace with all men; and if it be possible have peace with all men; and therefore among themselves they must seek it, and ensue it much more. I must open this as the former doctrine by distinguishing upon Christ's disciples. Some are preachers of peace, some are professors of peace. Let me show you how this doctrine reacheth unto both. *The teachers of peace must have peace one towards another*:—Their agreement, their peace, their consent, is a great motive to the people to entertain their doctrine. Hereupon was that use of Paul's, to prefix the names of others with his own, as "Paul, and our brother Sostenes;" "Paul, and our brother Timotheus;" "Paul, and all the brethren that are with me;" "Paul, and Silvanus and Timotheus." The case stands in the building of the spiritual body, as it did in the typical body, in fighting the Lord's battle, by those whose office it is to fight the good fight of faith, as in the fighting for Israel against Ammon. The agreement of the builders will advance the building both with speed and beauty; the joint proceeding of the leaders will undoubtedly prevail against the common enemy. Solomon's temple was builded without noise; neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was in building; a type, I doubt not, of the stillness in respect of freedom from mutual contentions which ought to be amongst pastors. Again, the want of this agreement and peace will be a great prejudice to the growth of the truth. The means used in God's wisdom to hinder Babel's building was a strife of tongues among the builders; so when those which are the builders of the spiritual House of God, the Church, are rent asunder in affection, the work cannot go forward as it should. The shepherds being divided, the sheep must needs be scattered. This to prove that the teachers of peace must have peace one towards another. God hath sent us *prædicare*, not *præliari*, to work and not to wrangle; while we strive the devil works for himself: atheism, popery, do advantage themselves by our dissentions. There must be mutual peace among the professors of peace, the places which I first named in the beginning of the doctrine do enjoin it. This is the mark by which they are known. "By this shall all men know that ye be my disciples, if ye have love one to another." To love one another, and to have peace one towards another, are all one. Be wise and learn how to judge and what to think in this point of ministerial consent and peace, that you may not easily stumble through mistaking. Here, therefore, in order, I pray heartily observe these particulars. First, that consent and agreement of teachers is no certain mark of truth in that wherein they consent; Aaron and all the other Levites consented to the making of the golden calf, four hundred prophets joined together to persuade good success to Ahab, yet that was false which they persuaded. Our Saviour was condemned by a common consent of elders and priests. Secondly, that it is possible for some dissention to fall out sometimes even amongst the best men. A controversy betwixt Peter and Paul, betwixt Peter and the other Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem. The difference between Paul and Barnabas was very eager. Dissentions in Corinth. Great and vehement quarrels betwixt Austen and Hierome, Cyril and Theodoret, Chrysostome and Theophilact, as histories and their own writings testify. It is so; first, by the cunning of the devil, who, to stop the course of the gospel, laboureth to sow the seeds of dissention. Secondly, by reason of the remainders of corruption which are in all; there is much ignorance and self-love even in the best, and these things cause differences, while men either see not

the truth. That among professors and preachers of religion there is, or may be, a threefold consent. First, in one faith and doctrine; namely, a consent of judgment. Secondly, in affection. Thirdly, in speech; namely, when their teaching and manner of holding and defending of points of doctrines is the same. (*Ibid*). *One essential*:—"Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its saltness wherewith will ye season it?" In every good thing there is one supreme essential, besides much that is of minor importance. Let that one element be lacking, and all the rest is a mockery. If sugar be not sweet, if fruit have no flavour, if meat be without nutriment, what folly to give it commendation for any other quality! If a man lack manliness, if a woman lack womanliness, if a child lack childlikeness, praise for any other characteristic is little else than censure or a sneer. What is home without affection? What is friendship without mutual confidence? What is character without sincerity? What is salt without saltness? If you are a disciple of Christ the real question is, How much of Christian discipleship is there in you? Everything else—all your popularity, all your supposed usefulness, all your zeal in good works—is something outside of the only that is really worth taking into account in an estimate of your worth as a disciple of Christ.

CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. **He taught them again.**—*He taught them again*:—How thick and close does this Heavenly Sower scatter His seed! Every line is a new lesson, and every lesson a rule of perfection. Oh, the magnificent bounty of our God! He gives not barely the measure we give others; but "pressed down, and shaken together, and running over into our bosoms." Why are we then so slow and dull to learn these Divine instructions? Why so remiss to practise them? Are they not sweet and excellent in themselves? Are they not infinitely profitable to us? Oh, make us greedy to learn what Thy love makes Thee so eager to teach! (*W. Austin.*)

Vers. 2–12. **Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?**—*The family relation*:—One of the most pathetic incidents found in the narrative of one of the arctic explorations, is that of the attempt made to induce a native of that terribly inhospitable region to journey away with the returning navigators to a more sunny clime. Won by the enthusiastic descriptions of a land of orchards and meadows, of purling brooks and singing birds, he did indeed surrender himself to go. But hardly were they on the way out from among those mountain bergs of ice and dismal fields of snow, directing their course towards the latitudes where the blue tops of distant hills told of freshening verdure, before they missed their simple-hearted comrade. He had gone back clandestinely to the cheerless scenes of his former life. Cold and uninviting to a stranger, those northern solitudes were welcome to him because they had been his home ever since he was born. We smile at his simplicity, but how quickly, after all, do we give him our sympathy in the feeling! We love our homes unaffectedly and almost illogically at times; not because they in every case are better than others, but because they are ours. I. The family is a DIVINE INSTITUTION. We are not left to look upon it as a chance arrangement of individuals of the human species; it is a definitely fixed form of association. 1. It was ordained by the Creator himself when the race began (see Mark x. 6; Gen. ii. 18–25). This order therefore cannot be changed irreverently, nor disturbed without peril. 2. It has been recognized all along the ages by the providence of God. When David (Psa. lxviii. 6) says: "God setteth the solitary in families," a more literal and more pertinent translation would give us this: "God maketh the lonely to dwell in a home." The all-wise Creator has provided in the wide adaptations of nature for an abode of its own sort for every creature of His hand. He has set the coney in the rock, the ant in the sand, the fish in the river, and the whale in the sea; but to no one of them all has He given a home but to man. 3. It has been sanctioned by God in His Word (see Mark x. 7–9). 4. It has been symbolized and spiritualized in the Church (see Eph. iii. 15). And the relation between Christ and His people is like that between a husband and wife (see Eph. v. 22–32). John saw the Church, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," descending out of heaven, "having the glory of God" (Rev. xxi. 9, 10). II. The family is A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION. That is to say, it has

a distinct and valuable purpose to serve in aiding men to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever as their chief end. 1. It is designed to perfect Christian character. The relations of a believer to his Saviour are essentially filial. The saints are the children of God. The Almighty Father, taking upon Himself the three obligations of a parent—government, education, and support—calls upon each Christian for the three duties of a son—subordination, studiousness, and grateful love. Hence, all our celestial connections with God are most perfectly and easily taught through our earthly connections with each other in a well-ordered home. 2. Again: the family relation is designed to concentrate Christian power. For it is the earliest outflow into practical use of the principle that in union there is strength. 3. In the third place, the family relation is designed to cultivate the Christian spirit. There ought to be in all organizations which are worth anything what the French people call *esprit de corps;* a peculiar, pervading tone of public sentiment and opinion, full of a generous confidence and pride, running through all its members. Each soldier feels his connection with the company to which he owes allegiance, thence with the regiment, and so with the entire corps. He is jealous of its honour, he is zealous for its name. 4. Once more: the family relation is designed to increase the Christian census. Children belong to the kingdom of God (see Mark x. 14). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The law of marriage:*—I. THE NATURE OF THIS CONTRACT. It is for life, and dissoluble only for one sin. It is subject to Divine laws. It is mutual. It must be based upon affection. It implies the surrender of various rights, but not of all, *i.e.* conscience. In case of difference of opinion, and within proper limits, the authority is with the husband. II. THE DUTIES IMPOSED BY THIS RELATION. UPON BOTH IS IMPOSED CHASTITY. Likewise mutual affection. Also the duty of mutual assistance. The husband made by Scripture and by law the head of the domestic society; hence the duty of submission. Virtue and dignity of submission. (*Dr. Wayland.*) *God's law greater than man's:*—We are here taught that marriage, being an institution of God, is subject to His laws alone, and not to the laws of man. Hence the civil law is binding upon the conscience only in so far as it corresponds to the law of God. (*Ibid.*) *Influence of a Christian wife:*—There was a company of rough men together at one o'clock one night, and a man says: "My wife is a Christian, and if I should go home at this hour, and order her to get us an entertainment, she would get it with good cheer, and without one word of censure." They laughed at him, and said she would not. They laid a wager, and started for his home, and they knocked at one or two o'clock in the morning. The Christian wife came to the door, and her husband said: "Get us something to eat! get it right away!" She said: "What shall I get?" And he ordered the bill of fare, and it was provided without one word of censure. After his roystering companions had gone out of the house, he knelt down and said: "Oh! forgive me! I am wicked! I am most wicked! Get down and pray for me!" and before the morning dawned on the earth, the pardon of Christ had dawned on that man. Why? His wife was a thorough Christian. He could not resist the power of her Christian influence. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Marriage:*—The special duties belonging to marriage are love and affection. Love is the marriage of the affections. There is, as it were, but one heart in two bodies. Love lines the yoke and makes it easy; it perfumes the marriage relation. Like two poisons in one stomach, one is ever sick of the other. In marriage there is mutual promise of living together faithfully according to God's holy ordinance. Among the Romans, on the day of marriage, the woman presented to her husband fire and water: signifying, that as fire refines, and water cleanses, she would live with her husband in chastity and sincerity. (*Thomas Watson.*) *A cure for divorces:*—A gentlemen who did not live very happily with his wife decided to procure a divorce, and took advice on the subject from an intimate friend—a man of high social standing. "Go home and court your wife for a year," said this wise adviser, "and then tell me the result." They bowed in prayer, and separated. When a year passed away, the once-complaining husband called again to see his friend, and said: "I have called to thank you for the good advice you gave me, and to tell you that my wife and I are as happy as when first we were married. I cannot be grateful enough for your good counsel." "I am glad to hear it, dear sir," said the other, "and I hope you will continue to court your wife as long as you live." *The marriage tie and the married life:*—The sacred institution of marriage has been fiercely assailed. The attempt is to shake off the authority of the great God who made and rules all things. Thus with regard to marriage, men tell us it is simply an agreement between two persons, which the State takes notice of only for the sake of public convenience, like it does of the lease of a house. This

leaves out of view the most powerful part of matrimony—the religious. True, it is a legal engagement; but it is also a solemn engagement before God. "Whom *God* hath joined together," &c. See, the golden links of matrimony are of heavenly temper. What hand can be so impious as to try to burst them asunder? The law of God has been transgressed of late years by the doctrine of polygamy so boldly proclaimed by the Mormon blasphemy. Everywhere Christ and His apostles speak of one wife; as the great God only created one man and one woman. It is a solemn moment when two immortal beings venture out on life's stormy sea in the bark of matrimony, with no aid but their own to help them. A mistake in matrimony is a mistake for life. Do not Christians find it important to avoid the friendship of the irreligious; what then is likely to be the effect of marriage with the ungodly? Married life is a detector of the real character. After marriage, faults are discovered, perhaps, to be greater than was expected, and excellences less. Disappointment springs up; contempt follows. Do you find much you did not expect? Remember you also are showing much that was not expected, and as you do not like in consequence of your faults to cease to be loved, so also do not let the faults you see kill your own love. Do not gloomily meditate on each other's failings, for that will make them seem greater than they are. If you would see your life-partner's faults amended, you should set the example by amending your own. Gentleness, firmness, forbearance, cheerfulness, openness, must be the chains with which husband and wife try to keep marriage love from escaping. 1. The want of experience is often a great hindrance to the happiness of married life; hence it frequently happens that the first years of married life are not the happiest. 2. The married life is often disturbed by the extravagance and folly of the husband or wife; for difficulties arise therefrom, and much bitterness is likely to spring up. Love is the universal law of marriage. Love will not easily find fault or rashly give offence. Poverty cannot quench it. The Christian rule for all applies doubly to man and wife—"weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice." Different dispositions and tastes may sometimes make mutual sympathy difficult. The sympathy of love and the sympathy of taste are distinct things. A source of unhappiness in married life is the habit of dwelling on individual right instead of remembering that love should not measure the service it bestows, nor that it receives. If difference of opinion does arise, the Christian duty is for the wife to yield. The marriage life was intended to promote human happiness; but it brings with it peculiar duties, and the happiness marriage was intended to impart will be wanting, if the duties of the married life are neglected. (*A. Bibby, M.A.*)

Vers. 13–16. **And they brought young children to Him.**—*Bringing children to Jesus*:—We know what it was to bring a little child to Jesus when He was on earth; we may ask what it is now, and wherein the difference consists. I. IN REGARD TO THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES. It is a common expression on the lips of good people to bid children to "come to Jesus." This cannot mean exactly the same as when Jesus was sitting in the house. The child saw Jesus with his bodily eye, might mark the kindly light in it, and be encouraged by the kindly smile that played around His lips. There could not be in the children on that day anything like what we now call a spiritual feeling, any doubts or difficulties as to what was meant by coming to Jesus. In more advanced years the notion of what is spiritual may be gradually developed in the mind, but in the tender time of childhood, religious ideas should be presented to children in forms that are true and natural to them. Let them feel that they are the children of the great unseen Father; that they have a Saviour and Friend; but beware how you mix up with that religious teaching a philosophy of human invention. Children are patterns of simplicity; do not reverse this picture. II. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRINGING A CHILD IN CHRIST'S DAY TO JESUS AND BRINGING HIM NOW? What is the difference to the child himself, and what to the parents? At that time the parents saw whether the child was accepted; saw Christ bless the child; it was a matter of sight, not of faith. Now it is matter of faith. One would like to know the ground of the rebuke administered by the disciples. Perhaps the parents were interrupting the teaching of Christ, or the disciples thought that the placing of Christ's hands on the children could do them no good. The objections of modern disciples are of the same nature. The action of Christ, as well as His words, is a rebuke to such. He does not say, "Take these children hence, they can get no good from Me. Bring them to Me when they can express assent to My teaching." His words tell us that before the age of understanding God can do the child good.

What is meant by "receiving the kingdom of God as a little child"? There are elements of a child's life which cannot be continued in the life of manhood; but there are outstanding characteristics of childhood which must be seen in those who receive the kingdom of God. 1. He refers to naturalness, truthfulness, or single-mindedness, as opposed to the spirit of artifice or duplicity. The child's nature comes out, unmindful of pain or pleasure to others, he speaks what is in him. His mind is a perfect mirror, throwing back all that falls on it, and he is utterly unconscious of any wish to give an undue colouring to his feelings or desires. He does not pretend to like what he hates; to believe what he does not believe; he is true to himself. Whosoever would receive the kingdom of God as a little child must be true to nature, the new nature, and be simple and sincere. How much more straightforward would the path be to the kingdom, and in the kingdom, if men would only renounce the crooked policy which they learn in the world. 2. The element of trust. (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *Children welcomed to Christ*:—1. The danger of sin standing in the way of children coming to Christ. Few persons are aware of the extent to which children, even very young children's minds, are capable of being affected, prejudiced, distorted, by the conversation which they hear. Children cannot balance and dismiss a subject as you do. It has fallen with fearful impression. But some cast obstacles less offensively, but perhaps more dangerously. They render religion repulsive to children. Where is that cheerfulness which a child loves, and in which real religion always consists? What ought to come as a pleasure you force as a duty; you are severe when you ought to be encouraging; abstract when you should be practical. II. THE DUTY OF BRINGING CHILDREN TO CHRIST. Impressions made in childhood are sure to creep out in after life. Let them feel that at any point of life they have to do with Jesus. Your child has told a lie. Tell him, "Jesus is Truth." This is leading him to Christ. III. WE OURSELVES MUST BE LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN. Be quite a child, and you will soon be quite a saint. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The Saviour's invitation to little children*:—Why does the Saviour show such tender affection for children? 1. Because they have a confiding trust in God. 2. Because they have a holy fear of God. 3. Because they have no false shame. 4. Because they have the spirit of humility. 5. Because they have the spirit of love. (*J. H. Norton, D.D.*) *The child's gospel*:—"O mother," said a little girl, on returning from church, and running into her mother's sick room, "I have heard the child's gospel to-day!" It was the very part which I am now preaching about. Another, about seven years old, heard the same passage read when she was near death, and, as her sister closed the book, the little sick one said, "How kind! I shall soon go to Jesus. He will take me up in His arms, and bless me, too!" The sister tenderly kissed her, and asked, "Do you love me, dearest?" "Yes," she answered, "but, don't be angry, I love Jesus more." (*Ibid.*) *Parental love*:—The poet Lamartine, in alluding to his father and mother, says, "I remember once to have seen the branch of a willow, which had been torn by the tempest's hands from the parent trunk, floating in the morning light upon the angry surges of the overflowing Saone. On it a female nightingale covered her nest, as it drifted down the foaming stream; and the male on the wing followed the wreck which was bearing away the object of his love." Beautiful illustration, indeed, of the tender affection of parents for their children. Much, however, as father and mother love their offspring, there is One whose feelings towards them are infinitely stronger and more enduring. I hardly need explain that I refer to our adorable Saviour. (*Ibid.*) *The sin of keeping back children from Christ*:—I It should be noted carefully that the parties who objected to the bringing little children to Christ were not Scribes and Pharisees, the unbelieving Jews who recognized nothing Divine in the mission of our Lord, BUT ACTUALLY HIS DISCIPLES. They perhaps considered it entailing unnecessary fatigue on their Master, that He should have to receive the young as well as the old; or that no sufficient end was to be answered by bringing little children to Christ. They would have understood the use of bringing a lame child to Him, though too young to exercise faith; but they had no idea of a child in bodily health deriving any advantage from contact with Christ. The parents judged better than the disciples. Knowing that by God's express command the rite of circumcision was administered to infants, they concluded, as we may suppose, that infancy of itself was no disqualification for a religious privilege, and that if there was anything spiritual in the mission of Christ, it might be communicated to the young as well as the old. If we delay religious instruction, under the idea that it is too difficult or too abstruse for a very young mind, are we not

acting in much the same way as the disciples? In after life there is no greater impediment to religion than the want of proper habits of self-discipline and control. It may therefore be justly considered, that whatever tends to the forming such habits facilitates the coming to our Lord for His blessing. Then, what want of faith is there in the education of children. Parents are actually suspicious of the Bible, even when desirous of instilling its truths into their children. They run to good books to make the Bible easy and amusing, whose business it is to dilute and simplify the Word, ridding it of mysteries, and adapting it to juvenile understandings. But this is virtually withholding the children from Christ. Remember that for the most part what is mystery to a child is to a man. If I strive to make intelligible what ought to be left mysterious, I do but nourish in the child the notion of his being competent to understand all truth, and prepare him for being disgusted if he finds himself in riper years called upon to submit reason to faith. Do not let it seem to you a harsh accusation—consider it well, and you will have to confess it grounded upon truth—that whensoever there is dilatoriness in commencing the correction of tempers, which too plainly prove the corruption of nature, or the substitution of other modes of instruction for the Bible itself, or any indication, more or less direct, of a feeling that there must be something intermediate, that children are not yet ready for the being brought actually to the Saviour, we identify your case with that of our Lord's disciples, who, when some sought for infants the benediction of Christ, rashly and wrongfully "rebuked those that brought them." II. But now let us mark more particularly OUR BLESSED LORD'S CONDUCT, IN REGARD TO THE CHILDREN and those who would have kept them from Him. When he observed the endeavour of the disciples to prevent the children being brought, you read that "He was much displeased." The original word marks great indignation. It is used on one or two other occasions in the New Testament, when very strong feelings were excited. For example, "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna, to the Son of David, they were *sore displeased*:" it is the same Greek word. Again: on the occasion of the woman's pouring on Christ's head an alabaster box of very precious ointment, "when His disciples saw it, they had *indignation*"—the same word—"saying, To what purpose is this waste?" These instances show you that the word denotes a very high degree of dissatisfaction, anger being more excited than sorrow, as though the thing done were specially offensive and criminal. It is never again used in connection with Christ; Christ is never again said to have been "much" or "sorely displeased." On the occasion of having little children kept from Him, but on no other occasion, did Christ show Himself "sorely displeased." What an indication of His willingness to receive little children! What a declaration as to the duty of bringing to Him little children; and the sinfulness, in any measure or on any account, of withholding them from Him! And, perhaps, many children would go to Christ, if they were but suffered to go. Christ draws their young hearts; but how often are serious thoughts discouraged in children! How little advantage is taken of indications of youthful piety! Then, again, what inconsistencies they perceive in those around them! and who quicker than children in detecting inconsistencies? They are as sharp-sighted in their discernment of the faults of their superiors, as if they had been born critics, or bred up for censors. But inconsistencies will stop them, just when they might be determining on taking the first step towards Christ; and we do not "suffer" them to go, if by anything in our example we interfere with their going, putting some sort of hindrance—and it need not be a high one for young feet to stumble at. Yea, and we may actually "forbid them." This is our Lord's next expression; and it indicates more active opposition than when He only requires us to suffer. Evidently the worldly-minded parent or instructor forbids the children from coming to Christ, when he discountenances any religious tendency; when he manifests his fear of a young person becoming too serious, too fond of reading the Bible, too disposed to avoid gay amusements, and cultivate the society of such as care for the soul. This is the more open sort of forbidding. Not but what there is a yet more open: when children or young persons are actually prevented from what they are inclined to do in the matter of religion, and forced into scenes and associations which they feel to be wrong. It is not thus, however, that "disciples"—any who may be parallel with those to whom our Lord addressed His remonstrance—are likely to prevent little children. But are there no other ways of forbidding? Indeed, a young mind is very easily discouraged; more especially in such a thing as religion, towards

which it needs every possible help, and from which it may be said to have a natural swerving. A look will be enough; the slightest hint; nay, even silence will have the force of a prohibition. There may be needed a stern command to withhold from an indulgence, but a mere glance of the eye may withhold from a duty. Not to encourage, may be virtually to forbid. The child soon catches this; he soon detects the superior anxiety which the parent exhibits for his progress in what is called learning, the comparative coldness as to his progress in piety. He quickly becomes aware of the eye being lit up with greater pleasure at an indication of talent, than at a sign of devotion. And thus the child is practically "forbidden" to come to Christ. He is practically told that there is something preferable to his coming to Christ. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Of such is the kingdom of God:*—Perhaps God does with His heavenly garden as we do with our own. He may chiefly stock it from nurseries, and select for transplanting what is yet in its young and tender age—flowers before they have bloomed, the trees ere they begin to bear. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The conversion of little children:*—1. Because they are not too young to do wrong. 2. Because the regeneration of children or adults is the work of the Holy Spirit. 3. Because piety is a matter of the heart, rather than of the intellect. 4. Special examples found in God's Word. 5. It is a pleasing confirmation of our faith in very early piety to observe the many instances within our own observation of the conversion of young children, and of their teachable spirit with reference to religion. (*S. S. Portwin.*) *The love of Christ to children:*—I. It is very old. II. It is all-embracing. III. It is all-sufficing. (*Anon.*) *Teachers warned against impeding children's salvation:*—The impediments which teachers throw in the way of children coming to Jesus. I. INADEQUATE PIETY. II. INCOMPETENT KNOWLEDGE of the gospel. 1. Your knowledge must spring from faith. 2. It must be derived from scripture. III. INJUDICIOUS MODES OF INSTRUCTION. 1. Loading the memory with scripture without explanation. 2. Lengthened addresses in which children take no part. IV. AN IMPROPER SPIRIT. 1. Impatience. 2. Pride. 3. Selfishness. V. INCONSISTENT CONDUCT. 1. Want of punctuality. 2. Gossiping. (*J. Sherman.*) *Jesus and children:*—1. The text teaches that Jesus is attractive to children. 2. That Christ takes a deep interest in children. 3. Jesus prays for children. 4. Jesus wishes children to be happy, and they could not be that without pardon. 5. There are a great many children in heaven. (*Dr. McAuslane.*) *Jesus and children:*—There was one thing about Jesus which no one could fail to notice—His great popularity with children. A certain fulness of humanity always seems to attract children. In Jesus this constituted an irresistible attraction. They ran after Him—they clung to Him—they shouted for Him. His must have been a joyous presence. Different from your sour-faced Puritan (who has his merits notwithstanding): your dried-up theologian (who is needful, too, in season): your emaciated ascetic (whose protest against sensuality is sometimes necessary and even noble). I think this power of attracting and interesting the little ones is one of the hall-marks of good men. The children's unspoiled natures seem to cling to unspoiled souls—as like cleaves to like. "They *brought* young children to Christ." Ah! there was no need of that, for they *came* to Him of their own accord—nor did He ever repulse them. How shall we bring the children to Christ—how shall we win them to love and follow Him? The best way of bringing our children to Christ is by being Christ-like ourselves. Let them see in us nothing but His kindness, wisdom, strength, tenderness, and sympathy, and they will learn to love their religion, and grow close to Jesus, as in the days when "He took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them." (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Christ's sympathy for childhood:*—Jesus was the first great teacher of men who showed a genuine sympathy for childhood—perhaps the only teacher of antiquity who cared for childhood as such. Plato treats of children and their games, but he treats them from the standpoint of a publicist. They are elements not to be left out in constructing society. Children, in Plato's eyes, are not to be neglected, because children will inevitably come to be men and women. But Jesus was the first who loved childhood for its own sake. In the earlier stages of civilization it is the main endeavour of men to get away from childhood. It represents immaturity of body and mind, ignorance and folly. The ancients esteemed it their first duty to put away childish things. It was Jesus who, seeking to bring about a new and higher development of character, perceived that there were elements in childhood to be preserved in the highest manhood; that a man must, indeed, set back again towards the innocence and simplicity of childhood if he would be truly a man. Until Jesus Christ, the world had no place

for childhood in its thoughts. When He said, "Of such is the kingdom of God," it was a revelation. (*Eggleston.*) *Bring the children to the Saviour*:—In a Chinese Christian family at Amoy, a little boy, the youngest of the three children, on asking his father to allow him to be baptized, was told that he was too young; that he might return to heathenism, if he made a profession of religion when he was only a little boy. To this he made the following touching reply:—"Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in His arms. I am only a little boy; it will be easier for Jesus to carry me." This was too much for the father; he took him with him, and the dear child was ere long baptized. The whole family, of which this child is the youngest member, belong now to the mission church at Amoy. *The Saviour's love for children reciprocated*:—A little girl, between six and seven years of age, when on her death-bed, seeing her eldest sister with a Bible in her hand, asked her to read this passage respecting Christ's blessing little children. The passage having been read, and the book closed, the child said, "How kind! I shall soon go to Jesus; He will soon take *me* up in His arms, bless me, too; no disciple shall keep me away." Her sister kissed her, and said, "Do you love me?" "Yes, dear," she replied, "but you mustn't mind that I love Jesus better." *Care in training children*:—What if God should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an index of your thoughts and feelings! What care, what caution, would you exercise in the selection! Now this is what God has done. He has placed before you immortal minds, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you are about to inscribe every day and every hour, by your instructions, by your spirit, or by your example, something which will remain and be exhibited for or against you at the judgment day. (*Dr. Payson.*) *Children need to be brought to Christ*:—The apostles' rebuke of the children arose in a measure from ignorance of the children's need. If any mother in that throng had said, "I must bring my child to the Master, for he is sore afflicted with a devil," neither Peter, nor James, nor John would have demurred for a moment, but would have assisted in bringing the possessed child to the Saviour. Or suppose another mother had said, "My child has a pining sickness upon it, it is wasted to skin and bone; permit me to bring my darling, that Jesus may lay His hands upon her," the disciples would all have said, "Make way for this woman and her sorrowful burden." But these little ones with bright eyes, and prattling tongues, and leaping limbs, why should they come to Jesus? Ah, friends! they forgot that in those children, with all their joy, their health, and their apparent innocence, there was a great and grievous need for the blessing of a Saviour's grace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sin of keeping children from coming to Christ*:—It must be a very great sin indeed to hinder anybody from coming to Christ. He is the only way of salvation from the wrath of God, salvation from the terrible judgment that is due to sin—who would dare to keep the perishing from that way? To alter the sign-posts on the way to the city of refuge, or to dig a trench across the road, would have been an inhuman act, deserving the sternest condemnation. He who holds back a soul from Jesus is the servant of Satan, and is doing the most diabolical of all the devil's work. We are all agreed about this. I wonder whether any of us are quite innocent in this respect. May we not have hindered others from repentance and faith? It is a sad suspicion; but I am afraid that many of us have done so. Certainly you who have never believed in Jesus yourselves have done sadly much to prevent others believing. The force of example, whether for good or bad, is very powerful, and especially is it so with parents upon their children, superiors upon their underlings, and teachers upon their pupils. (*Ibid.*) *Children the pastor's chief care*:—Dr. Tyng, senior, of New York, said that in all his ministry he had never hesitated, when the choice must be made between one child and two adults, to take the child. "It seems to me," he says, "that the devil would never ask anything more of a minister than to have him look upon his mission as chiefly to the grown-up members of his congregation, while somebody else was to look after the children. I can see the devil standing at the door, and saying to the minister, 'Now you just fire away at the old folks; and I'll stand here, and steal away the little ones as the Indians catch ducks, swimming under them, catching them by the legs, and pulling them under.'" *Children to be brought into the Church at earliest age*:—Now let us see how this theory works. I cannot show its evil effects better than by taking an illustration from the first book I ever read—"Æsop's Fables." It is long since I saw the book, but its pages are vividly impressed on my memory, especially the pictures, and here is one of them. A fisherman is sitting on the bank of a stream,

He has thrown in his bait, and brought out a very little fish. He has the fish in his hand, and is just about to put it into his basket, when the fish begins to talk. He is sitting up in the man's hand, and addressing himself to the fisherman, speaks on this wise: "You see I am a very little fish. It is not worth your while to put me into the basket. Throw me back into the stream, and I shall become a bigger fish, and much better worth catching." But the fisherman says: "No; if I throw you into the stream, it is most likely that I shall never see you again. I will keep you whilst I have got you." And so he puts the fish into the basket. The wrong theory is the theory of the fish, the right one that of the fisherman. Now I ask you to consider this. In the present day we have vast multitudes of children under Christian teaching and influence. A careful estimate gives the present number of scholars in the Sunday schools of England and Wales as over 4,000,000; and there are very many children well taught in Christian homes who are not in the Sunday schools. There is also provision made in our elementary day schools for over 4,000,000 scholars. Now these children are, so to speak, yet in the basket of the Church, and we should use our utmost efforts to prevent them from ever getting out of it. According to the great Teacher the little ones belong to the kingdom of God in their earliest days. Why should they ever leave it? But, alas! instead of acting in accordance with the true theory, we too often act as if the wrong theory were true. We are not so anxious as we ought to be to bring our children at the earliest possible moment into the enjoyment of peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not so careful as we ought to be to provide that before a child leaves school and his parents' home he shall be fortified against the temptations of life by established faith in Christ. *On the salvation of all dying before the age of accountability*:—I. THE CONDUCT OF THE PARENTS WAS VERY NATURAL AND COMMENDABLE. "They brought young children to Jesus," &c. Just as Joseph brought his sons to Jacob, that he might lay his hands upon them and bless them. His blessing would be sure to make rich in one way or another. These parents did not send their children to Jesus, but brought them; example better than precept. Let us not stop short of the Saviour. Morality good: but they must be born again. II. THE SPIRIT AND DEMEANOUR OF THE DISCIPLES WERE VERY REPULSIVE—"They rebuked those that brought them." What if the parents had judged of the Master by the spirit of His servants? There is love in His heart infinitely transcending all that exists in the hearts of His most devoted people. III. THE CONDUCT OF JESUS CHRIST WAS A PERFECT CONTRAST TO THAT OF HIS DISCIPLES. "He was much displeased." Christ may be angry with His own people, even when they think they are doing Him service. It is not enough to mean well. Is it any wonder that Christ should feel an interest in little children when He voluntarily became a little child Himself? "Of such"—in years—"is the kingdom of heaven." All infants go to heaven. The lost will go away into "everlasting punishment," but an infant cannot be punished, for that would imply personal criminality and conscious guilt: but an infant can neither do good nor evil. But may they not be annihilated? This passage kindles light in their little sepulchre and says, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." They live unto God. The only difference between the salvation of an infant and others, is this—the infant is saved without faith, by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of the finished work of Christ; others are saved by believing the gospel, and being sanctified through the truth. See the condescension of Christ. We cannot bless them as He did; we can plead for the Divine blessing upon them. (*R. Bayne.*) *The salvation of infants*:—Infants are all saved. 1. Our remarks apply exclusively to children who are not yet arrived at years of accountability; that is, who are not yet capable of employing the appointed means of salvation. 2. It is not said that the children of believers and of unbelievers are in all respects in the same case; on the contrary the relative holiness of the children of believers is an important blessing; their circumstances are more favourable to the formation of a religious character; their means of salvation are more direct. But the child of a believer has no other claim on the mercy of God than that may be put in by any infant. I. STATE THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF INFANT SALVATION. Considerations which may suggest this hope. 1. They are not accountable. They are incapable of moral obligation, hence are not condemned: free from personal guilt. Does it comport with the Divine Justice or mercy, to suppose that such are not saved whose only guilt is their unavoidable connection with a broken covenant? The benevolence of the Divine character suggests the hope of their salvation; and embraces infants in the redeeming purpose. The rectitude of the Divine government suggests their salvation;

they cannot be healed according to their deeds who have neither done good nor evil. There are many general expressions of Divine favour towards infants; God contemplates their advantage in the blessings He confers on mankind (Psa. lxxviii. 5, 6; Deut. xii. 28; Jer. xix. 3, 9). He spared Nineveh for their sake (Jonah iv. 11). 2. There are gracious declarations of the Word of God which imply this truth (Matt. xviii. 1, 14). That infants are capable of receiving the principle of faith is plain; Jeremiah and John Baptist have been sanctified from the womb. The Jewish children were accounted worshippers of the true God, even from their infancy (Deut. xxix. 10, 18; v. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 13; Joel ii. 15, 16). And so under the Christian dispensation children are viewed as believers, because visibly connected with the dispensation, and continue to be so accounted till they renounce it as their religion. Christ would not recognize as subjects of His kingdom here, those whom He did not regard as heirs of His kingdom hereafter. "Of such *is* the kingdom of God." Romans v. 12, 19 appears to involve this truth. It places in contrast the dispensations under which God has governed man; one at creation, the other at redemption. The curse of the broken covenant included the children; the saving benefit provided by Christ extends to them. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive again." 3. There are some recorded instances of faith in this truth, which support the conclusion (2 Sam. xii. 22, 23; 2 Kings iv). II. EXAMINE SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH APPEAR TO LIE IN THE WAY OF ADOPTING THIS CONCLUSION. 1. The imputation of Adam's sin. The doctrine of infant salvation does not deny this, but declares that the grace of God frees from the curse, and bestows the capacity for celestial happiness, through the mediation of Christ. 2. The temporal sufferings and death of infants. Because they suffer some of the effects of the curse it by no means follows that they suffer all. Actual believers suffer in this world. 3. The destruction of the children of the ungodly along with their parents. The case of Korah. 4. The declared necessity of faith in order to salvation. A new heart is the qualification for heaven, and may as easily be given to an infant as to an adult. 5. The early indications of sinfulness in infants. It is not easy to determine how far these are the result of animal propensities or deliberate choice. It is not said that infants are free from tendency to evil, or even apparent acts of sin; but are saved through Christ whose sacrifice puts away sin. 6. The silence of scripture. III. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THIS TRUTH. 1. Let it be viewed generally in its aspect on the moral government of God. (1) It relieves the difficulty connected with the permission of sin. (2) It reflects the glory of Divine grace. (3) It illustrates the declared importance of the mediation of Christ. 2. Let this truth be viewed in its aspect on the religious education of children. No excuse for the neglect of it. 3. Let this doctrine be viewed in its aspect on the seriousness of bereaved parents. (*J. Jefferson.*) *The death of babes*:—The whole case of the death of babes seems at the first thought to be indeed a marvel; yet what is there in life which is not a marvel? How few things there are which we can regard in any other light than that of unintelligent, though not unreasonable, wonder. Still, few things seem more marvellous in the rough aspect than that a little child should be allowed to suffer pain and die. Here is a little bud, a tender nursling of the spring, in the fairest way for flower, fragrance, and fruit, nipped by that bitter envious frost before a single leaf unfolds itself. Here is a little barque, freighted with costly wares for the markets of earth and heaven, bound for eternity, launched into life and wrecked at the very harbour-mouth. A work nobly simple, yet beautifully complex, with God's fresh breath of life inspiring its every look, and the power of the sweetest nature swaying its every movement; lo! it drops from His hand, as it might seem, in the very act of His holding it up to show its beauty to the world. It falls to pieces in an hour. The high art of its creation is negatived in a moment; its lovely mechanism siles off into dust; all its myriad contrivances for life—no one of which any man since the world began can imitate with the slightest effect, no, nor even rightly understand—in a few days are crumbled into mould, and as if they never had been at all. In fine, a work designed for duties of seventy or eighty, or perhaps a hundred years, capable of beautiful deeds, and of filling happy places in the house, the neighbourhood, the State, and all along in the family of the Church, is destroyed, as it might seem, by some slight accident, before any one of those duties has been met; and, to outward view, annihilated as though it had never been meant for anything whatsoever in the world. (*W. B. Philpot, M.A.*)

Ver. 15. **As a little child.**—*Intellectual submission*:—"Chrysostom," says Manton, "has the following comparison: 'A smith that takes up his red-hot iron

with his hands, and not with his tongs, what can he expect but to burn his fingers?' So we destroy our souls, when we judge of the mysteries of faith by the laws of common reason." Common enough is this error. Men must needs comprehend when their main business is to apprehend. That which God reveals to us is, to a large extent, beyond the reach of understanding; and therefore, in refusing to believe until we can understand, we are doing ourselves and the truth a grievous wrong. Our wisdom lies as much in taking heed *how* we receive, as in being careful *what* we receive. Spiritual truth must be received by a spiritual faculty, viz., by faith. As well hope to grasp a star by the hand as Divine truth by reason. Faith is well likened to the golden tongs, with which we may carry live coals; and carnal reason is the burned hand, which lets fall the glowing mass, which it is not capable of carrying. Let it not, however, be thought that faith is contrary to reason. No: it is not unreasonable for a little child to believe its father's statements, though it is quite incapable of perceiving all their bearings. It is quite reasonable that a pupil should accept his master's principles at the beginning of his studies; he will get but little from his discipleship if he begins by disputing with his teacher. How are we to learn anything if we will not believe? In the gloriously sublime truths of Godhead, incarnation, atonement, regeneration, and so forth, we must believe, or be for ever ignorant: these masses of the molten metal of eternal truth must be handled by faith, or let alone. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Necessity of humility*:—A high-caste Brahmin came to receive Holy Baptism. He approached the font wearing the sacred thread which, amongst his Hindoo co-religionists, was the badge of his being amongst the "twice-born," entitling him to little short of religious worship from those of a lower caste. But at the moment when he answered, "I renounce them all," he stripped off the sign of idolatrous pre-eminence and trampled it under his feet. *Childlike trust in prayer*:—People say, "What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Müller's prayers!" But is it not a sad thing that we should think it wonderful for God to hear prayer? We are come to a pretty pass certainly when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh, who had attended the prayer meetings, and at last said to his teacher who conducted the meeting, "Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible; she never reads it." "Why, Johnny, should your sister read the Bible?" "Because if she should once read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved." "Do you think so, Johnny?" "Yes, I do, sir; and I wish the next time there's a prayer meeting, you would ask the people to pray for my sister, that she may begin to read the Bible." "Well, well, it shall be done, John." So the teacher gave out that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister should begin to read the Bible. John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, "John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the prayer meeting, and go out. You ought not to have done it." "Oh, sir," said the boy, "I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister reading her Bible for the first time." That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer. The girl was reading the Bible when the boy went home. God had been pleased to hear the prayer; and if we could but trust God after that fashion we should often see similar things accomplished. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A dying blessing*:—A few days previous to his death, Dr. Belfrage, of Falkirk, hearing his infant son's voice in an adjoining room, desired that he should be brought to him. When the child was lifted into the bed the dying father placed his hands upon his head, and said, in the language of Jacob, "The God before whom my fathers did walk, the God who fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, *bless the lad*." When the boy was removed he added: "Remember and tell John Henry of this; tell him of these prayers, and how earnest I was that he might become early acquainted with his father's God." Happy are they who have their parents' prayers.

Vers. 17–22.—**Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** *The great refusal*:—I. We have here an INQUIRER. There are many things about him which awaken interest. He was young, thoughtful, an inquirer after the most momentous matter that can engage the attention of a man; not after methods of worldly success, speculative or antiquarian subjects. II. How JESUS DEALT WITH THE YOUNG MAN. Christ "knew what was in man." He varied His treatment of

inquirers so as to meet the character, history, and disposition of each. He touched the conscience always in the quick. To Nicodemus: woman at the well. This young man had a narrow view of the commandments; he did not love God with all his heart. Christ put before him the same alternative which, in many different forms, He puts before some of His people yet in the dispensation of His providence. The one thing needful is always entire self-surrender to God. III. THE CONVERSATIONAL COMMENT OF THE SAVIOUR ON THE YOUNG MAN'S DECISION. "How hardly shall they that have riches," &c. He does not mean to say that wealth is a bad thing. Intrinsically riches have no moral character; all depends upon the use. Our Lord does not mean to say that it is an absolutely easy thing for a man that has no riches to enter the kingdom of God. Poverty has spiritual perils. It is not the amount of a man's possessions, but the view which he entertains regarding them, that determines whether he will, or not, enter the kingdom of God. Salvation is a supernatural work. "With God all things are possible." 1. That the whole battle of conversion has to be fought over that which is dearest to the heart. 2. We may see here how an experience like this youth's takes the attraction even out of that which the heart prefers to Christ. "He went away grieved." He had discovered his slavery, and such gladness as he had formerly known even in his possessions dropped in a large measure out of his heart. In that one interview with Christ he had seen, as never before, the world's power over him; and even while he yielded to it, he loathed it. His property had a fascination for him, yet it seemed, even as he clung to it, the very price for which he had sold eternal life; and he could neither give it up, nor regard it with as much complacency as before. Just as the drunkard in his inmost soul loathes his slavery, even while he is draining the bottle to its dregs, and has no more such enjoyment in its stimulus as he had at first, because that which was then a delight has now become a bondage; so this youth, now that he saw that his property owned him, rather than he his property, had no longer the same delight in it as of yore. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Character tests*:—The chemical analyst has different tests for different poisons. If he suspect the presence of arsenic, he will use one thing to detect that; if he is looking for antimony, he will take another to discover that; if he is trying for strychnine, he will employ quite another to bring that to light. The test that will reveal one poison may altogether fail to make manifest another. Now it is quite similar with the moral poisons which destroy the soul. Each has its own appropriate test, and that which would reveal the presence of one would be impotent to detect another. Hence, like a skilful analyst as He was, the Lord in dealing with this young man used those means which He knew would be most effectual in revealing him to himself. He did not need to use any measures for the purpose of satisfying Himself. He wanted rather to do for the youth what the woman at the well said He had done for her when she affirmed "He told me all things that ever I did." (*Ibid.*) *Life eternal*:—What was the idea of eternal life which this young man had? Some understand heaven; to others it means a particular kind of life, which even now fills the soul. In order to know what a man means by the words you require to know more about him and his modes of thinking. Which of these was the young man thinking of? What was the view of eternal life which Jesus Christ had in mind? The eternal life was the life that was in Him. You gather an idea of the life which is spoken of, in any case, from the specimen of it which is adduced. You speak of the life of poetry as seen in one man, of the life of science as seen in another, of the practical life of industry or benevolence as seen in a third; and when you read of the eternal life in Christ, you must consider His history and see what His life was. It was not a life of ease or quiet, or one free from trouble and suffering and care. But it was a life always manifested; a life visible in defeat as well as in power, in weakness as really as in honour; a life of absolute submission to the will of His Father; and a life which was full of wisdom, purity, gentleness, truth. Whatever was in the mind of Christ, the thoughts of the young ruler had not been quite so high as this. Possibly he could not have explained the thought to himself. Christ shows him his deficiency like a skilful physician. He has come up to the very gate of heaven, but cannot take the last step. There was a like crisis in the life of St. Paul. He was in search of eternal life, questioning what good thing he should do. He learned that it could not be won by good works. "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." Must not explain these words away; nor must we apply to every case alike, or make the gospel, what it is not, a system of communism, or of purchase with certain outlays. To lose everything is a calamity which thousands have borne with courage. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath

taken away." They have entered the kingdom through losses and sufferings, not of property only, but of possession more precious. What is that state of mind which riches may injure. A comparatively poor man may be hurt by his wealth because of the place it has in his mind. We dare not direct men to outward acts in order to obtain eternal life, or to give up their property to religious uses. You may gain in material results, but lose in spiritual. Fellowship and sympathy with God, the mind that was in Christ—this is the highest possession. And if there is a hindrance to this—avarice or anything else—let us part with it at once, rather than obstruct the growth of our souls. (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *The disease pointed out*:—"What lack I yet?" he said, sincerely wishing to know wherein he might approach nearer to the standard of perfection, and thus attain the eternal life of which he was in search. And the answer of Christ shows that He discerns at once where the fault lies. It reminds one of a skilful physician who listens to the complaint of a patient telling him of some weakness and want of proper energy, but not knowing from what it springs; and at once the physician touches some muscle, puts his finger on a tender spot which had been unsuspected, presses it, and says, "Your disease is there." The patient starts: he had never felt pain there—never until it was touched by that hand; but at once he knows that the physician is right, that he has all along been living in ignorance of the nature of his malady, and perhaps by his habits he has been feeding it. So this young ruler feels at once that Christ is right, but he cannot all at once make up his mind to the consequences. He has power to do much—power to part with much, power to restrain his hand and his heart from much; but here is a tenderness he had never dreamt of, a diseased organ which hinders the current of his life, and he cannot suffer it to be removed. He has come up to the very gate of the kingdom, but he cannot take the last step and enter in. (*Ibid.*) *Eternal life a gift*:—There was a strange inconsistency in this young man's question, "What shall I *do* to *inherit* eternal life?" Inheritances are not earned by services. They are gifts, not wages. I have read somewhere the story of a poor woman who looked longingly at the flowers which grew in the king's garden, wishing to buy some for her sick daughter. The king's gardener angrily repelled her. "The king's flowers are not for sale," he said, rudely. But the king, chancing to come by, plucked a bouquet and gave it to the wistful woman, remarking at the same time, "It is true the king does not sell his flowers, but he gives them away." So, too, the Great King does not *sell* eternal life. He gives it. (*Lyman Abbot, D.D.*) *The splendid young man*:—"One thing thou lackest." I. The element of happiness. Happiness does not depend upon physical conditions. Some of the happiest people I have known have been those who have been wrapped in consumption. There is no happiness outside Christ; there is joy in His service. You lack—2. The element of usefulness. You have not yet commenced the real service of life. You lack—3. The element of personal safety. There is only safety in religion. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *A defective character*:—I. IN ALL GOD'S DEALING WITH MEN, THERE IS ONE ELEMENT OF RELIGIOUS CHARACTER FOR WHICH HE INVARIABLY LOOKS. Men are influenced by a showy exterior; God sees the heart (see 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7). 1. What is this element? A comparison of the different parts of this story will answer the question. "A little child" has a single peculiarity as its controlling characteristic: it loves, trusts, and obeys its parent. Its motive of life is sincere affection for him, above anything else. This is what God demands of His children: a full, filial regard for His honour, His commandments, and His affectionate approval (Mal. i. 6). 2. How do we know the young ruler did not possess this? He certainly seems like a thoughtful, amiable, virtuous person. But he owned that he still lacked something (see Matt. xix. 20). II. Let us take up a second lesson: NO OTHER QUALITY OF MIND AND HEART, NO OTHER CHARACTERISTIC, NO OTHER GROUPING OF ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER, CAN ATONE FOR THE LACK OF JUST THIS ONE. 1. Piety is the significant disposition which registers the value of everything else. Take any amount of ciphers, and arrange them carefully in a line; they will represent nothing, till you place a numeral figure at their head. We call that a "significant" figure; it gives reckoning of value to all the others. Now, with it at the head, each one of the ciphers increases it tenfold, while without it ten times as many ciphers would go for naught. The wiser a man is, the more distinguished a man is, the more wealthy a man is, the more lovely a man is—provided the consecration of his entire heart is rendered—the more helpful and useful he is as a Christian. But, the moment this consecration disappears, all these advantages are turned suddenly into dangers, for they work on the adverse side. Satan's gifts helped him to be a worse devil. 2. We recognize the same principle

in ordinary life. Suppose a journeyman, wilful and self-satisfied, comes to one of us, and asks for employment. We go to a master-mechanic seeking work for him in his poverty. Each one in turn says he is well acquainted with the man, but will have nothing to do with him. Now we begin to expostulate: "Is he not skilful? is he not industrious; is he not honest? is he no ia kind neighbour? is he not sober?" All this is true, comes the reply: "but the man will not obey orders." The prime quality of a workman is gone; that lack vitiates all the rest; he breeds insubordination wherever he goes. His excellences simply render him dangerous. 3. The worst is, that God Himself gives all these characteristics on which moral men pride themselves, and they wickedly turn them against Him. It has happened that one man has interfered sometimes to reconcile another man with his disinherited son. For many years under the home roof he was unfilial, abusive, alienated from all who loved him there. The father admits that he has rejected him at last. The neighbour inquires, "Is he not educated, so as to be an honour to you? is he not a most agreeable companion? are not his manners gentlemanly? is he not the very likeness of yourself in form and mien? how can you keep him away from your heart?" And the father answers in sad sincerity of pity and love: All that you say is true; and it was myself who gave him these accomplishments: I educated my boys all alike, but this one turned against me; I love him, but he hates me; no matter how courteous he is to strangers, he vilifies me here before the others: till he changes from a prodigal to a son, he is only a peril and a disturbance in the house: he is all the worse, in that he knows so well how to be better." III. So we reach, as our third lesson this: SUCH A DEFECTIVE CHARACTER AS IS HERE PICTURED HAS TO BE RECKONED ACCORDING TO ITS DEFECT, TO THE EXCLUSION OF ITS EXCELLENCES. 1. There may be a very showy morality without any true religion. Here was a man of great prominence and promise. He said he had kept the law (Mark x. 18–20). 2. There may be a very splendid manhood without any true religion. 3. There may be an unquestionable orthodoxy without any true religion. 4. There may be deep conviction of need in the soul without any true religion. Never forget the errand of this young man, nor the manner in which he discharged it (Mark x. 17). See his zeal: he came to Jesus. See his haste: he came running, See his courage: he was out in the highway conspicuous to all. See his humility: he kneeled at Jesus' feet. See his anxiety: he waited for no circumlocution, but pushed his question straight towards the "eternal life" he longed for. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The rich young man's question and carriage*:—I. THE OPINION OF GAINING ETERNAL LIFE BY THE OUTWARD OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW, WILL APPEAR VERY UNSATISFACTORY TO AN INQUISITIVE CONSCIENCE. This young man had not any full satisfaction in his own conscience, &c. He comes to Christ to receive instructions for the piecing up whatever was defective. Whosoever will consider the nature of God, and the relation of a creature cannot with reason think that eternal life was of itself due from God as a recompense to Adam, had he continued in a state of innocence. Who can think so great a reward due for having performed that which a creature in that relation was obliged to do? And if it were not to be expected in the integrity of nature, but only from the goodness of God, how can it be expected since the revolt of man, and the universal deluge of natural corruption? God owes nothing to the holiest creature; what He gives is a present from His bounty, not the reward of the creature's merit (Rom. xi. 35). II. IT IS THE DISEASE OF HUMAN NATURE, SINCE ITS CORRUPTION, TO HOPE FOR ETERNAL LIFE BY THE TENOR OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS (ver. 17). Cain thought to be accepted for the sake of his sacrifice. All men set too high a value upon their own services (Luke xix. 12; Phil. iii. 7). The whole nation of the Jews affected it, compassing sea and land to make out a righteousness of their own, as the Pharisees did to make proselytes. Man foolishly thinks he hath enough to set up himself after he hath proved bankrupt, and lost all his estate. III. HOW INSUFFICIENT ARE SOME ASSENTS TO DIVINE TRUTH, AND SOME EXPRESSIONS OF AFFECTION TO CHRIST, WITHOUT THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN PRECEPTS. IV. WE SHOULD NEVER ADMIT ANYTHING TO BE ASCRIBED TO US, WHICH IS PROPER TO GOD. If you do not acknowledge Me God, ascribe not to Me the title of good, &c. God is jealous of His own honour; He will not have the creature share with Him in His royal titles. (*S. Charnocke, B.D.*) *Gain though lose*:—A great gain was offered him, but a great loss was its condition. (*T. T. Lynch.* *Glad though grieved*:—As thou once camest glad and wentest away grieved, didst thou ever come grieved and go away glad? (*Ibid.*) *Privilege a trial*:—Have compassion on the privileged; for their advantage is their trial, and may be their ruin. (*Ibid.*) *No heaven without merit*:—And if we cannot merit

heaven, we cannot have heaven without merit. (*Ibid.*) *Ebb and flood:*—The ebb of this man's wealth would have been the flood of his prosperity. (*Ibid.*) *The beauty of an amiable character:*—Why did He love him? Because He saw him as he was—pure, enthusiastic, unspoiled though unproved. It is a false and forlorn view to take of man, that there is nothing beautiful in him before he becomes saintly. The very attractiveness of an unredeemed soul makes us the more keenly desirous to redeem it. But often, as a cultured tree knows nothing of the husbandries which beautified the stock from which it sprang, and thus caused its beauty, so youths know nothing of the spiritual husbandries of past days, to which they are indebted for the moral attractiveness they have to others, and the moral strength which they themselves deem sufficient. The children of Christians, not yet Christian themselves, have by nature an advantage. Often they are more loveable than others. But they must not trust a "nature" in themselves that would never have been so lovely but for the "grace" that was in their parents. There is much in common, and even in perverted, men that has a rude native grace. There is yet more in the sons and daughters of the sincerely pious that has a natural hopeful bloom about it. God loves this, and so may we. But God may love a man whom He cannot yet trust; He may love a man who does not yet truly know, and cannot yet deeply love, Himself. (*Ibid.*) *Virtue dependent upon wealth:*—He hardly knew how much of his happiness as a virtuous man depended upon his being a rich one. People are often happy in their religion because they are happy in their circumstances. They do well because they are well to do. These are good people, but they are not the best sort of good people. They do honour to religion as their very good master, and to themselves as his very good scholars; but they are but dry pools when the rain ceases, for no inner fountain feeds them. They know not how much Christ can do for them without the world, but how much he can do with the world, to help Him. All such goodness is only hopefully good as it learns that, without trial, it cannot know that it is lastingly good. (*Ibid.*) *Commandment keeping:*—Life is enjoyed in keeping the commandments, in doing as God would have us His creatures do. But they can only be kept as we attain the living ability to keep them. Thus, an adult man's privileges are enjoyed by doing as an adult man does: but a child cannot enjoy these privileges because his ability is not mature; nor an invalided adult because, though fully grown, he has not the powers of maturity. So an uneducated, uncivilized man cannot have the life of culture, because the "commandments," the ordinances of that life, though suitable to him as a man, are beyond his ability as such a man. The way to keep God's commandments in future is, first of all, to learn that you have never fully kept them yet. This young man really had kept God's law according to his understanding of it; and he could only be blessed as his comprehension of the law and his disposition to fulfil it were advanced. But in him there was no capacity to become a chief example of obedience to the chief laws, as there was in Christ. (*Ibid.*) *On characters of imperfect goodness:*—I. PERSONS OF THIS DESCRIPTION ARE NOT QUALIFIED FOR DISCHARGING ARIGHT MANY DUTIES TO WHICH THEIR SITUATION IN LIFE MAY CALL THEM. Mildness and gentleness alone are not sufficient. This is but plastic clay to be shaped either for good or bad. II. THESE PERSONS ARE ALSO ILL-FITTED FOR RESISTING THE COMMON TEMPTATIONS TO VICE. A constant desire to please is a poor bulwark against the persuasions of wicked men. III. THEY ARE ALSO UNPREPARED FOR SUSTAINING THE DISTRESSES TO WHICH OUR STATE IS LIABLE. Learn: 1. That fair appearances alone are not to be trusted. 2. Piety is the only safe foundation of character. 3. Discipline must also be practised. 4. Watchfulness is also needed. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *"All these have I observed from my youth":*—I. Consider HIS PROFESSION. He had not only made the law of God his study, but practice. 1. His obedience was early—"From my youth up." 2. His obedience was universal—"All these." 3. It was constant and persevering. Here we remark—1. How much the conduct of this young man condemns that of the generality of mankind, who, so far from having anything of true religion, have not even the shadow of it. 2. Those who have been preserved from such evils, and have attained a high degree of moral excellence, are apt to think better of their case than it really deserves. II. HIS INQUIRY—"What lack I yet?" 1. He lacked the true grace of God, or an inward principle of faith and holiness. He was like a spreading tree without a root. 2. He was deficient in the knowledge of himself and of that misery in which sin had involved him. 3. He lacked a justifying righteousness in which to appear before God. 4. With all his professions he was not weaned from earthly objects. Conclude: 1. We see that though grace puts sinners on the

inquiry about salvation, yet all inquirers are not truly gracious; many ask the way to Zion whose faces are not thitherward. 2. Mistakes with respect to the spiritual state of men are more common than most people imagine. 3. We here see what is the right use of the Divine law: by it is the knowledge of sin. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The goodness of God:*—The words are part of a reply of our Saviour to the young man's petition to Him. 1. God only is originally good, good of Himself. All created goodness is an outlet from this fountain, but Divine goodness hath no spring; God depends upon no other for His goodness: He hath it in, and of, Himself. 2. God only is infinitely good—a boundless goodness that knows no limits. 3. God only is perfectly good because only infinitely good. He is good without indigence, because He hath the whole nature of goodness, not only some beams that may admit of increase of degree. 4. God only is immutably good. There is not such a perpetual light in the sun as there is a fulness of goodness in God (Jas. i. 17). 5. All nations have acknowledged God good. 6. The notion of goodness is inseparable from the notion of a God (Rom. i. 20; Psa. cxlv. 6, 7). I. WHAT THIS GOODNESS IS. 1. We mean not the goodness of His essence, or the perfection of His nature. God is thus good because His nature is infinitely perfect. 2. Nor is it the same with the blessedness of God, but something flowing from His blessedness. 3. Nor is it the same with the holiness of God. 4. Or with the mercy of God. 5. By goodness is meant the bounty of God—His inclination to deal well and bountifully with His creatures. This is the most pleasant perfection of the Divine nature. 6. Comprehends all His attributes. All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of His goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the object it is exercised about. As the sea, though it be one mass of water, yet we distinguish it by several names, according to the shores it washeth and beats upon (Exod. xxxiii. 19, xxxiv. 6; Psa. cxlv. 7, 8). II. SOME PROPOSITIONS TO EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THIS GOODNESS. 1. He is good by His own essence—not by participation from another. Not a quality in Him, but a nature; not a habit added to His essence, but His essence itself. 2 God is the prime and chief goodness to whom all goodness whatsoever must be referred, as the final cause of all good. 3. His goodness is communicative, diffusive, without which He would cease to be good (Psa. cxix. 68.) God is more prone to communicate Himself than the sun to spread its beams, or the earth to mount up its fruits, or the water to multiply living creatures. 4. God is necessarily good—inseparable from His nature as holiness. 5. God is freely good. The necessity of the goodness of His nature hinders not the liberty of His actions: the matter of His acting is not at all necessary, but the manner of His acting in a good and bountiful way is necessary as well as free. 6. Communicative with the greatest pleasure. What God gives out of goodness He gives with joy and gladness. He is as much delighted with petitions for His liberality in bestowing His best goodness as princes are weary of the craving of their subjects. 7. Its display was the motive and end of all His works of creation and providence. III. GOD IS GOOD. 1. The more excellent anything is in nature the more of goodness and kindness it hath. 2. He is the cause of all created goodness. (1) Is not impaired by suffering sin to enter into the world, and man to fall thereby. It is rather a testimony of God's goodness, that He gave man an ability to be happy, than any charge against His goodness, that He settled man in a capacity to be evil. God was first a benefactor to man before man could be a rebel against God. (2) Is not prejudiced by not making all things the equal subjects of it. Is any creature destitute of the open marks of His goodness, though all are not enriched with those signal characters which He vouchsafes to others (Gen. i. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)? (3) Is not violated by the severe punishment of offenders, and the inflictions He inflicts upon His servants. (*a*) God's justice is part of the goodness of His nature. Is it not a part of the goodness of God to make laws and annex threatenings? and shall it be an impeachment of His goodness to support them? Not to punish evil would be a want of goodness. (*b*) Sometimes God afflicts men for the temporal and eternal good (1 Cor. xi. 32; Psa. lxxxix. 33; Heb. xii. 10). IV. THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS GOODNESS. 1. In creation of man—his being and nature; the conveniences He provided for, and gave to man; the world was made and furnished for man; the laws He hath given to man—fitted to his nature and happiness. 2. In redemption. (1) Goodness was its spring. He was under no obligation to pity our misery, &c. (2) Exceeds His goodness in creation: in regard to the difficulty of effecting it; its cost; man's desert of the contrary. Greater goodness than was expressed towards the angels—standing or fallen. Greater than was for a time manifested to Christ Himself. He *so* loved the world that He seemed for a time

not to love His Son in comparison of it, or equal with it (Jno. iii. 16). The first resolution to redeem, and the means appointed for redemption, could have no other inducement but Divine goodness. In God's giving Christ to be our Redeemer, He gave the highest gift that it was possible for Divine goodness to bestow—greater than worlds or all things purchased by Him: greater because it was His Own Son, not an angel; and this Son given to rescue us by His death. (3) This goodness is enhanced by considering the state of man in the first transgression, and since: nothing in fallen man to allure God to the expression of His goodness; man was reduced to the lowest condition; every age multiplied provocations; man was utterly impotent; the high advancement of our nature, after it had so highly offended; the covenant of grace made with us, whereby we are freed from the rigour of that of works—its nature and tenor, its confirmation (Heb. vi. 17, 18), its easy, reasonable, and necessary condition; His affectionate method of treating with man to embrace this covenant; the sacraments He hath affixed to this covenant, especially in the Lord's Supper. (4) By this redemption God restores us to a more excellent condition than Adam had in innocence (Jno. x. 10). 3. In His government—in preserving all things; in the preservation of human society; prescribing rules for it, restraining the passions of men, &c.; in providing Scripture as a rule to guide us, and continuing it in the world; in the conversion of men; in answering prayers; in bearing with the infirmities of His people; in afflictions and persecutions (Psa. cxix. 71); in temptations. V. USE. 1. Of instruction. If God be so good—(1) How unworthy is the contempt or abuse of His goodness. (2) It is a certain argument that man is fallen from his original state. (3) There can be no just complaint against God, if men be punished for abusing His goodnesss. (4) Here is a certain argument, both for God's fitness to govern the world, and His actual government of it. (5) The ground of all religion is this perfection of goodness. (6) Renders God amiable—to Himself, to us. (7) Renders Him a fit object of trust and confidence. (8) Renders God worthy to be obeyed and honoured. 2. Of comfort. (1) In our addresses to Him. (2) In afflictions. (3) Ground of assurance of happiness. (4) Of comfort in the midst of public dangers. 3. Of exhortation. (1) How should we endeavour after the enjoyment of a God so good! (2) Often meditate on the goodness of God. (3) Be thankful for. (4) Imitate—in relieving and assisting others in distress, &c. (*Stephen Charnocke, B.D.*) I shall show what was commendable in this young man. First—The question asked—What shall I do to inherit eternal life? I. It is not a question about another man, but himself. Many do not look inward, and are busy about the concernments of others; but here it is not, What shall *they* do, or what shall others do? but, Good Master, what is *my* duty? What shall *I* do to be saved? II. It is not a curious question, or the proposal of some intricate doubt and nice debate (Titus iii. 9—"Avoid foolish questions"). III. It is not about the body, but the soul. IV. About his soul. And certainly such a question as this discovers a good spirit. 1. That he was no Sadducee, for he inquires after eternal life, which they denied. 2. It discovers some thoughtfulness about it; his thoughts were more upon the kingdom of heaven than upon a temporal reign. 3. It discovered that he was very sensible of the connection that is between the end and the means, that something must be done in order to eternal life. There are some men who would have heaven and happiness, but are loathe to be at the cost. 4 This question so put discovers that he was sensible that a slight thing would not serve the turn, not a little saying and outward profession. 5. This was the errand and great thing that brought him to Christ to find the way to heaven and true happiness. V. This question was seriously put: he did not ask it in jest, but in the greatest earnest. Secondly. Let us consider the person by whom it was put. I. We find him to be a young man. God demands His right of the young man, that his heart be seasoned betimes with grace. 1. Consider how convenient and reasonable it is that God should have our first and best. The flower and best of our days is due to God, who is the best of beings. Under the law the first fruits were God's; the sacrifices were all offered young, and in their strength (Lev. ii. 14). When wit is dulled, ears heavy, body weak, affections spent, is this a fit sacrifice for God? If a man has a great way to go, it is good rising early in the morning; many set out too late, never any too soon. And for the convenience of it, young men are most capable of doing God service; the faculties of their souls are most vigorous, and the members of their bodies most active. It is not fit to lay the greatest load on the weakest horse; the weak shoulders of old men are not fit for the burden of religion. 2. Consider how necessary it is, because the lusts of youth being boiling hot need the correction of a

more severe discipline. As the boiling pot sendeth up most steam, so in the fervours of youth there are the strongest inclinations to intemperance and uncleanness. 3. Consider the profit of it. (1) The work is more easy the sooner it is taken in hand: whereas the longer it is delayed, the more difficult. A twig is easily bowed, but when it is grown into a tree it is not moved. When the disease groweth inveterate, medicines do little good. (2) You hereby provide for the comfort of old age. If you serve God in your good days, He will help you the better over those evil days wherein there is no pleasure. It will then be no grief of heart to you when old that you were acquainted with God young: whereas, on the other side, the vanities of youth will be the burden of age. (3) Our great work, that must be once done, is put out of hazard when we think of heaven seriously while we are young. Life is most uncertain, and such a weighty business as this should not be left at peradventures. II. This man was a rich man, one who had great possessions. This man, though he had enough to live happily in the present world, yet he thinks of the world to come. This is a question rarely moved by men of that sort. They think heaven is a fit notion to entertain the fancies of the poor and afflicted withal, a pleasant thought wherewith to comfort and relieve their sorrows; but this rich man, though he had great possessions, yet he hath his trouble upon him about his salvation. III. He was a ruler, not a vulgar and obscure plebeian, but a man of eminence and authority, a nobleman (to speak in the English language), or the chief of his family. Thirdly. Here is the manner of his address, and thence you may observe—1. The voluntariness of it. 2. The earnestness and fervour of his coming—"He came running." 3. Consider his humility and reverence to Christ: he kneeled to him, in token of civil honour and reverence to Him, as an eminent teacher and prophet. I. But where was his defect? 1. His fault was that he asked in the Pharisee's sense, what good thing he should do. Now the Pharisee's error was double; he thought that men should be saved by their own works, and that those works were in their own power. They were confident of their own merit and strength. II. His next fault was his love of riches and worldly things, which is a dangerous obstruction and a let to salvation. First: This may serve to humble us. It were a blessed thing for the world if all men went so far as this young man, so as—1. To have their thoughts taken up about eternal life. The most part of the world never consider whence they are nor whither they go, nor what shall become of them to all eternity. Should a man's thoughts be taken up about furnishing his inn where he tarries but a night and neglect his home? 2. To be sensible, it is no slight matter to have an interest in the world to come. Most men think they shall do well enough for heaven; a small matter will serve the turn for that. 3. To have such a sense as to choose fit means. Many keep up teachers to please their own lusts. 4. To be so concerned as to be in earnest in the means. "Be swift to hear" (St. James i. 19). But we are cold, slack, and negligent. Secondly: To caution us: do not rest in a common work. 1. In a desire of heaven is your only happiness. 2. Do not rest barely in a desire that moveth us to the use of some means, unless it bring us to a perfect resignation to God. This man had a good mind to heaven; he cheapens it, but is not willing to go through with the price. 3. If we would not rest in a common work, there are two things we must take care of, which are opposite to the double defect of this young man—brokenness of heart, and unbounded resignation of ourselves to the will of God; bring yourselves to that, and the thing is done. (1) Brokenness of heart. (2) Resignation of yourselves to God's will. He that starves as well as he that surfeits hath his difficulties in the way to heaven. Every man hath a tender part of soul, some carnal affection that he doth allow, reserve, and is loath should be touched; therefore, till there be an unbounded resignation, and we fully throw ourselves at Christ's feet, it is impossible ever we should come to the kingdom of heaven. No; we should be glad to accept of mercy on any terms, and take heaven at God's price. 1. This unbounded resolution must be seriously made (St. Luke xiv. 26). 2. It must be faithfully performed. There are four points of great weight and moment, which should ever be remembered by them that would make out their gospel qualifications or new covenant plea of sincerity. (1) That any allowed evil habit of soul or reigning sin is inconsistent with that faith that worketh by love, and only maketh us capable of the great privileges of the gospel. (2) That the usual bait of reigning sin is the world. The great difficulty of salvation lies in a man's addictedness to worldly things of temporal satisfaction. (3) That our inclinations to worldly things is various, according to our temper and constitution of men—"As the channel is cut so the river runs" (Isa. liii. 6). (4) That many times, when pretences are fair, there is a

secret reserve in our hearts. The devil seeketh to deceive men with a superficial change and half reformation, and moveth them to take on the profession of religion, and yet secure their fleshly and worldly interest. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) We have seen the young man's question: here is Christ's answer; in which observe two things. 1. His expostulation with him—"Why callest thou Me good?" 2. His instruction of him—"There is none good but One, that is God." First: For the expostulation. He doth not simply blame him for giving Him this title, but argueth with him about it. 1. To show He loves no compliment or fair words which proceed not from sound faith and love to Him. As elsewhere (St. Luke vi. 46)—"Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" It is a mockery to give titles to any one when we do not answer it with suitable endeavours. 2. He takes occasion to draw him from his error of conceiving Him as a mere man. The attribute of good belongeth truly and properly to none but God. 3. Our Lord would teach us by His own example to cast all the honour we receive upon God. This is a common sin, that when God doth any good by His creatures the minds of men stick in the creatures, and never look up to God; and from thence comes idolatry. 4. I suppose the chief reason was to beat down this pharisaical conceit. Secondly: I come to Christ's instruction of him. There is none good but God. And there you have two propositions. 1. That in some sense there is no man good. 2. That God only is good. Doctrine 1: There is no mere man that is absolutely and perfectly good. I shall explain this negatively and affirmatively. First: For the negative part. 1. It is not to be so understood as if in no sense man were good, for it is said in St. Luke vi. 45, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart"; and it is said of St. Barnabas (Acts xi. 24) and of Joseph of Aramathea (St. Luke xxiii. 50). 2. This is not so to be understood as if there were no distinction between men, but they were all equal in sin. 3. It is not so to be understood as if it were unlawful wholly to acknowledge that goodness that is in others. Secondly: Positively. How is it then true that no man is good? 1. No man is of himself good, but only by participation of God's goodness. As all the stars derive their light from the sun, so do we derive our poor weak ray wherewith we shine from the Father of lights (St. James i. 17). All the tribute we pay Him we have out of His own exchequer. 2. No man is good, that is, absolutely and perfectly good. 3. No man is good in comparison with God. The consideration of God's holiness and dignity obscureth all the glory and praise of the creature. As when the sun is up the lustre of the stars is no more to be seen than if they were not, so when God is thought on, and we are compared with Him, there are none good, no, not one. 1. This should ever keep us humble, for all the good that is in us, natural and spiritual, is not of ourselves but God (1 Cor. iv. 7). 2. This should keep us in a self-loathing frame and posture of heart, because the good that is in us is so imperfect and mingled with so much evil of sin. 3. This instructeth us, since none is good, where our happiness lieth, not in the plea of innocency, but in the pardon of sin (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2). Doctrine 2: That God only is good. First, the absolute perfection of His nature and being, which is such as nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better. In short, God is good, and only good four ways—originally, essentially, infinitely, and immutably. 1. Originally. He is *αὐταγαθος*, good of Himself. 2. He is essentially good. The goodness of God and the goodness of a creature differs, as a thing whose substance is gold differs from that which is gilded and overlaid with gold. A vessel of pure gold, the matter itself, gives lustre to it; but in a gilded vessel, the outward lustre is one thing, and the substance is another. The essence and being of an angel is one thing, and its holiness another. The holiness may be separated from the essence, for the essence and being of the angels was continued when their perfection and goodness was lost; so man's substance is one thing, his holiness another, but in God His holiness is His being. 3. God is infinitely good. God is an ocean without banks or bottom; the goodness of a creature is but a drop from the ocean, or as a nutshell filled with the water of the sea. 4. God is immutably good: it cannot be diminished or augmented, for in infiniteness there are no degrees—it can never be more than it is or less than it is; for God hath actually all possible perfection. Use 1. To humble us in our converse with God. Use 2. To make us thankful. Use 3. If we would have good wrought in us, let us look up to God. Use 4. Let us love God, and love Him above all things, for He only is good. He is the chiefest good. Other things are good in subordination to Him. All the goodness that is in the creature is but a spark of that good which is in God. If we find any good there, it is not to detain our affec-

tions, but to lead us to a greater good; not to hold us from Him, but to lead us to Him, as the streams lead us to the fountain, and the steps of a ladder are not to stand still upon, but to lead us higher. If the prince should woo us by messengers, and we should leave him and cleave to the messengers, this were extreme folly, and a great abuse and wrong to the prince. By the goodness of the creatures God's end is to draw us to Himself as the chiefest good. Here is goodness in the creature, but it is mixed with imperfection; the goodness is to draw us to God, the imperfection to drive us from the creatures. Many a fair stream is drawn dry or runneth low by being dispersed into several channels, but that which is infinite cannot be lessened. (*Ibid.*) *Question* 1. Why Christ refers the young man to the commandments? To convince him of his impotency, to humble him in the sense of his guilt, to drive him out o himself, and to draw him to seek salvation by a better covenant, or if not, to leave him without excuse. 1. Christ used the same method that God did in giving the law upon Mount Sinai. Why did God give it then but to break a stiff-necked people, trusting to their own strength, by this exact yoke of duty, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear? (Rom. v. 20, 21; Gal. iii. 19.) 2. Practical conviction is best, and men never see their unworthiness so much as when they are held to their own covenant, and we are so far to condescend to the humours of men as to convince them and condemn them in their own way. As a presumptuous sick man, that is strongly conceited he is able to leave his bed and walk up and down, the best way to confute him is by trial. 3. It was a truth Christ spake. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments; but we must consider his intention. Though men's trusting in their own works is displeasing to God, yet good works are not displeasing to Him. *Question* 2. Why the commandments of the second table are only mentioned? 1. In these the Pharisees conceived themselves to be most perfect, and yet these were a sufficient touchstone whereby to try and discover their unfruitfulness and their imperfection. Certainly if they be defective here, there is no standing by the law. If a man cannot go, surely he cannot run; if he cannot spell, snrely he cannot read; if men be defective in the duties of the second table, certainly they are not able to keep the law. 2. These are most plain and easy to be understood, and the sins committed against them are most evident and apparent. 3. In the externals of the first table the Jews seemed very zealous, but negligent they were of the second; and herein they commonly fail who hypocritically make fair shows of devotion and outward respect to God in worship (Isa. i. 11). Doct.: The true way to prepare men for Christ is to cause them to see their misery and impotency by the law. Because every man is apt to flatter himself with a spurious covenant of works of his own making, which is the main let and hindrance to keep him from Christ and salvation. It must be a powerful instrument to prepare men for Christ, because this covenant shuts up a sinner without any hope of relief, unless Christ and grace open the door to him. Let us then see how this law shuts men up. 1. The duty is impossible (Rom. viii. 3). 2. The penalty is intolerable (Gal. iii. 10). There is none passeth into the new covenant till he be driven by the old; and therefore certainly this is the way to prepare a man for Christ, to have some sense and feeling of it in our heart, and we see we are cursed and undone creatures, and so lie at God's feet with brokenness of heart (Rom. viii. 15). To instruct us, if we would be prepared for Christ, what we must do. 1. We must be able to understand the law. 2. Meditate often thereupon (Psa. i. 6). 3. Judge yourselves by it—look into thy bill, what owest thou? 4. Beg the light of the Spirit to show thee thy sin and misery (Rom. vii. 9). Without the Spirit we guess confusedly concerning things, as the man that saw men like trees walking, and have but general, cursory, confused thoughts. (*Ibid.*) *A good answer, if true*:—The young man's answer was good if it were true. First. It is good in the first respect, as an universality of obedience is pretended; and I drop this note—Doct.: They that would keep the commandments must observe not only one but all. It is true of the law of God, as it belongeth to the covenant of works, or to the covenant of grace. 1. As it belongeth to the covenant of works (Gal. iii. 10; James ii. 10). As one condition not observed forfeits the whole lease, therefore it concerns this legalist to make good his plea and conceit of perfection by the law, to say, "all these things have I done." 2. But is not the covenant of grace more favourable? No; it gives not allowance to the least failings, but binds us to make conscience of all as well as of some. (1) Because the authority is the same (Exod. xx. 1). "God spake," not one or two, but "all these words." (2) The heart can never be sincere when we can dispense with anything which God hath commanded; and you cannot have the testimony of a good conscience approving your sincerity when you allow yourselves in the least failing

(Psa. cxix. 6; Luke i. 6; Psa. lxvi. 18). (3) God giveth grace to all. Wherever He renews and sanctifies is throughout. He fills the soul with the seeds of all grace, so as to dispose and incline us to every duty, whether to God or man, the world or our fellow-creatures (2 Peter i. 7). Use. To reprove those that would keep some commandments, but not all. There is such an union betwixt all the parts of the law of God, that one cannot be violated without a breach of all the rest; therefore take heed of obeying God by halves. Secondly: There is another thing that is good in the reply the young man maketh, that is his early beginning—"I have kept all from my youth." 1. Because it will be a help to us all our lives afterwards, before affections are forestalled and pre-engaged, to begin with God, and to have the inclinations of youth set right by a good education, to be restrained from our own will, and to be trained up in a way of abstinence from bodily pleasures. When men are well principled and seasoned in youth, it sticketh by them; the vessel is seasoned already. 2. While parents and governors are careful to season those tender vessels, the Lord is pleased many times to replenish them with grace from above, and to give us His blessing upon their education, and many have been converted that way. You will bewail any natural defect of your children, and seek to cure it while they are young, if they have a stammering tongue, a deaf ear, or a lame leg; certainly you ought much more bewail the want of grace. Dye the cloth in the wool, and not in the web, and the colour is more durable. God works strangely in children, and many notable things have been found in them beyond expectation. 3. It prevents many sins which afterwards would be a trouble to us when we are old. The sins of youth trouble many a conscience in age; witness David (Psa. xxv. 7; Job xiii. 26). New afflictions may awaken the sense of old sins, as old bruises may trouble us long after, upon every change of weather. Alas! we cannot say "all these have we kept from our youth," but when we come to look to the commands of God, we may say "all these have we broken from our youth." But was it true? 1. It was true in regard of outward conformity. If there be light in the lantern, it will shine forth. If there be grace in the heart, it will appear. 2. It was not true in regard of that perfect obedience which the law requireth, and so he ignorantly and falsely supposed that he had kept the law well enough, and done those things from his youth. The falsity and presumption of this answer will appear by considering—(1) What the Scripture saith of the state of man by nature (Gen. viii. 21). (2) The falsity of it appears by the sense of the commandment produced. (3) The falsity of it will appear by comparing him with other holy men of God; how differently do they express themselves from this man that was so full of confidence. Compare him first with Josiah, who, when he heard the law read, rent his clothes (2 Kings xxii. 11). A tender conscience is all in an agony when it hears the law, and will smite for the least failing, as David's heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment. But what is the cause that men are so apt to overrate their own righteousness and goodness before God? First. Ignorance. 1. Ignorant of the spiritual meaning of the law. A man that keeps the law only outwardly can no more be said to keep the law than he that hath undertaken to carry a tree, and only taken up a little piece of the bark. 2. They are ignorant of gospel righteousness, which consists in the remission of sins, and imputation of Christ's righteousness applied by true faith. Ignorance, then, is one great cause of this disposition in men to justify themselves, ignorance of the legal and gospel covenant; they are ignorant of the nature, merit, and influence of sin, and of the severity of God's justice. Secondly. Another cause is error. 1. That they live in good order and are of a civil, harmless life, and are better than others, or better than themselves have been heretofore, and therefore are in good condition before God, and yet a man may be carnal for all this. A man may not be as bad as others, and yet not as good as God requireth (Gal. vi. 4). What is short of regeneration is short of salvation. 2. Here is another of their errors: they are born and bred up in the bosom of the Church, and true religion; and because they are baptized, and profess the faith of Christ, therefore they think they ever had faith and a good heart towards God, and do not see why or from what they should be converted. 3. They know no difference between a state of nature and a state of grace; they know no such thing as passing from death to life, and therefore are never troubled about it. As if all were of one lump, and all should fare alike, and therefore think themselves as good as the best. 4. That those that are blameless before men, and well spoken of in the world, need not doubt of their acceptance with God. 5. Another sottish maxim is, that petty sins are not to be stood upon. Thirdly: Self-love is the reason of it (Prov. xvi. 2). A man is very blind and partial in his own cause, and will

not own any opinion and conceit against himself. Fourthly. Negligence and want of searching, and taking the course whereby we may be undeceived. Fifthly. Security. As they will not search, so they will not know themselves when they are searched, and cannot endure thoroughly to be discovered to themselves. 1. They cannot endure to be searched by the Word (St. John iii. 20). 2. When God searcheth them by affliction; when they do not judge themselves, they are judged by the Lord. And that you may not be besotted with a dream of your own righteousness, consider—1. How light every one of us shall be found when we are put in the balance of the sanctuary (Prov. xvi. 2). 2. Consider how different the judgment of God and men will be (St. Luke xvi. 15). 3. Consider that self is an incompetent judge in its own case; and therefore you, that are to endure God's judgment, should not stand merely to the judgment of self. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 21. **Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.**—*The young ruler, whom Jesus loved*:—I. Let us INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF OUR LORD'S REGARD FOR THE YOUNG RULER. "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him." There are those who think that ardent love for an unconverted friend is a misplaced affection; that we should only love what God loves. But the love of God must be different from the love of the creature. When God loves He loves the whole man, not for his moral qualities, but in spite of them. The love of man is partial in its object, for we can admire one part of a man's character whilst we dislike another. Our attachments also in their present form must be of limited duration. What is implied in this love? 1. There is a sincere desire for such a person's welfare and an anxious wish to do him good. 2. There is a feeling of mournful pity, that one endowed with such high and hopeful qualities should fall short of heaven at last. II. WHAT WERE THE QUALITIES WHICH KINDLED OUR LORD'S REGARD FOR THE YOUNG RULER? 1. A real concern on the part of the young man for the safety of his soul. 2. Our Lord would be pleased with the young man's desire for religious knowledge. 3. The excellence of his moral character. III. Having seen the nature of our Lord's regard, and the qualities of the young man which seem most likely to have kindled it, let us conclude with a few practical reflections ON THE SAD COMPATABILITY OF BOTH WITH THE FINAL LOSS OF HEAVEN. 1. How many amiable qualities are here spoiled at once by the love of this world. 2. What is the precise value of any combination of amiable qualities towards the securing of this rich inheritance? However the world may applaud noble qualities, they will not save in the day of judgment. There must be repentance and faith. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Amiable qualities in the unregenerate*:—Doctrine I.—There may be some amiable and good qualities in unregenerate men. 1. All are created with some inclination to good, though not to good spiritual, yet to good, natural and moral. In our decayed condition there are some remainders of right reason, some impressions of equity, some principles of common honesty, still left and preserved in us, though as to spiritual endowments, "we are altogether become filthy and abominable" (Psa. xiv. 2). As in a rifled palace, though the rich furniture be gone, the plate and the jewels, and though the fashion of it be much spoiled, yet some of the fabric is left still standing to show what a magnificent structure it once was. 2. For the good of mankind. God is the patron of human society, and delights in the welfare and preservation of it. Now there would be no such thing as human society, if there were not sweetness of nature and moral dispositions yet left in us. 3. There are other things besides renewing grace that might cause these amiable qualities. (1) Bodily temper may incline men to some good. (2) The increase of one sin may cause others to decrease, as a wen that grows big and monstrous defrauds other parts of their nourishment. Though all sin be kindly to a natural heart, yet some sins are more apt to take the throne, and other lusts are starved to feed that. . . . A prodigal man is not covetous, and so more prone to be liberal and free-hearted. . . . Thus as weeds destroy one another, so do many vices; so many vices occasion something that is amiable. Ambition makes men diligent, sober, and vigilant to improve their opportunities. (3) It may be occasioned partly by discipline and strict education, or else the miseries and calamities of the present life; for these things, though they do not mortify sin, yet they may much weaken and hinder the discovery of it. (4) By politic government and laws, which keep men within the bounds of their duty, so that they are orderly by constraint, and for fear of penalty, which, if they should follow their pleasure in sinning, they would be exposed to. Austin compares laws to brooms, which, though they cannot make corn of weeds or of chaff, yet they serve to sweep

in the corn and keep it within the floor. Laws may make men good subjects, though not good men. (5) Unregenerate men may be translated from the grammar school of nature to the university of grace; and though they never commence there, and took the degree of true sanctification, yet they may come very near to it by common grace, and may not be far from the kingdom of God. Use I. It shows us how inexcusable they are in the sight of God, and how just their condemnation will be, that have nothing lovely in them. Use 2. If there may be amiable qualities in unregenerate men, then do not rest in these things (St. Matt. v. 46). A good nature without grace makes a fair show with the world, but it is of little respect with God as to your salvation. All this may be from temper and awe of men. How may a man mistake a still nature for meekness, firmness and height of spirits for zeal, want of affection to holy things for discretion, stupidity for patience, obstinacy for constancy! But God knows how to distinguish. Will complexion and temper ever pass for grace in God's account? And usually if a natural man hath one good quality, he hath another bad one to match it. Nay, a good nature once corrupted doth prove the worst of all others, as the sweetest wine makes the tartest vinegar—all their parts and excellences are but like a sword in a cutler's shop, as ready for the thief as the true man to purchase. Doctrine 2. That in some respect Christ loves those that are orderly and civil, and do but outwardly carry themselves according to God's commands. 1. The thing is good in itself, though the resting in it makes it useless as to the salvation of the person that goes no further (Micah vi. 8). 2. Because our Lord Jesus Christ is willing and ready to own the least good in us, that He might draw us on to more (St. Matt. xii. 20). 3. Because these things tend to the profit of mankind, and Jesus Christ's heart is much set upon the good of mankind. Use. Now let us see what use we may make of this. I. Negatively. 1. We cannot make this use of it as if Christ did love moral virtues as meritorious of grace; they are not such things upon which God hath bound Himself to give the grace of conversion. 2. We must not so take this as that He doth love good qualities so as to make them equal with Christian virtues or the graces of the Spirit. Morality is good, but we must not lift it up beyond its place. There is something better, and that is grace (Heb. vi. 9). Loose professors dishonour their religion, but the sound grapes in the cluster must not be judged of by the rotten ones, nor is the beauty of a street to be measured by the filthiness of the sink and kennel. Those that are the sink and disgrace of Christianity are unfit to show forth the virtue of it. So that if you compare these things, their morality is but like a field flower to a garden flower, or wild fruits to orchard fruits; it is a wild thing in comparison of grace, and not in any way comes up to the height of it. 3. We must not from hence make this use, that we should think ourselves to be in a good condition because of moral qualifications. Men may be viceless, but yet if they be Christless and graceless, and never brought to brokenness of heart (for certainly that is necessary to prepare men for faith, and for pardon of sins) they may perish for evermore. II. Positively. What use may we make of this, that Jesus loved this young man? 1. If Christ did love civility, much more will He love true grace in any of His, though mingled with much weakness. Certainly He that delights in the obscure shadow of His image will much more delight in the lively picture and impression of it upon the souls of His people, though we have our weaknesses. 2. We learn by Christ's example to honour others for their common gifts. 3. Thus we may learn children, young men, and others, all may know how to get Christ's love if they be tractable. By the rule of contraries, if He loves conformity to the law of God in externals, He hates those that walk contrary to His laws. 4. It condemns those that will pretend to the peculiar love of Christ, when they are not moral, but forward, undutiful in their relations, unconscionable in their dealing, and have not learned to be sober, to possess their vessels in sanctification and honour. What! do you talk of being Christians, when you are not as good as heathens? Object: What love doth Christ show now upon earth to those that are moral? 1. Moral virtues will at least procure a temporal reward. 2. There will be some serenity of mind resulting from the rectitude of your actions. 3. It is some advantage to grace; it is like the priming the post, that maketh it receptive of better colours. 4. As to their eternal state, it will be more tolerable for such than for others. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *On discerning good in others*:—It is only St. Mark who informs us that our Lord, beholding him, loved him. There were many imperfections in this young man, who was far too well satisfied with himself; yet our Lord loved him. Thus when we see much in people to lament and condemn, we should try to discern something in them to love. We are often

tempted to dwell on the worst side of our neighbour's character. We shall never help him much unless we love him. Let us go on looking till the ungraceful qualities disappear from view, and we discover his better self. There is some such view taken of the departed. Sometimes while a man is alive we are keenly alive to his bad points; when the man dies we find there is another side to his character which we never suspected. We often do not know the value of persons till we have lost them. We should not wait for death to remove men before we appreciate them. Try to think not so much of what the man is as what he was meant to be. Reconstruct in imagination the pattern after which he was created. He was meant to be something better than he has yet become. God meant him simply to be courageous. He is now rash. He is now lavish—he was intended to be generous. His very faults are perhaps perversions of good qualities. What you think insincerity arises from a desire not to wound feelings. What you think abruptness is a distorted form of straightforwardness. Not that we should confound moral distinctions. The man is a drunkard—we need not justify intemperance, but we may yet think God meant him for something better. God drew the plan for each. I will consider what by grace they may yet become. The Saviour loves you still, beholding you with all your blemishes. (*H. W. Burrows.*) **One thing thou lackest.**—*The defective amiabilities of the young*:—There may be much exceedingly fair and interesting in youth, and yet one thing of essential importance lacking. 1. Corporeal beauty—comeliness of feature, freshness of complexion, symmetry of form, gracefulness of movement; but how terrible if united with depraved and deformed soul, if no Divine light within, no love of God reigning in the heart. 2. Tender sensibilities, ever apt to awake at sight of distress. And yet in same heart there may be no sense of sin, no repentance toward God, no regard for Christ, no graces of the Spirit. 3. Mental ability—strong memory, ready judgment, shrewd observation, lively fancy; and yet an understanding blind in reference to the things of God, *e.g.*, Balaam, Ahitophel. 4. Docility—readiness to devote energies to this or that pursuit, but neglecting the greatest study of all. He who has been learning all other sciences, but will not learn of Jesus, has left out of his study that very science which alone can "enlighten him with the light of the living." 5. Religious assiduity—attention to outward rites. It is possible to know the truth and not love it; to hear the gospel and not believe it. 6. Active benevolence. Kindness may be done from motives of self-interest. They may also proceed merely from natural instinct, and not from love to God. 7. Ardent friendship, without any concern about the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. (*John Mitchell, D.D.*) *A special precept, given as a test*:—In the ruler's mind there was an ideal goodness; would he act up to its requirements? Riches and poverty in themselves are of little moment; our views of them constitute their most important feature. The point is, Are we trusting in them? If so, they must be given up, for they are a snare to us. 1. This test is much needed; for, although so dangerous, riches are not avoided like a haunted house. Very few fancy that they are rich, therefore the warning passes by them unheeded. But, whether we possess much or little, we may be clinging to what we have, and that is the danger. 2. If there remains one thing wanting, we cannot know satisfaction. No matter what our earthly possessions may be, still we shall be disappointed. The desires of an immortal spirit can be satisfied with nothing less than immortality. 3. Christ alone can satisfy all our wants. If we take up our cross and follow Him, we shall discover treasure laid up for us in heaven. With Christ as our guide and our hope, we shall be able to despise the riches of this world as so much glittering dross. Our course will be forward, our hope consistent, and heaven's pure treasures our everlasting portion. (*G. C. Tomlinson.*) *One thing thou lackest*:—A barren and a fruitful vine are growing side by side in the garden; and the barren vine says to the fruitful one, "Is not my root as good as yours?" "Yes," replies the vine; "it is just as good as mine." "And are not my lower leaves as broad and spreading? And is not my stem as large and my bark as shaggy?" "Yes," says the vine. "And are not my leaves as green, and have I not as many bugs creeping up and down? And am I not taller than you?" "Yes; it is quite true," replies the vine; "but I have blossoms." "Oh, blossoms are of no use." "But I bear fruit." "What! those clusters? Those are only a trouble to a vine." Such is the opinion of the fruitless vine; but what thinks the vintner? He passes by the barren vine; but the other, filling the air with its odour in spring, and drooping with purple clusters in autumn, is his pride and joy; and he lingers near it, and prunes it, that it may become yet more luxuriant and fruitful. So the moralist and the Christian. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Whole-hearted allegiance necessary: — What, then, did this young man lack? Not right desires: he wished to inherit eternal life. Not a good moral character: all the moral law he had kept from his youth up; he had been an honouring son, an honoured citizen, a pure man. Not earnestness: he came running to Christ. Not reverence: he kneeled before Him. Not humility: he made willing and public confession of his desire and his faith before the multitude in the open roadway. Not an orthodox belief: if words are creeds, no creed could be more orthodox than that which he compacted into the two words, "Good Master." Not a humane and tender spirit: for Christ looking on him loved him. But he lacked absolute and unquestioning allegiance; entire and implicit consecration; the spirit of the soldier who only asks what the marching orders are; the spirit of the Master Himself, whose prayer was ever, "Thy will, not Mine, be done." And, lacking this, he lacked everything, and went away sorrowful. (*Lyman Abbot, D.D.*) *Importance of the one thing lacking:*—The lack of one thing may make void the presence of all things else. Lacking its mainspring—which is but one thing—a watch with jewels, wheels, pinions, and beautiful mechanism, the finest watch indeed that ever was made, is of no more use than a stone. A sun-dial without its gnomon, as it is called, Time's iron finger that throws its shadow on the circling hours—but one thing also—is as useless in broad day as in the blackest night. A ship may be built of the strongest oak, with masts of the stoutest pine, and manned by the best officers and crew; but I sail not in her if she lacks one thing—that trembling needle which a child running about the deck might fancy a toy; on that plaything, as it looks, the safety of all on board depends—lacking that, but one thing, the ship shall be their coffin, and the deep sea their grave. It is thus with true piety, with living faith. That one thing wanting, the greatest works, the costliest sacrifices, and the purest life, are of no value in the sight of God. Still further, to impress you with the valuelessness of everything without true piety, and to show how its presence imparts such worth to a believer's life and labours as to make his mites weigh more than other men's millions, and his cup of cold water more precious than their cups of gold—let me borrow an illustration from arithmetic. Write down a line of ciphers. You may add thousands, multiplying them till the sheets they fill cover the face of earth and heaven; yet they express nothing, and are worth nothing. Now take the smallest number of the ten, the smallest digit, and place that at their head — magic never wrought such a change! What before amounted to nothing rises instantly by the addition of one figure, one stroke of the pen, into thousands, or millions, as the case may be; and whether they represent pounds or pearls, how great is the sum of them! Such power resides in true faith —in genuine piety. It may be the lowest piety, but one degree above zero; it may be the love of smoking flax, the hope of a bruised reed, the faith of a mustard seed, the hesitating, fluttering confidence of him who cried, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Still, so soon as it is inwrought by the Spirit of God, it changes the whole aspect of a man's life, and the whole prospect of his eternity. It is that one thing wanting which, however amiable, moral, and even apparently religious we may be, our Lord addresses us, as He did the young ruler, saying, "One thing thou lackest." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *One habitual fault may vitiate the whole life:*—When a clock is out of order, we take it to pieces, and search where the fault lies, knowing that one wheel amiss may hinder the going of the whole clock. Our hearts are every day out of order; our work must be to take them to pieces by examination, and to see where the great fault is. (*G. Swinnock.*) *One thing thou lackest:*—The celebrated preacher, George Whitfield, made it a custom wherever he went to speak to the people in whose houses he stayed concerning their souls. He used to travel throughout the country preaching the gospel, and was brought into communication with vast numbers. At one time he was staying in the house of a kind and amiable man, General E——, who was a great admirer of his preaching. The family was so extremely hospitable and kind that, though he saw no evidence of vital godliness among them, Whitfield's lips seemed sealed to all but the genial courtesies of society, and he omitted his ordinary custom on such occasions. But when he went up-stairs to bed the Spirit of the Lord said to him, "O, man of God, how shalt thou be clear of their blood if thou dost not warn them?" His own feelings would have led him to be silent; and the tempter suggested, "They are so amiable and good; how can you speak to them about sin? Besides, you have preached the gospel to-day in their hearing; surely that is enough." There was a struggle in his mind, which he would fain have decided by continuing silent, especially as so much kindness had been received. But God would not let him

sleep that night. The voice of conscience said, "This very kindness should appeal to your gratitude not to be silent. It is your duty to speak—to warn them." Early in the morning, before going away, Whitfield took his diamond ring from his finger, and wrote on the pane in the window these words: "One thing thou lackest." He was no sooner gone than the master of the house said, "I will go up and look into the room where this holy man slept," for he had an almost superstitious reverence for him. The first thing that caught his attention when entering the room was the writing on the glass. Its meaning flashed across his mind. He stood and wept. He then went to the door and called his wife. On looking at the writing she burst into tears, and said: "I thought he was unhappy. There seemed to be something on his mind. I knew he was in trouble about us, that we were not converted. I had been hoping he would speak to us." The husband said, "By God's grace, then, we will seek that 'one thing' we lack." He called his family together, three daughters and a grown-up son. The text was pointed out. The Spirit of the Lord blessed it to their souls. The whole family knelt in prayer, confessed their sins, and found joy and peace in believing. The narrator of this incident says: "I know the story to be a fact, a friend of mine in New York having in his congregation a young woman, the daughter of one of the three daughters who knelt with her family in Whitfield's room, and she treasures up the pane of glass as a precious relic." (*Christian Globe.*) *A good natural character without religion:*—The dahlia would surely be a very empress among flowers if it had but perfume equal to its beauty, even the rose might need to look to her sovereignty. Florists have tried all their arts to scent this lovely child of autumn, but in vain, no fragance can be developed or produced; God has denied the boon, and human skill cannot devise it. The reflecting mind will be reminded of those admirable characters which are occasionally met with, in which everything of good repute and comely aspect may be seen, but true religion, that sweet ethereal perfume of grace, is wanting; if they had but love to God, what lovely beings they would be, the best of the saints would not excel them, and yet that fragrant grace they do not seek, and after every effort we make for their conversion, they remain content without the one thing which is needful for their perfection. Oh, that the Lord would impart to them the mystic sweetness of His grace by the Holy Spirit! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *One thing lacking:*—I. That no outward respect, however exact, or however long, to God's law, can give us a title to eternal life. 1. It is not enough that there should be wishes after heaven: and even a willingness to do many things, so that we may obtain the crown and the glory which are there laid up. 2. It is not enough either that our hearts should be tender, and our temper amiable. For after all, delightful as is this frame of mind to those among whom we live, and on whom it sends forth a perpetual sunshine, it is the gift of God to us. It is not our own, but His, and, in many cases, we can no more help this sweetness of disposition, than the flowers of the field can help being fragrant and beautiful. It is their nature to be sweet, and ours, perhaps, to be amiable. But is it any excuse for not loving God, that we love everything and everybody else? 3. It is a mere wilful murdering of our own souls, to whisper to ourselves that the greatness of a sacrifice will plead before God in excuse for our not making it. Had the young man in the text prayed to God to help him in his strait, to conquer his carnal weakness, to support his fainting courage, and to gird up his soul with a triumphant faith, he would have prevailed; and so shall we. Faith, faith, faith—here is the want! (*J. Garbett.*) *Sermon to the young:*—1. WHAT IS THERE IN THE SCALE THAT IS FAVOURABLE TO YOU? 1. There are many of the qualities of youth which are favourable to religion, and as such Christ regards them. Courage, warm affections, retentive memory. These favourable to piety. 2. There are words in Scripture that are peculiarly favourable to you, and should inspire your hope. "They that seek Me early shall find Me." 3. So the works of God—His works of grace—confirm those things that are said, so earnestly, to encourage you. Perhaps not one in forty is convinced after the age of forty. II. WHAT IS THERE IN THE SCALE THAT IS AGAINST YOU? "One thing thou lackest," &c. 1. All that is merely amiable and hopeful in nature is not grace, nor is it at all really valuable in God's sight. It is not holiness. 2. All those things that may appear amiable and lovely, if they are not sanctified by religion, will become hostile. The readiness of mind that receives a report may render your mind the storehouse of all impurity. 3. That if the grace of God prevent not, all the promises of youth may perish in everlasting despair. Now let me entreat you to take the following counsels. 1. Never think you are too young to be converted, and forgiven, and saved. 2. Never take up with anything short of true religion. 3. Never be

satisfied with having religion—seek to abound in it. 4. Let me remind you that for this purpose you should study your own easily besetting sin, especially the sins of your youth. 5. For this purpose form a rule, lay down a plan for life, laying out every day as it ought to be spent, and as you will wish you had spent it when you come to die; for this purpose read daily the Holy Scriptures—consult aged and experienced Christians, and ask them how they would advise you to conduct yourself before God. 6. Lastly, seek to live not for yourselves, but to live usefully as well as safely. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *Christ's answer*:—Now we come to Christ's answer, and there take notice. First: Of the admonition of his defect: "Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest." 1. Because it would have been tedious to convince him of all his defects, Christ would take the more compendious way, and insist but upon one thing, which was enough to show that he was not perfect, as he vainly dreamed. If a man brag that he is able to pay one hundred pounds, you convince him of his penury when you press him to pay one penny, and he cannot. 2. This one thing was sure, and would strike home; for our Lord knew his heart, and therefore was resolved to touch his privy sore, and doth propose such a precept as would cross his darling sin; and therefore he would only come with one thing, which would try him to the purpose. 3. That one thing which he lacked was the main thing, the principal thing of the law, which was loving God above all things; the sum of the law is to love God above all, and our neighbours as ourselves. 4. Because the young man erred out of ignorance, Christ would not deal roughly with him, or by way of sharp reproof; He doth not rate him. (1) We learn—That proud sinners must not be soothed up in their self-conceit, but convinced of their defects. (2) That the way to convince them is by representing their principal and chief faults, some one sin; as Christ dealt with this young man: and so He deals with the woman of Samaria, convincing her of her sin. (3) The more our failings strike deep upon the main articles of our obedience to God, the greater our conviction, and the more sense we should have of our condition before God. Secondly: We come to Christ's precept, command, and injunction. First: "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Not applicable to all, in all circumstances. But yet still in some cases we are to forsake all. 1. When God by His providence reduceth us to a poor condition. 2. When we cannot obey any particular precept of God without danger of being undone by it. The reasons why we must do so. (1) God hath an absolute right to all that we have by His own eminency and prerogative. (2) Because it is impossible we should be Christians, if we come not to Christ with this mind and resolution to forsake all for our duty to Him (Luke xiv. 33). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *One defect fatal*:—But is it right to make such destinies turn upon a single point? That depends on the point. In other relations one thing may bring ruin. At a crisis in worldly interests, one wrong step may lead to remediless disaster. One error in trade may make you bankrupt; one medicine in sickness may give the turn to your life; for the lack of one anchor a vessel is lost. In religion, how may "one thing" keep a soul from heaven? If there is a determined, persistent unwillingness to be saved, that would seem sufficient, would it not? Well, that is the "one thing" referred to by Christ. And, furthermore, it is some "one thing" which makes the unwillingness. The ruler loved his great possessions more than he loved his soul. But the "one thing" may take many forms. It may be one appetite, one ambition, one companionship, one pleasure. Every one is called to choose between one set of influences that helps religion, and some other set which hinders. (*T. J. Holmes.*) **Sell whatsoever thou hast.** *A severe test*:—It is not raw recruits and beardless boys that hold the front of battle. These are not the stormers they throw into the fiery breach. Where the bullets fly the thickest, and the carnage is the fiercest, the ground is held by veterans, men inured to war, the flash of steel and the roar of cannon; on whose grim faces calm determination sits, with scars and medals on their breasts. The post of danger is assigned to veterans. Heavy burdens are laid on the backs, not of boys, but of grown men. It were little else than murder to bid a youth, who had just left his mother's side, nor ever had his foot before on a deck, climb the shrouds and reef the topsails in a storm, when the mast bends to the breaking, and the ship reels in the trough of the sea. That were not common-sense; and what man, who loved his son, and had either sense or consideration, would put a tender youth to so terrible a trial? It is said here, "Jesus, beholding him, loved him"; and if He loved this young ruler, why did He put him to a trial that, I venture to say, would test the faith, not of a young Christian, but of the

oldest and most mature Christian here? Why did He, so to speak, send this boy to the very front of the battle, the thickest of the fight? Doing so, I confess that, for myself, I am not much astonished at the result. At first sight, at least, I wonder less at this youth shrinking back, than I wonder at our Lord bidding him go forward. Let the best Christian here put himself for a moment in this youth's circumstances. Think how you would feel now, were you called upon to-day to give up all the earnings of a lifetime, to part with some ancestral property—the dear old house, and the old trees, and the scenes of your boyhood, your possession, fortune, estate, rank—to leave all, to become a beggar, and follow the fortunes of a man so poor Himself that He often had not where to lay His head. I doubt that would be a burden under which the oldest Christian would stagger. I suspect that would try the faith of the best man here. And if any of you are disposed to look with scorn rather than sympathy on this poor young man, I am not of your number; and I would ask you to think how you would have done, and how erect you would have stood, under the same trial. The question occurs, then, Why did our Lord put this youth to such a trial? Was it done to repel him? No; it was done to draw him. It was not done to quench the smoking flax; but to blow it, as it were, by what seemed an adverse wind, into a burning flame. It was done kindly, discreetly, mercifully. By this step Christ intended to make that man know what he was; to make him see that he was not what he seemed to others and to himself. This test was applied to convince him practically of what it was not possible, perhaps, to convince him theoretically—that there was one thing he lacked, and that (so to say) the one thing needful. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) I. Christ-following involves self-abnegation. You cannot have a little of Christ, and a little of self. All or none. II. Christ-following must be the expression of the soul's supreme love. You must not make Christ a mere convenience. III. Christ-following means self-giving. Christ was the Giver, and men are like Him in proportion as they give. Giving is not yet understood as a test of discipleship. Giving is understood as a patronage, but not as a self-sacrifice. Giving means different things to different people. There are men who give a thousand guineas at once, yet is their gift without value. If certain rich merchants, whose purses are always accessible, would but utter two sentences distinctly in favour of Christ as their personal Saviour, that would be worth more to the Christian cause than all the gold they lavish on it. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Consecration of all to Christ*:—Commentators stumble over the difficulty of this command. But it came to others, and they stood the test. It came to Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, when Christ bade them leave all to follow Him, to become fishers of men. It came to Paul when Christ bade him crucify his pride, and go into Damascus, and take his instructions from one of the despised and persecuted Christians, who would tell him what he should do. It came to Luther when Christ bade him forsake the church of his fathers and of his childhood; to Coligny, when Christ bade him abandon wife, and home, and peace; to William of Orange; to the Puritans; to John Howard; to David Livingstone. In one form or another it comes to every Christian; for to every would-be Christian the Master says, "Give up your property, your home, your life itself, and take them back as Mine, and use them for Me in using them for your fellowmen." He who cannot—does not—do this, is no Christian. He can do nought but go away sorrowful: in this life, if he is keen of conscience; in the life to come, if a false education has lulled his conscience into uneasy slumber, but slumber so deep that only the judgment day can awaken it. (*Lyman Abbot, D.D.*) *How to treat wealth*:—When King Henry asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the eclipses happening that year, he replied, "I have so much business upon earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven." So it is with those who entangle themselves with the riches and pleasures of this world. There is only one way in which we can make them helps instead of hindrances. As an old writer remarks, "If we place a chest of gold or treasures upon our backs, it weighs us down to the earth; but if we stand upon it, we are raised higher. So if our possessions are placed above us, they will surely keep our souls grovelling earthward; but if we place them under our feet, they will lift us nearer to God and heaven." (*Anon.*) *Apostolic poverty*:—"Once I was staying as a boy in a bishop's house, and there was dug up the brass plate from the tomb of one of his predecessors, and I have never forgotten the inscription that was on it. It was this: 'Stay, passer by! See and smile at the palace of a bishop. The grave is the palace they must all dwell in soon.' Some of the best bishops who ever lived have been housed in log huts, and lived in apostolic poverty, and on hard fare. So

did St. Augustine, the sainted Bishop of Hippo. 'Do not give me rich robes,' he said to his people; 'they do not become a humble bishop. When a rich robe is given to me I feel myself obliged to sell it to help the poor.' In former centuries the first thing a bishop did, as a rule, was to part with all his earthly possessions: and, while the heathen historian of the fourth century praises them, he speaks with angry scorn of the pompous and worldly prelates of other sees." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Giving to the poor:*—The *Dry Goods Chronicle* says that the late Mr. Nathaniel Ripley Cobb, of Boston, was generous-hearted and conscientious in the highest degree. In November, 1821, he drew up the following document:—"By the grace of God, I will never be worth more than 50,000 dollars. By the grace of God, I will give one-fourth of the net profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. If I am ever worth 20,000 dollars, I will give one-half my net profits, and if I am ever worth 30,000 dollars, I will give three-fourths, and the whole after my fiftieth thousand. So help me God, or give to a more faithful steward and set me aside. November, 1821." He adhered to this covenant, it is stated, with the strictest fidelity. *Give God thy heart, and He will reward thee with heaven:*—From the circumstances of the case, then, to which the text particularly refers, it is evident this precept implies that religion requires the renunciation of every object that engrosses the mind to the exclusion of God and duty. Nothing short of a complete sacrifice can fulfil the design of the gospel. This is a sublime view of the spirit and design of religion. It is not enough to submit to some privations, and endure some trials in performing its duties; religion is so authoritative and dogmatic, that it must govern the will. The precept of the text requires the avaricious to sacrifice their wealth; but their wealth is to be applied to useful and charitable purposes. The sacrifice is enjoined as an indispensable proof of sincerity. Religion casts contempt on all sublunary things; still it commands its disciples to make the world's goods subservient to generous uses: it does not mortify one vice to afford scope for another. The wealth which the rich man in the text possessed, was to be distributed among the poor; and nothing can illustrate more strikingly the kind and charitable spirit of the gospel than the importance which is thus given to the claims of the destitute. In thus illustrating the benevolent spirit of the gospel, it is necessary to remark, that the text furnishes no argument for profuse and indiscriminate charity. There is a danger that our charity should not only be indiscriminate, but profuse. In enjoining these arduous and important duties, religion proposes a rich and splendid reward. The figurative language of the text was evidently suggested by the nature of the precept it contains. The individual to whom the text was addressed was commanded to renounce his wealth; and the reward promised to his obedience was a treasure hereafter, infinitely more valuable than all the treasures of the earth. We are accustomed to say of any object on which we set a high value, that it is a treasure. We say of knowledge, that it is a treasure; we say of fame, that it is a treasure; we say of affection, that it is a treasure—a rich, inestimable treasure; and in all these cases, the phrase expresses the importance we attach to the object to which it is applied. In its application to the reward which religion reveals, it is comparatively weak. Nothing that men value on earth can convey any adequate idea of the splendour and value of that reward; for it includes in it all of dignity, enjoyment, and purity, of which our nature is capable—the greatest honour, the most exquisite happiness, and the most exalted virtue. It is a treasure of knowledge; for there all Divine truth will be revealed to the soul; doubts, errors, and prejudices, will be dispelled. It is a treasure of affection; for there all distrust, jealousy, and fear, will be removed; God's generous, unchanging love, will enrich and soothe the glorified spirit; a pure and glowing sympathy will unite soul to soul; the sweetest thoughts, and the most confiding tenderness, will be cherished and enjoyed; no suspicions will ever darken or chill the current of love, as it flows deep and warm from the rich fountains of the soul; and in communion with God, in the society of angels, and amidst the bright company of the redeemed, all the delights of lofty devoted affection will yield perpetual ravishment. It is a treasure of joy; for there every hope will be realized, and every promise fulfilled; care, trouble, and grief, will be for ever gone; all the meanness, sufferings, and bereavements of life, will have passed away; bright scenes will call up the fairest images, and awaken into life the most animating thoughts; and exercises of lofty meditation, and the purest devotion, will fill the soul with transporting ecstasy. It is a treasure of glory; for there the soul will be raised to its native rank, adorned with unfading righteousness, invested with the honour of a mighty triumph, associated with angels, and welcomed by Christ; then

the white robes will be put on, the crown and victory's palm; then the song of praise will smile from the innumerable host; all the glory of God, all the glory of angels, and all the glory of the redeemed, will meet in one resplendent blaze, and fill the vast heaven with its inconceivable brightness. Oh, what a treasure! valuable as the soul, lasting as eternity! Riches will decay and perish; the proud palace will crumble into ruins, and its stately chambers be lonely and silent; the charms of beauty will fade, the trophies of ambition moulder into dust; and all the gaiety, pomp, and splendour of life, will vanish like a dream, and leave not a wrack behind. (*A. Bennie.*)

Take up the cross.—*The Christian taking up his cross:*—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S CROSS—What is it? It is something painful and humiliating. No death inflicted by the Romans was so agonizing as crucifixion; no death so ignominious. The Christian's cross is that portion of pain and humiliation and suffering which the wisdom of God may allot to him in the way to heaven. It comes on us in different forms; the world's hatred; domestic sickness; in himself. One man's cross is visible—all can see it; another man's may be secret. Our crosses may be changed; my neighbour's to-day may be mine to-morrow. II. BUT WE ARE TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS. What is meant by this? 1. There are some things it seems to forbid. We are not to make crosses for ourselves; this is to invade God's province. He will order our afflictions for us. We are to take those He lays down, not to aggravate or increase them. Not to wish to choose what crosses the Lord shall make for us. We often want other men's crosses just as we want their comforts. We must let the Physician prescribe for our disease. The cross sent is that from which we would most like to be exempt; the man of strong affections is wounded in his affections. The text forbids stepping out of the way to avoid our cross; this is choosing sin rather than affliction. God can meet us with crosses in sinful ways as well as in righteous, heavier than those turned from. 2. We have seen what this taking up of the cross forbids: let us now see what it enjoins. To take our cross as Christ did His. We are to carry it patiently—voluntarily—cheerfully. III. LOOK NOW AT THE COMMAND OUR LORD GIVES US TO DO THIS. "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Be careful not to mistake. Suffering cannot expiate sin. Christ has done this completely. What will you say when you lay your cross down at the gate of heaven? (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Following Christ:*—There are many special reasons why Christ should be propounded to us as our pattern and example whom we should follow and imitate. 1. Because He is a pattern of holiness set up in our nature. 2. Because there are many advantages by this pattern in our nature; as (1) our pattern is more complete than if God had been our pattern. There are some graces wherein we cannot be said to resemble God, and therefore we must look for a pattern elsewhere, as humility, faith, fear, hope, reverence, obedience; none of these things are in God, for He hath no superior, and these things imply inferiority and subjection. (2) It is an engaging pattern. We are engaged by the rule of our obedience, but much more by Christ's example. (3) It is an encouraging pattern, partly as there is an efficacy in this pattern; as with the gospel or law of Christ, there goeth along the ministration of the Spirit, so also with the consideration of His example. Use. To persuade us to follow Christ. 1. Our general profession of being Christians doth oblige us to be like Him; head and members should be all of one piece—oh! what an affront is it to Christ to put His name to the picture and image of the devil. 2. We shall never be like Him in glory unless we be like Him in grace also (Romans viii. 29). But wherein should we follow Christ? 1. In His self-denial (2 Cor. viii. 9). 2. In His humility (St. Matt. xx. 28). 3. In His love to the saints (St. John xiii. 34). 4. In His usefulness and profitableness, and of this the whole Gospel is a narrative and history. 5. In His piety towards God. 6. In His spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. 7. In His obedience to His mean earthly parents. 8. In the sweetness and beauty of His conversation, and yet in a strict and winning way. 9. In the holiness and purity of His life. 10. In His wonderful patience and meekness. 11. In love to His enemies (Rom. v. 10). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) **And went away grieved.**—*Christ left sorrowfully:*—I. HE WENT AWAY FROM CHRIST, THOUGH GOOD. Alas that the moral should ever be separate from the holy. II. HE THOUGHT SO HIGHLY OF CHRIST, AND YET WENT AWAY FROM HIM. III. HE HAD PURE AND LOFTY ASPIRATIONS, AND YET HE WENT AWAY. Contentment in good is a sign of a poor aim, rather than a great achievement. His aspiration was weak, though pure. He was only partially prepared to do "the good thing." He had imagined performance rather than sacrifice. He looked to receive a lesson, not to enter a school. Like one who would gladly gain health and soundness at any cost, and then shrinks from the medicine and the knife—like one who feels quite strong and vigorous on

the couch, and falls when he attempts to walk. Men may be dissatisfied with their spiritual condition. This comes to naught. They want instruction to go on; they receive instructions to begin anew. Instead of being improved, they have to be detected. IV. HE WENT AWAY, THOUGH JESUS LOVED HIM. Jesus always is pleased with justice, goodness, truth; as far as they go, they are like Himself, and give Him joy. Jesus loved him: but He loved something more. Jesus may love you, and yet you may not attain to His righteousness and blessing. There is a point beyond which He cannot go with sinners, beyond which it would not be saving men, but forcing machines. V. HE WENT AWAY, ALTHOUGH HE DID IT SORROWFULLY. The sadness of loss—of disappointment—of self-conviction. "Ah! He is right." The sadness of shame. "He has seen through me—I have left *Him*." But the sorrow did not prevent his going. Jesus may but baptize you for the dead. You may die and yet mourn the loss of heaven. There are special times when we may be said to leave Christ. Such a time is that of deep religious conviction; when we are obliged by outward circumstances to take a stand. In leaving Christ we leave all. Let those who are following Him "cleave to Him with full purpose of heart." (*A. J. Morris.*) *Man good in the lower relationships of life, lacking in the higher relationships:*—So is it often still. Man is in ruins; but, as you often see in old religious houses, the part devoted to godly deeds has gone to utter decay, while that employed in providing for the lower needs of man is yet in good repair—though the spirit is wholly lost to God, the meaner but worthy offices of life are well discharged; and while the saint cannot be found, the man of the family, the place of business, and the social circle, are all that could be wished. Christ approved this ruler in the lower relations of social morality, while He pronounced him essentially defective in the higher; and "he went away" from Him in whom all morality might find its supplement and stimulus, its truest end and source. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 23–27. **How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!**—*Wealth a fearful snare to the soul:*—The Scriptures represent wealth, when used aright, as a distinguished blessing. It may, and ought to, lead men nearer to God, instead of driving them far from Him. I. THE PRIDE OF LIFE. The Scriptures speak of this as one of the most operative causes of human destruction. An inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem excludes God from the heart. II. A STRONG IMPRESSION OF THEIR PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE. Though men are absolutely dependent on God, and to a great extent on one another, there is in all a natural feeling of independence. Nor will it be denied that wealth is very apt to foster this unseemly self-reliance, and this haughty contempt of God. III. THEIR ATTACHMENT TO THIS WORLD. There is no room in the heart for God where it is pre-occupied by the world. IV. THEIR CARES AND PERPLEXITIES. Wherever you find the greatest amount of secular care and solicitude, there, rest assured, is the greatest danger of losing the soul. V. THE BEST MEANS OF GRACE ARE RARELY USED WITH THE RICH AND AFFLUENT. God has formed no purpose to save any man irrespective of the appointed means. From these views several reflections may naturally arise. 1. What melancholy evidence does this subject furnish of the strange depravity of the human heart. 2. Do not envy the rich. 3. Our subject then admonishes us to take care how we heap up riches. 4. Our subject affectionately addresses itself to the rich. Of all those who have hope towards God, the rich are most in danger of losing the savour and usefulness of piety, and of being "scarcely saved." And that your riches may prove a blessing, and not a curse, "set not your hearts upon them," "be not conformed to this world," "use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." You are God's stewards, and must give an account of your stewardship. And to the rich who are not pious, let me say, is there not fearful reason to apprehend that you will never enter the kingdom of God? Everything is leagued against you. 5. Let me say to all, while you envy not the affluent study to do them good. (*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*) *Use and abuse of riches:*—Riches neither further nor hinder salvation in themselves, but as they are used: as a cipher by itself is nothing, but a figure being set before it, it increaseth the sum. Wealth, if well used, is an ornament, an encouragement to duty, and an instrument of much good. All the danger lies in loving these things. Have them we may, and use them too, as a traveller doth his staff, to help him the sooner to his journey's end; but when we pass away our hearts to them, they become a mischief. . . . Let not, therefore, the bramble be king: let not earthly things bear rule over thy affections: "fire will arise out of them, that will consume thy cedars," and emasculate all the

powers of thy soul, as they did Solomon's, whose wealth did him more hurt than his wisdom good. How many have we nowadays who, when poor, could read, pray, &c., but who, now they have grown rich, resemble the moon, which, grown full, gets farthest off from the sun, never suffers eclipse but then, and that by earth's interposition! Let rich men therefore take heed how they handle their thorns: let them gird up the loins of their minds, lest their long garments hinder them in the way to heaven; let them see to it, that they be not tied to their abundance, as little Lentulus was said to have been to his long sword; that they be not held prisoners in those golden fetters, as the king of Armenia was by Anthony, and so sent by him as a present to Cleopatra; lest at length they send their mammon of unrighteousness, as Crœsus did his fetters, for a present to the devil, who had deluded him with false hopes of victory. (*John Trapp.*) *Wealth not always desirable:*—How many can form any estimate as to whether it is best for them to be prosperous or not? If I should consult the wheat growing in spring in the field as to what was best for it, the wheat would say, "Let me alone. Let the rain feed me. Let the winds gently strengthen me. Let me grow to my full height and size." But ah! the land on which that wheat is sown is over-rich; and if the wheat grows to its full height and size, it will be so fat and heavy that it will break, and fall down, and be lost. So the farmer turns in his cattle, and they browse the wheat. They eat it down to the ground. And by and by, later, when it is allowed to grow, it has been so weakened by this cruel pasturage that it will not become so rank as to break down, but will stand erect, and carry its head up, and ripen its grain. Many men will bear browsing. They get too fat, and cannot carry themselves upright and firm, and they break and fall down; and the best of them lies in the dirt; and all that stands up is straw and stubble. . . . Who knows what is best for him? Some men can endure prosperity, and some cannot; but who can discriminate between them? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Wealth genders pride:*—Who almost is there whose heart does not swell with his bags? and whose thoughts do not follow the proportions of his condition? What difference has been seen in the same man poor and preferred? his mind, like a mushroom, has shot up in a night; his business is first to forget himself, and then his friends. When the sun shines, then the peacock displays his train. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The rich should grow more humble:*—When flowers are full of heaven-descended dews, they always hang their heads; but men hold theirs the higher, the more they receive—getting proud as they get full. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Riches often debase the character:*—See yonder lake! The bigger the stream that runs into it—lying so beautiful and peaceful in the bosom of the shaggy mountain—the bigger the stream it discharges to water the plains, and, like the path of a Christian, wend its bright and blissful way on to its parent sea. But, in sad contrast with that, the more money some men gain, the less they give; in proportion as their wealth increases, their charities diminish. Have we not met it, mourned over it, and seen how a man, setting his heart on gold, and hasting to be rich, came to resemble a vessel with a narrow, contracted neck, out of which water flows less freely when it is full than when it is nearly empty? As there is is a law in physics to explain that fact, there is a law in morals to explain this. So long as a man has no hope of becoming rich; so long as he has enough of bread to eat, of raiment to put on, of health and strength to do his work and fight his honest way on in the world, he has all man really needs—having that, he does not set his heart on riches; he is a noble, unselfish, generous, large-hearted, and, for his circumstances, an open-handed man. But by success in business or otherwise, let a fortune come within his reach, and he clutches at it—grasps it. Then what a change! His eye, and ear, and hand close; his sympathies grow dull and blunt; his heart contracts and petrifies. Strange to say, plenty in such cases feeds not poverty but penuriousness; and the ambition of riches opens a door to the meanest avarice (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Uncertainty of riches:*—How often have I thought of riches, when, intruding on their lone domain, I have seen a covey of wild fowl, from the reeds of the lake or the heather of the hill-side, rise clamorous on the wing, and fly away! Has not many a man who hasted to be rich, and made gold his god, lived to become a bankrupt, and die a beggar!—buried among the ruins of his ambitious schemes. (*Ibid.*) *Wealth involves danger:*—It was as much as we could do to keep our feet upon the splendid mosaic floor of the Palace Giovanelli, at Venice; we found no such difficulty in the cottage of the poor glass-blower in the rear. Is it one of the advantages of wealth to have one's abode polished till all comfort vanishes, and the very floor is as smooth and

dangerous as a sheet of ice, or is this merely an accidental circumstance typical of the dangers of abundance? Observation shows us that there is a fascination in wealth which renders it extremely difficult for the possessors of it to maintain their equilibrium; and this is more especially the case where money is suddenly acquired; then, unless grace prevents, pride, affectation, and other mean vices stupify the brain with their sickening fumes, and he who was respectable in poverty, becomes despicable in prosperity. Pride may lurk under a threadbare cloak, but it prefers the comely broadcloth of the merchant's coat: moths will eat any of our garments, but they seem to fly first to the costly furs. It is so much the easier for men to fall when walking on wealth's sea of glass, because all men aid them to do so. Flatterers haunt not cottages: the poor may hear an honest word from his neighbour, but etiquette forbids that the rich man should enjoy the like privilege; for is it not a maxim in Babylon, that rich men have no faults, or only such as their money, like charity, covereth with a mantle? What man can help slipping when everybody is intent upon greasing his ways, so that the smallest chance of standing may be denied him? The world's proverb is, "God help the poor, for the rich can help themselves"; but to our mind, it is just the rich who have most need of heaven's help. Dives in scarlet is worse off than Lazarus in rags, unless Divine love shall uphold him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Riches are perilous to the soul:*—Christ does not speak of an impossibility, but of the difficulty of it and the rareness of it. Job unfolded the riddle, and got through the needle's eye with three thousand camels. But it is hard to be wealthy, and not wanton: too often are riches, like bird-lime, hindering the soul in its flight towards heaven. (*G. Swinnock.*) *The snares of affluence:*—I. THE SNARES OF AFFLUENCE. 1. It begets on inordinate love of pleasure. 2. It banishes from the memory all considerations of God and religion. 3. It produces an insensibility to the attractions of the gospel. II. THE PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS THAT ARE SUGGESTED BY THE SNARES OF AFFLUENCE. 1. Affluence is not a proof of a state of grace. 2. The loss of wealth may be a spiritual gain. 3. Both religion and happiness abound most in the middle region, between extreme wealth and extreme poverty. 4. The hope of heaven should reconcile us to present hardship. (*Plans of Sermons.*) *Ruined by riches:*—Do not be over-anxious about riches. Get as much of true wisdom and goodness as you can, but be satisfied with a very moderate portion of this world's good. Riches may prove a curse as well as a blessing. I was walking through an orchard, looking about me, when I saw a low tree laden more heavily with fruit than the rest. On a nearer examination, it appeared that the tree had been dragged to the very earth, and broken by the weight of its treasures. "Oh!" said I, gazing on the tree, "here lies one who has been ruined by his riches." In another part of my walk I came up with a shepherd, who was lamenting the loss of a sheep that lay mangled and dead at his feet. On inquiry about the matter, he told me that a strange dog had attacked the flock; that the rest of the sheep had got away through a hole in the hedge, but that the ram now dead had more wool on his back than the rest, and the thorns of the hedge held him fast till the dog had worried him. "Here is another," said I, "ruined by his riches." At the close of my ramble I met a man hobbling along on two wooden legs, leaning on two sticks. "Tell me," said I, "my poor fellow, how you came to lose your legs?" "Why, sir," said he, "in my younger days I was a soldier. With a few comrades I attacked a party of the enemy, and overcame them, and we began to load ourselves with spoil. My comrades were satisfied with little, but I burdened myself with as much as I could carry. We were pursued; my companions escaped, but I was overtaken and so cruelly wounded that I only saved my life afterwards by losing my legs. It was a bad affair, sir; but it is too late to repent it now." "Ah, friend," thought I, "like the fruit tree and the mangled sheep, you may date your downfall to your possessions. It was your riches that ruined you." When I see so many rich people, as I do, caring so much for their bodies and so little for their souls, I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and sometimes think there are as many ruined by riches as by poverty. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition' (1 Timothy vi. 9). The prayer will suit you, perhaps, as well as it does me, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). (*Old Humphrey.*) *A man of the world:*—The Interpreter takes them apart again, and has them first in a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake

in his hand. There stood also One over his head, with a celestial crown in His hand, and proffered to give him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor. Then said Christiana, "I persuade myself that I know somewhat the meaning of this; for this is a figure of a man of this world; is it not, good sir?" "Thou hast said the right," said the Interpreter; "and his muck-rake doth show his carnal mind. And whereas thou seest him rather give heed to rake up straws and sticks, and the dust of the floor, than to what He says that calls to him from above, with the celestial crown in His hand, it is to show that heaven is but as a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial. Now, whereas it was also showed thee that the man could look no way but downwards, it is to let thee know that earthly things, when they are with power upon men's mind, quite carry their hearts away from God." Then said Christiana, "Oh, deliver me from this muck-rake!" "That prayer," said the Interpreter, "has lain by till it is almost rusty. 'Give me not riches' (Prov. xxx. 8) is scarce the prayer of one of ten thousand. Straws and sticks and dust, with most, are the great things now looked after." (*John Bunyan.*) *A man in danger through riches*:—As a Christian man was passing out of church he met an old acquaintance whom he had not seen for several years. In the brief interview he seriously said to him, "I understand that you are in great danger." The remark was heard with surprise. The friend addressed was not aware of any danger, and eagerly inquired what was meant. The answer was, "I have been informed that you are getting rich." Men of this class are not accustomed to suspect danger from such a cause. They see none, and they see no reason why others should. And yet they are in peril; they are in great peril. They are in danger of making a god of mammon instead of the living God. They are in danger of seeking to lay up their treasures on the earth instead of in heaven, as the Saviour exhorts them to do. To His disciples He said, "Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God." And Paul thus wrote: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." *Engrossed in worldly cares*:—We keep ourselves in such a continual hurry and crowd of cares, thoughts, and employments about the things of the body, that we can find little time to be alone, communing with our own hearts about our great concernments in eternity. It is with many of us as it was with Archimedes, who was so intent upon drawing his mathematical schemes, that though all the city was in alarm, the enemy had taken it by storm, the streets filled with dead bodies, the soldiers come into his particular house, nay, entered his very study, and plucked him by the sleeve, before he took any notice of it. Even so, many men's hearts are so profoundly immersed and drowned in earthly cares, thoughts, projects, or pleasures, that death must come to their very houses, yea, and pull them by the sleeve, and tell them its errand, before they will begin to awake, and come to a serious consideration of things more important. (*Flavel.*) *Sanctified wealth is a blessing, not a hindrance, to its possessor*:—Two men have recently passed away, whose history, as one turns from their graves to sum it up, is at once a poem and a benediction. They were both men of large wealth and of inherited culture. They were both men with an intense love of life, and most human enjoyment of its pleasures. There have not lived in our generation two men who were more thoroughly alive, to their very finger ends, or who were more conspicuously exposed to the manifold dangers of the possession of great wealth. And yet who, in thinking of them, ever thought of their money? And when they died the other day, bereaving the two chief cities of our land with a sense of personal loss, who asked concerning either of them so beggarly a question as, "What did he leave?" What did they leave? They left each of them the fragrance of a good name, which is as ointment poured out. They left their image stamped in the hearts of thousands of men, women, and children, whose lives they had brightened and ennobled and blessed. Above all, they left a lesson to you and me of what men can be and do who say to wealth and the world, "You are my servant, not my master! I will not be slothful in business; I will be fervent in spirit, but it shall be always 'serving the Lord.'" They have taught two great communities that it is possible to be rich and not selfish, to have wealth and not be enslaved by it, to use the world as not abusing it. And to-day, William Welsh, in the Indian wigwam in Niobrara, among the boys of Girard College with whom he spent a part of every Sunday of his life, in the homes of the working men of Frankford whom he taught to love him as a

brother-man;—and Theodore Roosevelt in the newsboy's lodging-house, in the cripple's hospital, in the heart of the little Italian flower-girl who brought her offering of grateful love to his door the day he died, have left behind them monuments the like of which mere wealth could never rear, and the proudest achievements of human genius never hope to win. They will be remembered when the men of great fortune who have filled the brief hour with the fame of their millions shall have vanished into merited oblivion. They may have been poorer than these, but the world is richer because they were in it, and the influence of their large-hearted and unselfish lives will be owned and honoured when the mere hoarders of the day have ceased to have any slightest interest or influence among men, save as subjects of the somewhat curious and somewhat contemptuous study of the moral anatomist. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*) *Right use of wealth*:—Wealth is dangerous; and the worshipper of mammon, whether he dwell in a palace or a hovel, will find it equally hard to secure an entrance into the kingdom of God. But wealth, like other dangerous powers, may be subjected to a wise discipline and a resolute control. Lightning is dangerous, but men have mastered it and made it do their bidding. Master your meaner lust for gain, and then make it do your bidding in the service of your heavenly Master. It is not how many bonds you have in a bank vault, or how much plate on your side-board, that God looks to see, but how many lives have been brightened and how many sorrows have been healed by the gifts of your love. The cause of Christ, the cause of truth, the cause of humanity, need your gifts. But none of them need them half as much as you yourself need the blessed and ennobling education of being permitted to give them. (*Ibid.*) *Christians ladened with wealth*:—Crossing the Col D'Obbia, the mule laden with our luggage sank in the snow, nor could it be recovered, until its load was removed; then, but not till then, it scrambled out of the hole it had made, and pursued its journey. It reminded us of mariners casting out the lading into the sea to save the vessel, and we were led to meditate on the dangers of Christians heavily laden with earthly possessions, and the wise way in which the gracious Father unloads them by their losses, that they may be enabled to pursue their journey to heaven, and no longer sink in the snow of carnal-mindedness. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) In an interesting article in the *Expositor* (1st series, iii. 375), Canon Farrar mentions that some modern travellers in the East state that houses are sometimes provided with smaller gates in or by the side of larger ones, and that the former are called *Es summ el kayût*, the hole, or eye, of the needle. He also gives the following extract from the letter of a correspondent:—"In the summer of 1835, when travelling in the western part of Africa (Morocco), I took up my abode for a time in the house of a Jew named Bendelak. The house was built quadrangular, having an open court, in which beautiful plants were flourishing, and where the family sat in the heat of the day beneath a large awning. High double gates faced the streets, not unlike our coach-house doors, in one of which was a smaller door which served as an entrance to the court. Being seated one day in a balcony of the upper chamber, I suddenly heard the exclamation, 'Shut the needle's eye; shut the eye.' Looking down, I saw a stray camel trying to push through the little open doorway. Shortly afterwards I questioned the master of the house (a man whom I can never recall to mind without feelings of the utmost respect), and learnt from him that the double doors were always called 'the needle,' and the little door 'the needle's eye,' which explanation, of course, reminded me forcibly of the well-known passage in St. Matthew. Bendelak assured me that no camel would push through 'the eye' unless driven by stick or hunger, and always without any back-load. If the allusion of Christ be to this, it forcibly teaches the lesson that a rich man must strive and humble himself, must be willing to leave behind the load of his riches, must hunger for the bread of heaven, or he can never pass through the narrow way that leadeth unto life eternal." *The danger of riches*:—1. In the first place comes, very naturally, the idea of the young, that riches, in and of themselves, create happiness. A man's happiness depends upon what he is. If his feelings are right, and he is capable of being happy, riches will make him happy; but if these conditions do not exist, then riches will not make him happy. 2. Then comes the idea that riches are a substitute for character in the eyes of men. There is an impression, if a man is only rich, he can do what he has a mind to, and that the world will accept his riches in lieu of excellence. 3. Passing to another great peril, riches and the pursuit of them are apt to absorb the life and time of men to a degree that shall harness them to mere external things, so that they have very little leisure and less

disposition for self-culture. 4. Riches are apt to lift a man away from sympathy with common humanity; and that is always a sign of, and a step toward, deterioration. 5. Then there is a great tendency in riches to pamper a man's pride. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Riches do not of themselves create happiness*:—Now, it is very true that riches are a power which, if rightly applied or used, may create happiness; but it is not true that riches, in and of themselves, ever do make men happy; and this indiscriminate notion, as an ideal on which they base their life, will be fatal to their happiness. If a man is prepared for happiness riches can make him happy. A man is an organ. I do not care if Beethoven is put before an organ that has not a pipe, and whose bellows is split, I do not care who plays on such an instrument as that, you will not get any music. And if the organ were perfect, and there was nobody that knew how to play, you would not get any music either. Where you get music you must have two things: a good instrument and a good performer on it. Now happiness, conducted on a great scale in life, requires that there should be a performer—and riches are the performer; but what does it play on? An empty case, a wind-bag, a leathern pocket, an old iron chest, a rusty old miser. Do riches bring out anything in the way of happiness? Of themselves, no, they do not. The rich are not the happy folks in the world, as a rule. A great many of them are the most happy people on the globe; a man who has riches, and is otherwise rightly attuned, certainly can command as much happiness as any other man on the face of the earth; nobody can be any happier than he has the capacity of being. A man is happy according as he can generate sensibility of brain and nerve. Some men generate only five pounds, some generate fifteen pounds, and some generate twenty-five pounds. So some men can be happy a little bit, while others can be happy a great deal. Some men are not bigger than a daisy, and they can have only so much sunlight as can get into their disc. A man cannot be happy in one spot and miserable everywhere else, any more than he can have the toothache and feel well everywhere else but in his tooth. Happiness must have harmony in it. Where there is not harmony there is no happiness. If two-thirds of a man's nature is morbid and wrong, the other third is not going to rule them down, and compel happiness. I think that when a man has good manners, and is a gentleman, good clothes are very becoming and comfortable to him, and pleasant to everybody else; but good clothes do not make a gentleman, any more than riches make a man happy. (*Ibid.*) *Man more than money*:—I do not object to a man's having a good deal of property; I do not object to his having beautiful grounds, and making them shine like a garden of Eden, if he can; I do not object to his building himself a magnificent mansion, and storing it with whatever art can give; I admire the grounds, I admire the house, I admire the furniture, and I justify them. But now let me see the *man*. When a man has risen in wealth so that he can have fine grounds, a fine house and fine furniture, he ought to have something even grander in himself; and yet how many men are there that are like a monkey in an oriental palace, men that are ignorant, empty, narrow, conceited, poverty-stricken inside, but that outside glow like a rainbow! How many men there are that make the power of money in their hands simply picturesque, grotesque! (*Ibid.*). **Who then can be saved?**—*The disciples wondering at the difficulties of salvation*:—Salvation! What so desirable and necessary? Why so difficult to obtain. I. YOU KNOW WHAT SALVATION IS. Deliverence from condemnation, and placing us, pure and happy, in God's kingdom. We must take care that we do not mistake as to where the difficulty lies. It is not in God, not in Christ; willing and able "to save to the uttermost." 1. There is the difficulty arising out of the pride of our hearts—the difficulty of falling in with God's way of saving us. Salvation of grace troubles us. 2. There is the difficulty of complying with God's terms of salvation. We trace this to unbelief. The tidings of the gospel seem too good to be credited. 3. The difficulty of our seeking, or even accepting, such a salvation as God offers. It is a deliverance from the love and power of sin. We are by nature unholy, salvation crucifies all that nature delights in; hence difficulty. II. WHAT THE DISCIPLES FELT AT THE PROSPECT OF THESE DIFFICULTIES. 1. Wonder. "They were astonished out of measure." There was a time when we considered salvation easy; God was regarded as merciful. No sooner did the Holy Spirit make us alive to our spiritual welfare, than wonder came as described in the text. They wondered at the patience of God, at His amazing grace, and the mountain of difficulties which lies between them and heaven. 2. The other feeling we discover in these men is despair—"Who then can be saved?" We must learn to look beyond our spiritual difficulties, if ever we

would be carried over them. III. OUR LORD'S JUDGMENT CONCERNING THIS MATTER. "You are right," He says, "up to a certain point; beyond that you are altogether wrong." 1. They were partially right. It is difficult for a man to overcome the difficulties between him and heaven. He is weak as well as sinful; must despair of his own power to attain salvation. Self-sufficiency, like self-righteousness, insurmountable obstacle in our journey heavenwards. 2. But these disciples were also wrong. He tells them that salvation was never intended to be man's work; but God's. What omnipotence undertakes can be carried through. 3. How compassionately He says this—"You have felt My power, difficulties have vanished." Apply: 1. Some of you know nothing at all of the difficulties of salvation. 2. Others of you, like those disciples, have just begun to see the difficulties that lie before you. 3. A few of you have been long accustomed to spiritual difficulties. (*C. Bradley.*) *The difficulties of salvation:*—I. Let us notice more particularly SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF SALVATION. 1. The truths to be believed are some of them very mysterious. 2. The sacrifices to be made are also in some degree painful. 3. The dispositions to be exercised are such as are contrary to the natural bias of our depraved hearts. 4. The duties to be performed. 5. The trouble and danger to which religion exposes its professors. II. ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE INQUIRY—"Who then can be saved?" Certainly not those who neglect the means of salvation; nor those who prefer other things before it; nor those who think to attain it in any other way than God has appointed. 1. Such shall be saved as are appointed to it. 2. Those shall be saved who are truly desirous of it. 3. Those who come to Christ for salvation shall be sure to obtain it. 4. Such as endure to the end shall be saved. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Vers. 28–31. **Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee.**—*Sacrifice and reward:*—Christ had pity for this young man. He saw his soul visited by the dream of a more perfect life; then the dissolving of the dream and the return to commonplace. It were impossible not to pity his after life, for he could never be the same again. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." The disciples felt the difficulty. Then Peter said, "We have left all," &c. "It was very ill done of them," we say, "very selfishly thought, and no good could come of it." That is the hard way in which we speak, but we forget, when we ask this fine spirituality from men who are beginning the higher life, that we are asking more than human nature can bear. We are asking of the student the self-denial of the scholar. Christ did not ask this; He was tender to spiritual childhood. He was satisfied with the seeds of affection. He knew that if love was there it would grow, and that as their mind advanced and their love changed to higher love, the reward desired would also change. I. THE SACRIFICE ASKED FOR HERE WAS TO GIVE UP THE WHOLE WORLD AND ITS GOODS; TO GIVE THEM TO THE POOR AND TO FOLLOW CHRIST. Is no one a Christian who does not utterly make it? Christ always asked for sacrifice of life, of self, for God. That is the principle. In this case a special form of the life was asked for, and for a special reason. The sacrifice of wealth was the special form. The special reason was this. Christ was the founder of a new method of religion; He wanted missionaries to propagate it. No one could think of Paul or Xavier or Henry Martyn with great possessions, without a smile at the incongruity. Apostolic work could not be done by a man with ten thousand a year. The special form of the demand was motived by special circumstances. Such a demand was not made of all rich men; it would be contrary to the universal character of His religion, which was to enter into the life of all classes, rich and poor, as a spirit. It would shut out all rich men from Christianity; it would upturn society for no good. In fifty years all the industrious and intelligent would be rich again. It would be wrong; for wealth has its duties, its own ideal of life. The wealthy are bound to keep their wealth, and to use it, but in obedience to the spirit of sacrifice. II. ALL THIS KIND OF TALK COMES FROM PERSONS BEING FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BIND A SPIRITUAL IDEA INTO ONE SPECIAL FORM. The spirit of sacrifice may express itself in a thousand different ways, even in opposite ways in different men. It may be the giving up of wealth in one man, the taking up its duties in another. One man may sacrifice by leaving those whom he loves, another by remaining at home. Take the principle; do not limit it to one meaning. That is one characteristic of the idea of sacrifice. It cannot be specialized. In one point the special demand made on the rich man is in accord with the whole idea of sacrifice; it is in its absoluteness. It asks us to give up all our selfish life. "It is an impossible demand," say these persons. It was original, and Christ knew it. It did not say, like the moral law—this

do and you shall live, and you can do it. It did say "This ideal life I set before you is far beyond mere conformity with law. It is perfection. You shall not live by doing it completely, but by loving it and labouring towards it. It will transcend eternal endeavour, and thus secure eternal progress. The morality of the law is measurable, it stops at a certain point. The righteousness I put before you is immeasurable, infinite as God." It was a higher method than that of the moralist. It is only by loving and following illimitable ideas that man grows great. Their impossibility is their highest virtue, and awakens the highest virtue; they kindle unfading aspiration. It is better for man to live by than the standard of immorality. I now turn to the question of reward as illustrated by the answer of Christ. It is the custom now to say that we are to live the high life without a single hope of future reward; to hope for it is to set religion on a selfish basis. But there is no selfishness in the doctrine of rewards offered by Christ. His rewards are naturally connected with the acts, following from them and contained in them, as a flower follows from, and is contained in, the seed. The word fruits is better than the word rewards. The fruits are multiplied results. To live, hoping for the reward of a more unselfish life, and becoming more unselfish as one hopes and acts for such a life—is it not too ludicrous to call that a selfish motive? The man who gave up lands, houses, &c., received them tenfold; but not in a way which could serve his selfishness; on the contrary, in a way which increased he spirit of a larger love. It lifted above the narrow circle of an isolated family into union with mankind. Eternal life is another reward promised by Christ. "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." It may co-exist with what the world calls misery—"with persecutions." It cannot be material ease. So far, the element of ease or happiness is excluded. Love doubles itself by loving. Truth in us increases by being true. Mercy, purity, faith, hope, bring forth themselves in multiplied abundance. The sum of them all is a life with God and in God, and that is eternal life, a state of the soul. It cannot be selfish, it puts before man as his highest aim, union with God. (*S. A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Love consistent with reward*:—And the heart, do you believe that it can reconcile itself to your cold doctrine, and always love without hoping for return? It does not calculate, doubtless, but it believes that its flights do not disappear in a void. What is more disinterested than the love of a mother? Does she love her infant in order to be recompensed? Ah! though one should come and tell her that she must die before that infant can respond to her affection and reward her by a word, will she love it less, will she use the less on its behalf all that remains to her of energy and of life? Are there not every day and in all classes those martyrs of maternal love? And yet will you accuse a mother of loving less because, looking towards the future, she dreams with tremors of joy of the day when her infant's look will respond to her look, when its heart will understand her, and when she will find in it her strength and her recompense? Her recompense, I have said. . . . Well, be consistent. Call her mercenary, accuse her of devoting herself to her task through self-interest, drag her to the tribunal of the human conscience, and, if she comes away from it condemned, you shall drag there the Christian who seeks his joy and his wages in the love of God, who finds his true life there, and who thirsts for immortality, because he thirsts for an eternal love. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *Following Christ*:—I. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN BEING A TRUE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST? 1. Partaking of His spiritual nature—being born again. 2. Resting upon the infinite merit of His atonement as the only ground of acceptance with God. 3. Sitting at His feet as a humble learner. II. WHAT ARE THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST? 1. Willingness. 2. Humility. 3. Constancy. 4. Intimacy. Not as Peter, who followed afar off. 5. Exclusiveness—Jesus only. III. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS OF THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST? 1. Sonship. 2. Constant access to God. 3. The presence of Christ. 4. Protection in danger. 5. Light in darkness. 6. Salvation here and glory hereafter. (*Anon.*) *God's mode of recompensing self-sacrifice*:—The man who renounces temporal advantages for Christ's sake, is rewarded in kind as follows. 1. He has communion with God and His consolations, which are better than all he has given up; as Caleacius, that Italian marquis who left all for Christ, avowed them; and as Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken by the barbarians, prayed thus to God, "Lord, let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold and silver, for Thou art all in all to me." Communion with Jesus Christ is heaven beforehand, the anticipation of glory. 2. God often gives His suffering servants here such supplies of their outward losses, in raising them up other friends and means, as do abundantly outweigh what they have parted with. David was driven from his wife;

but gained, in Jonathan, a friend whose love was beyond that of women. So though Naomi lost her husband and children, Boaz, Ruth, and Obed became to her instead of all. The apostles left their houses and household stuff to follow Christ, but then they had the houses of all godly people open to them, and free for them, and happy was that Lydia who could entertain them; so that, having nothing, they yet possessed all things. They left a few friends, but they found far more wheresoever they came. 3. God commonly exalts His people to the contrary good to that evil they suffer for Him; as Joseph, from being a slave became a ruler; as Christ, who was judged by men, is Judge of all. The first thing that Caius did, after he came to the empire, was to prefer Agrippa, who had been imprisoned for wishing him emperor. The king of Poland sent Zelislaus, his general, who had lost his hand in war, a golden hand instead of it. 'God is far more liberal to those who serve and suffer for Him. Can any son of Jesse do for us as He can? (*John Trapp.*) *The Lord's reply to Peter shows:*—1. That he does not need man's work in the sense that He must pay wages for it. There is no comparison between what is given; an hundredfold will he returned. 2. That Christian work must be done in the spirit of devotion, not of calculation. Many of the first may work in a wrong spirit, and become last. 3. The reward may not come in this life; the work is spiritual, as are the wages. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Reward of self-sacrifice*:—Jesus, knowing out of the depth of His own experience how great is the joy of self-sacrifice, how transcendently superior to anything else, assures them that they will have their reward both here and hereafter. Here, in a vastly intensified appreciation of earthly enjoyments, finding new homes and new friends wherever they go, and seeing new beauty in the commonest things—in earth and air, and sky and sea. It was true they would meet with persecutions, but these would not mar their happiness, for by a mysterious law, understood by those alone who experienced them, they were accompanied by a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And hereafter they would receive the fullest compensation, an eternal weight of glory in the life everlasting. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) "*My Father's will*":—A pious old man was one day walking to the sanctuary with a New Testament in his hand, when a friend who met him said, "Good-morning, neighbour." "Ah! Good-morning," replied he; "I am reading my Father's will as I walk along." "Well, what has He left you?" said his friend. "Why, He has bequeathed me a hundredfold more in this life, and, in the world to come, life everlasting." It was a word in season; his Christian friend was in circumstances of affliction, but he went home comforted. *Things to come are yours*:—Had Queen Elizabeth foreknown, whilst she was in prison, what a glorious reign she would have for forty-four years, she would never have wished herself a milk-maid. So, did but the saints understand what great things abide them both here and hereafter, they would bear anything cheerfully. (*John Trapp.*)

Ver. 32–34. **And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem.**—*Christ on the road to the cross*:—Full of calm resolve Christ comes forth to die. Behold the little company on the steep rocky mountain road that leads up from Jericho to Jerusalem; our Lord far in advance of His followers, with a fixed purpose stamped upon His face, and something of haste in His stride, and that in His whole demeanour which shed a strange astonishment and awe over the group of silent and uncomprehending disciples. I. WE HAVE HERE WHAT, FOR WANT OF A BETTER NAME, I WOULD CALL THE HEROIC CHRIST. The Ideal Man unites in Himself what men are in the habit, somewhat superciliously, of calling the masculine virtues, as well as those which they somewhat contemptuously designate the feminine. He reads to us the lesson, that we must resist and persist, whatever stands between us and our goal. The most tenacious steel is the most flexible, and he who has the most fixed and definite resolve may be the one whose heart is most open to all human sympathies, and is strong with the almightiness of gentleness. II. THE SELF-SACRIFICING CHRIST. Hastening to His cross; surrendering Himself to death. His self-sacrifice was not the flinging away of the life which He ought to have preserved, nor carelessness, nor the fanaticism of a martyr, nor the enthusiasm of a hero and champion; but the voluntary death of Him who of His own will became in His death the oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. III. THE SHRINKING CHRIST. May not part of the reason for His haste have been that instinct which we all have, when some inevitable grief or pain lies before us, to get it over soon, and to abbreviate the moments that lie between us and it? (See Luke xii. 50; John xiii. 27.) In Christ this natural instinct never became a desire or

purpose. It had so much power over Him as to make Him march a little faster to the cross, but it never made Him turn from it. IV. THE LONELY CHRIST. Unappreciated aims; unshared purposes; misunderstood sorrow; solitude of death—all this He bore, that no human soul, living or dying, might ever be lonely any more. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Saviour's alacrity to reach the end of His course*:—A lowly band of travellers journeying towards Jerusalem. Already they are within sight of the hills that encompass the capital. One of the company outstrips the rest. His countenance is lit up with joyous expression, like that which glows on the face of one who, after long absence, is again drawing near to his father's house. It is Christ; and He is going up to Jerusalem to expiate a world's guilt by the sacrifice of Himself. Sorrows such as have never yet filled the breast of man await Him there; and least of all is it ignorance of what is before Him, which makes Him in haste to press forward. What was it that prompted Him to such eagerness? He designed to teach by action (1) a doctrine for His disciples to learn, viz., the necessity of His suffering, and suffering alone. In the work on which He was now entering, no man could be associated with Him. He must go before. (2) An example for them to follow. If He goes first, they come next. By His alacrity He would teach them how noble a thing it is to suffer in a good cause. They would think of this afterwards, and take courage. They would recollect the insignificance of all their sufferings as contrasted with His; and as they remembered this, the thought how bravely the Saviour went forward in the path of tribulation would nerve them to endurance, and make them almost impervious to fear. Arm yourselves with the like mind, and blush at the very thought of cowardice or retreat when summoned to suffer for the Redeemer's sake, remembering how eagerly He "went before." (*R. Bickersteth.*) *Christ's life founded on a plan*:—There was no uncertainty or experiment about that life; every detail was foreseen from the beginning. Every man's life may be planned by Divine wisdom, but the man himself is ignorant of his own course, unable to foresee the next hour. 2. That Jesus Christ knew all the developments of His plan of life. The sorrow of the first day, the sleep of the second, the triumph of the third, were all before Him, as conditions of His daily labour. 3. That though He knew the result, He patiently fulfilled the whole process. There was no precipitancy; there was no fretfulness; every case of need was attended to as though it were the only case in the world. The Christian knows that heaven will be his portion at last; let him be stimulated to constant activity, as though human want demanded his whole attention. 4. That Jews and Gentiles were alike engaged in carrying on a work which was for the highest benefit of the whole world. How unconsciously we work! We may be pulling down in the very act of setting up. 5. That the assured triumph of the right is a source of strength to the good man. Jesus Christ spoke not of the crucifixion, but of "the third day." The picture was not all gloomy. Light broke through the very centre of the darkness. How hopeless, but for "the third day," is the lot of suffering men. The third day may suggest (*a*) the brevity of bad influence; (*b*) the impossibility of destroying that which is good, and (*c*) the transference of power from a temporary despotism to an eternal and beneficent sovereignty. Brief and frail is the tenure of all malign powers. (*F. Wagstaff.*) *The cross, the object of desire.* I. THAT THE CROSS SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN OBJECT OF DESIRE AND OF INTENSE LONGING TO OUR SAVIOUR'S HEART IS A STATEMENT TOO REMARKABLE TO BE BARELY ASSERTED. Such a death was abhorred by all mankind. It was a death of ignominy, agony, and shame. Yet, contrary to the universal sentiment, Christ desired it. That the cross was a token of desire rather than fear will be seen by the way our Lord checked every hindrance or suggestion raised against it, and by His words and deportment as He approached it (Matt. xvi. 23). He desired the cross, and wanted to communicate that desire to others. On one occasion He reveals His desire in most remarkable language (Luke xii. 50). When He entered the Samaritan village, we are told "His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 53). The text discloses the same zeal—"Behold we go up to Jerusalem"; a sentence which sounds the key-note of triumph. His eager gait betokened the onward desire of His soul. II. WE WOULD CONSIDER THE REASONS FOR THIS DESIRE. The cross could not be in itself an object of desire. It was not like the joy set before Him at the Father's right hand; if desired at all, it must be because of its results. These were in two directions—one in relation to God, the other to man. The glory of God and the salvation of man were the ruling motives of Christ's conduct. We can all strive to be like Him in His inward life, though only martyrs are completely like Him in His outward life. His great motive was the

glorifying of the Father (John v. 30). God was glorified on Calvary (John xvii. 1). The cross was the Divine way of repairing the honour of God, which had been outraged by sin. The heart of Jesus was consumed with this desire of a reparation which was in His power. We know what it is to burn with indignation, when one who is loved, is offended and unjustly injured; how then must the true perception of sin have kindled the flame of desire for the cross in the Man Christ Jesus. Also the cross was to be the means of glorifying God by manifesting the Divine character —harmonizing mercy and justice; it was to be the witness of love—removing such misconceptions of the Deity, as may have arisen from the misery of sin. Thus viewed in relation to God, the cross was to Christ an object of desire. His love for us made it an object of desire on the human side. The cross was necessary according to the predestination of God as a means for imparting life to others (John xii. 24). Thus an object of desire; for to restore the creature must redound to the glory of the Creator. III. THE GREATNESS OF THAT DESIRE. Its greatness lies in its intensity and purity—"Jesus went before them." It was not a mere impulse which prompted this onward movement, as the hero is carried forward in the excitement of battle. All impulse in Jesus was regulated by His calm mind and perfect will, therefore vehemency of action betokened the ardour of His soul. Moreover, our desires are in proportion to the strength of our inward faculties. Their intensity will depend upon the vigour of our wills and the reach of our minds. The mind must present the object sought. The perfection of Christ's mind will show the strength of His desires. He saw the cross with all its detail of suffering. He saw all the effects of the cross. He looked beyond it and traced all its powers; all the powers of grace and supernatural beauty which would result from the merit of His passion; He saw the saints enjoying countless ages of happiness in heaven. Hence the intensity of His desire for the cross. 2. This desire may be measured by the natural fear which it overpowered. As man, Christ feared death and suffering. Pure human nature shrinks from torture. 3. The greatness of this desire of Christ for the cross, consists in its purity as well as intensity. With all the vehemency of our Saviour's zeal, there was calmness of spirit and an obedient will. The purity of desire lies also in the nature of the cross He had to bear, of shame and desolation. The hiding of the Father's face separates His cross from that of the martyr. It was comfortless suffering. The cross, too, was a punishment viewed with contempt. Some desire to suffer great things, because their greatness brings renown. Pride will support much bodily mortification; the cross had at that time only the aspect of humiliation. Christ took His disciples aside that He might impart to them His desire. He wanted to cast out of that fountain of fire which glowed within His own soul some sparks which might inflame them also—"Behold *we* go up." He suffers not only instead of us, but also to purchase for us power and grace to suffer with Him and for Him. He has not removed the necessity of suffering by His suffering, any more than He has removed the necessity of temptation by His being tempted. The same cross whereby we are redeemed promulgates, as the condition of emancipation, the law of mortification. The desire of the cross Christ communicates to His members. St. Paul prays "that I may know Him, and the fellowship of His sufferings." It must begin with the mortification of our lower nature (Gal. v. 24). It is a high pitch of nature to desire to suffer as a means of closer union with our Lord; we must first learn to bear crosses without murmuring; then to accept them with resignation; and, lastly, to meet them with desire and joy. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) **As they followed they were afraid.** *Following Jesus fearingly* :—See the union of two apparently contradictory things. The fear was not enough to stop the following, nor the following sufficient to arrest the fear. That walk up to Jerusalem illustrative of the path to heaven. You follow Christ, you love Him too much not to follow Him. But your religion is an amazement; it creates fear. Certainly, if you were not a follower, you would not be a fearer. I never knew any one begin to fear till God had begun to love him, and he had begun to love God. The fear is an index that you are on the road. Fear! ought we not to be beyond it; ought not to be *the* motive. How is it that a real follower may be a real fearer? I. THEY HAD NOT ADEQUATE IDEAS OF HIM WHOM THEY FOLLOWED. They did not know what exceeding care He takes of His own. If you knew the character and work of Christ you would get rid of fear. II. THOUGH THE DISCIPLES LOVED CHRIST, THEY DID NOT LOVE HIM AS HE DESERVED. If they had, the love would have absorbed the fear; they would have rejoiced to die with Him. III. They had not, what the Master had, one great, FIXED, SUSTAINING AIM. This will lift above the petty shafts of little disturbances; above

yourself. IV. THE DISCIPLES HAD THEIR FEARS UNDEFINED. It was the indefinite which terrified them. Take these four rules. 1. You that follow and are afraid, fortify yourself in the thought of what Christ is—His Person, work, covenant; and what He is to you. 2. Love Him very much, and realize your union with Him. 3. Set a high mark, and carry your life in your hand, so you may reach that mark, and do something for God. 4. Often stop and say deliberately to yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul." Many increase their fears by thinking so much about them. The onward going will gradually overcome the inward fear. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Following and fearing*:—Experience ought to teach us that our fears are seldom fulfilled. I. "As they followed"; THEN EVEN THE GLORIOUS ARMY OF MARTYRS WERE AFRAID. For "they" includes St. Peter. Fears disheartened them. Never let us think that the greatest souls are heroic right through, ever and always. The battle with the flesh was keen in them. Besides, some fears have their moral uses. It is well to be afraid of ourselves, if our dependence on Christ is strengthened. Then, what courage may not fear afterwards merge into! II. "As they followed": THEN FEAR DID NOT HINDER THEIR PROGRESS. If there was fear in their hearts, there was fidelity in their steps. III. "As they followed"; THEN WE NEED NOT DOUBT OUR DISCIPLESHIP BECAUSE WE ARE AFRAID. It is indifference that is to be dreaded, and presumptuous self-confidence. Forgiveness is needed for others, not for them. IV. "As they followed": THEN THE DEPARTURE OF SOME FEARS DOES NOT DO AWAY WITH THEM ALL. They did not fear poverty, they had left all to follow Christ; they did not fear change in Jesus, they found His word of promise sure. We shall never lose all fears here; this discipline is wise for us. V. "As they followed"; THEN LET NONE TURN BACK. Even when the intellectual beliefs are burdened with difficulty, never be afraid. Follow on. Be faithful unto death. (*W. M. Statham.*) *As they followed, they were afraid*:—The disciples' conduct. Up to the very period of Christ's death and resurrection, the disciples looked forward to His manifestation as a prince who should release their nation from bondage, and advance it to an hitherto unattained height of glory and dominion. All along they had been staggered at the meanness of their Master's outward appearance; and now they were amazed to find that the expected Deliverer of mankind was on His way to suffering. They could not understand it. They were amazed, too, at His readiness to suffer. He was advancing to the cross, like a victor to his crown. We must note here that (1) they followed. This is to their praise. They knew He was going on to death, yet they did not desert Him. They had true faith. But it was also weak faith, for (2) they were afraid. Strange, that while with Him they should fear. They thus missed much of the comfort they might have derived from His companionship. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are instances of the same—a true but weak faith—a faith which does not fill its possessor with peace. Let us not rest in a timorous faith. Let us be valiant for the truth. We have not the same excuse for fear that they had. They had not then experienced the Resurrection, the Ascension, the gift of the Comforter. When once the Spirit was given, they no longer knew fear. Shame on us, if with all our superior knowledge and privilege, we cast not aside the fear of man, and follow Jesus, with diligence to do, and with readiness to suffer, whatever He is pleased to prescribe or appoint. (*R. Bickersteth.*)

Vers. 35–45. **Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.**—*Christ's last journey to Jerusalem*:—I. SELF-SEEKING. It is a plausible maxim of this world which says: "Every man for himself." Prominent places are secured by those who seek them diligently, with shrewd management and artful manœuvring. Why should not this principle be extended into the next world, and our prudence take merely a little longer range in looking out for the main chance? Many people seem to have convinced themselves that in striving to outdo one another they are simply obeying a necessary law—the law of emulation; and have much to say about the wholesomeness of competition. In this narrative we see what effect self-seeking had on the disciples. 1. It blinded their eyes to the glory of the Son of God. Men seeking conspicuous places cannot understand the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, and humbled Himself to the cross. What could they know of His going up to Jerusalem? They saw only thrones and kingdoms. A self-seeking spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 2. It plunged the disciples into a quarrel on the eve of a great occasion. It converts the world into a place of violence. 3. It put the disciples into a false attitude of presumption, undertaking more than they were able to. "They say unto Him, We

are able." In a strength greater than their own they were indeed to drink of His cup; but only after learning their own weakness. 4. The spirit of self-seeking confused their notions of dominion. They had adopted the maxims of the Gentiles, and were in danger of believing that a man was great simply because he exercised authority. Position does not make the man. II. SELF-SACRIFICE—"Whosoever will be great among you," &c. 1. The courage of self-sacrifice—"We go up to Jerusalem." It shrinks from no danger. 2. The universality of self-sacrifice. Each man is to become like the Man Christ Jesus. 3. The reward of self-sacrifice. 4. The kingdom of self-sacrifice. Power to bless and rule. (*E. B. Mason.*) *The greatness of service:*—It is clear that the whole passage we are to study to-day arranges itself easily around these three particulars: the fact of which they were aware, the counsel which He wished to add to it, and the argument from the one with which He proposed to enforce the other (see also Matt. xx. 25–28). I. What they knew was this: in all the forms of government around them, ecclesiastical or political, with which they were acquainted, the principle of "lordship" held sway. 1. In those times the prominent matter of notice was a tremendous hierarchy in the Jewish Church, and a domineering aristocracy in the Roman government. The ancient people of God had travestied His word, and perverted His ordinances, and forfeited His favour. The "rulers" usurped authority everywhere in matters of faith and conscience. They destroyed the revelation from heaven by overlaying of human traditions. And as they continued to grow unrighteous, they began to grow oppressive. And surely, those Jewish disciples needed only to be reminded of the hateful superciliousness of the Roman empire that was holding their nation in captivity. They did indeed know that their "great ones exercised authority upon them." 2. In our times the picture is quite like the old one in every point. Leave men to themselves, and the systems they are sure to construct will be centralized and monarchical. The common people will be dominated by lords, and the lords will have dukes, and the dukes will be put under a king. The one principle of organization is, that each one will try to monopolize position and power, and, by crowding down all he can beneath him, will seek to elevate himself into rule over the masses. Louis of France only uttered the universal sentiment when he gave his word to history: he was reminded that there was a State which ought to be considered: "L'état! c'est moi!" was his answer: "The State! I am the State!" Look at the Papal Church, or the Greek Church. There are the poor worshippers that pray and pay and obey their leaders. Over these are the priests, then the prelates, then the archbishops, and ecclesiastics without number, narrowing in and rising up till they reach the patriarch or the pope. And even the tiara has its triple crown, running straight up to one point. 3. In all times this is almost inevitably the same. For unregenerate human nature is selfish and domineering. This is what "ye know." The best figure of this is a pyramid. Builders construct these masses of solid stone out of blocks. They place the lowest layer on almost a half-acre of land. After a base is made, they draw in a step on every side, then rise for a new layer; then narrow in, and rise again. So the structure lifts itself aloft till the apex crowns it with a single stone. The people are at the bottom; the artisans, the paupers, the slaves, the great wrestling toilers, whom everybody proposes to live upon and domineer over, if he can. Then there come landholders and monopolists and capitalists. After this, we expect to find some aristocrats, with titles, and entails of primogeniture. So we reach what are called nobles; and so on indefinitely, all working towards a pinnacle at the top. II. This, Christ says, "ye know;" and now He adds to it a counsel of His own: "so it shall not be among you" (v. 43). 1. He surprised His followers by relinquishing the "lordship" and disclaiming the "authority." We must be careful to notice that He did not forbid ambition as a motive; He sought only to direct it into a new exercise (v. 44). He did not say it was wrong to wish to be "chiefest," but told them that a Christian should desire to be chief servant to all. 2. He suggested that the humblest service constituted the highest dignity (v. 44). 3. Thus He completely reverses the whole notion of those who looked for lordship. Let us come back to the figure which we just left. The "chief" should be at the base, the "servant" of all those above. III. Now we are ready to notice the argument with which Jesus enforces His extraordinary counsel: He offers Himself as an example for absolute imitation (v. 45). Consider the plain fact in this case. Let us turn to a passage in one of Paul's Epistles (2 Cor. viii. 9). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *A religion which develops the fit and the useful:*—This was Christ's eternal principle, "the truest

supremacy is the most faithful service to men." The view of Christianity which looks upon religion as an excellent way of "getting something," is, we trust, fast dying out. Christ removed the question of getting to the level of enduring and doing. The most irresistible power in the world is the power of unselfishness. Is self-sacrifice possible, when self-sacrifice is, in reality, self-gain? These two disciples proved to be, although they little expected it, perfect types of that of which our Lord was speaking. James was the first apostle to receive the crown of martyrdom. John's martyrdom was that of living; he was the last of the apostles to die. Learn the divineness of a life of service. "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all." The natural idea of the untutored mind is that a man in supreme power would rule and please himself. Qualifications for serving are becoming to be the badge of governing. What a world of thought we suddenly reach, when we strike the flint of one text with the steel of another text, and a Divine spark is emitted, which lights up our system with the Christ-like principle of the divinity of eternal usefulness! Is it not a part of that stupendous truth, that nothing can live eternally except that which is useful and good? All nature is teaching us this lesson; plants, and animals, and men, and nations, are disappearing and dying out unless they can give a favourable answer to the searching question, "Art thou useful? Art thou of any service to God or to man?" What a magnificent view this gives of man's magnificent share in the universe! The worlds are hastening along in their prescribed courses—suns are forming—spheres are whirling in ordered procession through space: in what we call the chaos of nature there is no chaos: seas, and continents, and air, and clouds, are daily growing up and evolving; every star, every leaf, every creature that lives is busy, and is helping to roll the Great Universe along—and nature, if asked, "Art thou useful?" must reply, "Yea, every grain and every molecule, every breath and every atom, all are contributing to the order and the usefulness of God's system!" What is nature? Nature is an aggregation and a development of the eternally fit and useful. So also man's test must be this test of fitness too, and we may even go farther, and declare our belief that prospective material rewards are sometimes misleading in the way they are usually interpreted. Man's highest reward must be perfect co-operation with, union with, and knowledge of the eternal God. When God's purposes become man's purposes, God's aims man's aims, God's spirit and essence man's spirit and essence; then we shall not find men clamouring for seats upon golden thrones, but we shall hear them ask, "How can I combine with God to further the purposes of man and of God?" for both these are identical. Or, to use our Saviour's phrase, we shall hear men ask, "How can I drink of the cup which Christ drank of?" The eternally useful need not, of course, be the eternally assertive or prominent. Many careers of usefulness there are, which are perhaps more of enduring than of acting. To endure, in many circumstances, is, in a sense, to act. (*A. H. Powell, M.A.*) *Christ a Servant:*—I. "THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO." This should teach us—1. The emptiness of earthly greatness. 2. Contentment in our situation. II. The Son of Man came "TO MINISTER." From this we learn—1. To be diligent in doing good. 2. To condescend to the meanest acts of kindness. III. The Son of Man came "TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY." It teaches—1. The deplorable condition of sinners. 2. The amazing compassion of the Saviour. 3. The subject encourages our application to Him, and dependence on Him as the Saviour. 4. The subject stimulates us to seek diligently the salvation of others. (*T. Kidd.*) *Servant of all:*—A minister having accepted a cordial invitation to the pastorate of a Church, was visited by a lady, who said, "Sir, this Church, of which you are now unhappily the minister, is composed of such materials that you must either be its tyrant or its slave; which office will you select?" He answered, "Its servant, for Jesus Christ's sake." Not rendering service to please this one or the other, not giving forth dull tones to soothe the slumbering souls of those that love to sleep, not selecting dainty sentences of polite speech (polished swords that will not cut), hoping to win the admiration and commendation of those that sit in the well-cushioned pews; but a servant, and the servant of the Church for Jesus Christ's sake. Our highest relationship to God is a relationship of service; it ranks above sonship, because it is the fruit of adoption, love in action. *The servant of all:*—Men of the world would prefer to say, "I am among you, not as one who serves, but as one who rules. I live quite independent of the authority of any superior." There is a natural revolt against dependence on another as something derogatory to the dignity of manhood. This revolt against

rule, this chafing against the idea of interdependence, is founded on an utter misapprehension. If God is Creator, and we creatures, we are forced to concede the whole question at issue. There can be but one independent existence; man's ignorance renders inter-dependence impossible. Again, he is a servant, and not a ruler, because of the physical laws which environ him. Man is equally impotent to resist the operation of moral law. The servant of these laws secures his highest well-being. The men who have been servants are the regnant men of the world. "Moses, my servant." David cries, "Truly I am Thy servant." Elijah says, "Whom I serve." The whole life of Christ on earth was the demonstration of the truth of the text: "He came not to be ministered unto." There was but one way in which He could derive new glory, and that was by service and sacrifice. All crowns were already His, save one, and that one was the crown of thorns. After this who will venture to call service derogatory to the dignity of manhood, when even the glory of Godhead derives new lustre from this matchless display of condescending grace? The spectacle of the great Lord of All shrinking from no office, however menial, whereby humanity might be cleansed and elevated and ennobled, has given a new ideal to the world. A new form of beauty rises on the vision of mankind. A new standard of greatness is established by the authority of the Highest. "He that would be chief among you, let him be the servant of all." These are creative words. Out of them have come the philanthropies, the benevolent enterprises which the pious ingenuity of the Church has devised for the relief of suffering humanity, the sweet charities which minister to the physical and spiritual wants of the world. They are revolutionary words. They have reversed the judgments of men, and reconstructed public opinion as to what constitutes true greatness. (*M. D. Hoge, D.D.*) *Greatness realized in humble service*:—Dr. Chalmers was great when he presided over the General Assembly of his church, and when he lectured in the Divinity Hall from his professor's chair, and when he electrified vast audiences by his power in the pulpit all over Scotland, but never did he attract more reverential admiration or loving regard than when he was seen walking through the dark "closes" and filthy lanes of Edinburgh, with ragged children clinging to his fingers and to his skirts, as he led them out and gathered them into the schools he had organized for their benefit. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 38. **Ye know not what ye ask.**—*Prayers offered in ignorance answered in love*:—1. They did ask. Whatever be thy desire, go to Him. 2. These brothers had a definite purpose in coming to Him. Our prayers are often vague and indefinite. 3. These brothers were honest and sincere in their request. What, then, was there to be blamed in the matter? They had a false conception of Christ's glory; also as to the things which were involved in the granting their request. Holiness is a character which is formed within a man; it is not a gift conferred from without. He is the highest in the peerage who has served his Master best. By the cross Christ was elevated to the throne. The text means, "Ye do not know what is implied in the terms you employ in making your request, or what is involved in granting it to you." We may have a definite object in view, we may think it good and desirable; but we cannot trace it through all its bearings; we cannot see how it would affect us if bestowed; nor can we tell what may be required from us before it can be granted. The omniscient One alone can discern what is involved in our petitions. He will answer our prayers, if not in the letter, yet in the spirit. You ask for success in life, having in mind external prosperity. But God's view of success is a very different affair; in His estimation, success consists in what a man is, not in what he has; and He gives you that success by denying you the other. You ask for forgiveness, and expect it in joy. God answers by showing you more thoroughly your sins. We pray for holiness; it comes through sore trial. Thus God answers the prayer for purity. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Ignorance in prayers*:—A beautiful instance of this in the life of the great Church father, Augustine, has often given both consolation and light. He wished to leave Carthage, where he had become deeply entangled in the snares of sin, and to visit Rome, then the metropolis of the world; but his pious mother, Monica, restrained him with her tears, and would not let him go, being afraid that he would encounter still more dangerous snares in the great city. He promised to her to remain; but, forgetful of his duty, he embarked in a vessel under the cloud of night, and in that very Italy to which her affection was afraid to let him go, he found salvation and was converted. Pondering in his mind how the Eternal Love had conducted him to where he himself had thought of going only in the forwardness of his heart, he says, in his "Confessions,"

"But thou, my God, listening in Thy high and heavenly counsels to what was the scope of my mother's wishes, refused her what she prayed for, at that time, that Thou mightest grant her what was at all times the subject of her prayers." (*Ibid.*) *Mistaken prayer*:—A tradition current in Wales is a striking illustration of these words. It is said that an old woman, who was very ungodly, was once travelling from Cardiff to a neighbouring town, some twelve miles distant, for the purpose of selling her vegetables. It was a winter's day, the east wind was blowing, and drove the hail and sleet right in her face, causing her to give vent to sundry curses and evil exclamations. When she was nearing the end of her journey, she began in a most irreverent manner to pray that the wind might turn to her back. Extraordinary to relate, the wind did turn, and for about five minutes she had the comfort of a tolerably easy journey. But, alas, poor short-sighted creature! she finished the sale of her goods, and at almost dark started to return home; but the wind, which she had been so anxious should change, had done so, and was therefore again in her face. She had forgotten, when she prayed in the morning that it might turn, that to go home she would have to turn too, and then be exposed to its violence during the cold and dark night. The storm, too, had increased in fury, and it was not till the next morning that the old woman reached her native town. *Christ's cup of suffering*:—We cannot drink Christ's cup of suffering so—I. Willingly. II. Intelligently. III. With such bitter ingredients. IV. So capacious. V. Deadly. (*Plans of Sermons.*) *Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?*—I. Consider THE CUP PRESENTED TO OUR SAVIOUR, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH HE DRANK IT. David speaks of a cup of joy (Psa. xxiii. 5; cxvi. 13); but there is a cup of affliction (Isa. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15). 1. It was a bitter cup, consisting of the bitter ingredients of sin and wrath. 2. It was deep and large, and contained much like that which was presented to Judah in her captivity (Ezek. xxiii. 32). 3. It was a cup without mixture, it had torment without ease. In what manner did our Saviour drink this bitter cup? (1) He did it not ignorantly, but knowingly. (2) He did it not reluctantly, but freely. (3) He drank it not partially, but entirely. II. THE SHARE WHICH BELIEVERS TAKE IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. "Can ye drink," &c. 1. As no one can do what Christ did, so no one can suffer what He suffered. 2. Though no one can suffer what Christ suffered, yet His people must have some fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and be conformable to His death. 3. The people of God must expect trials. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Ver. 46–52. **Blind Bartimeus.**—*Observations on the narrative of blind Bartimeus*:—I. Observe HOW SINGULARLY IS THE PROVIDENTIAL GOODNESS OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE EVENTS LEADING TO THIS INTERVIEW. The blind man takes his place by the road-side, not to meet with Jesus or any one else who might restore his sight, but merely to procure from the uncertain compassion of travellers a small pittance that should serve to prolong his weary existence. Just at this juncture Jesus, having left Jericho on His way to Jerusalem, passes that way. Many travellers came and returned, but he knew them not. In this instance the rush of a multitude attracts his notice. That God who has denied him the use of sight can convey His blessings through another organ. It is affecting to think on what a trifle appear to hinge the most important relations and destinies of our existence. II. THE NOTICE BARTIMEUS TAKES OF THE INFORMATION CONVEYED TO HIM. It is with him no idle speculation. He did not fix on mere circumstantials, or on a topic of interest to others; he contemplated the matter in direct and prompt reference to his own case. Go at once to Christ, and cry so as to be heard through the crowd. The petition of Bartimeus deserves notice not less for the terms in which it is expressed than for the urgency with which it is preferred—"Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It contains a full and prompt confession of Christ in that character, in which of all others He demanded the recognition of mankind, and of that age and nation in particular, and in which He was most obnoxious to the malice of His enemies. Nor is this testimony to Christ as the Son of David less valuable as an indication of great faith in the covenant mercies of God as set forth in prophecy (Isa. lv. 3; Psa. lxxii. 12). III. THE COLD AND CHILLING REPULSE WHICH HE MET WITH, not from Jesus but from the bystanders, perhaps even the disciples, for they had not yet learnt much of the spirit of the Master. Some undervalue accessions to the kingdom of Christ from the ranks of the poor. Indifference and suspicion often hinder religious inquiry. IV. THE CONDUCT OF BARTIMEUS. When thwarted in your approach to the Saviour how has it operated? It has grieved you; but has it driven you back? Like the tide pent up, which

bursting every barrier, rushes with accumulated force, Bartimeus is prompted by this ungracious repulse to cry so much the more. Go thou and do likewise. V. JESUS STOOD STILL, AND COMMANDED HIM TO BE BROUGHT. Of what importance is it, in the career of the great mass of individuals, when they move along or when they stop? There are men whose movements are eyed with anxious care. The steps of a Cæsar, an Alexander, or a Napoleon, have borne hope or dread with them; the incidental halting of such characters has been identified with the fate of a city or a province. It is only of such as preach the gospel of peace that we can say, "How beautiful are their feet upon the mountains." The cry of one poor man was of sufficient importance to arrest Christ in His progress. VI. THE COMMANDS ARE OBEYED WITH ALACRITY. VII. THE SAME PROMPTITUDE AND DETERMINATION WHICH BARTIMEUS BEFORE MANIFESTED GUIDES HIM IN THIS NEW ASPECT OF AFFAIRS. His tattered cloak is cast away as a hindrance. He has an all-absorbing object before him. The sinner rejects as idle encumbrances his self-righteousness and self-indulgence, which have clung to him as his second self, and rushes alone into the arms of a compassionate Saviour. VIII. The scene now increases in interest. THE MAN IS HEALED IN THE WAY OF INQUIRY, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" This is the way disconsolate sinners are encouraged to tell their own tale. IX. WHAT REPLY IS MADE TO THIS INQUIRY? "Lord, that I might receive my sight." He came by the shortest step to the matter in hand; in prayer we should have a specific object in view. X. HOW IT SUCCEEDED IN THE CASE BEFORE US? "Go thy way." (*A. G. Fuller.*) *Sightless sinners:*—I. We look closely at Bartimeus on this occasion. It is true that Jesus is the centre of the picture, as He always is. But this miracle is peculiar in that the details of it are more than usually brilliant as an illustration of simple human nature in the one who receives the advantage of it. 1. The state of this poor creature is given at a stroke of the pen. It would be difficult to crowd more biography into one verse than we find in here. He was sightless. He had come to be called by that name, "Blind Bartimeus." He was a pauper. "Begging" was his business. He was a professional mendicant. We do not look upon him as one who had got behind-hand for a little, and so was out on the street for a day or two, until he could get into employment. He "sat by the highway side begging." He was helpless. There is no evidence that he had any friends who cared for him; they would have made themselves conspicuous after his cure, if there had been many of them. He was hopeless. It was impossible for him to do anything; he could not see to learn a trade. He was unpopular. Anybody had a right to snub him, the moment he said a word (see Luke xviii. 39). He was uneasy, and fiercely on the alert to better his condition. 2. Now notice his action. Here we need the verse which has just been quoted from Luke's Gospel, for a link between the two apparently disjointed verses of Mark's (see Mark x. 47). The way in which this man "heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth" is shown there; the multitude told him. Bartimeus sought information. He was not too proud to acknowledge he did not know. Does any one suppose this poor beggar got offended because some one insisted that he was sightless? If a neighbour had showed himself a little friendly, and proposed to lead him up for a cure, would Bartimeus simply spite him for being impertinent about other people's concerns? Then, next, this blind man began to ask for help (see Luke xviii. 38, 39). His request was singularly comprehensive and intelligent. His cry was personal and direct: "have mercy on me." He wastes no time in graceful opening or becoming close; what he wanted he tells. His prayer was courageous and importunate (see Mark x. 48). Bartimeus then "rose, and came to Jesus." It would have been the height of folly for him to say to himself, "If it is the will of this rabbi to open my eyes, he can do it from a distance just as well as if I were there." Then, also, this blind man put away the hindrance which it was likely would delay him in going for his cure (Mark x. 50). A simple garment, no doubt, but almost indispensable to him. Still, if it interfered with the restoration of his eyesight, it could well be spared. 3. Notice, in the next place, Bartimeus's full surrender (see v. 51). Two things are to be noted in this remarkable speech. We shall not understand either of them unless we keep in mind the most singular question which Jesus puts to the man, the moment he comes within hearing. It was not because He did not know this beggar's condition, that our Lord asked him so abruptly what he would have Him to do. It must have been because He desired to fasten his faith upon one chief object of supreme desire. There was no end to the needs of Bartimeus: he wanted food, friends, clothing, home, everything that anybody demands in order to make a

mendicant a man. But, more than all besides, he wanted eyesight; and he found that out when he went in upon his own soul to make inquiry. This explains his reply. He speaks with a declaration, "Lord." This address, most inadequately rendered here in Mark's Gospel, means far more than mere respect. The word in Luke is different from this; here it is actually the same as that Mary Magdalene uses when she discovers that one she thought was the gardener is Jesus: "Rabboni!" There is concentrated in just a single word, a whole burst of generous and affectionate feeling: "My Master!" Faith, reverence, love unspeakable, adoring wonder, were in that word. He speaks with an ellipsis. As, before, we found more in his utterance than we expected, so now we find less. Bartimeus does not reply directly to our Lord's question. He cannot: how could he know what a miracle-worker should do? All he knew was what he himself wanted to be done. So his answer would read in full: "I do not understand what Thou wilt do, nor even what I would have thee to do—oh, do anything, anything—that I might receive my sight!" 4. Once more, notice Bartimeus's cure (v. 52). It was instantaneous—"immediately." It was perfect—"whole." It was sovereign—"go thy way." It was complete, including salvation—"thy faith hath saved thee" (see Luke xviii. 42). 5. Lastly, notice the man's experience (Luke xviii. 43). He was full of joy; a new world had been suddenly opened upon him. He was obedient: he followed Jesus as a disciple. He was grateful: he glorified God. He was zealous. We may be sure he left not so much as one blind man in all Jericho without the knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth. "Oh that all the blind but knew Him, and would be advised by me! Surely would they hasten to Him, He would cause them all to see." II. So much then, concerning this miracle as a wonder; let us now study its lessons as a parable. It very beautifully pictures the steps of a sinner coming for spiritual relief to Jesus; the state, the action, the surrender, the cure, the experience. Indeed, this was a real part of the story that day. 1. Sightlessness is the symbol of sin. Not darkness now, for Christ has come (see John viii. 12). The trouble is in the heart (see Eph. iii. 18). Who did this? (see 2 Cor. iv. 4). How deep is it? (see Rev. iii. 18). 2. Sin destroys the whole nature. We do not say Bartimeus was injured in any of his senses except his eyes. But his blindness made him a beggar. His touch, hearing, and taste may have been perfect: indeed, they may have been rendered sensitive, sharp, and alert more than usual. But he walked as a blind man, he reasoned as a blind man, he thought as a blind man, and he went to his regular stand as a blind man, and then begged. 3. Awakening of sinners is often due to Christian fidelity. 4. In the salvation of his soul the sinner has a work to do. It is of no use to fall back on one's blindness; the first step is to confess blindness, and go to Christ for help. 5. Prayer is indispensable in every case. No one can be saved who will not ask for salvation. The petition might well become a "cry." And whatever hinders, let the man continue to pray, and pray "the more a great deal." 6. All hindrances must be put away if one is in earnest to be saved. Many a man has seemed to start well, but has been tangled in the running by his garments of respectability, fame, fortune, social standing, literary eminence, or pleasant companionship. One may obtain the "whole world," and lose "his own soul." 7. Jesus is always ready to save any one who cries to Him. Oh, most impressive moment is that when the Lord of Glory pauses in the way, and commands a soul "to be called"! 8. Unqualified acceptance of Christ in all His offices is the essential condition of acceptance by Him. The sinner must say "Lord," "Jesus of Nazareth," "Son of David," and "Rabboni." 9. Experience of salvation is the instrument to use in our efforts to save others. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *How to procure blessing from God*:—I. CRY ALOUD. "What is the noise?" asks this blind man. "Who is it?" "Jesus," they say. And at once he cries, "Son of David, have mercy on me." "Hush," say some; "hush,"—not liking the loudness of the cry, nor the shrill, sad tone of it. But Bartimeus only cries the louder. Misery often makes a great noise in the world, a great and displeasing noise, if it can but get opportunity to make its want and its woe known. Surely, happy people should be ready to bear with the disturbance a little time; for misery has perhaps had to bear its sorrow for a long time. II. BE IN EARNEST. It has always needed an effort to come at Jesus. You must not be discouraged by hindrances. III. CAST OFF INCUMBRANCES. The blind man throws aside his garment, lest it should hamper him, in his eagerness to get at Christ. Give him his sight, and he will not care even to look for this soiled and tattered garment any more, but will find a better. People that have their eyes opened will at the very least get their clothes washed. A neat, decent dress is often an early

sign that a man is becoming careful who has hitherto been reckless. And new talk, new tempers, new estimates of things, are garments of the spiritual man, that show he has become a new man. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *The blind beggar of Jericho:*—This man is a picture of what we would fain have every seeker of Christ to become. In his lonely darkness, and deep poverty, he thought and became persuaded that Jesus was the Son of David. Though he had no sight, he made good use of his hearing. If we have not all gifts, let us use those we have. I. HE SOUGHT THE LORD UNDER DISCOURAGEMENTS. 1. No one prompted his seeking. 2. Many opposed his attempts. 3. For awhile he was unheeded by Christ Himself. 4. He was but a blind beggar, and this alone might have checked some pleaders. II. HE RECEIVED ENCOURAGEMENT. This came from Christ's commanding him to be called. There are several kinds of calls which come to men at the bidding of Christ. 1. Universal call (John iii. 14. 15). 2. Character call (Matt. xi. 28; Acts ii. 38. 39). 3. Ministerial call (Acts xiii. 26, 38, 39; xvi. 31). 4. Effectual call (Rom. viii. 30). III. BUT ENCOURAGEMENT DID NOT CONTENT HIM: he still sought Jesus. To stop short of Jesus and healing would have been folly indeed. 1. He arose. Hopefully, resolutely, he quitted his begging posture. In order to salvation we must be on the alert, and in earnest. 2. He cast away his garment, and every hindrance. 3. He came to Jesus. 4. He stated his case. 5. He received salvation. Jesus said unto him, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." He obtained perfect eyesight: complete health. IV. HAVING FOUND JESUS HE KEPT TO HIM. 1. He used his sight to see the Lord. 2. He became His avowed disciple. 3. He went with Jesus on His way to the cross, and to the crown. 4. He remained a well-known disciple, whose father's name is given. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *This man came out of cursed Jericho*:—Are there not some to come from our slums and degraded districts? This man at least was a beggar, but the Lord Jesus did not disdain his company. He was a standing glory to the Lord, for every one would know him as the blind man whose eyes had been opened. Let seeking souls persevere under all drawbacks. Do not mind those who would keep you back. Let none hinder you from finding Christ and salvation. Though blind, and poor, and miserable, you shall yet see, and smile, and sing, and follow Jesus. (*Ibid.*) *Blind Bartimeus*;—I. WE TAKE THOSE POINTS WHICH SPEAK TO US OF OUR LORD. We are struck by the obvious fact that though attended by a wondering joyful crowd, He has an ear, grace, gifts, for the one; so to the one miserable man. We are apt to think the Lord of all has so many dependent upon Him, our distress may be overlooked by Him; and this fear is strongest when we are weakest. "Lord, that I may receive my sight." "Receive thy sight" responds Christ. Christ gives us just as much as we can take—as much as we really ask for. II. LET US NOW GLANCE AT BARTIMEUS AND HIS FAITH. It is to his faith that our Lord attributes his healing; therefore our attention is specially called to it. It was surprisingly great. There was pertinacity in his faith. Those who stand near Christ may rebuke the cry for mercy. The doctrinal rebuke. The philosophical rebuke. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The gate of the city*:—The gate of the city was, in the East, the favourite resort of the mendicant class; for there, not only must all travellers, and caravans, and peasants bringing their wares to market, pass them by, but the broad side-arches of the gate, with their cool recesses and divans, were the justice-halls in which suits and quarrels were adjusted, and the lounging-place in which, when the labours of the day were over, the citizens gathered to discuss their local politics or to enjoy their neighbourly gossip. The very reason, therefore, which draws the beggars of Italy to the fountains or the steps of churches, and the beggars of Ireland to the doors of hotels, or to the spots haunted by tourists, and the beggars of England to the crowded thoroughfares and market-places, drew the beggars of the East, and still draws them, to the gates of the cities. There men most congregate, and there they are most likely to meet some response to their appeals for pity and help. (*Ibid.*) *Prayer of a solitary individual heard*:—You have seen a mother laughing and making merry with happy friends. Suddenly she pauses, listens, and leaves the noisy room. She has heard a tiny wail of distress which you could not hear, and she cannot be content till the cry of her babe be hushed, its wants satisfied. And shall God, who made the mother's heart, be less tender, less pitiful, than the creature He has made? I tell you, Nay; but "as one whom his mother comforteth," so will God comfort all the distressed who cry to Him. (*Ibid.*) *The blind beggar*:—I. THE ORIGIN OF THIS POOR BLIND MAN'S FAITH. II. ITS QUICKNESS IN GRASPING THE GRACIOUS OPPORTUNITY. III. LISTEN TO THIS FAITH WHILST IT CRIES AND BEGS. IV. OBSERVE HOW EAGERLY IT OBEYED THE CALL. V. LISTEN TO THIS FAITH DESCRIBING HIS CASE. HE TOLD IT AT ONCE. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The blind man's earnest*

cries:—Wherever Jesus Christ is found, His presence is marvellously mighty. Providence at all times co-works with grace in the salvation of the chosen people. I. THE BLIND MAN'S EARNESTNESS AS A CONTRAST TO THE BEHAVIOUR OF MANY HEARERS OF THE WORD. By a very short sermon he was led to prayer. Instead of praying over sermons, a great many disport themselves with them. Some are anxious for others, whilst this man cried for himself. II. NOTICE THIS MAN'S INTENSE DESIRE AS AN ABSORBING PASSION. Some plead the excuse of poverty, and demands of business; and these are the two obstacles that Bartimeus overcame. Passover: and the passover time when roads crowded with pilgrims, was his harvest. III. HIS VEHEMENCE WAS A MOST REASONABLE ZEAL. He knew the misery of blindness. He was a beggar, and had learned the weakness of man. He knew that Jesus Christ was near. He felt it was now or never. IV. HE EXPERIENCED CHECKS IN HIS PRAYER. V. HIS IMPORTUNITY AT LAST BECAME SO MIGHTY, THAT REBUFFS BECAME ARGUMENTS WITH HIM. (*Ibid.*) **A great number of people.**—*Christ and His many followers*:—I. THAT THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST ARE NOT NECESSARILY HIS FRIENDS OR TRUE DISCIPLES. "He went out of Jericho with His disciples, *and* a great number of people." 1. In the multitudes who accompanied Jesus out of Jericho, some, doubtless, followed Him out of mere curiosity. 2. Some followed because it was just then fashionable to do so. 3. Some followed with a view to future worldly advantage. 4. Such following is generally useless, deceptive, and mischievous, being of no real or permanent advantage to any one. (1) It confers no substantial benefit on any Christian country. (2) It is of no real advantage to those followers themselves. II. The text suggests TO US THAT AMONG A MULTITUDE OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS YOU MAY GENERALLY EXPECT TO FIND SOME FRIENDS. "With His disciples." Out of those who follow from curiosity Christ is drawing many real followers. 1. This should encourage us to persevere in our own following. 2. This should encourage us in relation to other followers. (*J. Morgan.*) *Christ and the true friends*:—I. THAT THE TRUE FRIENDS OF CHRIST SHOULD FOLLOW HIM CONSTANTLY, CLOSELY, AND COLLECTIVELY. But why should we be anxious to follow Christ thus? 1. Because it would gratify and glorify Christ. 2. Because it would bring great blessings to our own souls. 3. Because such following would exert a blessed influence over our fellow creatures. II. But while the friends of Christ should thus follow Him constantly, closely, and collectively, THEY SHOULD ALSO PREACH HIM SIMPLY, DIRECTLY, AND LOVINGLY. "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." 1. The sermon was a very simple one. 2. It was a very evangelical one. 3. It was a very sympathetic or loving one. (*Ibid.*) *A great number of people*:—There he sits hoping for mere worldly gain. He has not come to meet Christ. It was not in all his thoughts to get his eyes opened. How many like him are before me—dying sinners on whom God's curse is resting, who yet did not come to secure the great salvation. God grant a further parallel; that you may get what you did not come for, even a solemn meeting and saving closing of your souls with Jesus Christ. A multitude with Jesus! a multitude of followers! How can He then complain, I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought? Simply because He had many followers, but few friends. A multitude with Jesus! But it is not all following that blesses. A multitude with Jesus! Yes, when His march is at all triumphal—when as He goes He invests His progress with the splendour of miracles, there will be no want of a crowd to gape after Him. A multitude with Jesus! Take care, then, ye members of the Church. Examine yourselves closely. Profession of religion is easy now. Numbers give power, respectability, fashion, even enthusiasm. A multitude with Jesus! Blessed be God, *in* that multitude some true disciples may be found; some who, though weak and sinning, forward, like Peter, when they should be backward, and then backward, of course, when they should be forward; ambitious, like Zebedee's children, or doubting, like Thomas, are still true friends of Jesus, living for Him, suffering for Him, growing like Him day by day, and dying for Him without a murmur, if He so appoint. Among the professed people of God there have always been real people of God. "And hearing the multitude." Oh, what a blessing is that! His ears are open though his eyes are shut. Thus God remembers to be gracious. Where He takes one mercy He leaves another. My text shall be my guide. The roadside was the church, the multitude preached, and Bartimeus was the hearer. And now for the sermon—"And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!" "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!" So you see it was a powerful sermon. It went to the heart and took complete possession of it. It was a very simple sermon. Who cannot preach it? "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." There is no follower of Jesus who cannot tell poor blind souls this. A good preacher tries to make all truth simple. He is a

bad shepherd, say the old writers, who holds the hay too high for the sheep. According to Lord Bacon, little minds love to inflate plain things into marvels, while great minds love to reduce marvels to plain things. "The very essence of truth," says Milton, "is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness are our own." "Better the grammarian should reprehend," says Jenkyn, "than the people not understand. Pithy plainness is the beauty of preaching. What good doth a golden key that opens not?" An old lady once walked a great way to hear the celebrated Adam Clarke preach. She had heard he was "such a scholar," as indeed he was. But she was bitterly disappointed, "because," said she, "I understood everything he said." And I knew a man who left the church one morning quite indignant, because the preacher had one thing in his sermon he knew before! It was a little explanation meant for the children; dear little things—they are always coming on, and I love to see their bright little faces among the older people. We used to need and prize these simple explanations, and why shouldn't they have them in their turn? But, best of all, this sermon was about Christ. He is mentioned alone. "The excellency of a sermon," says Flavel, "lies in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ." He passeth by! Now is your time; make haste to secure your salvation. How near He is! He passeth by in the light of every Sabbath sun, in every church built to His name, in every reading of His Word, in every gospel sermon, in sacraments and prayers and psalms, but most of all in every movement of His Spirit on the heart. But He "passeth by!" He will not always tarry. The day of grace is not for ever. Its sun will go down, and the night that follows is eternal despair. Christ never passed that way again; He may never pass your way again. That was His last visit to Jericho; this call may be His last visit to you. This was Bartimeus' only opportunity; to-day may be your only opportunity. (*Prof. W. J. Hoge.*)

Blind Bartimeus.—*Three kinds of blindness*:—The eye of the body may be out, and we have no name for the result but blindness. The eye of the intellect may be out, and we name the result idiocy. We say the man is a fool. The eye of the soul may be out, and God names the result wickedness. He calls the man a sinner. Think of Bartimeus. He rose this morning, and his wife blessed him, his children climbed his knees and kissed him. They ministered to his wants. They led him a little way by the hand. But he did not see them. He knew of them, but he could not behold them. Their smiles or beauty were nothing to him—he was blind. Think of yourself, O sinner! You rose this morning, and the eye of your heavenly Father looked upon you. His hand led you, His power guarded you, His goodness blessed you. But your soul did not see Him. A vague idea that God had done it all may have occurred to you, but it had no vividness. He was no blessed reality to you. You saw not the lineaments of a father—the loving eye, the benignant smile. You saw nothing—your soul was blind. Think again of Bartimeus. He went abroad, and the rich valley of the Jordan spread out before him. The stately palms rose toward heaven, and waved their feathery tops in the early breeze. The gardens of balsam were clothed in their delicate spring verdure, and Jericho sat in the midst of these vernal glories, deserving its name—Jericho, the place of fragrance, deserving its frequent description among the ancient writers—the City of Palms. And high above all was the blue sky, bending over as if to embrace and bless so much loveliness of earth; and the great sun, filling earth and sky and balmy air with glory. But what was all this to Bartimeus? It might have been narrow and black for aught he could tell. It was an utter blank, a dreadful gloom to him. All was night, black, black night, with no star. Why was it so to him, when to others it was splendour and joy? Ah! he was blind. Unregenerate man, think again of yourself. You went abroad this morning, on an earth once cursed, as of old Jericho had been, but spared and blessed by redeeming mercy, even as Jericho was that day blessed by the presence and healing grace of Jesus. Around you, too, was spread a world of spiritual beauty. The walls and bulwarks and stately palaces of the city of our God were before you. The rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, the vine, the palm, the olive, and the fig-tree all stood about you in the garden of the Lord. Through them flowed the river of life, reflecting skies more high and clear than the azure of summer mornings ever imagined, and lit to its measureless depth by a sun more glorious than ever poured splendour even upon Eden, in our poor world's ancient prime. You walked forth amid all this beauty, and many saw it—none perfectly, yet some very blessedly—but you saw nothing. You see nothing now. Nay, you cannot see it. Strain your blind soul as you will, you cannot see it. I see a beautiful mother gaze anxiously on her babe. She is trying a fearful experiment. She stretches out her arms to it, beseeches it with loving looks, holds out sparkling jewels to it, and

flashes them before its eyes in the very sunshine at the open window. But the little eyes move not, or move aimlessly, and turn vacantly away. And she cries out in anguish, "Oh, my poor child is blind!" And now I understand why even tender children turn away from Christ, seeing no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, and caring nothing for all His smiles or tears, or offers of the rich jewelry of heaven. They see nothing of it all. They are blind, born blind. (*Ibid.*) *The danger of the blind*:—I once saw a man walk along the edge of a precipice as if it were a plain. For anything he knew, it was a plain, and safe. He was calm and fearless, not because there was no danger, but because he was blind. And who cannot now understand how men so wise, so cautious in most things, can go so securely, so carelessly, even so gaily on, as if everything were safe for eternity, while snares and pitfalls are all about them, and death may be just at hand, and the next step may send them down the infinite abyss! Oh, we see it, we see it—they are blind! A blind man is more taken up with what he holds in his hand, than with mountains, ocean, sun, or stars. He feels this; but those he can neither touch nor see. And now it is plain why unconverted men undervalue doctrine, saying, that "it is no matter what a man believes, so his heart is right;" that "one doctrine is as good as another, and for that matter, no doctrines are good for much;" and that "they don't believe in doctrinal preaching at any rate." They, forsooth, they! blind worms, pronouncing contemptuously of the stupendous heights and glories of God's revelation, where alone we learn what we are to believe concerning Him, and what duty He requires of us. It is plain, too, why they see no preciousness in the promises, no glory in Christ, no beauty in holiness, no grandeur in the work of redemption; why they make a mock at sin, despise God's threatenings, brave His wrath, make light of the blood of Christ, jest at death, and rush headlong on certain perdition. They are blind. (*Ibid.*) *Light no remedy for blindness*:—"But we want to see them. If they are real, they are our concern as well as yours. Oh, that some preacher would come, who had power to make us see them!" Poor souls, there is no such preacher, and you need not wait for him. Let him gather God's light as he will, he can but pour it on blind eyes. A burning-glass will condense sunbeams into a focus of brightness; and if a blind eye be put there, not a whit will it see, though it be consumed. Light is the remedy for darkness, not blindness. (*Ibid.*) *Blindness disqualifies the critic*:—Let the people of God no more wonder then at the clamours of infidels against the Scriptures. Would you heed a blind man criticising pictures, or raving against your summer skies? If he denies that the sun has brightness, or the mountains grandeur, will you believe him? And if a hundred blind men should all declare that they cannot see the stars, and argue learnedly that there can be no stars, and then grow witty and laugh at you as star-gazers, would the midnight heavens be less glorious to you? When these men had thus satisfactorily demonstrated their blindness, would not the mighty works of God still prove their bright reality to your rejoicing vision? Would they not still declare His glory and show His handiwork? And shall the spiritually blind be more trusted? (*Ibid.*) *The blind man happy*:—In a journal of a tour through Scotland, by the Rev. C. Simeon, of Cambridge, we have the following passage:—"Went to see Lady Ross's grounds. Here also I saw blind men weaving. May I never forget the following fact. One of the blind men, on being interrogated with respect to his knowledge of spiritual things, answered, 'I never saw till I was blind: nor did I ever know contentment when I had my eyesight, as I do now that I have lost it: I can truly affirm, though few know how to credit me, that I would on no account change my present situation and circumstances with any that I ever enjoyed before I was blind.' He had enjoyed eyesight till twenty-five, and had been blind now about three years. My soul," Mr. Simeon adds, "was much affected and comforted with his declaration. Surely there is reality in religion."

Begging.—*When may a man be called poor*:—Is wealth for the body alone? Has the heart no riches? May not a mind be impoverished, a soul be bankrupt? Ah! yes, there are riches besides money, wealth to which gold and rubies are as nothing. A man is poor when his need is not supplied. The higher the wants, the deeper the kind of poverty, the more the want, the deeper its degree. A man with neither food nor shelter is poorer than he who lacks shelter only. And is not the man without love or hope poorer than he who has merely no fire nor bread? Who shall deny the name of poor to him whose soul is unfurnished? What is the chaff to the wheat, the body to the soul? Are not the soul's desires larger and more insatiable than those of the flesh? Does not the heart hunger? Is there no such thing as "a famine of truth and love"? Do desolate spirits never

cower and shiver and freeze, like houseless wretches in stormy winter nights? Night and winter and storm—are they not also for the soul? And when it has no home in its desolations, no refuge from its foes, no shelter from the blast, no food for its hunger, no consolation in its sorrows, is it not poor? poor in the deepest poverty, which almost alone deserves the name of poverty? How much of such poverty is there, dwelling in princely halls, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day! How often does it walk in royal processions, and flash with jewels, and handle uncounted gold. (*Ibid.*) *Every sinner is a beggar:*—How can it be otherwise? Can such poverty be independent? In outward poverty, a well-furnished mind, a wealthy soul may be an inward solace. But when it is the soul that is bankrupt, there is no region still within, where it may retire and comfort itself. It will seek for happiness, and it must look without—it is forced to beg. And thus I see poor, guilty, blinded souls begging—begging of earth and sky, and air and sea, of every passing event, of one another, of all but the great and merciful God, who would supply all their need through Jesus Christ. They must beg. The vast desires of the soul, which God gave that they might be filled from Himself, and which nothing but His own fulness can satisfy; the noble powers degraded to work with trifles; the aspirations which thrill only as they mount heavenward, but now struggle and pant like an eagle with broken wing, and his breast in the dust; the deathless conscience, filled with guilt and touched with unappeasable wrath, drugged indeed, and often sleeping heavily, but waking surely, and then lashing the soul inexorably—all these compel it to be a beggar. (*Ibid.*) *Begging begins in childhood:*—We beg then with eager hope. We are sure we shall not be disappointed. Games, holidays, sight-seeing, all promise much, and childhood begs them to make it blessed. Vexed, wearied, sent empty away again and again, the boy sees, further on, the youth, pursuing his great hopes, and hastens to join him, confident that in higher excitements and larger liberty, in new aspirations and tenderer love, his soul's thirst shall be slaked. Deluded once more, he grows sober and wise and firm. He is older. He is a man. He lays deep plans now, puts on a bolder face, and begs with sterner importunity. He can take no denial. He must have happiness; he will be blessed. Fame, wealth, power—these have the hidden treasure he has sought so long. He knows now where it is, and they must give it up. Years are passing, his time will soon be gone, and now he begs indeed! How these idols lead his soul captive! How he toils, cringes, grovels, sacrifices for their favour! Fame, wealth, power—deceitful gods!—still promise that to-morrow the long-sought good shall be given. But how many to-morrows come and go, and leave him still trusting to the next! Now he forsakes the pleasures he might have, dries up the fountains of his early love, sweeps all sentiment from his heart, crushes his dearest affections, tasks every power to the utmost, wrings out his heart's blood, and lays all his soul before his idol's feet—and is disappointed! Disappointed alike in failure and success! If he wins the prize, this is not what he coveted, and worshipped, and bargained away his soul for, and he curses it for a cheat. If he fails, he still believes that the true good was there, and he was near it; and he curses the chance, or envy, or hate which snatched it from his grasp. But who shall describe the base arts of this beggary? The disguises, the pretences, the fawnings—all the low tricks of street-beggars—are adopted and eclipsed by those who will be rich, will be great, will have fame. And what are the profits of thus begging the world for what God alone can give? Observe a street-beggar for a while. How many go by and give nothing, where one drops even a penny in the hat! So many of the passing things of time refuse altogether to give the soul the good it asks. See again. Do you mark the impudent leer of that mean boy? He knows the beggar is blind, and so he comes up pretending sympathy, and puts a pebble, a chip in that trembling hand. So a thousand times have you seen the world do for a begging soul. But there comes a still meaner boy; he puts that which, when the grateful old man's hand closes on it pierces or stings it, and, laughing loudly in the blind, bewildered face, he runs away. And thus have I seen the gay, polished world put a sparkling cup to the young man's lips; but when at last it bit him like a serpent and stung him like an adder, the polished world jeered his imprudence, and turned him from its door. His excesses and agony and death must not be seen there! And when the beggar's gains for the day are fairly counted, what are they? A few copper coins, foul with gangrene, and little bits of silver, rarely,—enough to buy a scanty meal and a poor lodging, and to-morrow all is to begin again. And thus the world gives—few pleasures, low pleasures, brief pleasures. They stay the soul's hunger for a while, but never satisfy it, so that straightway we must go out and beg again. The world

never raised a man's soul above beggary. It is both too selfish and too poor. It gives but little of what it has, and if it gave all, gave itself, that would not fill and bless an immortal soul. These things make me think how sadly all this begging from the world ends. The hour comes when the world can do no more. It is a bitter hour—an hour of pain and anguish, of weakness and despair—the hour of death. The world is roaring away as ever, in business and mirth, all unconscious that the poor man who loved and worshipped it so, is dying. But oh, the begging of God which now begins! Bitter crying to Him whose gracious heart has been waiting to bless these many years, waiting in vain for one sigh of contrition, one prayer of faith to His infinite grace! But it is too late. His patient, insulted Spirit has been grieved at length. He has departed. (*Ibid.*) **And when he heard.**—*And when he heard*:—Eternal salvation depends on right hearing. There are just two kinds of hearing, not three. There is a hearing unto life, and another hearing unto death; but there is no hearing between—none to indifference. You may try to hear merely that you may hear, and let that be the end of it—but that will not be the end of it. The end of it will be life or death! You may resolve that the preaching shall make no difference in you; but it will make a difference in you, and the difference will be salvation or perdition! The gospel leaves no man where it found him. If it be not wings to bear him to heaven, it will be a mill-stone to sink him to hell. Some of you think it the lightest of pastimes to come to church and hear a sermon. I. His hearing LED HIM TO ACTION. His very soul seemed to be roused, and he began to do something. Oh, for a pulse of life in those frozen hearts! A flush of blood, even though it were angry blood, in those pale cheeks! "I came to break your head," said a man once to Whitefield, "but by the grace of God you have broken my heart." That was a vile purpose to go to church with, but if he had gone in a complacent frame, and quietly slept or coolly criticised the preacher, it would have been far worse. He would not have carried away that priceless treasure—a broken heart. If what we say is true, why do you not act upon it? If false, how can you bear to be charged with it? If our charges are false, they are also insulting and outrageous. If you believe them to be false, your conduct, in hearing them so calmly, and coming back to hear them again, and even sometimes applauding us for the vehement way in which we assail and denounce you, is perfectly astonishing. Or if you say you believe these things to be true, your conduct is still more amazing. If true, they should concern you infinitely: yet you are not concerned at all. You will call Bartimeus a fool if he does not try to get his eyes opened this very day. But what name will you reserve for yourselves, if, while I this day, as one of these ambassadors of God, offer you pardon and healing and eternal life through Jesus Christ, who now passes by to bestow them, you once more refuse the Saviour, and go on as before toward perdition? II. This reveals to us the second mark of right hearing—IT FILLS A MAN WITH EARNESTNESS. If he has heard such truth as he ought, he not only acts, but acts with energy. Thus Bartimeus acted. "When he heard he cried out." So it must be with you, O sinners. If you would enter heaven you must be in earnest about it. Let us now see how this earnestness found expression. So shall we have another mark of true hearing. III. When the gospel is heard aright, IT LEADS TO PRAYER. This was the first thing Bartimeus did, when he was told that Jesus was passing by—he prayed. And this is always the first thing for a lost sinner who hears of Christ—let him pray. A soul truly in earnest after salvation will cry for help. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and when our strength fails, prayer is nature's messenger for helpers. And when did nature fail to pray in her need? Hunger will beg and pain cry out. Though the fever have caused madness, the sufferer will still cry for water. None need teach the babe to clamour for its nurture. Birds can plead for their young, and the dog entreat you, with all the power of speech, to follow him to the forest, where his master lies robbed and bleeding. And has the soul no voice in its sickness unto death? Is the instinct of the brute a sure guide, and do the reason and conscience of men slumber or lie? Or are they quicksighted and honest about bodily wants and earthly things, only to show themselves utterly besotted, when glory, honour, and immortality are at stake? When your souls are in jeopardy, must you be plied with such urgency before you will cry for help? If the voice of grace, sometimes warning, sometimes inviting, cannot wake you and bring you to your knees, God will try the voice of unmixed vengeance. IV. And do it at once. PROMPTNESS is another mark of a good hearer of the gospel. It is found in Bartimeus. "And when he heard," that is, as soon as he heard, "he began to cry out." But what need of such haste? "Jesus is going slowly," he

might say, "and some little while must pass before He is gone. Be sure I will be in time." "Or if He does get a little out of sight," Bartimeus might say, "while I am attending to some little matters, I will run after Him and call Him." "But I only want a little time, and that for most important business," Bartimeus might plead. But if Bartimeus choose to attend to his alms instead of his eyes, see if he has not a still stronger reason. Begging is not only his business, but this happens to be a very "busy season," as we say in the city, or "harvest-time," as they say in the country. A multitude was passing! He might go home almost rich—might almost retire from business! And after all has not Providence given him this opportunity, and would it be exactly right to throw it away? So have I heard professors of religion and non-professors reason. So do they put earth's business above all the calls of God. V. and VI. Two other marks of a good hearer of the gospel are found in Bartimeus. He heard with FAITH AND HUMILITY. He trusted in Jesus and was lowly in heart. His faith even outran the word of the multitude. They spoke of "Jesus of Nazareth,"—Nazareth of Galilee—a despised town of a despised province: but he could call Him "Son of David," and "Lord." And how deep was his humility! He hid nothing, pretended nothing. He came as he was. Blind, he came as blind. Poor, he came as poor. A beggar, he came as a beggar. And so it is always. Faith and humility meet in the sinner's experience, not as occasional companions only; they ever walk lovingly together as sisters. They cannot separate. Like the Siamese twins they live in each other's presence alone; should they part, they would die. A sinner cannot believe in Jesus and not be humble; he cannot be truly humble without believing in Jesus. (*Ibid.*) **That he should hold his peace.** *That he should hold his peace*:—There is never a knock at heaven's gate but it sounds through hell, and devils come out to silence it. The ungodly world bids anxious souls to hold their peace. It cannot bear the sinner's distress. If his conscience is disturbed its own is not quite easy. Therefore the world sets itself to make an end of these convictions. For this it has innumerable devices. It will flatter or curse. For some it has persecutions, for others promotions. But I pause not on any of these. I wish now to address the professed people of God. I say, then, plainly: you are in great danger every day of rebuking anxious souls, and charging them to hold their peace. I. BY INJUDICIOUS CRITICISM OF SERMONS you may stifle convictions and drive sinners away from Christ. I cannot better illustrate this caution than by a true narrative from "The Central Presbyterian." "A pious lady once left a church in this city (Richmond), in company with her husband, who was not a professor of religion. She was a woman of unusual vivacity, with a keen perception of the ludicrous, and often playfully sarcastic. As they walked along toward home, she began to make some amusing and spicy comments on the sermon, which a stranger, a man of very ordinary talents and awkward manner, had preached that morning in the absence of the pastor. After running on in this vein of sportive criticism for some time, surprised at the profound silence of her husband, she turned and looked up in his face. He was in tears. That sermon had sent an arrow of conviction to his heart! What must have been the anguish of the conscience-stricken wife, thus arrested in the act of ridiculing a discourse which had been the means of awakening the anxiety of her unconverted husband!" II. Beware also of UNSEASONABLE LEVITY AFTER SOLEMN APPEALS. III. This brings to mind another way by which you may bid sinners hold their peace—by BLINDNESS TO ANY BEGINNING CONCERN. Would you see how you should watch? Come with me to the chamber where a babe lies dying. A breathless messenger has gone for the physician, but still he comes not. How the worn mother gazes on her little sufferer in an agony of fondness and fear; how she sinks in anguish before the mercy-seat, and pleads like the Syrophenician woman at the feet of Jesus; how she rises wildly, and watches at the window for the physician; how at every sound of wheels she flushes with eagerness, and then grows sick at heart as they turn the corner, and the sound dies away; how she springs to the door as his well-known step is heard on the stair; and then, as he searches every symptom, how she waits on his every look, living on a gleam of hope, ready to die if his face is darkened by a cloud! IV. Nor is this the worst. Professing parents often LAY PLANS FOR THEIR CHILDREN DIRECTLY OPPOSED TO THE SPIRIT'S WORK. (*Ibid.*) *Pertinacity successful in the end*:—Success in this world comes only to those who exhibit determination. Can we hope for salvation unless our mind is truly set upon it? Grace makes a man to be as resolved to be saved as this beggar was to get to Jesus, and gain his sight. "I must see him," said an applicant at the door of a public person. "You cannot

see him," said the servant; but the man waited at the door. A friend went out to him, and said, "You cannot see the master, but I can give you an answer." "No," he replied; "I will stay all night on the doorstep, but I will see the man himself. He alone will serve my turn." You do not wonder that, after many rebuffs, he ultimately gained his point: it would be infinitely greater wonder if an importunate sinner did not obtain an audience from the Lord Jesus. If you must have grace, you shall have it. If you will not be put off, you shall not be put off. Whether things look favourable or unfavourable, press you on till you find Jesus, and you shall find Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **And Jesus stood still.** *Arresting Christ*:—When Jesus thus "stood still," He was on His way for the last time to Jerusalem. His "hour" was drawing nigh, and He was hastening to meet it. Can He be arrested in this journey? Where is the event mighty enough to stay His course? What destiny of man or empire is worthy even of a thought from Him now? "He stood still." Let us also stand and admire. Here let us learn the grace of our Redeemer, and lay up in our hearts the blessed teaching. Then may we learn how unreasonable and how unnatural is a favourite clamour of infidels against the gospel. They say they cannot believe that the Son of God came to this world and died for its redemption. This world is too small and mean in the great scale of the universe, to allow them to think that the Creator of countless millions of glorious suns and systems, could have stooped to love and care and suffer and die for the poor creatures of a day, who live on this insignificant planet. To a narrow vision a structure may seem unsightly from its vastness, while in miniature the same eye might find the proportions exquisite. And have we not, in this standing still of Jesus, amidst the urgencies of such a journey, at the call of a beggar, a miniature of the very things by which some are confounded or repelled, in the immense transactions of the Atonement? It was worthy of the illustrious Stranger—nay, it was beautiful, it was sublime—to stay for the relief of the unhappy beggar, though His own mind was burdened with the weight of the infinite sacrifice He was about to offer. Then who shall so vilify the redemption of men by the Cross, as to pronounce it unworthy of the Sovereign of a universe to which our earth is but an atom? Shall an astronomer be so lost in God's glory declared by the heavens, in their measureless and bright immensity, as to scorn the thought of His upholding and blessing each sun and star? Then, if these philosophers gaze on the luminous, illimitable fields of creation, until their dazzled minds turn back with contempt to the world on which they dwell, and find no worth nor grandeur in the Cross which redeems it, though it saves numbers without number from perdition, and glorifies them in the light of God, and displays His Attributes before an admiring universe, let us hold up the confessed truthfulness and beauty of this simple incident, till, "like a mirror of diamond, it pierce their misty eyeball" and lead them on to the acknowledgment of the truth. "Jesus stood still," and when did He ever refuse to stay at the call of the distressed sinner? Nay, if He stayed then, when can He refuse? Is He not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? The fires of eternal vengeance stood still over Sodom till Lot was gone out. The waves stood still, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea till the children of Israel passed over. The down-rushing waters of swollen Jordan stood still, as the feet of the priests touched their brim, and rose up as a wall till the chosen tribes had gained their inheritance. At the cry of Joshua, the sun stood still in the midst of the heavens, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, until the Lord's hosts had avenged themselves upon their enemies. So we may look upon His call, and the gracious call of every sinner who becomes a saint, in its Divine origin, its gentle instruments, and its effectual aids. I. "He called." Our vocation is of God. He hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. "He called." This word of Matthew contains, as in the seed, the expressions of Mark and Luke. All the agencies, by which the soul is persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel, are hidden in this, His loving call, as the leaves and flowers and golden fruit are all folded in the germ. Many providences, many scriptures, many ordinances, many movements of the Spirit may lay hold on a soul to draw it to Christ; but they are all so many threads which Christ holds in His own hand. They have all their power from His drawing. Then let us use this truth for holy fear. If you resist the appeals of God's ministers, you resist God. "He called." In Jesus Christ we behold the best of preachers—the Divine Exemplar after whom all should copy. II. "He commanded him to be called." The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it. Let him that heareth, say, Come! Then all the called

may themselves become callers. III. And now what a word of good cheer the third evangelist speaks—"He commanded him to be brought unto Him!" Admire the Lord's grace to the blind man. He will not leave him to grope his dark way alone. Some shall lead him by the hand. In whatever way, he shall have all the aid he needs to come into the Saviour's very presence. Blessed thought! that we who are but men may have some share in this dear work of guiding blind souls to Jesus. But here I rather choose to think of the higher than human aid, which Christ sends with His word to the souls of His chosen. The energy of Almighty power accompanies the preaching of the truth. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! (*Prof. W. J. Hoge.*) *A gospel sermon to outsiders*:—I. Many persons who are really seeking the Saviour greatly want comforting. There is a sort of undefined fear that these good things are not for them. They are cast down because they think they have been seeking in vain. They are sad because many round about them discourage them. Their sadness also rise from their spiritual ignorance. They regard conversion as something very terrible. II. This comfort is to be found in the text. The general gospel call ought to yield great comfort to any seeking soul. But there is also an effectual call. III. This comfort should lead to immediate action. The exhortation to rise means instant decision. It means also resolution. You are also to cast away everything that would hinder you from finding salvation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **He calleth thee.** The analogy would be perfect, if those who were sent to Bartimeus had themselves been blind, until their eyes had been opened by Christ. And who can say that it was not so with some of them? Then with what generous indignation must they have heard the cruel rebukes of the multitude! Then, too, with what alarmed sympathy would these men, once blind, now seeing, have regarded Bartimeus, if he had wavered in his earnestness after Christ! And with what alacrity would these messengers of Christ have hastened to bear His words of welcome to the blind man! Joy beyond expression would have inspired them. I have heard of a caravan which had lost its way in the desert. For days they could find no water. The suffering was sore, and many were perishing. Men were out in all directions searching for the water that was to be indeed water of life. At last, faint and ready to die, one man lighted on a spring. Cool and clear the stream gushed from the rock. Almost frantic with thirst, he rushed forward and drank, drank. Oh, how deep was the bliss of that draught! Is it strange that for one moment he thought only of himself? But suddenly the perishing multitude came before his mind, and he leaped up, and ran shouting, "Water! water! Enough for all! Come and drink!" And so from rank to rank of that scattered host he sped, until he had told them all, and was himself thirsty again. But when he saw the eager crowds rushing to the fountain, when he beheld the refreshment and gladness of all hearts and faces, and then stooped once more himself to drink the liberal stream, was not his second draught full of deeper bliss than even the first? Had he ever tasted such water as that? O blessed souls who have drank of the river of life, lift up your voice upon the mountains, and let your feet be swift upon the plains, publishing the good tidings of salvation. This brings to view the joyfulness of the gospel. It is not a message of gloom, a thing to be whispered in darkness as a dreadful secret. We dishonour the gospel when we would recommend it by a melancholy visage. Such is the spirit of the tidings these messengers bring to Bartimeus, in this, his second gospel sermon. The first told him simply that Jesus was passing by. Now he hears these heart-reviving words, "Be of good comfort; rise; He calleth thee." "Be of good comfort." On thy long night, without moon or star, or even a dim candle in thy dwelling, the Day-star is dawning. Thine eyes have never been used but for weeping; they seemed only made for tears. But now they shall serve thee for seeing. Sinners, poor, wretched, and blind, but crying for the Saviour, be not disconsolate. "Be of good comfort." After your night of weeping, your morning of joy has come. "Rise!" say the preachers to Bartimeus, and so we cry. There is salvation for the sinner, none for the sluggard. Rise, then, ye unpardoned. Away with your fears and doubts. They are unreasonable and wicked. Break off your indifference. It is a noiseless chain, indeed, but be not deceived; the chain that does not clank is the tightest. Let me take the trumpet of the Holy Ghost, and may He fill it with a sound that shall pierce your heart;—Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! "He calleth thee." What more canst thou want, Bartimeus? If He calls thee, He will cure thee. If He calls, who can forbid? Thy call is thy warrant. The call of Christ is warrant enough for any sinner. He may use it against the Law and Satan and his own evil conscience.

For example, Satan comes to him and says—"What, wretch! art thou going to Christ?" "Ay, that I am, with all my heart." "But will He receive thee?" "Ay, that He will, with all His heart." "Truly, thou art a brave talker! Who taught thee this lofty speech?" "Nay, my speech is lowly, and I learned it of my Lord." But where is thy warrant? None can go to Christ without a warrant." "He calleth me—be that my warrant!" "But where is thy fitness?" says Satan, shifting his ground. "Be my warrant my fitness—He calleth me," answers the sinner, keeping his ground, his only ground. "But listen, soul! Thou art going before a King. He cannot look upon iniquity" (for you see Satan can quote Scripture), "and thou art but a mass of iniquity" (here the devil affects a great horror of it, to fill the sinner with fear). "The heavens are not clean in His sight; how then shall thy filthiness appear before Him? Look at thy rags, if thy blind eyes will let thee, and say, what a dress is this to take into His presence!" "It is all true," says the contrite sinner, "still I will go, for He calleth me. I will bind this call about me and it shall be my dress, till He give me another. I will hold up this call, written with His own hand, and signed with His own name, and sealed with His own blood, and it shall be my defence and plea. Miserable and unworthy as I am, and deserving, I know, to die, with this I have boldness and access with confidence, saying only, like little Samuel, Here am I, for Thou didst call me!" Bartimeus needed no more. "Casting away his garment, he rose and came to Jesus." It could not be otherwise. True earnestness does not wait. Conscious wretchedness in the presence of a trusted Saviour cannot delay. Only half-convictions can procrastinate. The ancient heathen had this saying: "The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool." Shod with wool! Yes, they crept with noiseless steps, that the touch that aroused might be the blow that destroyed. It is not so with our merciful God. He sounds an alarm that we may seek a refuge. His thunder rolls along the distant horizon, that we may take in sail and be ready for the storm, the storm which would have burst upon us no less surely without this gracious warning. As Bartimeus rose to hasten to Jesus, he "cast away his garment," his loose upper robe. He would suffer no hindrance. He may have thrown it aside unconsciously, but it was the action of nature—nature in earnest for some great end. Let us take the lesson. If we would win Christ, we must lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us—the sin we have daily wrapped about us like our garment. (*Prof. W. J. Hoge.*) **What wilt thou?** *Our wants must be expressed:*—If we would commune with Christ, we must draw near to Him. If we would hear His voice, we must fall down before Him. It is only there that heaven and earth may meet in peace. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" A goodly word, indeed! What would not a soul, struggling in the depths and entanglements of sin, give once to hear it from his Lord? Let us admire —I. THE FULNESS OF THE GRACE. The tender love of Christ to lost souls is a great deep, without bottom and without shore. The wing of no angel can bear him so high that he can look over all its extent. The guilt of no sinner has been able to sound all its depth. King Ahasuerus said unto Queen Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of my kingdom shall it be performed. And so the monarchs of the East delighted to speak. But their utmost promise was half the kingdom, and their kingdoms were earthly, bounded and unsubstantial, and their pompous generosity often but the flourishing rhetoric of lust, pride, and wine. But Jesus puts no limit to His offers. Ask, it shall be given you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. II. Let us also admire THE FREENESS OF CHRIST'S OFFERS TO LOST SINNERS. The freeness of the offer springs from the fulness of the grace. "What wilt thou?" Choose for thyself, Bartimeus. If thou dost not carry away a noble gift, it is thine own fault. I do not set bounds to thy desires. The treasure is infinite, and thou hast it all to choose from. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, and if we are, it is in ourselves. God's grace is always larger than man's desire, and freer than his faith. If we take little pitchers to the well, we shall carry little water away. Though the golden bowl be full of golden oil, the lamp will burn dim, if the golden pipe be narrow or choked. The ocean itself can pour but a scanty stream through a slender channel. III. SEE HOW CHRIST'S GRACE CONDESCENDS TO EVERY SOUL'S PECULIAR NEED. He will suit His granting to our asking. To every soul He says, "What wilt thou?" IV. This

question teaches that, though CHRIST KNOWS WHAT WE WANT AND WHAT HE WILL DO, HE WILL HAVE US EXPRESS OUR WANTS. Through all the cold, dark night the petals of the flower were shut. So the sun found it and poured his rays upon it, till its heart felt the warmth. Then it yearned to be filled with these pleasant beams, and opened its bosom to drink them in. And so it is with man's prayer and God's grace. How pointless are the prayers we often hear. They scatter weakly over the whole ground. They have no aim and do no execution. If we would pray well, we must have something to pray for, something we really crave, we must know our wants, feel our wants, express our wants. We must have "an errand at the Throne." I learned that expression from a pious old slave. He was asked the secret of the fervour and spirit with which he always prayed. "Oh," said he, "I have always an errand at the Throne, and then I just tell the Lord what I come for, and wait for an answer." Thus, too, shall we wait for an answer. Even the sportsman, who cares not for his game, follows the arrow with his eye, till he sees it strike. But how many never cast a second glance after a prayer which has left their lips! (*Ibid.*) *What wilt thou?*:—Did the omniscient Redeemer not know what was the calamity under which this man groaned? He did. It was evident to all the world. Was He not aware of the desire of Bartimeus' heart? and that what he sought was not an ordinary alms? Undoubtedly, and He had already resolved to restore his sight. Why then did He put this question? It was that He might more fully manifest His Father's glory; that He might awaken the man to a deeper consciousness of his misery; call forth his faith into liveliest exercise; and, especially, teach him and all of us the nature and necessity of fervent prayer. 1. God has appointed a definite way in which we are to obtain His aid and deliverance. If we would have we must ask. Prayer is the means He has prescribed. Why? We could not enjoy the blessing of God without it. It is indispensable as a preparation of our hearts. 2. Our prayers must be definite and precise. Beware of vague, general, pointless prayers. State at once the evil you would have removed, the want you would have supplied, the promise you would have fulfilled. 3. He who asks the question in the text, can answer it. Jesus has all things at His disposal. There is no limit either to His resources or His readiness to help. Be not afraid to ask much, to expect much, and much you shall obtain. He imposes no conditions, no price, no merit. (*A. Thomson.*) **Immediately he received his sight.** *Blindness removed*:—I. What, then, does this healing stand for in the higher spiritual world? Surely, nothing less than regeneration—the new birth of the soul. Of the many images employed by the Holy Ghost to set forth our natural state, perhaps none is more frequent than blindness. Darkness is ever the chosen symbol of the kingdom of Satan, and light of the kingdom of God. 1. That the new birth is from God. If the harp be broken, the hand of the maker may repair it, and wake the chords again to their old power and sweetness. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But who can restore the shattered crystal, so that the sunbeams shall stream through it without finding a flaw, and flash, once more, as of old, in the ever-changing play of their splendour? And who can open the eyes of the blind? Who can restore to that most lustrous and precious of gems, its expression and power, when distorted and blotted by disease or violence? Who shall open again those delicate pathways for the light of two worlds—the outer world shining in and filling the soul with images of beauty, and that inner world shining out in joy, love, and thankfulness? Surely none but the Maker of this curious frame, who, when sin had so cruelly marred it, came in compassion as infinite as His might, to be Redeemer and Restorer where He had already been Creator. Only He can open the eyes of the blind. The power of God is in that work. But if a man *die* shall he live again? Oh, if the *soul* be dead, dead in guilt and corruption and the curse of Almighty God, can it revive? Yes, thanks be to God! by reason of the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead (after He had been delivered for our offences), we also may be quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, we may be quickened together with Christ; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. 2. In the light of this miracle we also learn that, whatever activities the sinner may put forth before and after his regeneration, *in* the great change he is passive. All the agonies of the blind man, all his tears and cries, all his rolling and straining his sightless balls, had just

nothing at all to do with the act of restoration. That was Christ's alone. And so in the new birth—"born of God," tells it all. It is the "unparticipated work" of the Holy Ghost. In this, regeneration is distinguished from conversion. God turns the man, but the man, so moved, turns with his whole heart. It is the day of God's great "power," but also of the sinner's great "willingness." The fire which the sun has kindled mounts toward it at once. The kindling of the heavenly flame is regeneration; its upward motion, conversion. Regeneration is the Divine cause; conversion, the sure effect. Where there is the grace of life, there will be a life of grace. 3. Light did not open Bartimeus' eyes, nor does truth alone regenerate the sinner. Pouring light on blind eyes will not heal them. Flashing truth, even God's glorious truth, on the sinner's mind will not regenerate him. Bartimeus was as blind at noon as at midnight. The sinner is as blind under the blaze of the gospel as amid the glooms of heathenism. II. Let me now speak of the greatness and glory of this change. III. As "Bartimeus immediately received his sight," so, in regeneration, the great change is instantaneous. There is some one moment when the vision of the blind man, and the new life of the sinner begins. It may be feeble, but it has begun, and for the faintest beginning the creative act is needed. The main thing for every sinner is, to be able on good ground to say, Whereas I was blind, now I see. If he can say this, and have the witness of the Spirit to its truth, it matters little whether he is able to add, On such a day, in such a place, by such and such means, my eyes were opened. A good ship has been broken by the tempest. Mast and rudder and compass, all are gone. The storm is over, but the wreck is drifting away blindly through night and fog. At length all is still, and the wondering sailors wait for the day. Tardily and uncertainly it dawns, and as the heavy mists slowly dissolve, all eyes are busy trying to discover where they are. At length one descries a cliff which seems familiar, another a pier in which he can hardly be mistaken, a third the old church spire, under whose shadow his mother is sleeping, and now, as the sun breaks forth, they all cry out in joyful assurance, that they are in the desired haven! Mysteriously and without their aid, the Ruler of wind and wave has brought them there, and all are exulting in the great deliverance. Nay, shall we say not all? Can you imagine one poor melancholy man refusing to rejoice, and even doubting these evidences, because he cannot tell the hour and angle of his arrival, nor whether he was borne chiefly by currents of air or ocean? IV. On the blessedness of this change in Bartimeus—image of the spiritual blessedness of him who is first tasting that the Lord is gracious—I can hardly bring myself to comment. When after long imprisonment in the chamber of suffering, we go forth again, leaning, perhaps, on the arm of a congenial friend, to breathe once more the fresh air, and rejoice in the measureless freedom of nature, she seems to have clothed her green fields and forests, her blue skies and waters, in a brighter pomp of "summer bravery" than ever before, and the strange beauty fills and almost oppresses the soul. In what affecting terms does Dr. Kane describe the almost adoring rapture with which the return of the first sunshine was hailed, after the long horror of an Arctic night—the frozen blackness of months' duration, when he eagerly climbed the icy hills "to get the luxury of basking in its brightness," and made the grateful record, "To-day, blessed be the Great Author of light! I have once more looked upon the sun;" while his poor men, sick, mutilated, broken-hearted, and ready to die, crawled painfully from their dark berths to look upon his healing beams; when "everything seemed superlative lustre and unsurpassable glory," when they could not refrain; they "oversaw the light." But what was this, what were all these, to the wonder and joy of Bartimeus' first vision of the mighty works of God? They already had the sense of sight, and had enjoyed many pleasurable exercises of it. To him the very sense is new, unimagined before. And now, at the word of Christ, the glorious element comes streaming, suddenly and for the first time, and in its fulness, with thrills of inconceivable bliss, upon the sense and soul buried from birth in utter darkness. And what did he see first? Jesus, his best friend, his Saviour! Jesus, chiefest of ten thousand and altogether lovely; O enviable lot! The first image which the light of heaven formed in his soul was the image of that dear face; O rich recompense for the long pains of blindness! The first employment of his eyes was in beholding Him that opened them; O blessed consecration of his new powers and pleasures! Gaze on, old man! Thou canst not look too ardently or too long. But is the joy which attends spiritual illumination answerable to this? Not always (we have seen) as the immediate result. But it is attainable, and very soon the believer ought to have it, and, unless through ignorance, error, or guilt, will have it, and

that abundantly. Moreover, the Bible is the sole Revealer of a conception of joy, in comparison with which every other idea of it, wherever found, is poor, earthly, and already darkened with the taint of death. It is a conception in which every best element of every earthly delight, by whatever name known—all the serenity of peace, all the exhilaration of hope, all the satisfaction of fruition, all the liveliness and sparkle of joy, all the mellower radiance of gladness, all the flush and bound of exultation, all the thrill and movement of rapture, are wrought into one surpassing combination, which, chastened by holiness, softened by charity, dignified by immortality and transfused by the beams of the all-encircling glory of the Godhead, is Blessedness. It elevates the soul to know of such a state as possible for itself; it purifies it to hope for it; strengthens it to strive after it. What, then, must it be to taste it, as we may on earth, and drink it to the full, as we shall for ever in heaven! *The Lord's answer*:—An echo from within the Veil! "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" cried the suppliant without. "Receive thy sight!" answers the Sovereign within. And so, if Christ suits His granting to our asking, it is because the Spirit has first shaped our asking to His granting. The purpose of grace is the foundation of the prayer of faith. Eternal grace is the mould into which faith is cast. Therefore there is harmony between faith and grace. "Grace crowns what grace begins." And so "faith saves" and grace saves; faith as the instrument, and grace as the Divine efficiency; faith the channel, and grace the heavenly stream; faith the finger that touches the garment's fringe, and grace the virtue that pours from the Saviour's heart. Faith cannot scale the dreadful precipice from which nature has fallen, but it can lay hold on the rope which grace has let down even into its hands from the top, and which it will draw up again with all the burden faith can bind to it. And this is all the mystery of faith's saving. Christ reaches down from heaven, and faith reaches up from earth, and each hand grasps the other; one in weakness, the other in power. Yea, the hand of faith is often but a poor, benumbed hand, stretched out in anguish from the dark flood where the soul is sinking. **Followed Jesus in the way.**—*Attachment to Christ*:—Whoever has looked unto Jesus as the Author of his faith, will look unto Him as the Finisher. If the eyes be opened truly to see Him, the heart will be opened truly to love Him; and when the heart is thus enlarged, like David, we will run in the way of His commandments. This is the test of discipleship: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." O friends, let *us* follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Let us follow Him "in the way"—the way laid down in His Word, the way opened by His Providence, the way of which the Spirit whispers, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Sometimes His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. The path of many of us may lie much in the Valley of Humiliation—a life of obscurity, poverty, and lowly toil. We may be Christ's hidden ones all our days. So thy way, believer, must lie by the cross and the grave. But beyond the grave is the resurrection, and then the crown of life for ever. *Christ revealed to the needy*:—The loss of sight is spiritually the most significant of all privations. The loss of Eden was perhaps truly a loss of sight—a great shadow, as of an eclipse, fell over all the beauty and splendour of the world, as the sinner's eye grew dim. Sin is privative. It works on us by limiting and finally destroying our powers. But this blind beggar had learned in, perhaps *through*, his blindness, more than Scribes and Pharisees knew. None of them have an eye for the Son of David, whom he saw in his blindness. Christ is revealed to those who need Him most. The man's importunity. He cast aside his garment and came to Jesus. It means impetuosity, and carelessness about external things. He came in the naked simplicity of his need. I. To see spiritually is to see Christ, the Light of the world, and to be penetrated with the sense of the beauty and fulness which are in Him. II. A soul fully enlightened sees that in Jesus is all its salvation and all its hope. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Christ's recognition of faith*:—I. THE APPLICATION. 1. He applies in the right quarter. 2. In the right spirit. 3. At the right time. II. THE RECEPTION. 1. Most gracious. 2. Most satisfactory. III. THE EFFECT OF THE CURE. He followed Jesus in the way up to Jerusalem. The love of Christ constrained him. Thus gifts from the hands of Jesus attach us to His Person. They form a link between us and Him. They are as a magnet to draw us. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Christ and the blind*:—I. Christ came to open the eyes of the blind, and to be the Light of the world. II. He did not disregard the meanest, and was ever ready to do good. III. Some wait long in darkness before obtaining the help desired. IV. Faith perseveres, receives encouragement, and attains its end. (*J. H. Godwin.*)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1-11.—**And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives.**—*The triumphal entry*:—I. THE OCCASION OF THIS HOMAGE. II. THE SCENE OF THIS HOMAGE. Scene of—1. His ministry. 2. His martyrdom. III. THE OFFERERS OF THIS HOMAGE. IV. BY WHAT ACTIONS THIS HOMAGE WAS EXPRESSED. V. THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THIS HOMAGE WAS UTTERED. (*J. R. Thomson.*) *Christ entering Jerusalem*:—The story presents to view CHRIST'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL MEN. II. This story also exhibits Christ's FOREKNOWLEDGE OF ALL ORDINARY EVENTS. He tells the disciples, as they set forth to do this errand, just what will happen. III. Then again, this story discloses Christ's POWER OVER ALL THE BRUTE CREATION (Luke xix. 35). No other instance of Jesus' riding upon an animal of any sort has been recorded in His history; and of all, this must have been a beast most difficult to employ in a confused pageant. IV. Once more: this story illustrates Christ's MAJESTY AS THE MESSIAH OF GOD. Two of the evangelists quote at this point the Old Testament prophecy concerning this triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech. ix. 8, 9). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ entering Jerusalem*:—What is the meaning of the day? What was the purpose of the demonstration? The suggestions that Jesus lost control of either Himself or of the people, so as to be carried away by their enthusiasm, are unworthy of His former history and of His subsequent teachings. I. THE DAY IS MEMORABLE FOR ITS SURPRISES AND REVERSALS OF JUDGMENT. Jesus only judged rightly; next to Him the children in the temple. The hopes and visions of the people and disciples were wide of the mark and doomed to disappointment. This day to them promised a throne, but hastened the cross and a tomb. The fears and hates of the Pharisees and rulers were surprised and reversed. Jesus made no attempt at temporal power and offered no resistance. II. THIS DAY EMPHASIZES SPIRITUALITY AS THE ONLY KEY TO A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF PERSONS AND PROVIDENCES. Christ was revealed as a king, but not of this world. After the gift of the Spirit the apostles clearly perceived the prediction of prophecy, the prediction of providence, in the songs of praise. III. WHAT THE DAY TEACHES OF THE CHILD-LIKE SPIRIT SHOULD NOT ESCAPE. IV. WE SHALL NOT BE TOO BOLD IN PRONOUNCING THIS DAY MEMORABLE AS A PROPHECY. The meaning of it was projected into the future. It is prophetic of the entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, when, indeed, souls shall give Him homage. That triumphal entry into the city of David was followed by crucifixion. This triumphal entry into the city of God shall be consummated in coronation. (*J. R. Danford.*) *"Who is this?"*—I. LET US INVESTIGATE THE DIFFERENT FEELINGS WHICH GAVE BIRTH TO THIS INQUIRY. 1. With many it was a feeling of thoughtless wonder. 2. Angry jealousy prompted the question in some. 3. There was yet another class of questioners, whose state of mind may properly be described as that of irresolute doubt. II. THE TRUE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION. 1. Go to the multitude by whom Jesus is surrounded, and ask, "Who is this?" 2. Go to the ancient prophets and ask, "Who is this?" (Zech. ix. 9). 3. Go to the apostles after they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. 4. Go to the experienced believer. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Honouring Christ*:—I. CONSIDER THE MEANING OF THE INCIDENT ITSELF, THE SPIRIT AND TRUTH WHICH IT EXPRESSES. It was, in fact, an expressive illustration of His claims as the Messiah. It was a spontaneous heart-offering. It indicates Christ's influence on His own age. The truth does get honoured at times, even in its own time. The prophet is not without his reward. A noble life will touch the hearts of the people. II. CONSIDER SOME OF THE LESSONS WHICH ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE CONDUCT OF THE MULTITUDE. The reputation of Christ was great. The multitude was lashed into enthusiasm. But then came disappointment. He assumed no royal dignity. "Crucify Him!" It was the fickle element that helps to constitute public opinion. We should, therefore, consider the grounds and motives from which we honour Christ. He demands more than our fickle, transient homage. He is not truly honoured by mere emotions. Men get glimpses of Christ's beauty and power. His sacrifice in its incidents moves to tears; but the real spirit and significance of it all are missed. Christ needs more than good resolutions under the influence of emotional excitement. We have to honour Him by our perfect self-surrender and trust; and by our actions amid the mire, and toil, and dust of daily traffic. Real honour must be faithful and persistent, like that of the loving women who, when Peter meanly shrank, stood at the last hour by His cross, and were, on the first dawn of Easter Day, at His sepulchre. There will necessarily be variations in religious

moods. But uplifting moments should leave us higher when they pass. Christ asks more than public honours. Professional respectabilities not enough. He wants individual honour and homage. The true heart's sacrifice more than the hosannas of the thoughtless hollow crowd. III. CONSIDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TRANSACTION IN ITS RELATIONS TO CHRIST HIMSELF. It reveals His true glory. He despised the earthly crown. Outward glory was not His object. He manifested the internal, spiritual, eternal. The kind of triumph here symbolized. That was one to be reached through sorrow, agony, death; a triumph of self-sacrificing love. It was not the coronation of sorrow, but victory through death. There is no real victory which does not partake of the qualities of the Lord's. Obedient, submissive, self-sacrificing love is in our appointed path to the upward heights of glory. You may share Christ's victory. Then honour Him in a kindred spirit of sympathy and self-renunciation. My Lord and my God! Let every heart honour Him! (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*)

Vers. 3—6. **Say ye that the Lord hath need of him.**—"*The Lord hath need of you*":—I. HE WANTS YOU FOR HIMSELF. Jesus loves you; you are to be the compensation to Him for all He suffered. Christ feels incomplete without you. II. HE WANTS YOU FOR HIS CHURCH. The Church is a building; you can never tell what stone the Great Master Builder may require next. It is a family—you complete the circle. III. HE WANTS YOU FOR HIS WORK. IV. HE WANTS YOU FOR HIS GLORY. When the Lord wants anything you will let Him have it. 1. Your money. If He takes it you will know that He had need of it. 2. Death. He has need of those dear to us. There is great comfort in the fact that when Christ sent to appropriate what was indeed His own, He sent also the constraining power of His own grace to overrule that it might consent to the surrender. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*). *On obeying Christ*:—The two disciples, without any questioning, proceeded upon their Master's mission. I. THE PRINCIPLE WE HAVE STATED APPLIES TO ALL NEW UNDERTAKINGS IN WHICH WE ENGAGE AS SERVANTS OF OUR SAVIOUR, ACTING UNDER HIS DIRECTION. It was a new thing He asked them to do when He sent them to bring to Him the colt. Our Lord often asks us to do unlikely and unexpected things. God told Moses to go to Egypt. God asked Jonah to do a new thing. If God asks us to take a new departure, His hand will guide us. II. THE PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED HERE APPLIES TO UNDERTAKINGS WHICH ARE DIFFICULT AND MYSTERIOUS, TO WHICH OUR LORD CALLS US. What right had they to the colt? There was a touch of mystery—why such a beast of burden? God often calls His people to difficult and mysterious duties. Try to do it and all is well ordered. III. THE PRINCIPLE HERE ILLUSTRATED APPLIES TO ALL UNDERTAKINGS IN WHICH CHRIST'S SERVANTS ENGAGE DIRECTLY FOR HIS SAKE. "The Lord hath need of him." (*A. Scott.*)

Vers. 8–10. **And they spread their garments in the way.**—*Religious excitement*:—How are we to deal with religious emotions when they are awakened in a more than ordinary degree? 1. We should make them subservient to the promotion of the rectitude of our nature and of our life. With the kindling of our religious emotions there comes strength for action, and our care should be to use that strength for *right* action. 2. It is not always safe to act under the impulse of strong feelings; therefore we need, at such seasons, to be more than ordinarily prayerful; and at such times conscience ought to be more than ever consulted. 3. If a man, under the influence of religious excitement, does not do what conscience and God's law clearly require of him, there is little reason to expect that he will do so when the excitement shall have passed away. There are certain lessons taught us by this subject. (1) That religious excitement has its sphere of usefulness in the development of religious life; (2) but it is a grievous mistake to regard emotional excitement as the very essence and substance of religion. (*F. Wagstaff.*)

Vers. 13–14. **And seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves.**—*Nothing but leaves*:—I. THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOUR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG-TREE. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit. 1. Those who follow the sign and know nothing of the substance. 2. Those who have opinion but not faith, creed but not credence. 3. Those who have talk without feeling. 4. Those who have regrets without repentance. 5. Those who have resolves without action. II. THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED. There are many characters who are destitute of both religion and

profession. III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE. To begin with the explanation of this special case. 1. In a fig-tree fruit comes before leaves. 2. Where we see the leaves we have a right to expect the fruit. 3. Our Lord hungers for fruit. 4. There are some who make unusual profession and yet disappoint the Saviour in His just expectations. IV. SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED. Deception is abhorred of God. It is deceptive to man. It committed sacrilege upon Christ. It condemned itself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus a Judge:*—As if to show that Jesus the Saviour is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of justice must dart forth. Where shall mercy direct its fall? The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect; its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig-tree by the way-side. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness, and perhaps was no one's property; little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig-trees has been left for the benefit of all ages. (*Ibid.*) *Doctrine without practice:*—I am sick of those cries of "the truth," "the truth," "the truth," from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Armenians. No pale of any Church can insure salvation, no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. "Ye must be born again." "Ye must bring forth fruits meet for repentance." (*Ibid.*) *Leaves without fruit:*—When Christ came it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was after the coming of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome, all these showed no signs of progress; but there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. You know the curse that fell on Israel. (*Ibid.*) *Profession without possession:*—Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, "They are candles with big wicks but no tallow, and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell," "and they have summer sweating on their brow, and winter freezing in their hearts." You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. (*Ibid.*) *Nothing but leaves:*—Most readers of the Pilgrim's Progress will remember that the Interpreter took Christiana and her family into his "significant rooms," and showed them the wonders he had formerly exhibited to Christian; and then the story runs on thus: "When he had done, he takes them out into his garden again and had them to a tree whose inside was all rotten and gone, and yet it grew and had leaves. Then said Mercy, "What means this?" "This tree," said he, "whose outside is fair, and whose inside is all rotten, is that to which many may be compared that are in the garden of God; who with their mouths speak high in behalf of God, but indeed will do nothing for Him; whose leaves are fair, but their heart good for nothing but to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box." This was John Bunyan's way of putting into an allegory what he had preached in his famous sermon on the "Barren Fig-tree." It shows the force with which the narrative now coming under our study fastens itself in the popular imagination. I. Let us begin with the observation THAT GOD CHERISHES A REASONABLE EXPECTATION OF FRUITFULNESS FROM ALL HIS CREATURES. Christ once told His disciples that He had chosen them and ordained them that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain (John xv. 16). 1. This story teaches that what the Almighty expects is only what is befitting and appropriate to the nature of the being He has made and endowed with a soul. 2. Then, next to this, the story suggests that what God expects is that every individual shall bring forth his own fruit. It is not vineyards that bear clusters, but vines. It is not orchards that produce figs, but trees. The all-wise One does not anticipate that one man or one woman, or that a few women and a few men, shall do the whole work in each community or in each parish. For there is nothing clearer in the Scripture than the declaration that every Christian is held accountable personally, and cannot be lost in a crowd. 3. The story also teaches that God expects a proportionate quantity of fruit from each person. And this would have to be reckoned according to circumstances. Suppose one fig-tree is standing a little better in the sunshine than another; suppose one receives somewhat more of refreshing moisture than another; suppose one has deeper soil for its roots than another; the rule will be,—the higher the favour, the richer must be the fruit. The principle of the gospel is all in a single formula: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Superior advantages extend the measure of our responsibility for usefulness. 4. Once more: the story teaches that the Master looks for fruit in the proper time for fruit. In the case of

this tree, "the time was not yet." Figs come before leaves on that kind of tree. So the appearance of leaves assumed the presence of fruit underneath them; but none was there. For some phenomenal reason this fig-tree was a hypocrite. Hence, Jesus caught it for a parable with which to teach His disciples, and warn them off from mere profession without performance. God does not in any case come precipitously demanding fruit, as soon as trees are planted; He seems to respect the laws of growth and ripening. He never hurries any creature of His hand. But He gives help to the end He proposes. He certainly puts realities before shows; figs previous to leaves. And He has no patience or complacency for those who are always making ready, and preparing, and getting started, and setting about things, without any accomplishments or successes. II. This leads to a second observation suggested by an analysis of the narrative: GOD IS SOMETIMES MOCKED BY THE PROFFER OF MERE PROFESSIONS INSTEAD OF FRUITFULNESS. He comes for figs, but He finds "leaves only" (Matt. xxi. 19). 1. It is possible to put all one's religious experience into mere show. That is to say, it is possible to feign, or to imitate, or to counterfeit, all the common tokens of a genuine Christian life, and yet possess no realities underneath the pretence. Men may be traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. All this is predicted of these latter times (2 Tim. iii. 1–7). Professors of religion may appear to love the Church of the Redeemer, and be nothing but sectarians. They may pray lengthily for a pretence, and devour widows' houses meanwhile. They may "repent" like King Saul, and "believe" like Simon Magus. They may speak "with the tongues of men and angels," and be no better in charity than a cymbal that tinkles. They may cry "Lord, Lord," and yet not do a single thing which the Lord has commanded. And with all this amount of loathsome hypocrisy in the world, the patient God forbears. 2. The sin of fruitlessness is always aggravated by the bold imposture of hypocritical cant. The Scriptures startle a timid student sometimes with their daring demand for clear issues, no matter where they will lead. Christ Himself is represented as saying, "I would thou wert cold or hot" (Rev. iii. 15–16). Elijah cries out, "If Baal be God, follow him" (1 Kings xviii. 21). It is the temporizing, compromising spirit of Naaman which destroys the historic picture of him (2 Kings v. 17–18). And the higher up into conspicuous assumption of sainthood one rises, when his heart is bad, the more offensive are his character and public professions in the sight of a truth-loving God.

"For sweetest things turn sourest by their deed;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

III. Thus we reach our third observation: GOD WILL IN THE END ASSERT HIMSELF, AND VISIT ON ALL FALSE PROFESSORS A FITTING RETRIBUTION (Mark xi. 21). At last the retribution is sure to come. The settled, calm, solemn decision is pronounced, from which there is no appeal. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The fruitless life*:—The verdict against the tree is, "nothing but leaves." 1. It is a remarkable description. It is the least offensive way of describing barrenness. Nothing but words, forms, profession. 2. It is an expression of disappointment. Leaves are promises. Christian profession is a promise to God and man. 3. It is a declaration of uselessness. There is (1) nothing to do credit to any one—to the garden, owner, soil, root; (2) nothing to be of use to any one. 4. It is a sentence of doom. "Nothing but leaves." 1. Then our creed is vain. 2. Our religion is vain. 3. Our Bible-reading is vain. 4. Our churchmanship is vain. 5. Our faith and hope are vain. 6. Our life is vain. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The barren fig-tree*:—The incident is full of instruction. I. AS TO OUR LORD'S BEING. It reminds us of the inseparable union between His humanity and His Divinity. 1. He was hungry, and came looking for something which did not exist; it bespeaks His liability to that which was common to man. 2. He cursed the tree by the fiat of an irresistible will, and nature was arrested, and the fountain of life dried up. It marks the possession of a power which is shared by no mortal creature, but is the sole prerogative of Almighty God. II. AS TO THE JEWISH NATION. Jesus had often taught by word. Here He arrests attention by a parable in action. It was the sequel of the parable of the barren fig-tree (St. Luke xiii. 6); a rehearsal, as it were, of the execution of the judgment then denounced upon the Jewish nation if they continued to bear no fruit. This tree had been refreshed by the dews of heaven; the sunshine had warmed it with genial rays; the sheltering

hill, perhaps, had warded off the chilling blasts, and all the seasonable influences of Providence had ministered to its growth, but only to bring forth an ostentatious show of unproductive leaves. And, as with that hapless tree, so with the nation. All the care and culture of the Great Vine-dresser had been bestowed in vain; there was nothing but a deceptive and pretentious display; they were for ever giving promise of fruit, but yielding none; there was no return for unremitting attention; they cumbered the soil, their end was to be burned, they were nigh to cursing. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The penalty of barren professions*:—Yesterday Christ wept over the fate of Israel, to-day He will warn them of it. And at once accordingly He utters His warning on barrenness. It takes the form of a parabolic action. Deeds speak louder than words, and, therefore, for the sake of a greater impression, Christ places before every one's eyes the penalty of barrenness, especially of barrenness concealed by hypocritical profession. He pronounces a curse on the tree, which at once, in all its greenness and glory, begins to wither away. 1. BARRENNESS IS A VERY COMMON AND GRIEVOUS SIN. It is very common, because we think there is no particular harm in it. If we avoid committing actual wrong, we think it no great matter if we neglect the discharge of duty. Accordingly, many who would be shocked at being "sinful" are quite unconcerned at being useless. There may, however, be the greatest guilt in uselessness. "Ye gave Me no meat," "ye gave Me no drink," "ye took Me not in," are words which accuse of nothing but neglect, yet are followed by the doom, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." Sins of commission slay their thousands, but sins of omission their tens of thousands. 2. THE SIN OF BARRENNESS IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED AND GREATLY AGGRAVATED BY GREAT PROFESSIONS. Performance and profession are apt to be in the inverse ratio of each other, for performance comes from a high standard, and a high standard never permits complacency or boasting; while a low standard permits poor performance, and sanctions complacency along with it. In human trees the combination is very frequent of pretentious foliage and poor fruitage. 3. ALL BARRENNESS LEADS TO DESTRUCTION. Nothing is permitted to exist except on condition that it employs its powers. Unused faculties decay; and unemployed opportunities are withdrawn. 4. THE PENALTY OF WILFUL BARRENNESS IS JUDICIAL BARRENNESS. The punishment of uselessness which is voluntary, is such withdrawal of grace as makes it fixed and absolute. Wrong is wrong's penalty. Going further astray is the penal result of going astray. (*R. Glover.*) *The fruitless fig-tree*:—I. ITS SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE. 1. Reasons for regarding it in a symbolic sense. (1) Neither its fruitlessness nor its leafiness was a thing of its own volition, therefore the tree was not blameworthy. (2) But as a symbol it was full of instruction. (*a*) As a correct representation of the heirarchical party in Jerusalem, adorned with the leaves of a pretentious piety, but utterly barren of the real fruit of a holy life, or reverence for God's Son. (*b*) As a correct representation of all pretension to piety. II. REASONS FOR REGARDING ITS DOOM SYMBOLIC. 1. There was neither conscience nor heart in the tree to be hurt by its withering. 2. Full of significance, however, as the type of the doom that awaits all those whom its fruitlessness represented. III. REASONS FOR REGARDING ITS SYMBOLIC DOOM JUST. 1. As a fig-tree in good situation and covered with leaves, fruit was reasonably expected. (1) So with the Jewish people, as taught in the parable of the wicked husbandmen. (2) The fruitlessness of those whom the tree represented was blameworthy, and their guilt enhanced by their pretension. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *He found nothing but leaves: a fruitless life*:—Christ's miracles were unspoken sermons. Here He sees a fig-tree growing by the wayside, and full of leaves; He draws near looking for fruit, but finds none—only leaves. It was not indeed the time for figs, but neither was it the time for leaves. The tree was making a false pretence. Jesus cursed the fruitless tree, and it withered away. It was a symbolic act. I. A LESSON FOR THE JEWS. They were full of the leaves of profession: proud of their religious ordinances, frequent fasts, long prayers, sacrifices; but they bore no fruit of holiness, meekness, gentleness, love. Nothing but leaves. II. A LESSON FOR ALL, WARNING US OF THE DOOM OF A FRUITLESS LIFE. Our blessings—what have we done to deserve them? We all remember what we have done for ourselves, how we have made our way in the world; but what have we done for God? Our religious professions—are they sincere, or are they kept for Sunday use only? Our talents—how are we employing them? Our time, intellect, bodily strength, wealth, influence? (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *The time of figs was not yet*:—Trees have their seasons at certain times of the year, when they bring forth fruit; but a Christian is for all seasons—like the tree of life, which bringeth forth fruit every month

Christ looked for fruit on the fig-tree when the time of fruit was not yet. Why? Did He not know the season for fruit? or, did He it "altogether for our sakes?" For our sakes, no doubt, He did it, to teach us that Christians must always be fruitful; the whole time of our life is the season for fruitfulness. (*Bp. Brownrig.*) *Warnings of Scripture:*—Cowper, speaking of his distressing convictions, says, "One moment I thought myself shut out from mercy by one chapter, and the next by another. The sword of the Spirit seemed to guard the tree of life from my touch, and to flame against me in every avenue by which I attempted to approach it. I particularly remember that the parable of the barren fig-tree was to me an inconceivable source of anguish; and I applied it to myself, with a strong persuasion in my mind, that when our Saviour pronounced a curse upon it, He had me in His eye, and pointed that curse directly at me."

Vers. 15–18. **And Jesus went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold.** — *The Temple cleansed: or, Christ the purifier of religion:*—When we are told that this took place "in the temple" we are not to suppose that the Holiest of all is meant, but the Court of the Gentiles. It was this portion of the sacred enclosure that was converted into a market. It was doubtless a convenient arrangement, and a profitable one; but it was a bold offence, and drew down the severe condemnation of Christ. Men may buy and sell in the temple, so to speak, without the presence of the articles and actual proceedings of commerce. How many of you are busy, in God's house, with the secularities of every-day life! Many do in spirit what these men did in fact. There is no need to call in the aid of miracle to account for the consequences of Christ's interference. Holy will is strong, especially when dealing with sinful consciences which are weak. Wrong felt the presence of Divine right, and departed. Strange to say, this action of Christ has been objected to. There are periods wnen logical arguments and gentle persuasions are out of place, and reason and righteousness assume their right of direct appeal, in word and act, to the inmost sense and conscience of men. Christ was thus severe only with corruption: He had nothing but tenderness for simply evil; He poured His hot displeasure only on the hardened wretches that covered their real sin with seeming sanctity. We see an under meaning in this incident: Christ standing in the temple of universal humanity, and by His word of power redeeming it from the desecrations of sinful corruption and abuse, rescuing it to the honour of its slighted Lord. I. THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS DESECRATED AND DEFILED. 1. Look at the heathen world; behold there the strength of the corruption. The religious sentiment strong amongst them is abused; at least it operates through fear, distrust, and hate, instead of love, hope, and faith; at worst it is the tool of craft and lust. Thus the highest endowments bring about the lowest degradation. 2. Thus has it been with every mode of revealed religion. Thus it was with Judaism. The life-giving spirit had perished; its very form had become corrupt. Does Christianity present an exception to this desecration? What is the religion of many of you but a buying and selling in the temple! Self-interest has its office in religion, but it is not an element of religion itself. Indeed, there is no juster distinction between true and false religion than this: In true religion, self-interest is made the means of what is spiritual; in false religion, what is spiritual is made the means of self-interest. When religion appears as a ladder set up between heaven and earth for all God's angels to descend and minister to man, but not for aspirations and holy communions to ascend from man to God; when Christianity is contemplated as a scheme of political economy, and the Lord of all is regarded chiefly as the most useful being in existence, we make our hearts the scenes of degrading traffic. II. THIS DESECRATION AND DEFILEMENT OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD SHOULD CREATE HOLY AND VEHEMENT INDIGNATION. What is there in the scene we have surveyed to call for holy wrath? 1. It involves the abuse of what is best and highest—"My house," &c. His Father's house was polluted. The highest view to take of sin is always that it dishonours God; the man who dishonours God also dishonours himself. When is God more dishonoured than when the many gifts by which He may be felt, known, served, frustrate His purposes and misrepresent His being? As when faculties, whose sphere is spirit, feed and flatter the flesh. 2. It involves the promotion of the worst and lowest things—"A den of thieves." They who rob God can scarcely be expected to be very scrupulous in their dealings with men. The best things when abused become the worse; there is no devil like a fallen angel. The reasons are not far to seek. The best things are the strongest. The best things when abused have a natural tendency to exceed in evil. Still further, good when

it is abused hardens the moral feeling. III. JESUS CHRIST APPEARS BEFORE US AS THE CLEANSER OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD. How does He effect it? 1. He comes into the temple of God as the living representative of Divine things. He appears as the Son of God in His "Father's house." 2. He makes an effective appeal to men on the true character and design of Divine things—"Is it not written, My house shall be called," &c. He draws attention to the nature and object of the sacred place. He forbids what is auxiliary to the condemned abuse. He "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple." The purification of humanity is slow, but sure. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Pickpockets in the synagogue*:—Our Paris correspondent telegraphs:—Complaints having been made to the police that the synagogue of the Rue de la Victoire had become a house of call for pickpockets, several detectives were set there on watch, who last Saturday caught a man in the act of stealing a purse from one of the congregation. Henceforth a couple of inspectors will be on duty during the service, and it is to be hoped will render personal property secure in the synagogue. The name of the man arrested is Jules Henrilien. He refuses to name his accomplices. (*Daily News.*) *The expulsion of the money changers from the temple*:—It would appear from a comparison of the different evangelists, that there were two occasions upon which Christ displayed His indignation at the traffic by which His Father's house was defiled. Those who yielded to the supernatural power with which our Lord acted, returned to their unlawful practices when that power was withdrawn. It was one thing to drive the wicked from the temple, but quite another to drive wickedness from their heart. This was a miracle upon mind. I. THE PLACE WHERE THE MARKET WAS HELD. It was not the temple properly so called; the Jews were scrupulous about their temple. Where, then, was the market? We will endeavour to explain this to you. In the time of our Saviour, the temple, properly so called, had three courts, each surrounding one another. These courts, with the building they encompassed, made up what was known under the general name of the temple. In the first of these courts stood the altar of burnt-offering, and to this came none but the priests and Levites. The second, surrounding that of the priests, was the great hall which, though the Jews assembled to worship, was also open to those proselytes who had been circumcised, and had thus taken upon themselves the whole ritual of Moses. But the outer court of the three was called the court of the Gentiles, and was appropriated to such proselytes as had renounced idolatry, but who, not having been circumcised, were still accounted unclean by the Jews. The two first of these courts were accounted holy, but no sanctity appears to have been attached to the third; it was considered a part of the temple, but had no share in that sacredness which belonged to all the rest. And in this outer court—the court of the Gentiles—it was, that the sheep, and oxen, and doves were sold, and the money changers had their tables. As the Jews did not regard this court as possessing any legal sanctity, they permitted to be used as a market the temple of those who came thither to worship. If you have followed me in this there is good reason for supposing that it was on purpose to show their contempt for the Gentiles, that the Jews allowed the traffic which Christ interrupted. When Christ entered the court of the Gentiles, and found in place of the solemnity which should have pervaded a scene dedicated to worship, all the noise and tumult of a market, He had before Him the most striking exhibition of that fatal resolve on the part of His countrymen, and which His apostles strove in vain to counteract—the resolve of considering themselves as God's peculiar people, to the exclusion of all besides; and the refusing to unite themselves with converts from heathenism in the formation of one visible Church. Was not this, then, an occasion upon which to exercise the prophetic office? Was there not here an opportunity of inculcating a truth which, however unpalatable to the Jews, required, of all others, to be set forth with clearness, and maintained with constancy—the truth, that though God for a time had seemed neglectful of the great body of men, and bestowed all His carefulness upon a solitary tribe; yet were the Gentiles watched over by Him in their long alienation, and about to be gathered within the borders of His Church. And this truth we suppose it to have been which Christ set Himself to teach by the significant act of driving from the court of the Gentiles the merchants with their merchandise. He declared, as emphatically as He could have done in words, that the place where the strangers worshipped was to be accounted as sacred as that in which the Israelites assembled, and that what would have been held as a profanation of the one, was to be held a profanation of the other. By thus vindicating the sanctity of the spot appropriated to the Gentiles, as worthy of as much veneration as that appropriated to the Jews, when

He expelled the merchants and money changers, He went far towards putting Jew and Gentile on the same level, and announcing the abolition of ceremonial distinctions. The Jews had allowed the desecration of the court of the Gentiles, because they regarded the Gentiles as immeasurably inferior to themselves, and defiled through the want of circumcision; and, therefore, unable to offer to God any acceptable worship. What, then, was meant by the resistance, on Christ's part, to this desecration of the court of the Gentiles, except that the Jews had fallen into the grossest of errors, in so supposing that the Gentile had been overlooked by God, or excluded from His mercies? The ground on which he stood to pray was as hallowed as that on which the sanctuary rose, and, therefore, he might himself be as much approved and accepted as any one of that family which seemed for centuries to engross the notice of heaven. And when this has been determined, it is scarcely possible but to feel that the prophecy may glance on to future occurrences. We need not point out to you how little progress has yet been made, notwithstanding the struggles and the advancings of Christianity, towards the announced consummation that God's "house shall be a house of prayer for all people." "All people" have not yet flocked to its courts; but, on the contrary, the great mass of the human population bow down in the temple of idols. True, indeed, that the doors of the sanctuary have been thrown open, and the men of every land been invited to enter; but the prophecies in question speak of more than a universal offer of admission; they speak of what shall yet take place—the general acceptance of the offer; the pressing of all nations into the Church of the Redeemer. Consider, then, whether the expulsion of the buyers and sellers, as figuring the first accomplishment of the prophecy, when the Gentiles were admitted into the visible Church, may not also be significative of what shall occur at the close of the dispensation when Christianity shall be diffused throughout the earth. We have succeeded to the place of the Jews; for Christians are now the peculiar people of God, and what the Gentiles were to the Jews, that are the heathen to us—a race divided from us by external privileges, and not admitted into the same covenant with the Almighty. And what is it that Christian nations have done and are doing for the heathen? In our intercourse with lands where idolatry and superstition still hold the ascendency, has it been our main endeavour to introduce the pure gospel of Christ? or have we striven, where there was no room for direct assault upon the fabric of error, to exhibit Christianity in its purity, and beauty, and majesty? Alas, might it not be said, we have planted our markets rather than our churches in the court of the Gentiles; that we have crowded that court with our merchandise, but taken little pains to gain room within its area for the solemnities of truth; that even when the voice of the preacher has been heard, it has been overborne by the din of commerce, or contradicted by the lives of those professing Christianity? Indeed, we much think that putting, as we are bound to do, the Christian into the place of the Jew, there is little or no difference between the present aspect of the court of the Gentiles, and that which it wore when Christ was on earth—the same, at least, in a great degree; for what portion do our efforts bear either to our ability or the urgency of the case? The same inattention to those not born to our privileges; the same persecution; the same neglect or disregard of the interests of religion; the same supercilious notion of superiority in the midst of the non-improvement of our many advantages; and if Christ were now to return to the earth, as we believe He shall at the close of the dispensation, what measure could Christendom expect at His hands but that awarded to the Jews? It is in exact accordance with those delineations of Scripture which relate to the second coming of Christ, that we should consider the expulsion of the traffickers from the temple figurative of what will be done with the great mass of nominal Christians. We could almost think that in this, and other respects, the transaction represented how Christ would proceed in cleansing the temple of the heart. He comes into the courts of this temple—the heart of any amongst ourselves whom He desires to consecrate to Himself; and He finds it occupied by worldly things—carnal passions, ambitious projects, the affections all fastening on the creature, to the exclusion of the Creator. And there must be an expulsion from the temple of whatsoever defiles it, that it may indeed become a sanctuary fit for the indwelling of the Lord of the whole earth. But the purifying process is gradual. Nothing unclean can be suffered to remain; but it is not all at once that what pollutes is removed. The first assault, as it were, is on the oxen, and the sheep, and the tables of the money changers, as the more prominent of the occasions and causes of profanation.

And with these He is vehement and forcible. Sensuality, covetousness, pride—these are for the scourge and the indignant expostulation; and no quarter can be allowed, no, not for an instant. But it is not only the oxen, and the sheep, and the tables of the money changers, which desecrate the temple of the heart. There are the doves—the gentler and kindlier affections of our nature; and these—even these—contaminate when God is not their first object, but their fervour and their freshness given to the creature. But it is in gentleness, rather than in harshness, that the Lord of the temple proceeds with us in effecting this part of the purification. It is not with the doves, as with the sheep, and the oxen, and the tables of the money-changers—the scourging and the overthrowing, but rather by the mild expostulation—"Take these things hence," that He attempts the removal of what He cannot suffer to remain. Harshness might injure or destroy the affections themselves, just as the driving out the doves would have caused their being lost; but by continually setting before us the goodness of God, whether as manifested in creation or redemption, by teaching us how much more precious becomes every object of love when we love it not so much for its own sake as for the sake of the Giver—this cleanses the heart, and gradually inclines us to the substituting for affections chained to the finite, affections centering on the infinite; and thus persuades us to take away the dove on whose plumage is the dust of the earth, but only that its place may be occupied by one such as the Psalmist describes—"whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The cleansing of the heart is not complete till God is supreme in its affections, It is not enough to mortify corrupt passions, and resist imperious lusts: this is but expelling the sheep and the oxen. We must give God the heart, delighting in Him as the "chief good;" ay, my brethren, we must act on the consciousness, and God grant that we all may!—we must act on the consciousness that the gentle dove may profane God's house, as well as the flocks whose pastures are of the earth; and that if the one—the sheep and the oxen—must be altogether ejected, the other—the dove—must be trained to the soaring upwards, and bathing in the free light of heaven. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Profanation of holy places:*—Who will venture to deny the exceeding enormity of that offence which a prince deems it right to punish with his own hand? God drove our guilty first parents from the garden; but it was done by the intervention of an angel. He chased the Canaanites from their land; but He did it by an army of hornets. By the hand of an angel He struck down the army of the Assyrians, and brought low the pride of Herod when he assumed Divine honour to himself. Only in the case of those who profane sacred places do I see Christ—Him, that is, who on all other occasions was so mild and gentle—coming forth and taking the rod in His own hand. What a monstrous, what an intolerable crime must this be—the profanation of holy places! (*Segneri.*) *Desecration of the temple:*—The circumstances which led to the profanation were these. The Jews who came up to the Feasts from a distance would obviously find it more convenient to purchase their sacrificial victims on the spot, and cattle-markets were held in the city; but in lapse of time, when the authorities of the temple began to grow mercenary, they determined to have such a large source of profit in their own hands. The Court of the Gentiles was always held in little respect by the Jews, and it seemed to them quite justifiable to utilize it for their purpose. For about twenty days before the Feast the corridors and arcades and outer walls of the sacred enclosure were commonly occupied by cattle-pens; and the solemn stillness of the precincts was broken by the unseemly confusion of the lowing of herds, and the wrangling of drovers and pilgrims bargaining for their price. Besides these there were the money-changers. After the captivity the Jews of the dispersion, when they came up to the Feasts, in common with those who dwelt in Palestine, made each their offering for the temple service. There was only one coin in which this offering might be paid into the treasury—the half-shekel piece. It was intended as a safeguard to prevent the Korban being desecrated by the introduction of pieces of money upon which heathen emblems were stamped. Those pilgrims, therefore, who came from countries where non-Jewish money was current, as Babylon, Alexandria, Greece, or Rome, were compelled to procure the half-shekel by exchange. It was not only a fruitful source of gain to the bankers, who demanded an exorbitant discount; their extortion kindled the indignation of our Lord, and His ears were pained by the clinking of money and weights and balances, and the strife of words and angry recriminations, mingling with the prayers and praises of the sanctuary. But this was not all. Even the offerings of poor women, and others, whose very poverty might have exempted them from fraudulent imposition, were included in the market. The

whole scene was such as would raise the righteous anger of any one who was jealous for the honour of God's house. It was almost a worse profanation than that which made our cathedrals and churches scenes of riot and desecration in the times of Edward VI., when St. Paul's was turned into a stock exchange for merchants, and its aisles were used as common thoroughfares for both man and beast. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Cleansing of the Temple*:—I. GOD HAS MANY TEMPLES; (1) Temple of Israel; (2) Temple of nature; (3) Christian church; (4) Saved souls. II. WE ARE TOO READY TO DEFILE THEM. We mix self-interest with religion, or trade with religion, for our own profit. 1. Preaching in order to get money. 2. Sale of livings. 3. Going to certain churches because it may be good for business. III. However the Saviour may seem to ignore such pollution, a time will come when HE WILL RESENT AND PURGE IT AWAY. (*R. Glover.*) *Thieves in the Temple*:—Religion must not be exploited for money. The church is not a shop. The kind of spiritual outrage attacked by Christ is one that repeats itself. There was nothing wrong in selling outside the temple, or any other church, things which were necessary for the temple service. We sell hymn-books in our vestries; abroad they sell candles and breviaries and crosses at the doors of the cathedrals. It is a question of degree and intention. But I have seen, at the time of a church celebration abroad, the whole street blocked with booths. Noisy sellers of sweetmeats, toys, and provisions, pushing their bargains, and touting even in the church porch, and on the threshold of the sanctuary. There was the den of thieves. Your miracle-mongers, who set up their winking statues and healing-saints' bones with the one view of fleecing the people—are thieves. Your idle clergy, especially certain Roman cathedral clergy, who fatten on the sins of the faithful, never preach, seldom hear confessions, never visit the sick; simply do nothing but mumble mass on saints' days—they are thieves. Your English clergy, who are hale and hearty non-residents on £500 a year, and put in a man at £80 to look after their parishes—are thieves. Wherever or whenever God's church and service is made the pretext first and foremost for getting money, then and there the spiritual outrage chastised by Christ with whip and expulsion is committed afresh: the house of prayer has been made a den of thieves; and at such an hour as they wot not of, the Lord will suddenly come to His temple and purify it. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Right looking upon wrong*:—As it is said that ferocious animals are disarmed by the eye of man if he but steadily look at them, so it is when right looks upon wrong. Resist the devil and he will flee from you; offer him a bold front and he runs away. (*Dr. Bushnell.*)

Ver. 22. **Have faith in God.**—*Have faith in God*:—I. WHAT FAITH IS. 1. Taking God at His word, about things unknown (Heb. xi. 7), unlikely (Heb. xi. 17–19), untried (Heb. xi. 28). 2. Trusting Jesus at His invitation. Trust your soul to His care; your sins to His cleansing; your life to His keeping. II. WHENCE FAITH COMES. 1. From God's grace (Eph. ii. 8; Rom. xii. 3). 2. From God's Word (Rom. x. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 15). 3. From God's working (1 John v. 1; Col. ii. 12). 4. Out of the heart (Rom. x. 10). III. HOW FAITH WORKS. 1. It overcomes the world (1 John v. 4). 2. It purifies the heart (Acts xv. 8, 9). 3. It works by love (Gal. v. 6). (*J. Richardson, M.A.*) *Have faith in God—God will not desert those who trust in Him*:—Many years ago, when in my country charge, I returned one afternoon from a funeral, fatigued with the day's work. After a long ride, I had accompanied the mourners to the churchyard. As I neared my stable-door, I felt a strange prompting to visit a poor widow who, with her invalid daughter, lived in a lonely cottage in an outlying part of the parish. My natural reluctance to make another visit was overcome by a feeling which I could not resist, and I turned my horse's head towards the cottage. I was thinking only of the widow's spiritual needs; but, when I reached her little house, I was struck with its look of unwonted bareness and poverty. After putting a little money into her hand, I began to inquire into their circumstances, and found that their supplies had been utterly exhausted since the night before. I asked them what they had done. "I just spread it out before the Lord!" "Did you tell your case to any friend?" "Oh no, sir; nobody knows but Himself and me. I knew He wouldn't forget, though I didn't know how He would help me, till I saw you coming riding over the hill, and then I said, "There's the Lord's answer." Many a time has the recollection of this incident encouraged me to trust in the loving care of my heavenly Father. (*G. Macdonald, D.D.*) One winter morning, a poor little orphan boy of six or eight years begged a lady to allow him to clean away the snow from her door. "Do

you get much to do, my little boy?" said the lady. "Sometimes I do," he replied, "but often I get very little." "And are you never afraid that you will not get enough to live on?" The child looked perplexed a moment, and then answered, "Don't you think God will take care of a boy if he puts his trust in Him, and does the best he can?" *Have faith in God*:—Gotthold saw several sailors step into a boat to cross a river. Two took the oars, and, as usual, turned their backs upon the shore to which they intended to sail. A third stood and kept his face unaverted on the place where they wished to land, and which they very speedily reached. "See here," he said, to those about him, "what may well remind us of our condition. Life is a mighty river, rapidly flowing into the ocean of eternity, and returning no more. On this river we are all afloat in the bark of our vocation, which we must urge forward with the oars of industry and toil. Like these sailors, therefore, we ought to turn our back upon the future, put our confidence in God, who stands at the helm, and by His mighty power steers the vessel to where happiness and salvation await us, and diligently labour, unconcerned about anything else. We would smile, were these men to turn round and pretend that they could not row blindfold, but must needs see the place to which their course was directed; and it is no less foolish in us to insist on apprehending, with our anxieties and thoughts, all things, whether future or at hand. Let it be our part to ply the oar and toil and pray; but let us leave it to God to steer and bless and govern. O my God, be with me in my little bark, and bless it according to Thy good pleasure! I will turn my face to Thee, and, as Thou shalt enable me, I will diligently and faithfully labour; for all else Thou wilt provide." *The orphan's prayer*:—A little child, whose father and mother had died, was taken into another family. The first night she asked if she might pray, as she used to do. They said, "Oh, yes." So she knelt down, and prayed as her mother had taught her; and when that was ended, she added a little prayer of her own: "O God, make these people as kind to me as father and mother were." Then she paused, and looked up, as if expecting an answer, and then added, "Of course you will." How sweetly simple was that little one's faith; she expected God to "do"; and, of course, she got her request. *Have faith in God—Never give up in despair*:—An industrious tradesman had fallen on bad times; his business would not prosper, and he lost heart. His wife, however, kept cheerful; she went on praying, and tried to hearten up her husband. But it was no use; he kept on saying there was no hope for him, and he might as well go out of life, for there was nothing good to be looked for. One morning the cheery wife came down with a face as sad as her husband's. "What's the matter?" said he. "Oh," she replied, with a shudder, "I've had such a dreadful dream. I dreamt God was dead, and all the angels were going to His funeral!" "What nonsense!" said her husband. "How can you be so silly? Don't you know God can't die?" She thought a moment, and then brightened up. "That's true," she answered. "But, oh, husband! if He can't die, He can't change, either. He has taken care of us all our lives: why should we begin to think He has forgotten us now? It'll only be a passing cloud, may be, that's hiding the sun, just to try us. Let us trust Him through it all." "You're right, wife," said the man. "Seems to me I've believed in God without trusting Him. Let us ask Him to forgive me this sin of mistrust. May be my ill-luck has been a punishment for that same, sent to open my eyes." However that may have been, the tide did turn, and neither man nor wife ever mistrusted God again. *Have faith in God—Wonder-working faith*:—It is not only to faith, as a general spiritual force of boundless potency and value, that our Lord here directs our thoughts; but also, and more particularly, to the faith which sees what things are useless and ready to die, and puts them out of the way; the faith which confronts obstacles as big as solid mountains, and yet is sure that it can remove or surmount them; the faith which faints at no difficulty, no apparent impossibility even, but attacks even the greatest of them with courage and good hope. This is the faith to which Christ here invites us—the faith which He Himself exercised, not only when He banned the fig-tree, but also when He set Himself to save and raise the world against its will, and had therefore to face a world in arms. It is the faith which believes truth to be stronger than error, righteousness than unrighteousness, good than evil, even though all the world should have espoused the losing cause. It is the faith which believes not only that spiritual energies are stronger than material forces, but also that the good spiritual forces of the universe are stronger than its evil forces, and are sure to overcome them in the end. Nothing seems more doubtful to us at times than the victory of faith over the world; yet nothing is more certain. The whole history of the world is one

long continuous testimony to the fact, that it is by faith in great principles that men are really swayed. What is the history of every great movement by which the world, or any portion of it, has been raised, purified, reformed, and renewed, but just this: Faith in some great truth or principle—faith in justice, faith in freedom, faith in wise laws and deep convictions—has grown to enthusiasm in a few hearts; and in the power of this faith they have spoken and toiled, facing and gradually beating down all opposition, detecting signs of decay in the most venerable and solidly established institutions, customs, statutes, and dooming them to perish; encountering whole mountains of obstacle and difficulty, yet taking them up and at last casting them into the sea. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Faith in God*:—1. There is Christ's command itself. 2. God's own character demands this faith. 3. God's gifts claim and warrant faith. 4. The way in which we specially honour Him is by having faith in Him. 5. Unbelief profits nothing. 6. Faith has done wonders in time past, and it can do wonders still. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Ver. 23. **That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed.**—*This mountain*:—"This mountain," which Christ promised His disciples power to remove, and which in after years they did most effectually remove, was the holy mount on which the Hebrew temple once stood, but which is now crowned with churches and a mosque. He saw that even the Jewish religion was waxing old and ready to vanish away. And yet how impossible it seemed that they, a few simple and unlettered men, with no force but their faith in Him, should achieve this mighty task. The whole world, heathen and Hebrew, was against them: the unbroken power of Rome, the unsurpassed wisdom of the Greeks, the ancient philosophies and hereditary customs of the unchanging East, the fierce barbarism of the North, the jealous and tenacious bigotry of the Jews; the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, the pride and splendour of life; all to which men leaned with all the weight of habit, tradition, and inclination. And yet, in a few years, all these mighty forces went down before the power of faith; and, where they still survive, their doom is written on them in characters which it takes no prophet to read. All this the disciples had to believe before, as yet, any jot of it had come to pass. Their faith in God, and in the redeeming purpose of His love, was to be their sole warrant and evidence that the temple, with all which it symbolized, was to pass away; that "this mountain," with all its pile of sacred fabrics, all its weight of sacred memories, was to be cast into the sea; and that the world, banded in an apparently impregnable unity against them, was nevertheless to be overcome. And in this faith they both destroyed the temple and conquered the world. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *This mountain—Difficulties in the Christian's path*:—Our Lord here presupposes that believers will be called by God to the undertaking and doing of great and difficult works, such as are above and beyond the power of nature, and as hard and difficult to flesh and blood as the removing of a mountain. Such great and difficult works may a Christian be called by God to perform: yea, every Christian is actually called by God to the performance of such hard and difficult works, so soon as he is called to believe and to be a Christian—*e.g.*, a Christian is called to deny himself, and to take up his cross and follow Christ: which are most difficult works, impossible to nature and contrary to it. A Christian is also called to the practice of repentance, *i.e.*. to die unto sin, to mortify his sinful lusts, &c., a most hard, difficult, and painful work. Again, we are called to obey God in all things which He requires: in all parts of His will, though never so hard and contrary to our nature. We are called to despise the world, and to use it as if we used it not; yea, to be crucified and dead to it; and to forsake all we have for Christ and the gospel. All these are most hard and difficult duties, which every Christian and true believer is called to undertake and perform; and he must indeed perform them, in some measure at least; otherwise, he cannot be a good Christian. If we wish to be good Christians indeed, we must not promise ourselves a life of ease; we must think seriously and often what we are called to; and we must daily pray and labour for supernatural strength and grace. Not of ourselves can we accomplish this arduous task; but God, who calls us to it, will enable us to perform it, if we seek from Him that which we have not in ourselves. (*G. Petter.*) *Mountain removed*:—When William Carey went to India, many a wise man would have said to him, "You may just as well walk up to the Himalaya mountains, and order them to be removed and cast into the sea." I would have said, "That is perfectly true; this Hinduism is as vast and as solid as those mountains; but we have faith—not much, yet we have faith as a grain of mustard seed"; and William Carey

said, "I will go up to the mountain." Lonely and weak he walked up towards the mountain, which in the eye of man seemed verily one of the summits of human things, far above all power to touch or shake it; and with his own feeble voice he began saying, "Be thou removed! be thou removed!" And the world looked on and laughed. A celebrated clergyman, looking down from his high place in the *Edinburgh Review*, was much amused with the spectacle of that poor man down in Bengal, thinking in his simple heart that he was going to disturb Hinduism; and from his high place he cast down a scalding word, which he meant to fall just as of old boiling lead used to fall upon a poor man from the height of a tower. He called him a "consecrated cobbler." All the wise world laughed, and said he was treated as he ought to be treated. However, he went on saying to the mountain, "Be thou removed! be thou removed!" And one joined him, and another joined him; the voice grew stronger; it was repeated in more languages than one: "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the depths of the sea!" and now there is a large company who are uttering that one word, "Be thou removed!" I ask the living representatives of the very men who first smiled at this folly, "What say ye now?" "Well," they answer, "you have not got into the sea yet." That is true; but do you say that the mountain during the last forty years has not moved? No man can say that it is in the same position as it was when William Carey first went up to it. It is moving fast; and I call upon you to swell that voice, the voice of God's Church, which seems to say, "Be thou removed, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the depths of the sea!" Cast into those depths it will be; and a day will come when the nations of a regenerated East will write in letters of gold upon the first pages of their Christian history the name of the "consecrated cobbler." (*William Arthur.*)

Ver. 24. **What things soever ye desire when ye pray.**—*Combined action of prayer and faith:*—The apostles, when the Lord was taken away from them, would have to commend His doctrine to the world by miracles. To this end it was needful that their faith in God, as the Bestower of all power to do such things, should be raised. For the real doer of every miracle or sign was God, and God only. When the apostles healed suddenly any sick person, or cast out any evil spirit, it was by the combined exercise of prayer and faith. They secretly or openly called upon God, and they implicitly believed that He would accompany their word with His power. Now, being men totally ignorant of science, and so unable to form a conception of the kind or amount of power put forth in the performance of any miracle, they would naturally look upon it as a matter of size, or weight, or extension. They would, as a matter of course, look upon the removal of the Mount of Olives as a far greater thing, demanding far greater power, than the sudden drying-up of the life-juices of a single fig-tree; but it may not really be greater by any means. On the contrary, the sudden touching and arresting the springs of life in the living thing may require far more knowledge of the greatest secret of all—the secret of life, and far more real power in applying that knowledge, than the removal of the most stupendous mass of dead matter. Now the apostles, though they could not understand this, must yet act as if it were so. They must not judge by the sight of their eyes of the difficulty or easiness of anything which they felt moved by the Spirit to perform. They must think of nothing but the almighty power of God, and His pledge to accompany their prayers or words with that power. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *The miracle of faith:*—True prayer is sure power. I. LOOK AT THE TEXT TO SEE THE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES NECESSARY TO ANY GREAT SUCCESS IN PRAYER. There must be—1. Definite things prayed for. No rambling, or drawing the bow at a venture. Use no mock-modesty with God. Be simple and direct in your pleadings. Speak plainly, and make a straight aim at the object of your supplications. 2. Earnest desire. Plead as for your life. There was a beautiful illustration of true prayer addressed to man in the conduct of two noble ladies, whose husbands were condemned to die and were about to be executed, when they came before George I. and supplicated for their pardon. The king rudely and cruelly repulsed them. But they pleaded again and again; and could not be got to rise from their knees; and they had actually to be dragged out of court, for they refused to leave till their petition was granted. That is the way we must pray to God. We must have such a desire for the thing we want that we will not rise until we have it,—but in submission to His Divine will, nevertheless. 3. Faith. No questioning whether God can or will grant the prayer. The prayers of God's people are but God's promises breathed out of living hearts; and those promises

are the decrees only put into another form and fashion. When you can plead His promise, then your will is His will. 4. A realizing expectation. We should be able to count over the mercies before we have got them, believing that they are on the road. II. LOOK ABOUT YOU, AND JUDGE BY THE TENOR OF THE TEXT. 1. Public meetings for prayer. How often, at these meetings, does this advice of an old preacher need to be remembered: "The Lord will not hear thee because of the arithmetic of thy prayers; He does not count their numbers: nor because of their rhetoric; He does not care for the eloquent language in which they are couched: nor for their geometry; He does not compute them by their length or their breadth: nor yet will He regard thee because of the music of thy prayers; He cares not for sweet voices and harmonious periods. Neither will He look at thee because of the logic of thy prayers—because they are well arranged and excellently comparted. But He will hear thee, and He will measure the amount of the blessing He will give thee, according to the divinity of thy prayers. If thou canst plead the person of Christ, and if the Holy Ghost inspire thee with zeal and earnestness, the blessings thou askest will surely come to thee." 2. Your private intercessions. There is no place that some of us need to be so ashamed to look at as our closet door. Shame on our hurried devotions, our lip services, our distrust. See to it that an amendment be made, and God make you more mighty and more successful in your prayers than heretofore. III. LOOK ABOVE, AND YOU WILL SEE ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU—1. Weep. God has given us a mighty weapon, and we have let it rust. If the universe were as still as we are where should we be? God gives light to the sun, and he shines with it. To the winds He gives force, and they blow. To the air He gives life, and it moves, and men breathe thereof. But to His people He has given a gift that is better far than force, or life, or light, and yet they neglect and despise it! Constantine, when he saw that on the coins of the other emperors their images were in an erect position, triumphing, ordered that his image should be struck kneeling, for, said he, "This is the way in which I have triumphed." The reason why we have been so often defeated, and why our banners trail in the dust, is because we have not prayed. 2. Rejoice. For, though you have sinned against God, He loves you still. You may not as yet have gone to the fountain, but it still flows as freely as ever. 3. Amend your prayers from this time forth. Look on prayer no longer as a romantic fiction or an arduous duty, but as a true power and a real pleasure. When philosophers discover some latent power they delight to put it in action. Test the bounty of the Eternal. Take to Him all your petitions and wants, and see if He does not honour you. Try whether, if you believe Him, He will not fulfil His promise, and richly bless you with the anointing oil of His Spirit, by which you will be strong in prayer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lessons on prayer*:—I. God hears prayers of any magnitude; much wrong might have been prevented or cured, much good done, if only we had prayed. II. Success for prayer depends on goodness; without the soul-health of trust and love we cannot pray. III. Let our unanswered prayers be a mirror in which we see our faults. (*R. Glover.*) If our doubts do not prevail so far as to make us leave off praying, our prayers will prevail so far as to make us leave off doubting. (*H. Hickman.*) *Prayer a key*:—Prayer is a key which, being turned by the hand of faith, unlocks God's treasures. (*Anon.*) *The sum and substance of every prayer should be the will of God*:—The exercise of prayer can only be a blessing to our souls when our own will is entirely merged in the will of our heavenly Father. If we only knew the truth, we should find that prayer is more connected with the discipline of the will than we generally imagine. Our will is not naturally in harmony with God's. The carrying out of our own will, when bent on some desired object, is what invariably characterises us. It becomes habitual to us. We carry it, more or less, as a habit into the presence of God. It must not be, however. Wilfulness is not a characteristic of one of God's children. He is but a child, and he must know it. The Father's will is best; the child must know no will but His. It must be crossed, however painful it may be. To subdue that will, to blend it with His, and to make us perfectly happy under the conviction that our own is not to be carried out, is the only true explanation of many an unanswered prayer, many a bitter cup still unremoved, and many a thorn still left rankling in the flesh. But when the heart has been brought into that state when it can, with happy, confiding trust, look up and say, "Father, not my will, but Thine, be done!" then will relief come. The thorn, indeed, may not be extracted, the cup may not be removed, but there will appear the strengthening angel from heaven enabling us to bear it. (*F. Whitfield.*) *Scope and limit of prayer*:—In other places the promise is considerably qualified.

We shall receive, not whatever we ask, but the Holy Spirit, *i.e.*, we are to spread out our case, our needs, our desires, before God, for that is the way to come into close relations with Him; He will do the rest. The answer shall be the gift we ask for, and our demand shall be the needful link in the chain of causes which brings us and our heart's desire together; in other words, the answer shall be the "Holy Spirit," who shall mould our wills into accord and illuminated acquiescence with His good will. In any case, prayer is seen to be the ways and means of bringing us into communication with One who is above all, and over all, and through all. Direct demands are the most obvious, simple, childlike forms of prayer; but the spiritual value of prayer is, after all, not this—to get exactly what we want, when we want it, like the magic ring in the fairy tale; but this—to bring the human into close relation with the Divine. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The foundation of faithful prayer:*—I remember asking an old friend of mine, who is now between seventy and eighty years of age, and who, I think, as far as I have been permitted to know Christian men, is mightier with God than almost any man I have met, "Do tell me the secret of your success in prayer." He said, "I will tell you what it is. I say to myself, Is that which I am asking for promised? Is it according to the mind of God? If it is, I plant my foot upon it as upon a firm rock, and I never allow myself to doubt that my Father will give me according to my petition." (*Bp. Bickersteth.*) *The links that unite earth and heaven:*—Give me these links—(1) sense of need; (2) desire to get; (3) belief that, though He withhold for a while, He loves to be asked; (4) belief that asking will obtain—give me these links, and the chain will reach from earth to heaven, bringing all heaven down to me, or bearing me up into heaven. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Faith and prayer:*—Faith is to prayer as the feather is to the arrow; faith feathers the arrow of prayer, and makes it fly swifter and pierce the throne of grace. Prayer that is faithless is fruitless. (*T. Watson.*) *Earnestness in prayer:*—The arrow that is shot from a loose cord drops powerless to the ground, but from the tightly-drawn bowstring it springs forward, soars upward, and reaches the object to which it is directed. So it is not the loose utterance of attempted prayer that is effectual, but the strong earnestness of the heart sending its pointed petition to heaven, that reaches the Divine ear and obtains the desired blessing. (*Bowden.*) *Perseverance in prayer:*—I saw the other day a man attempting to split a rock with a sledge-hammer. Down came the sledge upon the stone as if it would crush it, but it merely rebounded, leaving the rock as sound as before. Again the ponderous hammer was swung, and again it came down, but with the same result. Nothing was accomplished. The rock was still without a crack. I might have asked (as so many are disposed to ask concerning prayer) what good could result from such a waste of time and strength. But that man had faith. He believed in the power of that sledge. He believed that repeated blows had a tendency to split that rock. And so he kept at it. Blow after blow came down; all apparently in vain. But still he kept on without a thought of discouragement. He believed that a vigorously-swung sledge "has great power." And at last came one more blow and the work was done. That is the way in which we ought to use prayer. God has told us that "the earnest prayer of the righteous man has great power." We ought to believe it, just as that man believed that his sledge had power. And believing it, we ought to use prayer for the attainment of spiritual results with just such confidence of success as that man used his sledge. We may not secure our answer at once. That rock was not split at the first blow, or the second. But that man believed that if he continued his blows, he was more likely to succeed every blow he struck. So we are to believe that there is a spiritual power in prayer, just as there was a physical power in that sledge; and that, the more perseveringly and earnestly we use it, the more certain are we to accomplish something by it. *Ye shall have them: Divine answers to prayer:*—Is the direct Divine answer to prayer a reality? Call the witnesses and let them testify. Let the martyrs of the early church answer, from their exile, from the prisons where they were chained, from the amphitheatre whose sands were crimsoned with their blood, from the chariots of flame in which they swept up to glory. Let the Covenanters, kneeling on the heather, or hiding in the grey fastnesses of the crags; let the Pilgrims, with their faces wet with the cold, salt spray, and the gloom of the wilderness overshadowing them; let Christian heroes everywhere—missionaries passing through belts of pestilence, women in army hospitals, philanthropists in jails and lazar-houses—let all these testify whether prayer has anything more than a "reflex influence." Let thousands of death-beds answer. Let the myriad homes of sorrow, wrapped in darkness that may be felt,

answer. Let every man or woman who has ever really prayed, answer. From each and all comes one and the same testimony: "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, unto all that call upon Him in truth." (*Ed. S. Attwood.*) *Expecting answer to prayer:*—A few years ago there was a time of much dryness in a certain part of England. No rain had fallen for several weeks, and it seemed as if the crops would all perish for want of moisture. A few pious farmers who believed in the power of prayer asked their minister to make a special supplication on a particular Sunday for the needed blessing of rain. The day came, and was as bright and cloudless as those which had preceded it. Among the congregation the minister noticed a little Sunday-scholar, who carried a large old-fashioned umbrella. "Why, Mary," he exclaimed, "what could have induced you to bring an umbrella on such a lovely morning as this?" "I thought, sir," answered Mary, "that as we were going to pray for rain I should be sure to want the umbrella." The minister patted her cheek good-naturedly and the service began. Presently the wind rose, the clouds gathered, and at length the long-desired rain fell in torrents. Mary and the minister went home together under the umbrella, while the rest of the congregation reached their dwellings well drenched. Let us follow Mary's example, and always pray, not only hoping that God *may* hear, but believing that He *does* hear, and will send us what we ask if it is good for us. *The most mighty force:*—Thou hast power in prayer, and thou standest to-day amongst the most potent ministers in the universe that God has made. Thou hast power over angels, they will fly at thy will. Thou hast power over fire and water, and the elements of earth. Thou hast power to make thy voice heard beyond the stars; where the thunders die out in silence thy voice shall make the echoes of eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Power of prayer:*—Oh, God, thou hast given us a mighty weapon, and we have permitted it to rust. Would it not be a vile crime if a man had an eye given him which he would not open, or a hand that he would not lift up, or a foot that grew stiff because he would not use it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Pleading prayer:*—It was said of John Bradford that he had a peculiar art in prayer, and when asked for his secret he said: "When I know what I want I always stop on that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God, and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon it. (*Ibid.*) *The limit of prayer:*—I. PRAYER'S LIMIT. "All things soever ye desire, believe and ye shall have them." The boundary line of desire and of faith. 1. The boundary line of faith. Faith is vast, recognizes the covenant of the promises, and whatever comes outside the promises for which she can find anywhere a direct engagement of Almighty God to do. Faith is the turning of an infinite future, into a present real receiving; it can go confidently when it treads on Scripture ground. So the Bible becomes, in a measure, prayer; you must try to bring prayer up to the mind of God in it. 2. Desire has a gracious limit. A man well acquainted with God's Word lives under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and his mind is conformed to the mind of God, and his desires gradually blend with the wishes of the Almighty. II. PRAYER'S REACH. III. PRAYER'S WARRANT. The blood of Christ and the worth of this warrant. 1. It is personal. 2. It is present. 3. It is absolute. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 25, 26. **But if ye do not forgive.**—*Prayer and forgiveness:*—1 The first lesson here taught is that of a forgiving disposition. God's full and free forgiveness is to be the rule of ours with men. 2. There is a second and more general lesson. Our daily life in the world is made the test of our intercourse with God in prayer. Life does not consist of so many loose pieces, of which now the one, then the other, can be taken up. My drawing nigh to God is of one piece with my intercourse with men. Failure here will cause failure there. 3. We may gather these thoughts into a third lesson. In our life with men the one thing on which everything depends is love. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. The right relations to the living God above me, and the living men around me, are the conditions of effectual prayer. (*A. Murray.*) *Forgiving foes:*—I. WE SHOULD FORGIVE OUR ENEMIES AND ALL WHO HAVE INJURED US, BECAUSE OF THE DIVINE EXAMPLE. Let us learn to act like our Father in heaven, who forgives us without any merit on our part. II. WE SHOULD FORGIVE BECAUSE IT IS NEEDFUL FOR OUR OWN PEACE. Revenge cherished is like a thorn in the flesh. III. FORGIVENESS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SIGNS AND ESSENTIALS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. IV. WE SHOULD FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE IT IS THE CONDITION OF OUR OWN FORGIVENESS. (*Anon.*) *Forgive:*—He that cannot forgive others breaks down the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every one has need to be forgiven. As when the seaworm makes a hole in the shell

of the mussel, the hole is filled up with a pearl; so, when the heart is pierced by an injury, forgiveness is like a pearl, healing and filling up the wound. (*Anon.*) Generous and magnanimous minds are readiest to forgive; and it is a weakness and impotency of mind to be unable to forgive. (*Bacon.*) *Forgive and forget:*—Whilst wrongs are remembered, they are not remitted. He forgives not, that forgets not. When an inconsiderate fellow had struck Cato in the bath, and afterwards besought his pardon, he replied, "I remember not that thou didst strike me." Our Henry VI. is said to have been of that happy memory, that he never forgot anything but injuries. (*J. Trapp.*) *Forgive:*—A wealthy planter in Virginia, who had a great number of slaves, found one of them reading the Bible, and reproved him for neglect of his work, saying, there was time enough on Sundays for reading the Bible, and that on other days he ought to be in the tobacco-house. On the offence being repeated, he ordered the slave to be whipped. Going near the place of punishment soon after its infliction, curiosity led him to listen to a voice engaged in prayer; and he heard the poor black implore the Almighty to forgive the injustice of his master, to touch his heart with a sense of his sin, and to make him a good Christian. Struck with remorse, he made an immediate change in his life, which had been careless and dissipated, and appears now only to study how he can render his wealth and talents useful to others. *Forgiveness by those forgiven:*—A great boy in a school was so abusive to the younger ones, that the teacher took the vote of the school whether he should be expelled. All the small boys voted to expel him, except one, who was scarcely five years old. Yet he knew very well that the bad boy would probably continue to abuse him. "Why, then, did you vote for him to stay?" said the teacher. "Because if he is expelled, perhaps he will not learn any more about God, and so he will be more wicked still." "Do you forgive him then?" inquired the teacher. "Yes," said the little fellow; "papa and mamma, and you, all forgive me when I do wrong; God forgives me too, and I must do the same." *Why prayers sometimes fail:*—I. Let us, in the first place, ENTER UPON AN INTELLIGENT EXPOSITION OF THE VERSES JUST AS THEY STAND. It will be quite as necessary for us to be sure what they do not mean, as what they do mean; for the declaration has been somewhat abused. 1. It is easy to show what our Lord does not teach in His repeated counsels on this point. The new revision gives a very interesting turn to the form of expression by throwing the verb into the past tense: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." This intensifies the admonition, and enforces the condition that ensures success in our praying; for it demands that our pardon of injuries shall have taken place previous even to our coming to the mercy-seat for ourselves. It cannot be that the passage we are studying means that our forgiveness of others is in any sense the ground for our remission of sins from God. It cannot be that the passage means that our forgiveness of others is to furnish the measure of our own pardon from God. 2. What then does our Lord mean when He gives this warning? How is a forgiving spirit connected with our prayers? If our having pardoned those who have injured us be not a ground for our own pardon nor a measure of Divine grace, what is it? For one thing, it may be used as a token. It can be looked upon as a hopeful sign that our transgressions have been removed, and that we are now heirs of the kingdom. "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Such a token can be employed very easily. If used faithfully, it would set at rest many a doubt concerning religion in one's heart. For another thing, this passage may serve as an admonition. And it is likely that it will have in this its widest use. The petition of the great universal prayer cannot be pressed without its comment. In this demand for a forgiving spirit, there is nothing less than a permanent reminder that when we come asking for pardon, we must be prepared to exercise it likewise; if not, we are to turn on our track and seek preparation. II. This being the exposition of the verses, and the conclusion having been inevitably reached that we cannot even pray without the spirit of forgiveness, IT IS EVIDENT THAT WE MUST MOVE FORWARD TO A HIGHER PLANE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN THIS ONE PARTICULAR. So we inquire, in the second place, concerning the reach and the limit of the doctrine of forgiveness. 1. The reach of it is indicated in an incident of Simon Peter's life (Matt. xviii. 21, 22). 2. But now, with a sober sense of inquiry, and a sincere wish to be reasonable, some of us are ready to ask after the limit as well as the reach of this counsel. (Luke xvii. 3, 4.) Before this question can be plainly answered, we must be careful to see that forgiveness does not imply that we approve, condone, or underrate the injurious acts committed; we forgive the sinner, not the sin—the sin we are to forget. Nor does forgiveness imply that we are to stifle all honest indignation against the

wickedness of the injury. Nor is it settled that we are to take the injurious man into constant companionship if we forgive him; Jacob and Esau will do better apart. What, then, are we to do? We are, in our very heart of hearts, to cease for ever from the sore sense of a hurt; we are to shut our souls against all suggestions of requital or future revenge; we are to use all means for furthering the interests of those who have done us harm; we are to illustrate the greatness of God's pardoning love by the quickness of our own. All this before our wrongs have been atoned for; before our honest acts and decent deeds have been shown! It does seem a little difficult; but think over Augustine's searching question: "Do you who are a Christian desire to be revenged and vindicated, and the death of Jesus Christ has not yet been revenged, nor his innocence vindicated?" It is related of the chivalric leader, the great Sir Tristam, that his stepmother tried twice to poison him. He hurried to the king, who honoured him as he honoured none other, and craved a boon: "I beseech you of your mercy that you will forgive it her! God forgive it her, and I do! For God's love, I require you to grant me my boon!" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Forgiveness of injuries*:—A young Greenlander said to a missionary, "I do love Jesus—I would do anything for Him; how good of Him to die for me!" The missionary said to him, "Are you sure you would do anything for our dear Lord?" "Yes, I would do anything for Him. What can I do?" The missionary, showing him the Bible, said, "This Book says, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'" "Oh, but that man killed my father." "Our dear Lord Himself says, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments,' and this is one of them." "Oh," exclaimed the Greenlander, "I do love Jesus! but I—I must—" "Wait a little, calm yourself; think it well over, and then come and let me know." He went out, but presently came back, saying, "I cannot decide; one moment I will, the next I will not. Help me to decide." The missionary answered; "When you say, 'I will kill him,' it is the evil spirit trying to gain the victory; when you say, 'I will not,' it is the Spirit of God striving within you." And so speaking, he induced him at length to give up his murderous design. Accordingly the Greenlander sent a message to the murderer of his father, telling him to come and meet him as a friend. He came, with kindness on his lips, but treachery in his heart. For, after he had stayed with him a while, he asked the young man to come and visit him on this side of the river. To this he readily assented, but, on returning to his boat, found that a hole had been pierced in the boat, and cleverly concealed by his enemy, who hoped thereby to destroy him. He stopped the hole, and put off in his boat, which to the surprise and wrath and indignation of the other, who had climbed a high rock on purpose to see him drown, did not sink, but merrily breasted the waves. Then cried the young man to his enemy, "I freely forgive you, for our dear Lord has forgiven me."

Vers. 28-33. **By what authority doest Thou these things?**—*Christ's authority and the way to discern it*:—I. FROM THE SIDE OF THE QUESTIONERS AND THEIR QUESTION. "By what authority doest Thou these things," &c. Christ's power was a new power in the world at that time. It was different from the authority of the scribes, priests, elders, and sanhedrim. They had a right to put this question, but were chargeable with negligence in not having settled it long before. They were Israel's shepherds, and had a responsibility for the people over whom they were set. Year by year, and we may almost say day by day, there is some power or another growing up in society which in process of time will make itself felt, and which will gradually weaken and uproot all authority which is held in a wrong spirit, and which is exercised in a wrong way. And it has often made great way before its progress is observed. Christianity began by appealing to the hearts of men, to what men felt to be true. It began in Christ's life and teaching. It pandered to no prejudice. It rested not till it brought every man, with his faults, into the presence of God. To these facts the priests and scribes were blind. There are men who will do nothing but by tradition and rule; they set form above substance. They slumbered whilst new forces were rising all around them. So like Christ there are men who strive to do good, striking out a course for themselves, who look at what has to be done, if not in the old way, in one which will accomplish the object. These leave it to critics and cavillers to settle as best they can by what authority this work is done. II. LOOK AT THE PASSAGE FROM THE SIDE OF CHRIST. It was not His custom to be silent when men wished to learn. He received Nicodemus by night; reasoned with the Samaritan woman; Zaccheus. Christ says, "Neither will I tell you." These words are not mere resolution on His part to withhold information; but in their being unable to receive

what He might tell them. On another occasion the Jews came to Christ and said, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Christ's answer was, "I have told you before, and ye did not believe." In like manner the rulers had been virtually told before by what authority Christ had done these things. His words and works were His authority. This want of power to see the truth and to know it is the natural result of a spirit of unfaithfulness to former light and present convictions. Many people overlook this law of their spiritual being; they think that by neglect or carelessness they are at the most missing some advantage for a short season, and that when they please they can regain what has been lost. They forget that the loss is within, in the soul, character, and life, and that it is irreparable. When they wrong their inward convictions, they not merely defile their honour, but destroy the very powers of discerning right and wrong, truth and error. Each time that a man is unfaithful to the light within him he is laying a thicker film upon the spiritual eye. It is marvellous how men with an honest love of the truth are guided into it, and are led out of the labyrinth of darkness and perplexities which surround them. (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *Christ's works His authority*:—His works were His authority, His teaching was His authority. Just as the discovery of a principle in science is the authority for accepting it, as the discovery of a law of nature is the authority for following it, as the invention of a piece of mechanism is the authority for using it, as the healing power of a new medicine is the authority for applying it—so, one would think, there was no need to ask for the authority by which the sorrowful were comforted, or the ignorant taught, or the wicked reformed, or the worldly made spiritual. These works themselves showed whose authority they had. If you cannot see authority in an act of mercy or kindness, how can any words show it? If you cannot see the authority of a wise act, or of a true word, or of a good life, how can any assertions prove it? If a man is righteous, you do not ask him his authority for being just; or benevolent, you do not question his authority for kindness of heart: and if a man, by reading the hearts and consciences of men, succeeds in producing in them a purer and better life, in calming the passionate, in changing the idle into the industrious, the intemperate into the sober, the unholy into the chaste and virtuous—these changes themselves are for you the assurance of an authority which no man may deny. (*Ibid.*) *The question of authority*:—There is something just in the words of Christ's enemies. The idea of Divine revelation is inseparable from the idea of authority. If God speaks He will speak with authority. That authority will have nothing violent or arbitrary in it; it will be persuasive, it will set free instead of enthralling. Individual illumination becomes a dream if it claims to raise itself above God's revelation. God, who has given revealed truth to men, has given them at the same time the institutions which preserve it. But we must make a fundamental distinction between the Divine truth and the institutions destined to preserve it. The authority of the first is direct; the authority of the second only derived. What is the aim of religious institutions? To preserve life. If the authority of the institution is put above that of the truth itself, if the form is put above the foundation, it is a perversion of the Divine order. Jesus to the Scribes is a person without authority. For them authority is wholly in the priestly institution. These men would have said to the sun, "By what right dost thou shine at an hour we have not chosen? Prove to us that thou hast permission to give us light." Therefore they shut their eyes to the light. Let us never put questions of hierarchy and of the church above the truth. I am not indifferent to these things, the form here touches very closely the reality. I distrust a soldier that turns up his nose at his flag. We must love and defend the church to which we belong. But we must know how to recognize everything outside of it that God makes beautiful, and by means which are not at its direction. We must choose between the pharisaical spirit that says to Christ, "By what authority doest thou these things?" and the spirit of truth which, when it sees the light, comes to the light, and says, "God is here." (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *The official religionist challenges the Prophet on a point of order*:—The method is always popular—plausible; it appeals to every commonplace instinct, and is flattering even to the lowest intelligence. "By what authority?" Who shall fathom the depth of Divine scorn in the Saviour's glance ere He replied? In truth, by what authority did Nathan stand in the presence of David, and, after arraigning before him in his tale a black criminal, cry, "Thou art the man"? By what authority did Elijah confront Ahab and denounce him as the "troubler of Israel"? By what authority did Paul, the prisoner at the bar, stand before Felix, and reason with him "concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"? By what authority

in all ages and everywhere does the spiritual man judge the carnal man; the heavenly assert supremacy over the earthly, sensual, and devilish? Before we listen to the question which Jesus in His turn puts to His questioner by way of answer, read the situation between the lines; let us pause to take in the full meaning of His searching, indignant gaze. "*You*," it seems to say, "*you* who question My authority, then, are the religious teachers. It is your business to know about spiritual things; to judge between the things of God and the things of man; to judge spiritual and carnal conduct; to protect religion; to guard the temple; to be the ministers and stewards of the mysteries. Is that so? Well, let Me see if you are fit for such duties—if you in the least understand them. If you *do*, you will have a right to question My action, not otherwise. Prove to Me your authority, I will prove to you Mine. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?" A silence—dead silence. The eyes of the crowd are on the Pharisees; they notice them whispering together. They are overheard muttering, "If we say, 'of heaven,' He will say, 'Why, then, did you not believe Him?' if, 'of men,' all the people will stone us, for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.'' Then at last these teachers, these judges of spiritual action, reply out loud, "We cannot tell." Cannot tell—great doctors of the law—whether John was a charlatan or not; cannot tell the difference between true and false teaching—real and sham religion! Well, if they cannot tell about John, what is the value of their opinion about Christ? They are not ashamed to dub themselves imbeciles—incapables. Had they expressed an adverse opinion, it would have still been respectable; had they proclaimed John and Christ, fanatics, enthusiasts, or impostors, they would have found supporters, as every one does who has the courage of his opinions. But no—"We cannot tell." It was enough; they were answered out of their own mouths. There are some things it is quite useless to tell people who "cannot tell"; there are some things which, if not felt, can never be explained. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Authority and presumption*:—I. Where the action is unquestionably right, some will censure the agent. II. They who require reasons should be ready to give reasons. III. Truth should be the first question with men, not consequences. IV. Incompetency may be exposed, and assumption resisted, for the sake of truth. (*J. H. Godwin.*)

CHAPTER XII

VERS. 1–12. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it.—*The vineyard, or the visible Church transferred to the Gentiles*:—I. THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PECULIAR TREASURE. II. THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE APPOINTED ITS GUARDIANS. III. THE JEWISH NATION WAS UNFAITHFUL TO ITS TRUST. 1. They rejected the moral government of Jehovah. 2. They rejected His political control as the head of their theocracy. IV. THE SACRED TRUST WAS TRANSFERRED TO OTHER PEOPLES AND NATIONS. V. THEY WERE FEARFULLY PUNISHED AS A NATION. 1. We are now led to admire the sublime features of the scheme of Providence. 2. That there is a great responsibility on the nations, communities, and individuals, to which God commits His Church. 3. We are the husbandmen. (*E. N. Kirk, D.D.*) *God the Proprietor of all*:—The manufacturer in his office knows that through building after building filled with machinery, running out to the very first and rudest processes, every single act of every single operative, down to the last and lowest boy, has its direct commercial connection with him and his interest. There is not one of the wheels that revolve of the ten thousand; there is not a thread spun or woven; there is not a colour mixed nor employed; there is not a thing done by any of the hands working in his vast establishment of whom there may be hundreds or even thousands, that is not related directly to his interest. The whole economy of the globe is, as it were, but a small manufactory under the direction of God; and there is not a single act performed in it which has not some relation to the thought, the feelings, the purpose of God. And He declares Himself to be in a wonderful sense identified with everything that is going on in life, in one way or another. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Obligation to God*:—Horace Bushnell tells us that a few years before his death, Daniel Webster, having a large party of friends dining with him at Marshfield, was called on by one of the party as they became seated at the table to specify what one thing he had met with in his life which had done most for him, or had contributed most to the success of his personal history. After a moment he

replied: "The most fruitful and elevating influence I have ever seemed to meet with has been my impression of obligation to God." *The world's ingratitude:*—Socrates, one of the wisest and noblest men of his time, after a long career of service in denouncing the wrongs of his age, and trying to improve the morals of the people, was condemned to death and obliged to drink poison. Dante, when Italy was torn by political factions, each ambitious of power, and all entirely unscrupulous as to the means employed to attain it, laboured with untiring zeal to bring about Italian unity, and yet his patriotism met no other reward than exile. "Florence for Italy, and Italy for the world," were his words when he heard his sentence of banishment. Columbus was sent home in irons from the country he had discovered. The last two years of his life present a picture of black ingratitude on the part of the Crown to this distinguished benefactor of the kingdom, which it is truly painful to contemplate. He died, perhaps, the poorest man in the whole kingdom he had spent his lifetime to enrich. Bruno, of Nola, for his advocacy of the Copernican system, was seized by the Inquisition and burned alive at Rome in 1600, in the presence of an immense concourse. Scioppus, the Latinist, who was present at the execution, with a sarcastic allusion to one of Bruno's heresies, the infinity of worlds, wrote, "The flames carried him to those worlds." (*M. Denton.*) *God's forbearance:*—The Macedonian king, Alexander the Great, who, as in one triumphal march, conquered the world, observed a very singular custom in his method of carrying on war. Whenever he encamped with his army before a fortified city and laid siege to it, he caused to be set up a great lantern, which was kept lighted by day and night. This was a signal to the besieged, and what it meant was that as long as the lamp burned they had time to save themselves by surrender, but that when once the light should be extinguished, the city, and all that were in it, would be irrevocably given over to destruction. And the conqueror kept his word with terrible consistency. When the light was put out, and the city was not given up, all hope of mercy was over. The Macedonians stormed the place, and if it was taken all were cut to pieces who were capable of bearing arms, and there was no quarter or forgiveness possible. Now, it is the good pleasure of our God to have compassion and to show mercy. But a city or a people can arrive at such a pitch of moral corruption that the moral order of the world can only be saved by its destruction. It was so with the whole race of men at the time of the flood, with Sodom and Gomorrah at a later period, and with the Jewish people in our Saviour's time. But before the impending stroke of judgment fell, God always, so to speak, set up the lamp of grace, which was not only a signal of mercy, but also a light to show men that they were in the way of death, and a power to turn them from it. (*Otto Funcke.*) *Pursued by God's mercy:*—"Saved at the bottom of the sea!" So said one of our Sydney divers to a city missionary. In his house, in one of our suburbs, might be seen lately what would probably strike the visitor as a very strange chimney ornament; the shells of an oyster holding fast a piece of printed paper. But devoutly do I wish that every chimney ornament could tell such a tale of usefulness. The possessor of this ornament might well value it. He was diving amongst wreck on our coast, when he observed at the bottom of the sea this oyster on a rock, with this piece of paper in his mouth, which he detached, and commenced to read through the goggles of his head-dress. It was a tract, and, coming to him thus strangely and unexpectedly, so impressed his unconverted heart, that he said, "I can hold out against God's mercy in Christ no longer, since it pursues me thus." He tells us that he became, whilst in the ocean's depth, a repentant, converted, and (as he was assured) sin-forgiven man—"saved at the bottom of the sea!" (*Mother's Treasury.*) *God's longsuffering:*—The axe carried before the Roman consuls was always bound up in a bundle of rods. An old author tells us that "the rods were tied up with knotted cords, and that when an offender was condemned to be punished the executioner would untie the knots, one by one, and meanwhile the magistrate would look the culprit in the face, to observe any signs of repentance and watch his words, to see if he could find a motive for mercy; and thus justice went to its work deliberately and without passion." The axe was enclosed in rods to show that the extreme penalty was never inflicted till milder means had failed; first the rod, and the axe only as a terrible necessity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's love in sending His Son:*—What would tempt you to give the baby out of your cradle? Is there any one you love on earth, mother, that would tempt you to give your baby for that? But what if the child had grown up and had come to man's estate? Say it had bloomed into fruition and all your hope was on it. What do you love in this world that would tempt you to give this child up a sacrifice? You

might for the country in hours of heroism. Many and many a mother has done a work that was divine when she consecrated her only son and sent him forth into the war, believing that she should never see him again. How many hearts are touched with the thought of this remembrance. But, oh, is there language that can expound such heroism, such zeal, such enthusiasm, as must inhere in the hearts of every one that can do such work as that? And yet our hearts are small comparatively, and pulseless and shallow, and our human senses, as compared with God, are like a drop of water in comparison with the ocean. And what is the love of God, the Infinite, whose flowings are like the Gulf Stream? What are the depths, and the breadths, and the lengths of the love of God in Christ Jesus, when, looking upon a world that was so degraded and animal-like, He gave His only-begotton Son to die for it that there might be an interpretation of the love of God to the world. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ ungratefully treated:*—Surely a servant of the government may risk himself in the very heart of a convict prison alone, if he is the bearer of a royal pardon for all the inmates. In such a case it would not be necessary to look out for a man of rare courage who might dare to carry the proclamation to the convicts. Give him but the message of free pardon, and he may go in unarmed, with all safety, like Daniel in the den of lions. When Christ Himself came to the world—the great convict-prison of the universe—came the Ambassador from God, bringing peace—they said: "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him!" He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; and the servant is not greater than his Lord. (*A.*) *Cruelty to Christ:*—Some time ago a father had a son who had broken his mother's heart. After her death he went on from bad to worse. One night he was going out to spend it in vice, and the old man went to the door as the young one was going out, and said, "My son, I want to ask a favour of you to-night. You have not spent one night with me since your mother was buried, and I have been so lonesome without her and without you, and now I want to have you spend to-night with me; I want to have a talk with you about the future." The young man said, "No, father, I do not want to stay; it is gloomy here at home." He said, "Won't you stay for my sake?" and the son said he would not. At last, the old man said, "If I cannot persuade you to stay, if you are determined to go down to ruin, and to break my heart, as you have your mother's—for these grey hairs cannot stand it much longer—you shall not go without my making one more effort to save you;" and the old man threw open the door, and laid himself upon the threshold, and said, "If you go out to-night you must go over this old body of mine;" and what did he do? Why, that young man leaped over the father, and on to ruin he went. Did you ever think that God has given His Son? Yes, He has laid Him, as it were, right across your path that you might not go down to hell; and if there is a soul in this assembly that goes to hell, you must go over the murdered body of God's Son. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The stream of mercy directed into another course:*—In the channel through which a running stream is directed upon a mill-wheel, the same turning of a valve that shuts the water out of one course throws it into another. Thus the Jews, by rejecting the counsel of God, shut themselves out, and at the same moment opened a way whereby mercy might flow to us who were afar off. (*William Arnot.*) *The parable of the vineyard:*—One who was wont to illustrate His teaching by imagery drawn from the objects which surrounded Him, could hardly fail in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem to speak of vineyards. The hills and table-lands of Judah were the home of the vine. Five times our Lord availed Himself of this figure for His parables (St. Matt. xx. 1; xxi. 28, 33; St. Luke xiii. 6; St. John xv. 1); and though it is doubtful in what locality He spoke that of the labourers in the vineyard, it is almost certain that the remaining four are intimately associated with Jerusalem. In many places in Southern Palestine the features of this parable may still be traced. The loose stone fences, like the walls so familiar to the eye in Wales or Derbyshire; the remains of the old watch-towers, generally in one corner of the enclosure; and the cisterns hewn in the solid rock in which the grapes were pressed—all remain to the present day. It was the custom in our Lord's time for the owner in leasing a vineyard to tenants, to arrange for the rent to be paid, not in money but in kind—a certain portion of the produce being set apart as "a first charge" for the landlord. The system prevails in modern times in some parts of France, and more widely under the name of "ryot-rent" in India. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *God's dealings with the Jews are signified in this parable:*—I. He did by His special providence protect and defend the Jewish Church, against all enemies and dangers both bodily and spiritual, which might annoy them and so

hinder their fruitfulness. II. He afforded them all necessary helps and means to further them in grace, and to make them spiritually fruitful. 1. The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, together with the whole true worship of God prescribed in the moral and ceremonial Law. 2. Godly discipline. 3. Afflictions and chastisements. 4. Mercies and deliverances. 5. Miracles. (*G. Petter.*) *God's care of His church*:—Where God plants a true church, He does not so leave it, but is further careful to furnish it with all things needful for a church; and not only for the being, but also for the well-being of it; that it may not only be a church, but a happy and prosperous church, growing and flourishing in grace, and bringing forth plentiful fruits of grace, such as God requires and are acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ. As a careful and wise householder, having planted a vineyard for his use, doth not so leave it, and do no more to it; but is at further care and cost to furnish it with such things as are necessary and commodious, to the end it may grow, flourish, and prosper, and that it may bring forth much fruit and profit to the owner of it. So here, the Lord having planted a church in any place or amongst any people, doth not so leave it, but is careful to use all further means for the good of His church; especially for the spiritual good and prosperity of it, that it may grow, and increase, and prosper spiritually, and bring forth much spiritual fruit to God who planted it. Thus He did to the church of the Jews: He did not only plant His vineyard amongst them, by adopting and calling them to be His people, but withal He hedged about that vineyard, and set up a winepress, and built a watch-tower in it, *i.e.*, He furnished the Jews with all things needful to make them happy and prosperous, truly growing, thriving, and prospering in grace, and bringing forth plentiful fruits thereof, to the glory of God, the good of others, and the furtherance of their own salvation. To this end, He compassed them about with His special providence, as with a strong and sure hedge, to defend and keep them safe from all enemies and dangers bodily and spiritual which might annoy them; He gave and continued to them all spiritual helps and means of grace, and a government of His own appointing; He corrected them with afflictions, bestowed on them great mercies and deliverances, and wrought miracles for their benefit, to further their spiritual good and prosperity. And this is but a sample of how He treats every true church that He plants. (*Ibid.*) *The church divinely protected*:—Whether in the parable the hedge and winefat and tower had each a special application in the system of God's providential care for His ancient people, we cannot say; but at least in one particular we may trace a peculiar fitness in the figure of "the hedge." What was it that protected the land of Israel year by year during the three Great Festivals, when by the Divine Law the country was denuded of its male population; when every man from north, south, east, and west, from the most unguarded districts, leaving their flocks and herds, their wives and little ones, totally unprotected from their bitterest enemies, went up to Jerusalem, the centre of religious worship? What was it that held in check the Moabite and Ammonite, and the robber tribes of Arabia? It was the fence of Divine protection, which, like a wall of fire, God in His providence had built up, so that no one dared to pass it. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The pleading of the last Messenger*:—The coming of the Son of God in human form, as Emmanuel, is love's great plea for reconciliation. Who can resist so powerful an argument? I. THE AMAZING MISSION. 1. He comes after many rejections of Divine love. None have been left without admonitions and expostulations from God. From childhood upwards He has called us by most earnest entreaties of faithful men and affectionate women; and, in spite of our obstinate resistance, He still sends to us His Son to plead with us and urge us to go to our Father. 2. He comes for no personal ends. It is for our own sake that He strives with us. Nothing but tender regard for our well-being makes Him warn us. 3. See who this Messenger is. (1) He is One greatly beloved of His Father. (2) In Himself He is of surpassing excellence. (3) His graciousness is as conspicuous as His glory. (4) His manner is most winning. (5) He is God's *ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. Heaven contains no further Messenger. Rejecting Christ you reject all, and shut against yourself the only possible door of hope. II. THE ASTOUNDING CRIME. There are many ways of killing the Son of God. 1. Denying His deity. 2. Denying His atonement. 3. Remaining indifferent to His claims. 4. Refusing to obey His gospel. Thus you may virtually put Him away, and so be guilty of His blood, and crucify Him afresh. III. THE APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT. Our Lord leaves our own consciences to depict the overwhelming misery of those who carry their rebellion to its full length. He leaves our imagination to prescribe a doom sufficient for a crime so

base, so daring, so cruel. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The son rejected:*—I. THE OWNER'S CLAIM. His right and authority are complete. God presses His right to our love and service. Blessings are privileges, and privileges are obligations. We owe Him more than Israel owed. The human will has a natural repugnance to submission to absolute authority. But God never presents His claim as grounded on this alone. He tells of His love before He declares His laws. Only a bad heart can resent the authority or refuse the service. II. THE OWNER'S LOVING PATIENCE. There never was an earthly employer who showed such persistent kindness towards such persistent rebellion. This is a faint picture of God's forbearance towards Israel. Mercies, deliverances, revelations, gather around their history. III. THE REJECTION. Rejection of the prophets leads up to the rejection of Christ. Privilege and place do not lessen the danger. IV. THE JUDGMENT. It was just, necessary, complete, remediless. V. THE FINAL EXALTATION OF THE SON. The kingdom is not to perish, only the rebellious. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *The Head of the Corner:*—I. The picture suggested by the scene which Christ calls up into imagination would be likely to cause surprise, or be termed an exaggeration, if it were laid anywhere outside of Palestine. Down even to the present time customs remain very much the same as in Christ's day in that oppressed country. 1. The insecurity of property and person is proverbial. The Scripture record might be incorporated into the ordinary guide-books. 2. There has been in all ages a special confusion of iniquitous dealing in respect to real estate. Thievery and violence seem to be the rule in the east, peace and possession the exception. Something is to be charged to the government; the laws are indefinite, and bribery is rife; indeed, the government sets the example of systematized crime. In all history of the Holy Land, from Christ's time to ours, the rulers have been organized for official robbery and outrage. No titles are secure, even when one has paid for his vineyard or his building-plot. 3. Then, too, the custom of committing all oversight and control of farms and orchards to underlings makes the matter a great deal worse. Absenteeism is a fruitful reason for crime (Mark xii. 1). Those men left in charge of the vineyard, to whom messenger after messenger had been sent, and who now were peremptorily addressed by the owner with a final demand in the august person of his son, are represented as communing with each other, and saying, as they laid the wiles of their conspiracy, what might be construed into an utterance of their belief that, if this one inheritor were only dead, all heirship would be extinguished (Mark xii. 7). 4. Still, so far as we can learn, there was no ground for hope of success in this plot. No enactment has come down to us which would sustain such an entailment or division or heirship as those infamous creatures assumed. Luke's language (xx. 14) agrees with Mark's; but Matthew (xxi. 38) says, "Let us seize on his inheritance." This suggests the true interpretation. The husbandmen had no countenance in the common law; they intended to say that they would make the vineyard theirs by violence, and hold it by any extremities of force. It was a singularly stupid plan; it could not have even a plausible look anywhere but in that wretched region. It assumed an absence of justice, an insecurity of possession, an immunity from the worst crime, positively oriental in its toleration of rapine and murder. 5. Add to this the fact that in those early days, when invention had not yet brought firearms into use, the measures taken for homicide were brutal and hard beyond description. Not even spears or daggers or knives are used there for assassination now any more than they used to be. The coarse, rude weapon for murder is a club or bludgeon of the roughest sort; the Bedâwin will have a gun on their shoulders, but will knock their victim on the head with a knotted stick all the same. The description, left on record by the Psalmist, is true to this day: "He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it." 6. Hence, this frightful picture was a tremendous invective as well as a vivid illustration when employed by our Lord. He used it for a similitude in one of His most direct and forcible arraignments of the Jewish nation for their blind, dull, coarse, criminal rejection of God's only-begotten Son, despatched then from high heaven to secure His Father's rights from those who had grasped after heirship by murder. II. We turn now to the second branch of the story. Our Lord suddenly drops His figure, and leaves the parable altogether, finishing His application with a quotation from

one of the most familiar of the psalms (cxviii. 22). 1. Thus He illustrates His position. He claims a Messianic psalm for Himself. Matthew (xxi. 43) tells us He said to those hearers of His in plain words that He was speaking this parable concerning them. And He chooses to show them that, for Himself, there was no fear of the future. The "son" of the story, who got murder instead of "reverence," is heard of no more. But the Son of God, though "rejected" now, should one day come to His place of honour. They understood Him very well, for in an alarmed sort of murmur they said, "God forbid!" (Luke xx. 16). 2. Thus He predicts His eventual triumph. There is a tradition of the Jewish Rabbis which relates the history of a wonderful stone, prepared, as they say, for use in the building of Solomon's temple. Each block for that matchless edifice was shaped and fitted for its particular place, and came away from the distant quarry marked for the masons. But this one was so different from any other that no one knew what to do with it. Beautiful indeed it was; carved with figures of exquisite loveliness and grace; but it had no fellow; it fitted nowhere; and at last the impatient and perplexed workmen flung it aside as only a splendid piece of folly. Years passed, while the proud structure was going up without the sound of axe or hammer. During all the time this despised fragment of rock was lying in the valley of Jehoshaphat covered with dirt and moss. Then came the day of dedication; the vast throng arrived to see what the Israelites were wont to call "the noblest fabric under the sun." There it stood crowning the mountain's ridge, and shining with whiteness of silver and yellowness of gold. The wondering multitudes gazed admiringly upon its magnificent proportions, grand in their splendour of marble. But when one said that the east tower was unfinished, or at least looked so, the chief architect grew impatient again, and replied that Solomon was wise, but a builder must admit there was a gap in his plans. By and by the king drew near in person; with his retinue he rode directly to the incomplete spot, as if he there expected most to be pleased. "Why is this neglect?" he asked in tones of indignant surprise: "where is the piece I sent for the head of this corner?" Then suddenly the frightened workmen bethought themselves of that rejected stone which they had been spurning as worthless. They sought it again, cleared it from its defilement, swung it fairly up into its place, and found it was indeed the top-stone fitted so as to give the last grace to the whole. 3. Thus Jesus also clinches His argument. He made His audience see that He was fulfilling every necessity of the Messiah's office, and answering to every prediction made of Him, even down to the receiving of the "rejection" at their hands as they were now giving it to Him. They were educated in the ancient oracles of God, and were wont to admit the bearing of every sentence and verse of prophecy. And when this strange, intrepid Galilean asked them, "Did ye never read in the Scripture?" they saw that He knew His vantage with the people, and would be strong enough to hold it against their violence or treachery. There was force in argument when one brought up a text inspired. 4. Thus, likewise, our Lord enlightened their consciences. There is something more than logical defeat in their manner after this conversation: there is spiritual dismay and consternation. "They knew that He had spoken the parable against them." It was necessary to silence this terrible voice of denunciation. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *They will reverence My Son*:—A father may be sure that his son will be counted as standing for himself in a peculiar sense; and that all there is of gratitude or affection or reverence toward himself will indicate itself in the reception and treatment of that son, wherever the son goes as the father's representative. When the Grand Duke Alexis visited America after our civil war, he was greeted with the liveliest expressions of interest by young and old throughout the North, because of his father's sympathy with our government in the hour of its need. The Prince of Wales, on his visit to this country, was honoured as the representative of his royal mother; and the admiration for her character as a woman was commingled with the respect for her as a sovereign, in all the honours that were tendered to him wherever he moved. Any father or any mother may always be sure that a real friend will be true to the interests of a child of that parent, keenly alive to that child's welfare, and tenderly sensitive to its comfort and good name, because it is that parent's child. God recognized this truth when He sent His only Son into this world as His representative. Whatever of real love for the Father there was among the sons of men, would be sure to show itself wherever the Son was recognized. (*H. Clay Trumbull.*) *Rejection of Christ a common, but most unreasonable iniquity*:—There is no sin more common or more pernicious in the Christian world than an unsuitable reception of Jesus Christ and the gospel. A soul that has the offer of Christ and the

gospel, and yet neglects Him, is certainly in a perishing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. This was the sin of the Jews in Christ's time, and this brought temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To represent this sin in a convictive light is the primary design of this parable. But it will admit of a more extensive application. It reaches us in these ends of the earth. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will universally meet with an affectionate reception from creatures that stand in such absolute need of Him, yet it is a melancholy, notorious fact that Jesus Christ has but little of the reverence and love of mankind. The prophetical character given of Him long ago by Isaiah still holds true. This is a most melancholy and astonishing thing; it may spread amazement and horror through the whole universe, but, alas! it is a plain fact. I. To SHOW YOU WHAT KIND OF RECEPTION WE MAY REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO GIVE TO THE SON OF GOD. 1. We should give Him a reception agreeable to the character which He sustains. (1) A Saviour in a desperate case, a relief for the remediless, a helper for the helpless. (2) A great high priest making atonement for sin. (3) A mediatorial king, invested with all the power in heaven and earth, and demanding universal homage. (4) The publisher and the brightest demonstration of the Father's love. And has He not discovered His own love by the many labours of His life, and by the agonies and tortures of His cross? (5) As able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him, and as willing as able, as gracious as powerful. (6) A great prophet sent to publish His Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God, and to show the way in which guilty sinners may be reconciled to God. A way which all the philosophers and sages of antiquity, after all their perplexing searches, could never discover. (7) The august character of supreme Judge of the quick and dead. Do not imagine that none are concerned to give Him a proper reception but those with whom He conversed in the days of His flesh. He is an ever-present Saviour, and He left His gospel on earth in His stead, when He went to heaven. It is with the motion of the mind and not of the body that sinners must come to Him; and in this sense we may come to Him as properly as those that conversed with Him. II. THE REASONABLENESS OF THE EXPECTATION THAT WE SHOULD GIVE THE SON OF GOD A WELCOME RECEPTION. Here full evidence must strike the mind at first sight. Is there not infinite reason that infinite beauty and excellence should be esteemed and loved? that supreme authority should be obeyed, and the highest character revered? Is it not reasonable that the most amazing display of love and mercy should meet with the most affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged, &c? In short, no man can deny the reasonableness of this expectation without denying himself to be a creature. III. To show HOW DIFFERENT A RECEPTION THE SON OF GOD GENERALLY MEETS WITH IN OUR WORLD, FROM WHAT MIGHT REASONABLY BE EXPECTED. 1. Let me put you all upon a serious search, what kind of reception you have given to Jesus Christ. It is high time for you to inquire into your behaviour. 2. Is it not evident that Jesus Christ has had but little share in your thoughts and affections? 3. Is Jesus Christ the favourite subject of your conversation? 4. Are not your hearts destitute of His love? If you deny the charge and profess that you love Him, where are the inseparable fruits and effects of His love? 5. Have you learned to entrust your souls in His hands, to be saved by Him entirely in His own way? Or, do you not depend, in part at least, upon your own imaginary goodness? &c. Conclusion:—1. Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus, you contract the most aggravated guilt? 2. Must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt? 3. How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus (Heb. ii. 3)? 4. If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be engulfed in everlasting destruction, does it become you to be so easy and careless, so merry and gay? (*President Davies.*) *Reverence claimed for Christ*:—The Saviour here applies an ancient prediction to Himself (ver. 10), "And have ye not read," &c. Our present design is the consideration of the words of our text as they will properly apply to us. I. THE DIGNIFIED CHARACTER OF CHRIST. "God's well-beloved Son." This representation presents Jesus to us. 1. In His divine nature. 2. As the object of the Father's delight (Isa. xiii. 1; Jno. xvii. 24). II. THE MISSION OF CHRIST. "He sent Him also." God had sent His prophets and ministering servants to teach, to warn, and reveal His will to His people; but, last of all, He sent His Son. 1. From whence? From His own bosom (Jno. i. 18). 2. To whom was He sent? To a world of sinners. 3. For what was He sent? To be the Saviour of the world; to restore men to the favour,

image, and enjoyment of God. (1) He came to destroy the works of the devil and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. (2) He was sent to illumine a dark world by the doctrines of the gospel. (3) To recover an alienated world by His power and grace. (4) To redeem an accursed world by His death upon the cross. (5) To purify a polluted world by His spirit and blood. III. THE REVERENCE GOD DEMANDS ON BEHALF OF HIS SON. Let us ascertain—1. The manner in which this reverence should be evinced. (1) By adoring love of His person. (2) By cheerful obedience to His authority. (3) By studious imitation of His example. (4) By ardent zeal for His glory; making Christ's interest our own; living to spread His name. 2. The grounds of this reverence. (1) Think of the glory of His person. (2) The purity of His character. (3) The riches of His grace. (4) The preciousness of His benefits. (5) The terribleness of His wrath. Application: 1. Address sinners. Rejection of Christ will involve you in endless wrath and ruin. 2. Saints. Aver your reverence for Christ. Not only cherish it, but exhibit it. Fearlessly profess Him before men, and ever live to the glory of His name. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The reverence due to the Son of God*:—I. IT IS REASONABLE HE SHOULD BE REVERENCED on account of—1. The dignity and authority of His Father. 2. His inherent excellencies. 3. His actual achievements. II. THE RECEPTION WHICH HE MET WITH. III. THE DOOM OF THOSE WHO DISREGARD THE SON. The ancient Jews who persisted in their rebellion did not escape punishment. So all those who now reject the offers of mercy and disregard the Son of God, will not escape punishment. IV. CHRIST SHALL BE REVERENCED. (*G. Phillips.*) *The builders overruled by the great Architect*:—This is a striking though homely image applied to the most wonderful of events. I. THE BLINDNESS OF THE BUILDERS. The position which the Jewish leaders occupied was a very honourable one. They were appointed to build—to build up the Church. They have to deliberate and devise regarding all that greatly pertained to the ecclesiastical life of the nation. But there also lay their great responsibility. They might do a great service, putting Christ into the place intended for Him; or they might do a great disservice, setting Him aside, and putting Him in a false light before the nation. It unhappily turned out in the latter way. And their crime is represented as a refusing of Him whom God meant to be a chief corner-stone. And what made their conduct so criminal was that they acted against the light. II. THE BUILDERS AS OVERRULED BY THE GREAT ARCHITECT. It has always been matter for surprise how bad men get into power. Never was human liberty brought into such antagonism to the Divine sovereignty. It would have been a sad thing if their conduct had prevented the building up of a Church. That, we know, could never be. This may be put on the ground of the Divine purpose. Christ was the living stone, chosen of God. But deeper than the purpose itself is the ground of the purpose in the character of God, and the fitness of the stone for the place. He was a stone refused, disallowed. But God was independent of them, and got others more humble than they, but more in sympathy with the purpose. Ay, even they were taken up into the purpose as unconscious, involuntary instruments. For it was in the very refusing of Him in His death that He became chief corner-stone. They were thus doing what they did not intend to do. And He rose triumphant out of their hands when they thought they had effectually secured Him in the tomb. III. LET US DRAW SOME LESSONS FROM THE THEME. 1. Let us beware of self-deception, of blinding ourselves. These rulers thought they were doing God service in what they did to Christ. If they could so far deceive themselves who occupied so prominent a position in the Church, have we not reason to be on our guard? 2. Let us beware of leaving out Christ. 3. Let us admire the placing of Christ as chief corner-stone. 4. Let us remember the way and glory of becoming living stones in the spiritual temple. 5. Let us consider the loss of not being living stones in this building. Our Lord has a comment on these words, than which there is nothing more fearful: "Whosoever shall fall," &c. (*R. Finlayson, B.A.*) *Rejected and chosen*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE HERE ASSERTED. The quotation is from Ps. cxviii. 22, 23. 1. The intrinsic excellence of a thing is not at all affected by its non-recognition. 2. The instrinsic excellence of true principles enables them to become, in spite of human contempt, true rulers of the world and of life. 3. In their opposition to the true and the good, men know not what they do. 4. We see now how God must make use of what seem the unlikeliest instruments for the realization of His gracious purposes. 5. The processes of spiritual regeneration and new life are carried on by means of rejected powers. II. THE REACTION OF THIS PRINCIPLE UPON THE MEN OF CHRIST'S TIME. "They knew that He had spoken the parable against them." They lost the Christ

they rejected. "To him that hath shall be given," &c. III. THERE ARE SPECIAL LESSONS HERE FOR THE MEN OF THE PRESENT AGE. 1. The possession of great privileges and advantages is not to be regarded as excluding moral abuses and dangers. 2. Faithfulness to spiritual truth is the true life-giving and conservative force in individual and national life. What is morally wrong can never be safe. 3. Personal relations to the Christ determine destiny. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder." (*The Preacher's Monthly.*) *The rejected stone*:—God's truth overcoming human opposition:—There is a legend which I have seen somewhere, which describes the origin of the figure in this way: That at the building of the temple a stone was cut and shaped in the quarries, of which the builders could make no use. It lay about during the period of the building, held by all to be a hindrance (a stone of stumbling), but at the very last its place was found to be at the head of the corner, binding the two sides together. And so the Father explains Christ the corner-stone, as binding Jew and Gentile in one Church of God. It is very remarkable how often this has been repeated in the history of the Church—how great religious movements have been frowned down, if not actively opposed, by those in high places, which have afterwards subdued all opposition. In our own times, in this very century, this has occurred twice. First, the great evangelical movement in our Church was set at naught by the builders, though it was the assertion of the primary truth of personal religion—that each soul must have a personal apprehension of Christ, and look to Him with the eye of a living faith; and then the great Church movement was almost unanimously rejected by the bishops between 1840 and 1850, though it was the assertion of the truths patent through all the New Testament, that the Church, though a visible organization, is the mystical body of Christ—that it is a supernatural system of grace, and that its sacraments are the signs of grace actually given in and with the outward sign. In neither of these cases did "the builders" discern the strength of the principles asserted, and foresee that they must win their way; though the formularies of the Church, of which these builders were the exponents and guardians, assert very unmistakably both these truths in conjunction, viz., spiritual apprehension of Christ, and sacramental union in His body. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *The head stone of the corner*:—The Lord Jesus is—I. A STONE: No firmness but in Him. II. A FUNDAMENTAL stone: No building but on Him. III. A CORNER stone: No piecing, or reconciliation, but in Him. (*Anon.*) **They knew that He had spoken.**—*A guilty conscience*:—During the Protectorate, a certain knight in the county of Surrey had a lawsuit with the minister of his parish; and, whilst the dispute was pending, Sir John imagined that the sermons which were delivered in church were preached at him. He, therefore, complained against the minister to Oliver Cromwell, who inquired of the preacher concerning it; and, having found that he merely reproved common sins, he dismissed the complaining knight, saying, "Go home, Sir John, and hereafter live in good friendship with your minister; the Word of the Lord is a searching word, and it seems as if it had found you out!"

Vers. 13, 14. **Catch Him in His words.**—*Eastern spies*:—The course pursued by the enemies of our Lord does not seem strange to any one who knows anything of the surveillance which a Hindoo uris establishes over any one whose sayings or doings it may be of importance for him to know. For instance, Major T——, the agent for the Viceroy at the court of the Nawab Moorshedabad, complains that his house is as full of spies as it is of servants, nearly all of whom, he suspects, are in the pay of the Nawab. One servant, who pretended not to know a word of English, was discovered at length to know it well, and great was the major's disgust at the discovery; for this man was in attendance at the table, where of course he would have ample opportunities of hearing his master's opinions expressed in all the confidence of social intercourse. One of the punkah-bearers, too, was found to be a quite well-to-do man. His position was a most menial one, yet its duties took him within sight and hearing of his master many times in the day. It was suspected that the Nawab was making it worth his while to submit to the drudgery of so mean a post. (*A Missionary's Notes.*) **We know that Thou art true.**—*Concerned only to do right*:—"What I must do," says Emerson, "is all that concerns me, and not what people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to look after your own; but the great man is he who

in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." *Moral fearlessness*:—In Scotland, Knox arose, of whom the Regent Morton said, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man;" who said himself that "he had looked in the faces of many angry men." When he was working in chains on the galleys in France, they brought him an image of the Virgin, and bade him worship the mother of God. "Mother of God," he exclaimed, "it is a pented bredd" (or board), and he flung it into the river to sink or swim. "Who are you?" said Mary Queen of Scots to him, "that presume to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?" "Madam," he answers, "a subject born within the same." "Have you hope?" they ask him on his death-bed, when he can no longer speak; and lifting his hand he pointed upwards with his finger, and so, pointing to heaven, he died.

Ver. 15. **But He knowing their hypocrisy.**—*Hypocrisy*:—Sir John Trevor, who had for some misdemeanours been expelled from Parliament, one day meeting Archbishop Tillotson, cried out, "I hate to see an Atheist in the shape of a Churchman." "And I," replied the good Bishop, "hate to see a knave in any shape." (*Clerical Anecdotes.*) *Always a hypocrite*:—The sincerity of his (the Emperor Alexius) moral and religious virtues was suspected by the persons who had passed their lives in his familiar confidence. In the last hours, when he was pressed by his wife Irene to alter the succession, he raised his head and breathed a pious ejaculation on the vanity of this world. The indignant reply of the Empress may be inscribed as an epitaph on his tomb: "You die as you have lived—a hypocrite." (*Gibbon.*) **Bring Me a penny.**—*Lessons in the smallest things*:—We may learn and be put in mind of good and Christian duties by the smallest things that are in common use amongst us; *e.g.*, the very stamp of the coin or money which is in common circulation may put us in mind of our duty of subjection and obedience to the prince and to all lawful magistrates. So also the matter of the coin, whereof it is made, being silver or gold, may remind us of God's goodness and bounty towards us, in affording us such precious metals for our use and trading one with another. The meanest garment we wear may cause us to think of our sins and be humbled for them, sin being the first cause of nakedness appearing shameful. Every bit of meat or bread which we eat may teach us the frailty of our bodies, which cannot be sustained without such food. Every blade of grass in the field, and every flower in our garden may put us in mind of our mortality, and stir us up to prepare for death and judgment. Hence, also, it is that the Scriptures send us sometimes to brute beasts to learn our duties, as to the ox and the ass, and to the birds of the air, yea to such tiny creatures as the ant. This leaves us without excuse if, having so many masters at hand and near about us continually to teach us and stir us up to our duties, we yet do not learn, or make conscience of what is required of us. (*G. Petter.*) *The Roman penny*:—The silver penny was a coin a little larger than a sixpence, but probably equal to 4s. or 5s. in purchasing power. In this coin the poll-tax—so much for each man—was paid. Until very lately the Jews had had a Hebrew coinage, on which no head was permitted (in deference to the second commandment), but which carried the names of their ruler and their high priest. Even now the Herods issued money of their own coinage. But since Judæa had been reduced to a province, the Roman penny had been introduced, and was the coin legally demanded for payment of taxes. Its use proclaimed who was master, as the head of Victoria on an Indian rupee proclaims her ruler of India. Indeed, already it had become a maxim that he is ruler whose coin is current in a land. It was not, therefore, an unsettled question whether they would have the Romans for their rulers or not; but they being rulers—and any government being better than anarchy—were they at liberty to withhold the amount needed for its fair support? (*R. Glover.*) *Christ's victory over cunning*:—I. They take counsel. He is thoroughly armed. II. They would entangle Him. He seeks to deliver them out of their own snare. III. They praise Him in order to His destruction. He rebukes them, for their awakening and salvation. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *A penny*:—A penny has two sides. As I hold it up I see one and you the other. If I were to ask you what is represented on the coin, you would say, A portrait of the Queen and some Latin. If I say what I see it is something very different, it is a representation of Britannia and some English. You say one thing and I say another. Now, suppose we were to wrangle about it, and I were to contradict you, and say, "It is a falsehood; I can see no likeness of the Queen;" and you were to say, "You must be out of your senses; I am sure there is one;" that would be very foolish. Yet that is about the way with one half of the disputes amongst people. It is so with many religious controversies. And

with party feeling in politics. And with those quarrels that take place in the family or amongst friends. People cannot see both sides of the penny at once. Two persons may have very different opinions on the same subject, and yet both be right. Try and remember that when you look on a penny. Look at these two sides. On the one is a portrait of the Queen. It has two inscriptions. Victoria D. G.: that means by Divine grace. It is well to acknowledge that every blessing we have is through the grace of God. Then we read, Britt. Reg. F. D.: that means Queen of the Britains, or the British Islands, and Defender of the Faith. The double T shows the plural, which in Latin is by doubling the last letter rather than adding S, as in English. There is a beautiful story told of our Queen. When she was a little girl, about twelve years of age, her tutors thought the time had come when she ought to know that she might some day become Queen of this great and glorious nation Into one of her lesson-books was put a paper which showed to her that it might be so. On looking at it, she said, "I see I am nearer the throne than I thought." "So it is, madam," said her governess. After some moments' thought the Princess said, "Now, many a child would boast, but they don't know the difficulty. There is much splendour, but there is more responsibility." Then she gave the lady her hand, and said, "I will be good." That was a noble resolve. None of you can hope to gain an earthly crown, but you may each resolve, and solemnly say, "I will be good." Better be good than great, better be good than rich, better be good than powerful, better be good than to sit on a throne. Best of all to have the true goodness—that which comes from the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the penny the crown is a crown of leaves. It is a fading crown. Jesus Christ has promised to all who trust Him a crown of glory that fadeth not away. You cannot be kings and queens here, but if you are amongst the followers of Christ you will be grander in heaven than kings and queens. Of all things it is best to be a Christian. The Lord said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Try and remember that when you look upon a penny. Look to the other side, and consider the representation of Britannia. It is full of beautiful suggestions of what our nation should be. Let us consider the emblem, and we shall find it quite a treasury of good ideas. Our country would be indeed great and glorious if every British young person acted up to them. 1. She appears very calm, holding firm the shield of faith in her right hand. On the shield are three crosses—the cross of St. George of England, the cross of St. Andrew of Scotland, and the cross of St. Patrick of Ireland. The true Christian, however, only lays hold of the one true cross—that of Jesus Christ—and finds, resting upon that, a peace that passeth all understanding. 2. She is clad from head to foot with a robe. This reminds us that by faith in the Lord Christ the Christian has the robe of righteousness, which covers every defect. It is pure and white, and the wedding garment of the marriage supper of the Lamb. The saints in glory are represented as having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 3. She holds her head erect, having on the helmet. The Apostle speaks of the helmet of hope. Nothing can more enable us to lift up our heads and look out brightly than the hope of heaven. 4. She is prepared for attack. She holds the very ancient weapon called the trident. The Christian is surrounded by danger, and always liable to the attacks of sin and Satan, and should ever be on the guard, and the old weapon of the Word of God is the best after all. Whilst resting on faith, wearing the robe of righteousness, and lifting up the head with hope, there must be the preparation for conflict: Jesus Christ bid all His followers "Watch." There are two other beautiful emblems of the Christian hero. One is a lighthouse. This is a tall column placed in a dangerous part of the ocean, in which there is a powerful light. That shines out into the darkness, and so guides vessels safely into the harbour. Thus the Christian is to show the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and help souls to avoid dangerous rocks and to find the way to heaven. On another part of the coin is a ship in full sail. That, too, is an emblem of the Christian. He leaves the port of this world; he takes Christ for his captain; he sails through perils and dangers, through sunshine and storm, but reaches at last the desired haven. Try and remember these truths when you look upon a penny. Thus I have endeavoured to give you some of the important lessons which Jesus taught, and to illustrate them by a penny, so that when you look at a penny you may remember some of these truths you ought ever to have in mind. There are many others which might be considered if time permitted, and which you may well discover for yourselves. I conclude by giving you a very beautiful old Rabbinical legend taken from the Talmud:—

"From the mint two bright, new pennies came,
The value and beauty of both the same;
One slipt from the hand, and fell to the ground,
Then rolled out of sight and could not be found.
The other was passed by many a hand,
Through many a change in many a land;
For temple dues paid, now used in the mart,
Now bestowed on the poor by a pitying heart.
At length it so happened, as years went round,
That the long-lost, unused coin was found.
Filthy and black, its inscription destroyed
Through rusting peacefully unemployed;
Whilst the well-worked coin was bright and clear
Through active service year after year;
For the brightest are those who live for duty—
Rust more than rubbing will tarnish beauty." (*J. H. Cooke.*)

Ver. 17. **Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.**—*Our obligations to God and man:*—The spirit of the passage requires us to regard the rights of all beings as sacred, and to give to them all that is theirs. I. WHAT IS DUE TO GOD? Or what are the things, the property of God, which our Saviour here requires us to render to Him? "The earth is the Lord's," &c. Of course we, and all that we possess, are God's property. More particularly—1. Our souls with all their faculties. 2. Our bodies. 3. Our time. 4. All our knowledge and literary acquisitions. 5. Our temporal possessions. 6. Our influence. He, then, who withholds from God any of these things, or any part of them, does not comply with the precept in the text. II. WHAT THINGS ARE DUE FROM US TO MEN? 1. All men have a right to our love. 2. To all whom God has made our superiors we owe obedience, submission and respect. 3. To our inferiors we owe kindness, gentleness and condescension. 4. Those of us who are members of Christ's visible church, owe to each other the performance of all the duties which result from our connection. 5. There are some things which we owe our families and connexions. As husbands and wives. Improvement: 1. How great, how inconceivable is the debt which we have contracted both to God and to men! 2. Our need of an interest in the Saviour, and the impossibility of being saved without Him. We evidently cannot discharge our past debts. In Christ is there help. He becomes surety for all who believe in Him. And do not reason, conscience, and a regard to our own happiness, combine with Scripture in urging us to accept the offers of this Divine benefactor, and, constrained by His love, to live henceforth to Him, and not to ourselves? (*Dr. Payson*). *God before Cæsar:*—Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, who, being prisoner to Charles V., was promised enlargement and restitution of dignity, if he would come to mass. "*Summum in terris dominum agnosco Cæsarem, in cœlis Deum.*"—"In all civil accommodations I am ready to yield unto Cæsar, but for heavenly things I have but one Master, and therefore I dare not serve two: Christ is more welcome to me in bonds, than the honours of Cæsar without Christ. (*Dictionary of Illustrations.*) *An offence against Cæsar:*—A boy about nine years of age, who attended a Sabbath-school at Sunderland, requested his mother not to allow his brother to bring home anything that was smuggled when he went to sea. "Why do you wish that, my child?" said the mother. He answered, "Becauee my catechism says it is wrong." The mother replied, "But that is only the word of a man." He said, "Mother, is it the word of a man which said, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's?'" This reply entirely silenced the mother; but his father, still attempting to defend the practice of smuggling, the boy said to him, "Father, whether is it worse to rob one or to rob many?" By these questions and answers, the boy silenced both his parents on the subject of smuggling. (*Biblical Museum.*)

Vers. 18, 27. **In the resurrection.**—*More in Scripture than at first appears:*—These words of Christ show us how much more there is in Scripture than at first sight appears. God spoke to Moses in the bush, and called Himself the God of Abraham; and Christ tells us, that in this simple announcement was contained the promise, that Abraham should rise again from the dead. In truth, if we may say it with reverence, the All-wise All-knowing God cannot speak, without meaning many things at once. He sees the end from the beginning; He understands the

numberless connections and relations of all things one with another. Every word of His is full of instruction looking many ways; and, though it is not often given to us to know these various senses, and we are not at liberty to attempt lightly to imagine them, yet, as far as they are told us, and as far as we may reasonably infer them, we must thankfully accept them. (*J. H. Newman.*) *Christ's proof of immortality* :—Christ raises the question: Could God call Himself Abraham's God if He had permitted his hopes to be disappointed, and his whole life to be dissipated by the touch of death? Whatever we love we seek to keep alive, and, if God loved Abraham, would He let him die? If the Sadducee was right, Abraham was at the time a handful of desert dust in which certainly God could take no peculiar interest. The fact that man can engage the interest of God, speak to Him, enter into covenant with Him; be beloved, embraced, protected by God, is the proof of immortality. Because God lives, he will live also whom God loves. There are many arguments that go to prove immortality, but this is chief, that God loves man, delights in him, and would be Himself bereaved, and spend a desolate eternity, if death robbed Him of the spirits that trust Him. (*R. Glover*). *The error of the Sadducees* :—1. Knowledge of the Scriptures may be very superficial. 2. Christ shows us how to conduct controversy. 3. Jesus enlarges our thoughts of what life is. 4. We are not to measure the unseen by the seen. 5. We cannot ignore one truth without danger of losing our hold on others. 6. The future life differs from the present (1) In its constitution; (2) in its blessedness. 7. A higher existence hereafter suggests the folly of expecting perfection here. 8. Our friends, who "sleep in Jesus" are not dead. (*F. Wagstaff.*) *Materialism and the Resurrection* :—I. THE ARGUMENT. It may be presented in three aspects. 1. After the three patriarchs were dead, and had been in the grave for centuries, God spoke of Himself as their God. If the words assume their then conscious existence as spirits, then it followed (1) that the negative portion of the system of the Sadducees was destroyed. There are spiritual existences. 2. Supposing they do not exist in a state of consciousness, still God considers Himself as sustaining relations to them; He is their God. This, again, disposes of materialistic Sadduceeism. For God cannot sustain that relationship to what has been annihilated—to what has ceased to be—to nothing. 3. The emphasis may be put on the term "God." "I am the God," &c. What is it to be God to a being who has a religious nature, is capable of worship and happiness through Divine relations? How had He shown them He was their God? He called, led, educated, tried them, and taught them to rest implicitly on His word. He promised them a wonderful possession. What seemed to be conveyed by the words was never actually enjoyed. Yet they lived in faith, and died in the exercise of this faith—that in bestowing this possession He would prove Himself to be their God. If the Sadducees were right, there was an end of them and of the Divine faithfulness. It was a commencement without a conclusion, a porch without a temple, a beginning of promise without the termination. II. NOW, THIS SUBJECT WILL CAST LIGHT UPON TWO OTHERS. 1. The manner in which Christ threw light upon the future condition of man. He did not bring life and immortality to light as a new thing. There were indications of it in the ancient Church. He brought out in distinctness, and clearness, and fulness what was involved in mist and fog. Speaking with Divine authority, (1) He took the affirmative side—always took it: resisted the objectors, threw against them arguments from the power of God, and the Scriptures of God. (2) He raised men from the dead. (3) He threw light upon the resurrection—the life of men in glory—long after their bodies had passed away. (4) Then He illustrated and embodied in His own Person everything He taught. He died, was buried, was raised, was changed, was glorified. (5) But greatest of all, by His redemptive work He shows how all could be done according to, and in harmony with, the principles of the Divine government, and the perfection of God's nature. 2. Light is cast upon the state of the pious and holy dead. They live. Martyred saints committed their spirits to the Lord Jesus. 1. If men choose to live "without God" here, they will find hereafter that there is a sense in which the actual relation between Him and them has not been destroyed. 2. The dignity and glory of a religious life. They are to be glorious immortals who love God, cherish religious faith, cultivate acquaintance with the Infinite, and walk in holy obedience. The character of faithful worshippers is to be perpetuated and become eternal. 3. It is of infinite importance that all possess this Divine faith, and live the real life based upon the truth of God and the Gospel of Christ. (*Thomas Binney.*) *Immortality and love* :—I never saw a man that did not believe in the

immortality of love when following the body of a loved one to the grave. I have seen men under other circumstances that did not believe in it; but I never saw a man that, when he stood looking upon the form of one that he really loved stretched out for burial, did not revolt from saying, "It has all come to that: the hours of sweet companionship; the wondrous interlacings of tropical souls, the joys, the hopes, the trusts, the unutterable yearnings—there they all lie." No man can stand and look in a coffin upon the body of a fellow-creature, and remember the flaming intelligence, the blossoming love, the whole range of Divine faculties which so lately animated that cold clay, and say, "These have all collapsed and gone." No person can witness the last sad ceremonials which are performed over the remains of a human being—the sealing down of the unopenable lid, the following of the rumbling procession to the place of burial, the letting of the dust down into dust, the falling of the earth upon the hollow coffin, with those sounds that are worse than thunder, and the placing of the green sod over the grave—no person, unless he be a beast, can witness these things, and then turn away and say, "I have buried my wife; I have buried my child; I have buried my sister, my brother, my love." (*H. W. Beecher.*) *A type of the Resurrection*:—One bright summer day I stood beside a large water-butt, watching the insect life which skimmed its surface and the lower forms of life which revelled and rejoiced in its depths. Whilst thus engaged, I saw a little creature, in the shape of a worm, come up with zig-zag course apparently from the bottom of the butt to its surface. There was a little agitation—the shell broke, and a bright and beautiful insect flew away towards heaven. To my apprehension that was the most beautiful type of the resurrection I ever beheld, and thus has our gracious God filled all nature with appropriate and instructive emblems of the glorious doctrine of the resurrection. (*S. Cocks.*) *The Resurrection*:—In Dr. Brown's work on the resurrection, their is a beautiful parable from Halley. The story is of a servant, who, receiving a silver cup from his master, suffers it to fall into a vessel of aquafortis, and, seeing it disappear, contends in argument with a fellow-servant that its recovery is impossible, until the master comes on the scene, and infuses salt water, which precipitates the silver from the solution; and then, by melting and hammering the metal, he restores it to its original shape. With this incident a sceptic—one of whose great stumbling-blocks was the resurrection—was so struck, that he ultimately renounced his opposition to the gospel, and became a partaker of the Christian hope of immortality. (*S. S. Teacher.*) *Heaven will reveal itself*:—John Bunyan was once asked a question about heaven which he could not answer, because the matter was not revealed in the Scriptures; and he thereupon advised the inquirier to live a holy life and go and see. (*Christian Age*). *Progressive knowledge of the Bible*:—It is curious to compare old and new maps, and to mark the progress of discovery. The black space of ocean is followed by a faint outline of a few miles of coast, marking the termination of an intrepid voyage. Then further portions of the same coast are laid down at intervals as supposed islands. Then by and by these portions are connected, and the outline of a great continent begins to be developed. The "undiscovered" passes into the region of the known and familiar. Thus it is with the Bible. What progress is being made in the discovery of its meaning! How much better acquainted is the Church of Christ now with its spirit, its allusions, its inner and outer history, than the same church during a former period! What a far more true and just idea of the mind of Christ, as manifested in and by the Apostolic Church, have we now than the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries possessed! Distance has increased the magnitude, the extent, the totality, the grandeur in the heaven-kissing mountain range. Individually I find in daily study of the Bible a daily discovery. What was formerly unknown becomes known, and what seemed a solitary coast becomes a part of a great whole, and what seemed wild and strange and lonely becomes to me green pasture and refreshing water—the abode of my fireside affections. And surely I shall read the Bible as an alphabet in heaven. It was my first school-book here, and I hope it will be my first there. What! shall I never know the Spirit which moves the wheels, whose rims are so high that they are dreadful? The only true theory of development is the development of the spiritual eye for the reception of that light which ever shineth. (*Norman Macleod, D.D.*) *Our knowledge of the future state imperfect*:—Whatever correct ideas we have about the heavenly state, are of course derived from the revelation God has made. And yet from the very nature of the subject our ideas must necessarily be vague, and perhaps even incorrect. The information may be, and doubtless is, the very best God could give us; but the unsatisfactoriness of it clearly remains, just because the

subject is so far beyond our present attainments and conceptions. It is like talking of the higher mathematics to a child who has only begun to comprehend the simplest relations of numbers, and to whom the multiplication table is an "Ultima Thule." (*Christian World Pulpit.*) *Like the angels*:—The children of God, in the resurrection, our Saviour says, shall be equal to the angels; or, perhaps, more properly, they shall be like the angels in attributes, station, and employments. Like the angels, they will possess endless youth, activity, power, knowledge, and holiness; enjoy the same immortal happiness, dignity, and Divine favour; be lovely, beautiful, and glorious in the sight of God, and "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Like the angels, shall they be sons, and kings, and priests to God, and live and reign with Him for ever and ever. (*Pres. Dwight.*) *Individual relation to God*:—In our mysterious being we have a double existence; we are part of a body, and God deals with men collectively as communities: yet also we are as much single spirits as if we were alone in the world, each running separately and apart its individual course. To teach men from the first the awful, the difficult truth, that they have each of them a soul—this was the meaning of that discipline of Abraham and the Patriarchs; and the whole history has shown how necessary it was. The visible world is all about us, early and late, wrapping us around, occupying eye and thought and desire; we seem to belong to it, and to it alone; it seems as if we must take our chance with it. And, on the other hand, we know how easily men come to think that being one of a body—even though it were the "seed of Abraham," or "the Church of Christ"—made it less necessary to remember their personal singleness, their personal responsibility. To belong to a "good set," to a religious family, seems to give us a security for ourselves; insensibly, perhaps, we take to ourselves credit for the goodness of our friends, we look at ourselves as if we must be what they are. The soul has indeed to think and to work with others and for others, and for great aims and purposes, out of and beyond itself. For others, and with others, the best parts of its earthly work is done. But first, the soul has to know that sublime truth about itself: that it stands before the Everlasting by itself, and for what it is. Abraham learned it, like Moses, like Elijah, like Isaiah, like St. Paul: in Job and the Psalter we see the early fruits of that discipline. The soul knew itself alone with God; no words could tell the incommunicable secret of the presence of God; and in that secret was wrapped up the seed of its conviction of its mysterious immortality—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This is the first lesson of the masters of the spiritual life. This is the first opening of the eyes to the reality of religion, when it comes upon us in our heart of hearts, in the deep certainties of conscience, that in spite of all that fills the eye and is not ourselves, there is ourself and there is God; and we begin by degrees, as it has been said, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe—two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings—our own soul, and the God who made it. (*Dean Church.*) **As the angels.** — *Employment in heaven*:— What shall we do in heaven? Well, our employments will accord with our state and disposition. Some one of you may perhaps be an artist. Now to paint a fine picture to hang upon somebody's wall on earth is accounted a great thing. Pooh! In heaven, your canvas shall be a soul, and your picture a loving spirit which under your guidance shall become a being of grace and beauty for evermore. On earth, an artist generally paints to make himself a name and earn both money and glory, but in heaven the object and aim of an artist shall be, "Oh, that I might train this soul to be like Christ! Oh, that my work might glorify God!" Some one else here may, I think, be an architect in heaven, not with bricks, stone, mortar, ladders, and rubbish. No; you build houses here; there you shall build human souls into angels. If life in heaven is to be as the angels, we have the joy of knowing that useful and congenial occupation will be our lot. (*W. Birch.*) *Congenial occupation in heaven*:—A lad, who served as a milk-vendor, stood one day in Antwerp cathedral before the glorious picture by Rubens of the bringing down of Christ from the cross. The boy drank in all the beauty of the painting as if it were a thing of life; and it seemed as if the hunger in his soul were satisfied while he gazed upon the marvellous glory of that scene. At length, he turned away with a sigh in his heart, but a light in his eye, saying, "I, also, have in me the soul of a painter!" But he was only a poor boy, who went with a dog and a little cart carrying milk-cans from the country to the people of Antwerp. In his soul he said, "I in soul am an artist!" But he had to go back to his dog and cart and milk cans, and that sort of humdrum work continued to be his daily employment, until having lost his living through a false

accusation, and he and his dog being refused bread, they wandered up and down in the cold of the winter until one day they found themselves weary and starving at the door of the cathedral. The poor boy, with the soul of an artist, followed by his dog, more faithful to him than men and women, walked up the grand aisle of the cathedral, and stood before the glorious picture of Christ. Being weary, he lay down, when the poor dog crouched close to his starving master to warm him, and the boy kissed the head of the faithful beast and fixed his eyes on the sacred canvas. In the morning, the people found a boy and dog both dead, and clasped together. He had the soul of a painter, but he was poor and cold and hungry, yet he died feeling the love of his dog and beholding the picture whose glory had inspired his soul. And the people wept, and mourned over the poor boy whose circumstances had prevented the realization of his heart's desire. In the other world there will be no obstruction to lawful desires, and the possibilities of the human heart shall be granted. Every one of us shall have our opportunity of congenial employment. That which is within the soul and forms our real nature shall come out and have an opportunity of being employed in the service of God and mankind. A man with a musical soul one day went into a shop where he saw a beautiful violin for sale, and with all the money he had, he bought it. He came exultingly out of the shop the possessor of the glorious instrument. Then somebody said to him, "My friend, where is the bow?" He had the fiddle, but he had no bow. In a corresponding way, many of you have the violin in your nature, the capacity for harmony, but circumstances are against you; you cannot realize your earnest resolves because there is something wanting. You were meant to be a poet, and yet are, perhaps, a bricksetter; or you were made to be an artist, and may be only a chimney-sweep; or you may have the instincts of an engineer, and yet are probably chained to a desk in some dingy office, or may be a shoemaker sitting at a stall all day mending boots. These are some of the disciplinary contradictions of this life, where round people are continually found in square holes, and square people in round holes. But in the better land all these "odds" shall be made "even," and an opportunity given to every one to bring out that which God has put within us, and we shall be and do that which harmonizes with our angelic nature and inclination. (*Ibid.*) *Leisure in heaven*:—Most earnest men are too busy in this world to find time to really live and know themselves. They are too much engrossed in the "maddening maze" of things to "watch and pray" and practise self-examination. They are like a steamer which is of excellent build and power of speed, and which is so profitable to its owners that they send it about from port to port and never put it into harbour to survey and restore it; and at length when stress of weather comes, the beautiful, powerful steamer gives way and sinks. Thousands of business men are like that steamer; they perish for want of overhauling and renovation. They are too busy to think of God, and death, and judgment. They are too busy to do a good deed in any way except putting their hand into their pocket to give something to a charitable institution, or throwing a copper to some unfortunate beggar. In the other world these over-busy men will have time to think of God and of themselves. The life of the other world will without doubt be progressive. Progress or development is the law of creation. There is progress on earth, and there will be progress in heaven. Your life is to be as a pure river which cannot be defiled or overshadowed by evil. We shall have to learn to forgive, learn to be pure, learn to be loving, learn to be kind. Have you learned these things on earth? Not fully; but you are trying to learn them; if so, you shall be as the angels and finish your education in heaven. There has been only One who went perfect into heaven. That perfect being was Jesus, and He has promised that His Spirit shall be with every one who desires to follow Him. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 30. **And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.**—*Love to God secures all blessings*:—"Love not pleasure," says Carlyle; "love God. This the Everlasting Yea wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein he who so walks and works, it is well with him." *Love to God contrasted with not loving Him*:—Man not loving God, not looking upward and outward, becomes sensual. He spends his time in feeding his body, in satisfying his appetites, in grovelling in the dust, in joining himself to earth, that God made simply for his footstool and his pathway, and he forgets the realm of empire over nature, and over ideas, and over thoughts, that God opens out before him; and hence, without love of God, man is the animal; with love to God, he is the seraph; without love to God, he lives for

his appetites and is debased; with love to God, he lives in His affections and rises toward glory; without love to God, he crawls like the worm; with love to God, he soars like the seraph, flames like the cherubs; without love to God, he goes downward until he is ready to make his bed with dæmons; with love to God, he rises above angels and archangels, and is preparing for the throne of God. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *Love to God the supreme feeling:*—A man may be weary of life, but never of Divine love. Histories tell us of many that have been weary of their lives, but no histories can furnish us with an instance of any one that was ever weary of Divine love. As the people prized David above themselves, saying, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us;" so they that indeed have God for their portion, oh, how do they prize God above themselves, and above everything below themselves! and, doubtless, they that do not lift up God above all, they have no interest in God at all. (*Thomas Brooks.*) *The great commandment:*—When Tom Paine, the man who did so much mischief years ago in spreading infidel opinions, and making our Bible a laughing-stock, resided in New Jersey, he was one day passing the house of Dr. Staughton, when the Doctor was sitting at the door. Paine stopped, and after some remarks of a general character observed, "Mr. Staughton, what a pity it is that a man has not some comprehensive and perfect rule for the government of his life." The Doctor replied, "Mr. Paine, there is such a rule." "What is that?" Paine inquired. Dr. Staughton repeated the passage, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Abashed and confounded, Paine replied, "Oh, that's in your Bible," and immediately walked away. The great commandment from which the infidel turned away, is the rule which Christians accept, love, and try to obey. *The nature of our love to Christ:*—I. It must be sincere, with all the heart. II. Intelligent, with all the mind. III. Emotional, with all the soul. IV. Intense and energetic, with all the strength. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The two great commandments: all true love is one:*—The first commandment is very great, but the second is not little. They are upper and nether pools, and the same fountain fills them. He who is richest in the love of God has the greatest advantage for loving his neighbour—for loving his family, his household, his country, and the world. And that is the best and happiest state of things, the primal and truly natural, where, springing from under the throne of God, with a bright and heaven-reflecting piety, love fills the upper pool, and then, through the open flower-fringed channel of filial affection and the domestic charities, flows softly till it again expands in neighbourly kindness and unreserved philanthropy. The channel may be choked. The devotee may close it up in the hope of raising the level in the first and great reservoir, and by arresting the current he causes an overflow and converts into swamp the surrounding garden. In the same way the materialist or worldling, content with the lower pool, may fill up the conduit, and declare that he is no longer dependent on the upper magazine; but from the isolated cistern quickly evaporates the scanty supply, and thick with slime, weltering with worms, the stagnant residue mocks the thirsty owner, or, as over the bubbling malaria he persists to linger, it fills his frame with the mortal poison. Cut off from living water, receiving from on high no consecrating element, human affection is too sure to end in the disgust of a disappointed idolatry or the mad despair of a total bereavement; whilst the mystic theopathy, which in order to give the whole heart to God gives none to its fellows, will soon have no heart at all. Love is of God, and all true love is one. The piety which is not humane will soon grow superstitious and gloomy; in cases like Dominic and Philip II. we see that it may soon grow bloodthirsty and cruel; nor, on the other hand, will brotherly love long continue if the love of God is not shed abroad abundantly. (*Hamilton.*) *Supreme love to God impossible without a Saviour:*—The Rev. M. Jeanmarie, a widely known French Protestant pastor, has recently passed away. The story of his conversion appears in the continental journals, and is a fine example of the power of the Word of God. He was at the time a preceptor in a family of the House of Hohenlohe and a rationalist. A neighbouring preacher asked him to supply for him. He declined on the plea of "How could he preach what he did not believe?" "What! not believe in God?" "Yes, I do that." "And surely you believe that man should love Him?" "Doubtless." "Well, then, preach on the words of Jesus, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and strength.'" "I will try, just to oblige you." He thought over the words, and took note:—"1. We must love God, and the reasons thereof. 2. We must love Him with all our powers in very deed; nothing short of this could satisfy God. 3. But do we thus love God? . . ." "No!" and then said he, "Without any

previously formed plan I was brought to add, 'We need a Saviour.' At that moment a new light broke upon my soul; I understood that *I* had not loved God, that *I* needed a Saviour, that Jesus was that Saviour: and I loved Him and clung to Him at once. On the morrow I preached the sermon, and the third head was the chief—viz., the need of Jesus, and the necessity of trusting to such a Saviour." (*Christian Age.*)

The properties of love:—Because many deceive themselves in thinking that they love God, when they do not, it is needful to set down the marks of the true love of God, by which we may ascertain whether it be in us or not. The principal are these: 1. A deliberate preferring and esteeming of God above all things in the world, though never so excellent or dear to us. 2. A desire to be united and joined to God in most near communion with Him, both in this life and the next. 3. A high estimation of the special tokens and pledges of God's love to us—the Bible, Sacraments, &c. 4. A conscientious care to obey God's will, and to serve and honour Him in our calling. 5. Joy and delight in the duties of God's service and worship. 6. Zeal for God's glory, causing in us a holy grief and indignation when we see or hear that God is dishonoured by sin. 7. Love is bountiful, making us willing and ready to give and bestow much upon the person we love. 8. True love to the saints and children of God. (*G. Petter.*)

Love to God and men:—Man's life, rightly ordered, revolves, like the earth upon which he dwells, upon an axis with two fixed poles. That axis is love, and the poles are God and man. The love thus defined and exercised fulfils the whole law. It embraces in its scope all of man's duties, religious and moral. Consider—I. THE NATURE OF THIS LOVE. 1. An affection of the soul. 2. An all-inclusive affection, embracing not only every other affection proper to its object, but all that is proper to be done to its object. 3. The most personal of all affections. One may fear an event, hope for and rejoice in it; but one can love only a person. 4. The tenderest, most unselfish, most divine of all affections. Such is that axial principle, on which man's life, when obedient to God, revolves. It reminds us of that great discovery of the age, which has traced the various powers of nature—light, heat, electricity, &c.—back to one great original force, from which they all spring and into which they are convertible. Like the mythic Proteus, that force changes its form according to the exigency of the time, now appearing as heat, then as light, then as magnetism, then as motion—so this love, which is the fulfilment of the law, is at the basis of all acts of piety and of all forms of virtue (1 Cor. xiii.). II. THE OBJECT OF THIS LOVE. 1. God is the first and supreme object. 2. True love of God begets love to man. The latter, resulting from the former, must needs occupy a subordinate position. The fountain is higher than the stream, and includes it. III. THE DEGREE IN WHICH THIS LOVE TO GOD SHOULD BE EXERCISED. It should not be a languid affection, but one in which all the powers of man's nature are engaged. The various parts of our complex being are summoned to contribute their utmost force to the formation of it. 1. With the heart: perfectly hearty and sincere. 2. With the soul: ardent—full of warmth and feeling. 3. With the mind: intelligent. God does not want fanatical devotion. 4. With the strength: energetic and intense. In a word, our love to God is to be of the most earnest, real, and vital sort; one into which we are to put the whole of our being, as a plant puts into its flower the united forces of root and leaf and stem. IV. THIS LOVE IS POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH CHRIST. He reveals to us the almighty, incomprehensible Creator, who would otherwise be to us a mere abstraction. V. FALSE AND TRUE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS LOVE. 1. Take care not to let it become a matter more of outward form than of inward reality. 2. The real proof of love is its willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of its object. (*A. H. Currier.*)

The mind's love:—The love of God fills the mind, when knowledge gathereth all things with reference to God; when speculation ever weigheth the things of God with the things of men; when imagination compareth all things with the things of God; when memory storeth in her treasure things of God, new and old; when the thoughts ever turn to God, as their end; when all studies are in God, and there is no study which hath not God for its end. We are always thinking of something, at all times, and in all places; we can behold no object in the earth or sky, but thought is busy with the same. The thoughts are according to the heart. If one might say it with reverence, as angelic ministrations execute God's will, so are the thoughts to the heart and soul of man ever busy traversing and returning, through earth and heaven, as the heart wills. And these, in the good man, are ever full of God. (*Isaac Williams, M.A.*)

Love:—Observe that love is not merely one way of fulfilling the Law. It is the best way. Far better to love a man so much that to steal from him would be impossible, than merely to refrain

from stealing in obedience to the Eighth Commandment. Nay, more, it is the only way. One who would steal, but for his sense of its being forbidden, and therefore wrong, already sins against his neighbour by breaking the Tenth Commandment. 1. Love brings all the powers of man's soul into interior harmony. 2. It begets obedience, both inward and outward. 3. It begets a strong desire after God. 4. It finds God in everything. 5. It is the mainspring of the soul, controlling hands, feet, eyes, lips, brain, life. (*Anon.*) *Love is the most important thing*:—"Father," asked the son of Bishop Berkeley, "what is the meaning of the words 'cherubim' and 'seraphim,' which we meet with in the Bible?" "Cherubim," replied his father, "is a Hebrew word signifying knowledge; seraphim is another word of the same language, signifying flame. Whence it is supposed that the cherubim are angels who excel in knowledge; and that the seraphim are angels likewise who excel in loving God." "I hope, then," said the little boy, "when I die I shall be a seraph, for I would rather love God than know all things." *The first and great commandment*:—I. WHETHER WE ARE POSSESSED OF THIS SUPREME LOVE TO GOD? A sincere love manifests itself by approbation, preference, delight, familiarity. Do these terms express the state of our affections towards our heavenly Father? 1. Do we cordially approve all that the Scriptures reveal concerning His character and His dealings with men? 2. Approbation, however, is the very lowest token of this Divine affection. What we really love we distinguish by a decided preference: we have compared it with other things, and have come to the conclusion that it is more excellent than all of them. 3. Further, the love of God will lead us to delight in Him. 4. I will mention but one more sign of love unfeigned; which is seen when a person courts the society and familiar intimacy of the object of his affections. II. BY WHAT MEANS A SPIRIT OF LOVE TO GOD MAY BE ACQUIRED, IF WE HAVE IT NOT, OR INCREASED, IF WE HAVE. 1. The first step is to feel our utter deficiency in this duty. 2. Take up your Bible, and learn the character of Him whom you have so neglected. 3. These views of the love of God, however, will, in great measure, be ineffectual, till you have actually cast yourself at the foot of the cross, and believed in Jesus Christ for the justification of your own soul. 4. My next direction for cherishing this spirit of love to God is, that you should carefully guard against everything in your temper and conduct which might grieve the Spirit of God. 5. I would press upon you the necessity of frequent communion with your reconciled God in prayer and thanksgiving. (*Joseph Jowett, M.A.*) *Love to God*:—I. A TRUE LOVE TO GOD HAS THREE PRINCIPAL CONSTITUENT PARTS. 1. The love of desire, which takes its origin from the wants of man, and the fitness and willingness of God to supply them. 2. The love of gratitude, arising from the sense of the Divine goodness to us. 3. A disinterested love, having as its foundation the excellence and perfection of God considered in themselves, and without any reference to the advantages we derive from them. II. THE MEASURE OF DIVINE LOVE. 1. That we must love God supremely above any other object. 2. With all the ardour and intensity of our soul. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *The life of Christian consecration*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THIS LOVE. The whole man must be enlisted in our love of God; all the force of our life must go to express and to fulfil it. 1. God claims from us a warm personal affection. 2. God must be loved for His moral excellence. Not only must our conscience approve our affection; it will be ever supplying us with new material for exalted worship of Him. The sense of righteousness will kindle gratitude into adoration. 3. God claims from us an intelligent affection. Our intelligence must have full scope, if our love of God is to be full. 4. God claims from us that we love with all our strength. The whole force of our character is to be in our affection for Him. Men devote their energies to worldly pursuits. II. THE UNITY OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THIS LOVE. The command of our text is introduced by a solemn proclamation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The object of Moses in declaring the unity of God was to guard the Jews against idolatry; my object in dwelling on it is to claim from you the consecration of all your powers. A simple illustration will make both these points clear. Polygamy is contrary to the true idea of marriage; he who has many wives cannot love one of them as a wife should be loved. Equally is the ideal of marriage violated if a man cannot or will not render to his wife the homage of his whole nature. His affection itself will be partial instead of full, and his heart will be distracted, if, whatever her amiability may be, her conduct offends his moral sensibilities; if he cannot trust her judgment and accept her counsel; if she is a hindrance to him and not a help in the practical business of life. Many a man's spiritual life is distracted and made inefficient, simply because his whole

being is not engrossed in his religion; one-sidedness in devotion is sure to weaken, and tends ultimately to destroy it. Consider the infinite worthiness of God. He is the source and object of all our powers. There is not a faculty which has not come from Him; which is not purified and exalted by consecration to Him. And as all our powers make up one man—reason and emotion, conscience and will uniting in a complete human life—so, for spiritual harmony and religious satisfaction, there must be the full consecration and discipline of all our powers. Again and again is this truth set before us in the Bible. The blind and the lame were forbidden for sacrifice; the maimed and imperfect were banished from the congregation of the Lord. The whole man is redeemed by Christ—body, soul, and spirit, all are to be presented a living sacrifice. The gospel is intended, not to repress our powers, nor to set a man at strife with himself, but to develop and enlarge the whole sphere of life; and he wrongs the Author of the gospel, and mars his own spiritual perfection, who allows any faculty to lie by disused in God's service. Look at the same truth in another aspect; consider how our powers aid one another in gaining a true apprehension of God. The sensibilities of love give us insight into His character, and furnish us with motives for active service of Him. On the other hand, intelligent esteem of God expands affection for Him, and preserves it strong when mere emotion will have died away. Obedience is at once the organ of spiritual knowledge, and the minister of an increasing faith. "They that know Thy name," says the Psalmist, "will put their trust in Thee." III. THE GROUNDS AND IMPULSES OF THIS LOVE. In reality it has but one reason—God is worthy of it; and the impulse to render it comes directly from our perception of His worthiness and the knowledge that He desires it from us. The claim for love, like all the Divine claims, is grounded in the character of God Himself; and it takes the form of commandment here because the Jews were "under the law." There are, however, two thoughts suggested by the two titles given by Moses to God, which will help us in further illustration of our subject. (1) Moses speaks of God as Jehovah, the self-existent, self-sufficing One. God is the source and author of all, wherever found, that awakens love in man. When once the idea of God has taken full possession of the soul, there is not a perfection which we do not attribute in infinite measure to Him. (2) Moses calls Jehovah "the Lord our God," reminding His people that God had singled them out from all the nations of the earth, that they were "precious in His sight and honourable;" and that all they knew of His excellence and goodness had come to them through their perception of what He had done for them. "We love Him, because He first loved us;" this is the Christian reading of the thought of Moses. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Of loving God*:—I. THE DUTY ENJOINED IS, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." A true love of God must be founded upon a right sense of His perfections being really amiable in themselves, and beneficial to us: and such a love of God will of necessity show forth itself in our endeavouring to practise the same virtues ourselves, and exercise them towards others. All perfection is in itself lovely and amiable in the very nature of the thing: the virtues and excellencies of men remote in history, from whom we can receive no personal advantage, excite in us an esteem whether we will or no: and every good mind, when it reads or thinks upon the character of an angel, loves the idea, though it has no present communication with the subject to whom so lovely a character belongs: much more the inexhaustible Fountain of all perfections; of perfections without number and without limit; the Centre, in which all excellencies unite, in which all glory resides, and from which every good thing proceeds, cannot but be the supreme object of love to a reasonable and intelligent mind. Even supposing we ourselves received no benefit therefrom, yet infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom in conjunction, are lovely in the very idea, and amiable even in the abstract imagination. But that which makes these perfections most truly and substantially, most really and permanently, the object of our love, is the application of them to ourselves, and our own more immediate concerns, by the consideration of their being joined also with those relative and moral excellencies, which make them at the same time no less beneficial to us than they are excellent absolutely in their own nature. I say, then is it that God truly appears the complete object of love, for so our Saviour Himself teaches us to argue (Luke vii. 47)—To whom much is forgiven, he will love the more; and the apostle St. John (1 John iv. 19)—"We," says he, "love Him, because He first loved us." This, therefore, is the true ground and foundation of our love towards God. But wherein this love towards God consists, and by what acts it is most properly exercised, has sometimes been very much misunderstood. It always signifies a moral virtue, not a passion or affection; and is therefore in Scripture always

with great care explained and declared to mean the obedience of a virtuous life, in opposition to the enthusiasm of a vain imagination. In the Old Testament, Moses, in his last exhortation to the Israelites, thus expresses it (Deut. x. 12): "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to love Him?" And what is loving Him? Why, He tells them in the very next words, 'tis, "To walk in all His ways, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good." And again (2 John 6), "This," says he, "is love, that we walk after His commandments." For what is rational love but a desire to please the person beloved, and a complacency or satisfaction in pleasing him? To love God, therefore, is to have a sincere desire of obeying His laws, and a delight or pleasure in the conscience of that obedience. Even to an earthly superior, to a parent, or a prince, love can no otherwise be shown from a child or a servant than by cheerfully observing the laws, and promoting the true interest of the government he is under. Now from this account which has been given of the true nature of love towards God, it will be easy for us to correct the errors which men have sometimes fallen into in both extremes. Some have been very confident of their love towards God from a mere warmth of superstitious zeal and enthusiastic affection, without any great care to bring forth in their lives the fruits of righteousness and true holiness. On the contrary, others there are, who though they really love and fear and serve God in the course of a virtuous and religious life, yet, because they feel not in themselves that warmth of affection which many enthusiasts pretend to, therefore they are afraid and suspect that they do not love God sincerely as they ought. II. Having thus at large explained the duty enjoined in the text, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," I proceed now in the second place to consider briefly THE CIRCUMSTANCES REQUISITE TO MAKE THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY ACCEPTABLE AND COMPLETE: "Thou shalt love Him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." In St. Luke it is somewhat more distinctly: "With all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." 1. It must be sincere: we must love or obey Him with all our heart. 'Tis not the external act only, but the inward affection of the mind principally that God regards, an affection of mind which influences all a man's actions in secret as well as in public, which determines the person's true character or denomination, and distinguishes him who really is a servant of God from him who only seems or appears to be so. 2. Our obedience must be universal: we must love God with all our soul, or with our whole soul. He does not love God in the Scripture sense who obeys Him in some instances only and not in all. The Psalmist places his confidence in this only, that he "had respect unto all God's commandments" (Psa. cxix. 6). Generally speaking, most men's temptation lies principally in some one particular instance, and this is the proper trial of the person's obedience, or of his love towards God. 3. Our obedience must be constant and persevering in time as well as universal in its extent; we must love God with all our strength, persevering in our duty without fainting. "He that endureth to the end," saith our Saviour, "the same shall be saved;" and "he that overcometh shall inherit all things;" and "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." The Scripture notion of obedience is, walking "in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luke i. 75). 4. Our obedience to God ought to be willing and cheerful: we must love Him with all our mind. "They that love Thy name will be joyful in Thee" (Psa. v. 12): and St. Paul, among the fruits of the Spirit, reckons up peace and joy "in the Holy Ghost." But virtue becomes more perfect when 'tis made easy by love, and by habitual practice incorporated as it were into a man's very nature and temper. III. The last thing observable in the text is THE WEIGHT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DUTY: it is the "first and great commandment." The reason is, because 'tis the foundation of all; and without regard to God, there can be no religion. (*Samuel Clarke, D.D.*) *On the love of God:*—It is the improved ability of the head that forms the philosopher, but 'tis the right disposition of the heart that chiefly makes the Christian. 'Tis our love directed to that Being, who is most worthy of it, as the Centre in which all excellencies unite, and the Source from which all blessings proceed. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." 'Tis not the mere action that is valuable in itself. 'Tis the love from which it proceeds that stamps a value upon it, and gives an endearing charm and beauty to it. When a servile fear engrosses the whole man, it locks up all the active powers of the soul, it cramps the abilities, and is

rather a preservative against sin than an incentive to virtue. But love quickens our endeavours, and emboldens our resolutions to please the object beloved; and the more amiable ideas we entertain of our Master, the more cheerful, liberal, and animated the service that we render Him will consequently be. Upon love, therefore, the Scriptures have justly laid the greatest stress, that love which will give life and spirit to our performances. I. I SHALL INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE AND FOUNDATION OF OUR LOVE TO THE DEITY. The love of God may be defined a fixed, habitual, and grateful regard to the Deity, founded upon a sense of His goodness, and expressing itself in a sincere desire to do whatever is agreeable, and avoid whatever is offensive to Him. The process of the mind I take to be this. The mind considers that goodness is everywhere stamped upon the creation, and appears in the work of redemption in distinct and bright characters. It considers, in the next place, that goodness, a lovely form, is the proper object of love and esteem, and goodness to us the proper object of gratitude. But as goodness exists nowhere but in the imagination without some good Being who is the subject of it, it goes on to consider that love, esteem, and gratitude is a tribute due to that Being, in whom an infinite fulness of goodness ever dwells, and from whom incessant emanations of goodness are ever flowing. Nor does the mind rest here; it takes one step farther to reflect that a cold speculative esteem and a barren, unactive gratitude is really no sincere esteem or gratitude at all, which will ever vent itself in strong endeavours to imitate a delight to please and a desire to be made happy by the Being beloved. If it be objected that we cannot love a Being that is invisible, I answer that what we chiefly love in visible beings of our own kind is always something invisible. Whence arises that relish of beauty in our own species? Do we love it merely as it is a certain mixture of proportion and colours? No; for, though these are to be taken into the account as two material ingredients, yet something else is wanting to beget our love; something that animates the features and bespeaks a mind within. Otherwise we might fall in love with a mere picture or any lifeless mass of matter that was entertaining to the eye. We might be as soon smitten with a dead, uninformed, unmeaning countenance, where there was an exact symmetry and regularity of features, as with those faces which are enlivened by a certain cheerfulness, ennobled by a certain majesty, or endeared by a certain complacency diffused over their whole mien. Is not this therefore the chief foundation of our taste for beauty, that it giveth us, as we think, some outward notices of noble, benevolent, and valuable qualities in the mind? Thus a sweetness of mien and aspect charms the more because we look upon it as an indication of a much sweeter temper within. In a word, though the Deity cannot be seen, numerous instances of His goodness are visible throughout the frame of nature. And wherever they are seen, they naturally command our love. But we cannot love goodness abstractedly from some Being in which it is supposed to inhere. For that would be to love an abstract idea. Hitherto, indeed, it is only the love of esteem. The transition, however, from that to a love of enjoyment, or a desire of being made happy by Him, is quick and easy: for, the more lovely ideas we entertain of any being, the more desirous we shall be to do his pleasure and procure his favour. Having thus shown the foundation of our love to God, I proceed—II. To STATE THE DEGREE AND POINT OUT THE MEASURES OF OUR LOVE TO HIM. The meaning of these words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," is, that we are to serve God with all those faculties which He has given us: not that the love of God is to be exclusive of all other loves, but of all other rival affections; that, whenever the love of God and that of the world come in competition, the former undoubtedly ought to take place of the latter. To love God, therefore, with all our heart is so far from excluding all inferior complacencies that it necessarily comprehends them. Our love must begin with the creature, and end in Him as the highest link in the chain. We must love, as well as argue, upwards from the effect to the cause; and because there are several things desirable even here under proper regulations, conclude that He, the Maker of them, ought to be the supreme, not the only, object of our desires. We cannot love God in Himself without loving Him in and for His works. We are not to parcel out our affections between piety and sin. Then is our affection like a large diamond, most valuable, when it remains entire and unbroken, without being cut out into a multitude of independent and disjointed parts. To love the Lord with all our strength is to put forth the active powers of the soul in loving and serving Him. It is to quicken the wheels and springs of actions that moved on heavily before. It is to do well without being weary of

well-doing. The love of God is a settled, well-grounded, rational delight in Him, founded upon conviction and knowledge. It is seated in the understanding, and therefore not necessarily accompanied with any brisker agitations of spirits, though, indeed, the body may keep pace with the soul, and the spirits flow in a more sprightly torrent to the heart, when we are affected by any advantageous representation of God, or by a reflection on His blessings. This I thought necessary to observe, because some weak men of a sanguine complexion are apt to be elated upon the account of those short-lived raptures and transient gleams of joy which they feel within themselves; and others of a phlegmatic constitution to despond, because they cannot work themselves up to such a degree of fervour. Whereas nothing is more precarious and uncertain than that affection which depends upon the ferment of the blood. It naturally ceases as soon as the spirits flag and are exhausted. Men of this make sometimes draw near to God with great fervency, and at other times are quite estranged from Him, like those great bodies which make very near approaches to the sun, and then all at once fly off to an immeasurable distance from the source of light. You meet a person at some happy time, when his heart overflows with joy and complacency: he makes you warm advances of friendship, he gives you admittance to the inmost secrets of his soul, and prevents all solicitation by offering, unasked, those services which you, in this soft and gentle season of address, might have been encouraged to ask. Wait but till this flush of good humour and flow of spirits is over, and you will find all this overwarmth of friendship settle into coldness and indifference; and himself as much differing from himself as any one person can from another; whereas a person of a serious frame and composure of mind, consistent with himself, and therefore constant to you, goes on, without any alternate heats and colds in friendship, in an uninterrupted tenour of serving and obliging his friend. Which of these two is more valuable in himself and acceptable to you? The answer is very obvious. Just so a vein of steady, regular, consistent piety is more acceptable to that Being with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of change, than all passionate sallies and short intermitting fits of an unequal devotion. Truly to love God is not then to have a few warm notions about the Deity fluttering for a while in the breast, and afterwards leaving it void and empty of goodness. But it is to have the love of God dwelling in us. It is not a religious mood or humour, but a religious temper. It is not to be now and then pleased with our Maker in the gaiety of the heart, when, more properly speaking, we are pleased with ourselves. It is not to have a few occasional transient acts of complacency and delight in the Lord rising in our minds when we are in a vein of good humour, as the seed in the parable soon sprung up and soon withered away, because it had no root and deepness of earth, but it is to have a lasting, habitual, and determinate resolution to please the Deity rooted and grounded in our hearts, and influencing our actions throughout. III. I PROCEED TO EXAMINE HOW FAR THE FEAR OF THE DEITY IS CONSISTENT WITH THE LOVE OF HIM. "There is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared," is a passage in the Psalms very beautiful, as well as very apposite, to our present purpose. The thought is surprising, because it was obvious to think the sentence should have concluded thus: There is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be loved. And yet it is natural, too, since we shall be afraid to draw upon ourselves His displeasure, whom we sincerely love. The more we have an affection for Him, the more we shall dread a separation from Him. Love, though it casteth out all servile fear, yet does not exclude such a fear as a dutiful son shows to a very affectionate but a very wise and prudent father. And we may rejoice in God with reverence, as well as serve Him with gladness. For love, if not allayed and tempered with fear and the apprehensions of Divine justice, would betray the soul into a sanguine confidence and an ill-grounded security. Fear, on the other hand, if not sweetened and animated by love, would sink the mind into a fatal despondency. Fear, therefore, is placed in the soul as a counterpoise to the more enlarged, kindly, and generous affections. It is in the human constitution what weights are to some machines, very necessary to adjust, regulate, and balance the motion of the fine, curious, and active springs. Happy the man who can command such a just and even poise of these two affections, that the one shall do nothing but deter him from offending, while the other inspirits him with a hearty desire of pleasing the Deity. (*J. Seed, D.D.*) *Love of God peculiar to Christianity*:—Do you know that ours is almost, if not quite, the only religion which teaches us to love God? The heathen do not love their gods. They are afraid of them; they are such horrid, ugly things; they are so fierce; they fear them. It

was thought that the Esquimaux had no word for "love" in their language. At last they found one nearly two lines long. It makes two lines in a book—you could hardly say it. But ours is very short. If I were an Esquimaux, and I had to say "love," I should have to write a word of two lines, made up of all sorts of words. It is a great privilege that we can love God. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Love buried*:—I have heard it said of a man, "That man is a grave!" because something in him lay dead and buried. What do you think it was? Love. Love was dead and buried in him, so the man was a grave! I hope I have no graves here. I hope there is nobody here that is a grave; a person in whom love lies dead and buried. (*Ibid.*) *Thy God*:—"Thou shalt love the Lord *thy* God." You won't love Him, you will never love the Lord, till you can call Him yours. "*Thy* God." "*My* God." "He is *my* God." If a little girl likes her doll, she says, "*My* doll." If a boy likes his hoop or bat, he says, "*My* hoop; *my* bat." We say, "*My* father; *my* mother; *my* brother; *my* sister; *my* little wife; *my* husband." "*My*" is such a nice word. Till you can say "thy" or "my" you will not love God. But when you can say, "*My* God!" then you will begin to love Him. "The Lord *thy* God." When one of the Roman emperors—after a great triumph, a military victory—was coming back to Rome, he went up the Appian hill in great state, with his foes dragged at his chariot wheels. Many soldiers surrounded him, adding to his triumphant entry. On going up the hill, a little child broke through the crowd. "You must not go there," said the soldiers, "that is the emperor." The little child replied, "True, he is *your* emperor, *but he is my father!*" It was the emperor's own little boy. He said, "He is *your* emperor, but he is *my* father." I hope we shall be able to say that of God. He is the God of everybody; but he is *my God* specially. He is not only the Creator of the world,—but He is *my God!* (*Ibid.*) *How it is that we love God*:—What is the way to do it? I will tell you. When I look at some of you boys and girls down there, I cannot see much of your right cheek, but I can see your left cheek very clearly, because the light comes that way, shines directly down upon you. That is the way I see them. How do I love God? Love comes from God on me; then it shines back again on Him. I must put myself where God can shine upon me; then His love shining upon me will make a reflection go back again to Him. There is no love to God without that. It is all God's love reflected back to Him. Have not you sometimes seen the sun setting in the evening, and it has been shining so brightly on a house that you have thought, "Really that house is on fire"? It was only the light of the sun shining back again, the reflection. So if the love of God shines on your heart, then it will shine back in love to Him. Did you ever go near a great high rock where there was an echo? You said a word, back it comes to you; you said, "Come! come!" It said, "Come! come!" It was an echo. It was your voice coming back to you. It is God's love that comes back to you when you love Him. It is not your love. You have no right to it. It is God's love shining upon you makes your love go back to Him. God's love touching you goes back to Him. That is the way. I hope you will so love God. (*Ibid.*) *Love for God at the bottom of everything*:—In one of the wars in which the Emperor Napoleon was engaged, we read that one of his old soldiers, a veteran, sustained a very bad wound; and the surgeon came to dress it and probe it. He was feeling it with his probe, when the man said to the surgeon, "Sir, go deep enough; if you go quite deep, you will find at the bottom of my wound 'emperor!'" It was all for the love of the emperor. "You will find the word 'emperor' at the bottom of my wound." I wish I could think in all our wounds, on everything we do, we could find quite at the bottom of it, "I have got this wound for love of the Emperor. The love of my Emperor has given me this wound." O that we might find at the bottom of everything, "God!" God!" (*Ibid.*) *Love for God supreme*:—I will tell you another thing. Many years ago, there lived a schoolmaster in the Netherlands. It was at the time that a very wicked persecution was going on against the Protestants, when they had "The Inquisition." It was a very cruel thing. The inquisitors, as they were called, put this poor man to the torture of the rack. They pulled his limbs almost asunder. This rack was a horrible instrument! have you ever seen one? You may see them in some museums. These inquisitors put men on the rack, and then pulled their joints out, thus putting them to horrible pain! When on the rack, the inquisitor said to this poor schoolmaster, "Do you love your wife and children? Won't you, for the sake of your wife and children, give up this religion of yours? Won't you give it up?" The poor old schoolmaster said, "If this earth were all gold, if all the stars were pearls, and if that golden globe and those pearly stars

were all mine, I would give them all up to have my wife and children with me. I would rather stay in this prison, and live on bread and water with my wife and children, than live like a king without them. *But I will not* for the sake of pearls, or gold, or wife, or children, *give up my religion*, for I love my God more than wife, or child, or gold, or pearls." But the inquisitors' hearts did not soften a bit; they went on inflicting more tortures, till the man died on the rack. He loved God with "all his mind, and soul, and heart, and strength." Do you think *we* could go to the death for Him? If we love Him, we shall every day do something for Him. What have you done this day to show your love to God? (*Ibid.*) *I should just like to point you to a few ways by which we may show our love to God*:—Supposing you had got a very dear friend—some one whom you loved very much—should you like to be quite alone with that friend, and tell him your secrets, and for him to tell you his secrets? Did you ever do that? If you have a friend, I am sure you would like to be quite alone with him, and talk secrets. This is just what you will do with God if you love Him—you will like to be quite alone with Him; you will tell Him your secrets, and God will tell you His secrets. He has promised this, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." He will tell you things He does not tell to everybody. He will tell you things you have not heard before. I will tell you another thing. Do you know anybody you love very much? If they go away from you, don't you like to have a letter from them? and when a letter does come, don't you read it from beginning to end without one wandering thought? I don't think you can say your lessons without a wandering thought; but if you had a letter from a dear friend, I think you would give it all your best attention—from the first word to the last. Well, is there a letter from God? Yes. Here it is—the Bible! It is a letter from God Himself. If you love God, you will love His letter, and you will read it very lovingly, and attentively, and give your whole mind to it. (*Ibid.*) *Loving those like God*:—If you have got a friend you love very much, you will like anybody who is like your friend. You will say sometimes, "I quite like that person, she is so like my mother; he is so like my friend." You will love other Christian people, because you can say of them, "They are so like my Jesus, so like my God. I will love them therefore." So you will like poor people. I will tell you why. I will tell you a little story, I do not know whether you ever heard of it. There was a gentleman who always used to say grace before dinner, and he used to say,

"Be present at our table, Lord,
Be here and everywhere adored:"

and his little child, his little boy, said, "Papa, you always ask Jesus Christ to come and be present at our table, but He never comes. You ask Him every day, but He never does come." His father said, "Well, wait and see." While at dinner that very day, there was a little knock at the door, given by a very poor man indeed, and he said, "I am starving; I am very poor and miserable. I think God loves me, and I love God, but I am very miserable; I am hungry, wretched, and cold." The gentleman said, "Come in; come and sit down, and have a bit of our dinner." The little boy said, "You may have all my helping." So he gave him all his helping; and a very nice dinner the poor man had. The father—after dinner—said, "Didn't Jesus come? You said He never came. There was that poor man, and Christ said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me!' Christ sends His representatives! What you have done to that poor man, it is the same as if you had done it unto God." Then I am sure if you love people very much, you will love to work for them, and you will not mind how hard, because you love them. If you love God, you will love to do something for God. Like Jacob felt about Rachel: "He served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." I will tell you one more thing. If you love a person very much, and he has gone away from you, you will love to think he is coming back again. (*Ibid.*) *Do you love Jesus?*—A long time ago, a gentleman, a young man, was travelling in a coach, and opposite to him there sat a lady, and the lady had a very little girl on her lap, a very sweet pretty little girl. This young man was very much pleased with the little girl: he played with her, took great notice of her, he lent her his penknife to play with; and he sang to her, and he told her little stories; he liked her so exceedingly. When the coach arrived at the hotel where they were to stop, this little girl put her face close to the young man's, and said, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" The young man could not catch it, and so he asked,

"What do you say, my dear?" She said again, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" He blushed, and went out of the coach, but he could not forget the question. There was a large party to dinner, but he could hear nothing but, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" After dinner, he went to play billiards, and while playing he could not forget it—"Does 'oo love Jesus?" He went to bed, uncomfortable in his mind. When on his bed at night, in his wakeful moments and in his dreams, he could only hear the same question, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" The next day he had to meet a lady by appointment, he was still thinking about it, he could not forget it, but spoke a little out loud, and when the young lady came in, he said, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" She said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I forgot you were present. I was saying what a very little girl said to me yesterday, 'Does 'oo love Jesus?'" She said, "What did you say to her?" He replied, "I said nothing. I did not know what to say." So it went on. Five years afterwards, that gentleman was walking, I think it was through the city of Bath. As he was going along the streets, he saw at the window the very lady who had had the little girl on her lap. Seeing her, he could not help ringing the bell, and asked if he might speak to her. He introduced himself to her thus: "I am the gentleman you will remember, perhaps, who travelled with you in a coach some years since." She said, "I remember it quite well." He said, "Do you remember your little girl asking me a question?" She said, "I do, and I remember how confused you were about it." He said, "May I see that little girl?" The lady looked out of the window, she was crying. He said, "What! what! is she dead?" "Yes, yes," was the reply. "She is in heaven. But come with me, and I will show you her room. I will show you all her treasures." And the gentleman went into the room, and there he saw her Bible, and a great many prize books, very prettily bound; and he saw all her childish playthings, and the lady said, "That is all that is now left of my sweet Lettie." And the gentleman replied, "No, madam, that is not all that is left of her. I am left. *I am left.* I owe my soul to her. I was a wicked man when I first saw her, and I was living among other wicked people, and living a very bad life. But she said those words to me, and I never forgot them. And since that time I am quite changed. I am not the man I was. I am now God's. I can answer that question now. Don't say that all of little Lettie is gone." And now I say to you, and to everybody in this church, "Does 'oo love Jesus?" (*Ibid.*).

The nature of love to God:—I. THAT THE LOVE WHICH WE OUGHT TO CULTIVATE AND CHERISH, IN REFERENCE TO GOD, IS SUPREME IN ITS DEGREE. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" thus reminding us that, in every respect, God is to have the pre-eminence, because He possesses a right of absolute and entire proprietorship in us, as the author and the end of our existence—because He only is adapted, in Himself and in the benefits which He has to bestow, to constitute the happiness of man, as an intelligent and immortal being. And, indeed, it cannot be otherwise: it is utterly impossible that the love of God should be a subordinate principle. Wherever it exists it must be the ascendant; from its own nature it cannot mix with anything that is unlike itself, and, in reference to its object, it cannot by possibility admit of a rival. For what is there in us to which it can be subordinated? Can the love of God in us be subordinated to the love of any sin? Certainly not; for "if any man love Me," said the Saviour, "he will keep My commandments." Can the love of God in us be subordinated to the love of fame? Certainly not—"How can ye believe," said Christ, "while ye seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God?" Can the love of God be subordinated in us to the love of the world? Most certainly it cannot. This is as inimical to it, and as unlikely to mix with it, as any other principle or feeling that can be specified: "Love not the world," says the Apostle, "neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,"—and "The love of money is the root of all evil." Can the love of God be subordinated in us to the love of creatures? Can it be subordinated to the love of the various comforts and enjoyments of this life? Most certainly it cannot—for what says our Lord? Why, He asserts thus much on this subject: that if any man love houses or lands—that if any man love father or mother—that if any man love wife or children—that if any man love sister or brother, more than Him, he is not worthy of Him. Nay, indeed, He goes beyond this, and gives us to understand, that where the continuance or preservation of our own life is inimical to, or incompatible with, the performance of our duty to Christ, even to this our love to God is not to be subordinated; for, says He, "If any man love his own life more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." This is the view we are to take of that gracious

empire established over man by Jesus Christ: it is not the reign of coercion or of fear, but of freedom and of love. It supposes the entire surrender of our hearts to Christ, so that Christ is enthroned in our affections, and exercises entire dominion over us, bringing every imagination and thought of the heart into entire subjection. It would be just as foolish to say, that a kingdom was given up to a conqueror while at the same time its strongholds were in possession of his adversary, as for an individual to say that he had surrendered his heart and affections to Christ, while, at the same time, these affections are placed on anything opposed to the will and inimical to the interests of Christ. II. THAT THE LOVE OF GOD, AS INCULCATED UPON US BY HIMSELF, IS TO BE REGARDED AS A RATIONAL EXERCISE OF OUR AFFECTIONS, IMPLYING THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE ESTEEM OF GOD. Man is not only the subject of passion, but also of reason. It is originated in us by the knowledge of God; it arises from the admission of the soul into an acquaintance with God. But this is not all: there are vast multitudes that have this knowledge of God; at the same time, they love not God. And hence we would distinctly and seriously impress it upon your minds that that knowledge of God which is to originate in us supreme affection for Him, implies the peculiar and personal application to us of the benefits of His grace—it supposes our reconciliation to God by the forgiveness of our sins, through faith in the redemption that has been wrought out by Jesus Christ. When this becomes the case, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us;" then our love assumes the character of filial love, the love which a child feels to its parent. III. THAT THE LOVE OF GOD, INCULCATED UPON US BY THE PRECEPTS OF HIS HOLY GOSPEL, SUPPOSES SUPREME DELIGHT OR COMPLACENCY IN GOD. Now, the exercise of our affections forms a very prominent part of that capacity of happiness by which we are distinguished; for our own experience has taught us that the presence of that object on which our affections are placed is essential to our happiness; and that its absence at any time occasions an indescribable feeling of pain, which cannot be alleviated by the presence of other objects, however excellent in themselves—for this very reason, that they do not occupy the same place in our affections. Look, for instance, at the miser: let him only accumulate wealth and add house to house and land to land, and to the presence and claims of every other object he seems completely insensible: his attention is completely engrossed with the one object of his pursuit; and, dead to everything else, he cares not to what sufferings or privations he submits, if he can only succeed in gratifying his penurious avidity. Now, look at the same principle in reference to the love of God. Wherever it exists, it lifts the soul to God, as the source and fountain of its happiness—it brings the mind to exercise the utmost possible complacency in God—it leads the mind to seek its felicity from God—it brings it to Him as to its common and only centre. God is the centre to which the soul can always tend—the sun in whose beam she can bask with unutterable pleasure and delight; she finds in Him not merely a stream but a sea—a fountain of blessedness, pure and perennial, of which no accident of time can ever deprive her. IV. THAT THE LOVE OF GOD, AS INCULCATED UPON US IN HIS WORD, IMPLIES THE ENTIRE AND PRACTICAL DEVOTEDNESS OF OURSELVES TO HIS SERVICE AND GLORY. Ordinarily, you know, nothing is more delightful than to promote, in any possible way, the interests of those whom we love: and whatever is the sacrifice which we make, however arduous the duty we perform, in order to accomplish this object, if successful, we feel ourselves more than adequately rewarded. (*John James.*) *The great commandment:*—I. HOW CAN THIS LOVE BE DISCRIMINATED? It is directed towards "the Lord thy God" (Psa. xvi. 8). 1. It may be known by its sensibility. It is the love of a bride on the day of her first espousals (Jer. ii. 2). A new convert wants to be demonstrative. At the ancient Roman games, so we are told, the emperors, on rare occasions, in order to gratify the citizens, used to cause sweet perfumes to be rained down through the vast awnings which covered the theatres; and when the air grew suddenly fragrant, the whole audiences would instinctively arise and fill the space with shouts of acclamation for the costly and delicate refreshment (Cant. vi. 12). 2. This love will be characterized by humility. Call to mind David's exclamation, for a notable illustration of such a spirit (2 Sam. vii. 18, 19). A sense of unworthiness really renders a lovely person more welcome and attractive. 3. This love will be recognized by its gratitude. Christians love their Saviour because He first loved them. He began the acquaintance. A true penitent will remember how much she owes for her forgiveness, and will break an alabaster-box, costly and fragrant, over the Redeemer's head (Mark xiv. 3). Once Dr. Doddridge secured for a sorrowful woman the pardon of her husband who had

been condemned for crime; she fell at the minister's feet in tears of overcharged feeling, and exclaimed, "Oh, my dear sir, every drop of blood in my body thanks you for your kindness to me!" 4. So this love will be manifested in consecration. What belongs to God shall be defiled by nothing earthly (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). Once among the Scottish highlands, the queen of Great Britain, storm stayed, took refuge in a cottage. Not till after she had gone did the simple-hearted housekeeper learn who it was she had been sheltering under her roof. Then she gently took the chair which her sovereign had occupied, and set it reverently aside, saying, "None shall ever sit in that seat less than the heir of a crown!" 5. Then this love will be distinguished by its solicitude. It would seem as if every true convert might hear Jesus saying to him, as He said to the impotent cripple at Bethesda on receiving his cure: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee!" II. So we reach a second question: How MAY THIS LOVE BE INJURED? It may be wilfully "left," and so lost (Rev. ii. 4). 1. It may lose the "heart" out of it. It was fabled that Mahomet's coffin was suspended in the air half-way between heaven and earth; that is no place for a Christian surely while he is alive. Christ said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Look at the account given of the military people who wanted to make David king (1 Chron. xii. 33–38). No man can love God with a heart for Him and another heart for somebody or something else (Psa. xii. 2, *margin*). 2. This love may lose the "soul" out of it. See how fine seems the zeal of Naaman when he scoops up some loads of earth from the soil of Israel, that he may bear it over into Syria for an altar to Jehovah; and now see how he takes the whole worth out of it by the absurd proposition that, when his royal master walks in procession to the temple of Rimmon, he may be permitted to go as he always went, kneeling down to the idol with the rest of the heathen worshippers (2 Kings v. 17, 18). When the heart is gone, and so there is no interest in loving, and the soul is gone, and there is no purpose in loving, where is love? 3. Then this love may be injured by losing the "mind" out of it. All true affection is intelligent. Defections from the true doctrines of the Scriptures are inevitably followed by a low state of piety. 4. This love may lose all the "strength" out of it. When the worldly Lord Peterborough stayed for a time with Fénélon, he was so delighted with his amiable piety that he exclaimed at parting, "If I remain here any longer, I shall become a Christian in despite of myself." Love is a power; but it is possible that the force of it shall be mysteriously spirited away while the form of it might appear unchanged. One secret sin, or one indulged lust, will turn the whole man from its influence. We saw the story of a ship lost not a great while ago; it went on the rocks miles away from the harbour which the pilot said he was entering. The blame was passed as usual from hand to hand; but neither steersman's skill, nor captain's fidelity, nor sailor's zeal, could be charged with the loss. Then it came to light at last that a passenger was trying to smuggle into port a basket of steel cutlery hid in his berth underneath the compass; that swerved the needle from the north star. A single bit of earthliness took all the strength out of the magnetism. That is to be the fate of those who try to smuggle little sins into heaven. III. Now comes our third question: How SHOULD THIS LOVE BE EXERCISED? This brings us straight to the eleventh commandment, which our Lord declares is new in some respects, but in its spirit is like the rest of the Decalogue (John xiii. 34). We are bidden to love our neighbour as ourselves. 1. Who is our neighbour? The answer to this is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 29). 2. What are we to do for our neighbour? The answer to all such questions is found in the Golden Rule (Matt. vii. 12). We are to comfort his body, aid his estate, enlighten his mind, advance his interests, and save his soul. There is a story that a priest stood upon the scaffold with Joan of Arc till his very garments took fire with the flames which were consuming her, so zealous was he for her conversion. "None know how to prize the Saviour," wrote the good Lady Huntingdon, "but such as are zealous in pious works for others." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Supreme love to God, the chief duty of man:*—I. THE PLACES OF SCRIPTURE WHERE THIS GREAT DUTY IS ENJOINED, EITHER EXPRESSLY OR IMPLICITLY, are the following: Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." Deut. x. 12; Josh. xxii. 4, 5; 2 Thess. iii. 5. II. Let us look a little into THE NATURE OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE DUTY. And without controversy it is the most excellent qualification of the human nature. This love supposes some acquaintance with God: not only a knowledge that there is such a Being, but a just notion of His nature and perfections. And further, this love of God is justifiable in the highest degrees possible; nay, it is more laudable in proportion to its ardency, and the influence

it has on our thoughts and on the actions of life: whereas love to our fellow-mortals may rise into unlawful extremes, and produce ill effects. Even natural affection, such, for instance, as that of parents to their children, may exceed due bounds and prove a snare to us, and be the occasion of many sins: but the love of God can never have too much room in the heart, nor too powerful an influence on our conduct; but ought to rule most extensively, and to govern and direct in all our purposes and practices. III. Let us now, in some particulars, consider THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS DUTY. 1. The object of it is the infinitely perfect God; the contemplation of whose glories gives the angels inexpressible and everlasting delight; nay, furnishes the eternal mind with perfect unchangeable happiness. 2. Love to God is a celestial attainment: it flames in the upper world; heaven is full of this love. God necessarily loves Himself; takes delight in His own glory; reflects upon His own perfections with eternal complacency: the Son loves the Father; the angels and the spirits of the just behold the face of God with entire satisfaction. 3. The love of God is the noblest endowment of the mind of man. It more exalts the soul, and gives it a greater lustre than any other virtue. Nay, this is the most excellent part of godliness, internal godliness. 4. The excellency of this gracious principle, love to God, will appear, if we consider it as productive of the most excellent fruits. Love is the fulfilling of the law. It prepares us for communion with God, for gracious communications from Him, for delight in Him, for a participation of the comforts of the Spirit, for the light of God's countenance, a sense of His love to us, and a lively hope of glory. 5. Without love we cannot be approved and accepted of God, either in religious worship, or in the common actions of life. What the apostle says of faith, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," we may likewise say of love. 6. Love to God entitles us to many special privileges and blessings. 7. Besides the promises of the life that now is, they have a claim to such as relate to another life. It is not in this life only they have hope, there is an eternity of glory provided for them; they shall have the pleasure of an everlasting view of the infinite beauties of the Deity, and for ever feel the ravishment of that incomprehensible glory. 8. It likewise prepares the soul for heaven, adapts the mind to celestial entertainments. It meetens us for the presence of God, as it is an ardour like that which is raised by the heavenly vision, though so much below it in degree. IV. THE REASONS FOR THE LOVE OF GOD. 1. The infinite perfections of God call for our highest esteem and love. 2. Creating goodness teaches us to adore and love our Maker. 3. The consideration of God's preserving care directs us to love Him. 4. The liberality and bounty of God in making provision for mankind is what should by no means be overlooked, but considered and acknowledged to the praise of His goodness, and should incline our hearts to the great Benefactor. 5. The patience of God is engaging, and should attract the soul to Him, and dispose us cheerfully to return to obedience with grateful resentment of His unmerited and forfeited goodness. 6. The titles which God is pleased to take on Himself with regard to His people should be thought an inducement to love Him, at least by those who hope they have an interest in His special favour. 7. The promises of God are of an attractive engaging nature, and are made to gain our hearts, and to render the paths of duty pleasant. 8. Redeeming grace directs our hearts into the love of God. 9. Another argument directing and pressing us to the love of God is the distinguishing goodness of God to us in giving us the gospel revelation. 10. With respect to those I have mentioned, and all other instances of the love of God, the disinterestedness of it exalts and magnifies it, and shows Him to be infinitely worthy of our esteem and love. We are bound to love the Lord our God for the hope He has given us as to another life; hope of a fulness of joys and pleasures for evermore, blessedness more suitable to the highest powers of the soul than any that we enjoy here, and lasting as eternity itself. V. I must now lay before you, in some particulars, THE FRUITS OF THIS EXCELLENT PRINCIPLE IN THE SOUL OF MAN. 1. Love to God will produce obedience, voluntary, cheerful obedience. 2. Love to God will beget in us a sincere affection for the people of God, such as in the gracious condescending style of the Scripture are called His children. 3. Love to God will moderate your affections towards worldly enjoyments, which are apt to take up too much room in our hearts, and to engross unlawful degrees of our love. 4. It will qualify you for dutiful submission to God under temporal evils, and bodily afflictions, and prevent complaints against God. 5. Love to God will prepare you for communion with God, manifestations of Himself to you. 6. It fits the soul for delightful meditation upon God. 7. If yor truly love God, you will delight in His worship, you will

love the house of God. 8. Love to God will furnish you with a lively hope of glory. What remains further to be done on this subject is to add some inferences and exhortations. The inferences are the following: 1. If the love of God be a great and indispensable duty, then the whole of religion does not lie in love to our neighbour; much less does it in being just and honest in our dealings, giving to all their due, and doing no one any harm. 2. If the love of God be so great a duty, and there are so many clear unanswerable arguments to prove it to be so, what a horrid accursed wickedness is it to hate God! 3. What a vast advantage is it to enjoy the gospel revelation, where we have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ! 4. If to love the Lord our God with all our heart be the first and great commandment, then we are greatly concerned to inquire, whether we have this Divine principle in the soul. I have a few particulars of exhortation to add, and with these I shall finish this subject. 1. Believe in God, His existence, His glorious perfections, His infinite, eternal, unchangeable rectitude, His providence, His care of His creatures, His mercy and love, His general goodness to all. 2. Use yourselves to meditation on those attributes of God which have a more direct tendency to attract esteem and love, the attributes which are as it were the spring from whence blessings flow to His creatures, such as His compassion, mercy, and goodness. 3. Believe the gospel. God's purposes of love to fallen man before the foundation of the world, the incarnation of the Son of God, the sufferings and death of the Mediator, remission of sin purchased by His blood. 4. Be conversant with the Scriptures, which were written to bring us to God as the fountain of good and the author of happiness, to raise and improve in the mind all gracious affections towards Him, and, among the rest, our love to Him. 5. Labour to get the heart more purified from natural corruption. 6. Take care to keep your affections towards other things within due bounds, that they may not lessen your esteem of God. (*Thomas Whitty.*)

Ver. 31. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—*The second great commandment, love to our neighbour:*—I SHALL MAKE A FEW OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY. This phraseology has been very differently understood by different persons. Some have supposed it to contain a direction that we should love our neighbour with the same kind of love, which is exercised towards ourselves. This plainly cannot be its meaning. The love which we usually and naturally exercise towards ourselves is selfish and sinful. Others have insisted, that we are required to love them in the same manner as ourselves. This cannot be the meaning. For we love ourselves inordinately, unreasonably, without candour, or equity; even when the kind of love is really evangelical. Others, still, have supposed, that the command obliges us to love our neighbour in exactly the same degree in which we ought to love ourselves. This interpretation, though nearer the truth than the others, is not, I apprehend, altogether agreeable to the genuine meaning of the text. It has, if I mistake not, been heretofore shown satisfactorily, that we are in our very nature capable of understanding, realizing, and feeling whatever pertains to ourselves more entirely than the same things when pertaining to others; that our own concerns are committed to us by God in a peculiar manner; that God has made it in a peculiar manner our duty to "provide for our own, especially for those of our own households"; and that thus a regard to ourselves, and those who are ours, is our duty in a peculiar degree. To these things it may be justly added that we are not bound to love all those included under the word neighbour, in the same degree. Some of these persons are plainly of much greater importance to mankind than others; are possessed of greater talents, of higher excellence, and of more usefulness. Whether we make their happiness or their excellence the object of our love; in other words, whether we regard them with benevolence, or complacency, we ought plainly to make a difference, and often a wide one, between them; because they obviously and exceedingly differ in their characters and circumstances. A great, excellent, and useful man, such as St. Paul was, certainly claims a higher degree of love from us than a person totally inferior to him in these characteristics. For these, and various other reasons, I am of opinion, that the precept in the text requires us to love our neighbour generally and indefinitely as ourselves. The love which we exercise towards him is ever to be the same in kind, which we ought to exercise towards ourselves; regarding both ourselves and him as members of the intelligent kingdom; as interested substantially in the same manner in the Divine favour; as in the same manner capable of happiness, moral excellence, and usefulness; of

being instruments of glory to God, and of good to our fellow-creatures; as being originally interested alike in the death of Christ; and, with the same general probability, heirs of eternal life. This explanation seems to be exactly accordant with the language of the text. "As" does not always denote exact equality. In many cases, for example, in most cases of commutative justice, and in many of distributive justice, it is in our power to render to others exactly that which we render to ourselves. Here, I apprehend, exactness becomes the measure of our duty. The love which I have here described is evidently disinterested; and would in our own case supply motives to our conduct so numerous and so powerful as to render selfish affections useless to us. Selfishness therefore is a principle of action totally unnecessary to intelligent beings as such, even for their own benefit. II. THE LOVE HERE REQUIRED EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE INTELLIGENT CREATION. This position I shall illustrate by the following observations:—1. That it extends to our families, friends, and countrymen, will not be questioned. 2. That it extends to our enemies, and by consequence to all mankind, is decisively taught by our Saviour in a variety of Scriptural passages. It is well known that the Pharisees held the doctrine, that, while we were bound to love our neighbour, that is, our friends, it was lawful to hate our enemies. On this subject I observe (1) That the command, to love our enemies, is enforced by the example of God. (2) If we are bound to love those only who are friends to us, we are under no obligation to love God any longer than while He is our friend. (3) According to this doctrine, good men are not bound in ordinary cases to love sinners. (4) According to this doctrine, sinners are not ordinarily bound to love each other. From these considerations it is unanswerably evident that all mankind are included under the word neighbour. 3. This term, of course, extends to all other intelligent beings, so far as they are capable of being objects of love; or in other words, so far as they are capable of being happy. 4. The love required in this precept extends in its operations to all the good offices which we are capable of rendering to others. (1) The love required in this precept will prevent us from voluntarily injuring others. (2) Among the positive acts of beneficence dictated by the love of the gospel, the contribution of our property forms an interesting part. (3) Love to our neighbour dictates also every other office of kindness which may promote his present welfare. (4) Love to our neighbour is especially directed to the good of his soul. Remarks: 1. From these observations it is evident, that the second great command of the moral law is, as it is expressed in the text, "like the first." It is not only prescribed by the same authority, and possessed of the same obligation, unalterable and eternal; but it enjoins exactly the exercise of the same disposition. 2. Piety and morality are here shown to be inseparable. 3. We here see that the religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of all the duties of life. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*) *The second commandment*:—I. EXPLAIN THE SECOND COMMAND. 1. Who is my neighbour? (1) Some regulate their charities by local habitation: for a stranger, or one afar off they have no compassion. (2) Some have a law of relationship. "What! assist the heathen while I have poor relations?" (3) Others confine charity to their own nation. (4) Others to the same religious profession. (5) Many think themselves justified in excluding enemies. The Jews understood the word neighbour to signify "thy friend." (6) The last rule of exclusion is that which relates to character. Even if notoriously vile, there is no plea for neglect: benevolence, under these circumstances, may often gain their souls! Is the inquiry still urged, "Who is my neighbour?" Every human being, without exception. "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men." If redeeming love made the exclusions we make, where should we be? In hell; or, if in the world, without God and without hope. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Christianity makes distinctions, but no exclusions. With these distinctions, every man is your neighbour, and you are bound to fulfil towards him the duties of love. 2. What is my duty to my neighbour? It includes: (1) The dispositions we are to cultivate and the conduct we are to observe towards him in all the intercourse and transactions of ordinary life. It includes (2), as already remarked, the benevolence we are to exercise towards our neighbour in distress; because then he is more particularly the object of regard and affection. If the text were more obeyed there would be far less evil in the world. (3) The endeavours we ought to make for the salvation of the soul. 3. What is the measure of duty to your neighbour? "To love him as yourself." Self-love is thus lawful and excellent, and even necessary. It is not the disposition which leads unregenerate man to gratify vicious appetites and

passions. This is rather self-hatred. Nor that which leads us to grasp at all advantages, regardless of the consequences to others. This is selfishness. But that principle which is inseparable from our being; by which we are led to promote our own happiness, by avoiding evil and acquiring the greatest possible amount of good. This is the measure for our neighbour. While avoiding everything that would injure him in body, family, property, reputation, seek to do him all the good you can, and do it in the way in which you would promote your own welfare. Now, how does a man love himself? 1. Tenderly and affectionately. Then so love your neighbour. While helping him, never show sourness of countenance or use asperity of language. 2. Sincerely and ardently. This will make him prompt and diligent, in everything he thinks, for his good. "Say not unto him, go and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee." Our opportunities for doing, as for getting, good are precarious. Now is the accepted time. 3. Patiently and perseveringly. So if we do not succeed by one means we try another, keeping on to life's end. Consider how varied the means which God employed with you. Having thus explained the text, let us, II. ENFORCE IT. In doing this, we make our appeal. 1. To authority. His, who is Lord of all. 2. To example. Example is of two kinds. First, those we are bound to imitate: these are strictly patterns for us. Secondly, those which, though we are not obliged to follow, yet, for their excellence, are worthy of imitation. 3. To the connection and dependence which subsist between us and our neighbour. We are parts of one and the same body, and each is expected to contribute to the general good. 4. How much present pleasure arises from the exercise of this duty. This is present pleasure; and have we not present advantages too? Is not charity a gain? 5. Advert to the future recompense of benevolence. (1) The love of our neighbour originates in, and is always connected with, the love of God. (2) That benevolence must not infringe upon justice. No man should give in alms what belongs to creditors. (3) The most proper objects are often those who are least willing to make known their distress. (*John Summerfield, M.A.*) *The duty of loving our neighbour as ourselves explained*:—It is not said, thou shalt love thy neighbour with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. No, that would have been carrying the point too high, and scarce have left any sufficient note of distinction between what we owe to man, and what we owe to God only. I. TO SHOW WHAT NEIGHBOUR, IN THE TEXT, MEANS. The word neighbour primarily and properly signifies one that is situated near unto us, or one that dwelleth nigh us. But by use and custom of language, the same word neighbour has been made to signify one that we are any way allied to, however distant in place, or however removed from the sphere of our conversation or acquaintance. From all which it is plain, that in construction of gospel-law, every man whom we can any way serve, is our neighbour. And as God is a lover of mankind at large, so ought every good man to consider himself as a citizen of the world, and a friend to the whole race; in real effect to many, but in good inclination and disposition, and in kind wishes and prayers, to all. So much for the extent of the name, or notion of neighbour. II. Next, I am to explain, WHAT IT IS TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR, OR ALL MEN, AS WE LOVE OUR OWN SELVES. There is the more need of frequent exercise this way, because indeed selfishness is originally sown in our very nature, and may perhaps be justly called our original depravity. It shows itself in the first dawn of our reason, and is never well cured, but by a deep sense of religion, or much self-reflection. From hence may appear our Lord's profound wisdom and deep penetration into the darkest recesses of man's heart; while to the precept of loving one's neighbour, He superadds this home-consideration, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Not so highly, or so dearly, as you love yourself (for that is not expected) but as highly and truly as you could reasonably desire of him, if his case and circumstances were yours and yours were his. Judge from yourself, and your own just expectations from others, how you ought to behave towards them, in like cases and circumstances. III. Having thus competently explained the precept of the text, it remains now only, that in the third and last place, I LAY DOWN SOME CONSIDERATIONS PROPER TO ENFORCE IT. 1. First, Let it be considered, that this second commandment, relating to the love of our neighbour, is so like the first, relating to the love of God, and so near akin to it, and so wrapp'd up in it, that they are both, in a manner, but one commandment. He that truly, sincerely, consistently loves God, must of course, love his neighbour also: or if he does not really love his neighbour, he cannot, with any consistency or truth, be said to love God. 2. It may further be considered (which indeed is but the consequence of the former) that by this very

rule will the righteous Judge of all men proceed at the last day; as our Lord Himself has sufficiently intimated in the twenty-fifth of St. Matthew. (*D. Waterland, D.D.*) *The proof of brotherly love*:—It is said that when the story of West India slavery was told to the Moravians, and it was told that it was impossible to reach the slave population because they were so separated from the ruling classes, two Moravian missionaries offered themselves, and said: "We will go and be slaves on the plantations, and work and toil, if need be, under the lash, to get right beside the poor slaves and instruct them." And they left their homes, went to the West Indies, went to work on the plantations as slaves, and by the side of slaves, to get close to the hearts of slaves; and the slaves heard them, and their hearts were touched, because they had humbled themselves to their condition. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *Love to each other should be constant*:—"On the top of the Mourne Mountains in the North of Ireland there is a clear, cool pool of water. The hill on which it is situated is very high and steep, and when you have laboured to the top you feel very tired, hot, and thirsty, especially if it be a warm day. How gratefully you drink of the clear, cool water, and you think that if you had met with it half way up the hill the ascent would have been much easier completed. The peculiar thing about this well is that on the warmest day in summer the water is always cold, almost ice cold; and on the coldest day in winter the water will not freeze, but is exactly the same all the year round. The well is a spring, or rather a running stream which suddenly emerges from the earth, showing itself at this place, and immediately disappearing. When I looked at that I thought, should this not teach Christians a lesson? Should not brotherly love springing from Christ, and making its appearance as an unexpected refreshing stream in us, flow constantly, swiftly, and strongly, refreshing, and strengthening, and preparing for new efforts, all with whom we come in contact, and such, that no matter what trouble or annoyance may come in the way, the love of Christ flowing through us may be strong enough to sweep them all away and leave us as clear and calm as ever—loving and kindly affectionate one towards another as ever." (*Forbes.*) *The nature of true laudable self-love*:—I. ENDEAVOUR TO EXPLAIN TO YOU THE NATURE OF TRUE LAUDABLE SELF-LOVE, AND SHOW YOU WHAT IS NOT MEANT BY IT. The mistakes to which we are generally liable as to this matter; and then what we are to understand by self-love, in what respects it is our duty. 1. That it is not self-conceit, an extravagant opinion of our own qualifications, and an unreasonable esteem and value for ourselves. 2. By self-love I do not mean self-indulgence, allowing ourselves in the gratification of sensual appetites without restraint or control, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and giving liberty to our own inclinations and passions however irregular and unbounded. 3. Neither does this duty consist in taking care only for the body, in employing all our thought and care, spending all our pains, and all our time in making provision for our subsistence in the world. 4. By loving ourselves, I do not mean what we may call selfishness, a confining our regard and concern wholly to ourselves, minding our own pleasures, or our own interest, not caring what becomes of others, what difficulties they go through, what miseries they suffer. For a further explication of this duty of love to ourselves, take the following particulars. (1) It must be regulated by love to God, and our relations and obligations to Him. (2) The measure of our love to ourselves must likewise be adjusted by the love and duty we owe to others; just as the love of others to themselves should be such as is consistent with their love and duty to us. II. OUR LOVE MUST EXTEND TO OUR WHOLE SELVES, BODY AND SOUL. III. TRUE LOVE TO OURSELVES MUST HAVE RESPECT TO ETERNITY AS WELL AS TIME. The arguments for rational religious self-love are such as the following. 1. The excellent nature of the soul requires a regard for ourselves, and a concern for our own welfare, and particularly for the true happiness of the soul. 2. To love ourselves, and to show a concern for our own welfare is a natural duty. 3. Your eternal salvation depends upon your serious concern for yourselves. 4. Consider the love of God to souls, manifested in his declarations of goodness and mercy. 5. How great is the loss of the soul! It is shameful folly and ignorance to think that any pleasure you can find in the way of sin will in any measure compensate it: What is a man profited. (*Thomas Whitty.*)

Ver. 32. **Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth.**—*The Divine echo in the human heart*:—Man needs a Saviour. The heart of man answers, "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth." What are the practical consequences of our having this responsive faculty? I. MAN IS MADE A CO-WORKER WITH GOD; not a machine,

but a co-operating agent. II. MAN ENJOYS THE RESTRAINTS OF CONSCIENCE. The Bible appeals to and has the consent of conscience. III. GOD BASES HIS JUDGMENT UPON THIS RESPONSIVE FACULTY. "To him that knoweth to do good," &c. The judgment day will be short, because every man will be his own witness. (*The Pulpit Analyst.*)

Ver. 34. **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.**—*Need of self-examination:*—There is great cause for every one of us diligently to try and examine our knowledge and faith in Christ, whether it be true, sound, and sincere; or whether it be an hypocritical and counterfeit faith, seeing one may be "not far from the kingdom," and yet not in it. The rather, because so many deceive themselves with a vain persuasion and opinion of faith, thinking they have true faith in Christ, when it is not so. We are to try our faith by those marks of it, which are taught in the Word of God. 1. By the object of it. True faith believes and applies not only the promises of the gospel touching forgiveness of sins and salvation in Christ, but also all other parts of God's Word, as the precepts and commandments of it forbidding sin and commanding holy duties, also the reproofs and threatenings denounced against sin and sinners. 2. By the means by which we attained to it, and by which it is daily nourished in us. 3. By the contrary sin of unbelief. Look whether thou feel and complain of thy unbelief, and doubtings of God's mercy and forgiveness of thy sins in Christ, and whether thou daily pray and strive against such doubtings. 4. By the fruits and effects of it, especially by our hatred of sin, and care to avoid it, and to live holily. (*G. Petter*). *Danger of this state:*—Among those who have turned out to be the most determined enemies of the gospel are many who once were so near conversion that it was a wonder they avoided it. Such persons seem ever after to take vengeance upon the holy influence which had almost proved too much for them. Hence our fear for persons under gracious impressions; for, if they do not now decide for God, they will become the more desperate in sin. That which is set in the sun, if it be not softened, will be hardened. I remember well a man who, under the influence of an earnest revivalist, was brought to his knees, to cry for mercy, in the presence of his wife and others; but never afterwards would he enter a place of worship, or pay attention to religious conversation. He declared that his escape was so narrow, that he would never run the risk again. Alas, that one should graze the gate of heaven, and yet drive on to hell! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Nearly a Christian:*—After being twelve days on shipboard, I awakened in the morning and saw the American coast. The headlands seemed beautiful; even Sandy Hook seemed attractive. I was impatient to get on shore. It seemed as if we never would get free from quarantine, or get up the Narrows, or come to our friends who stood on the wharf waiting for us. I think that the most tedious part of a voyage is the last two or three hours. Well, there are many before me who are in the position I have described myself as once having been in. You have been voyaging on towards Christian life; you have found it a rough passage; a hurricane from Mount Sinai has smitten you, but now you see lighthouses, and you see buoys, and the great headlands of God's mercy stretching out into the ocean of your transgression. You are almost ashore. I have come here to-night to see you land. You are very near being a Christian—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." O that this might be the hour for your emancipation. (*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Lost within sight of home:*—A Christian minister says: "When after safely circumnavigating the globe, the *Royal Charter* went to pieces in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, it was my melancholy duty to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown, and the lady was sitting in the parlour expecting her husband, with the table spread for his evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. Never can I forget the grief, so stricken and tearless, with which she wrung my hand, as she said, 'So near home, and yet lost!' That seemed to me the most terrible of sorrow. But, ah! that is nothing to the anguish which must wring the soul which is compelled to say at last, 'Once I was at the very gate of heaven, and had almost entered in, but now I am in hell!'" *Not quite saved is lost:*—Suppose you stop where you are, and go no further? Suppose you perish at the gate? Suppose I tell you that multitudes have come just where you are, and got no further? Do you know that to be almost saved is not to be saved at all? Suppose a man is going up a ladder and he slip, from what round had he better slip? If he slip from the bottom-rung it

is not half so perilous as if from the top. Suppose you are making an effort for eternal life, and you have come almost to the kingdom of heaven, and you fall—not quite saved, almost saved, very near the kingdom of God, not quite—but lost! A vessel came near the Long Island coast, and was split amid the breakers in a violent storm. They were within a stone's throw of being saved, when a violent wave took the boat and capsized it, and they perished—almost ashore, but not quite. And there are men who are pulling away towards the shore of safety. Nearer and nearer they are coming. I can say to them to-night: Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. But you have not quite reached it. Alas! if you stop where you are, or if a wave of worldliness capsizes your soul, and you perish almost within arm's reach of the kingdom! O do not stop where you are. Having come so near the kingdom of God, push on! push up! Will you tantalize your soul by stopping so near the kingdom of God? Will you come to look over the fence into the heavenly orchard, when you might go in and pluck the fruit? Will you sit down in front of the well-curb, when a few more turns of the windlass might bring up the brimming buckets of everlasting life? (*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Not far off:*—The man to whom these words were addressed was a candid inquirer. I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM. 1. They may possess considerable knowledge of Scripture. 2. They may make a candid confession of their belief. 3. They may have strong convictions of sin. 4. They may have a desire to amend their lives. 5. They may have partially reformed. They only need repentance and faith. II. THE REASONS WHY THEY DO NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM. 1. Difficulties in the way. 2. Advantages in a middle course. 3. Belief that they are Christians already. 4. Reluctance to observe the needful conditions. III. THE INDUCEMENTS TO ENTER. 1. The blessedness of those who do. 2. The misery of those who do not. (*Seeds and Saplings.*) "*So near:*"—I. WHAT ARE ITS MARKS? 1. Truthfulness of spirit. 2. Spiritual perception. 3. Acquaintance with the law. 4. Teachableness. 5. A sense of need of Christ. A horror of wrongdoing. 7. A high regard for holy things. 8. Diligent attention to the means of grace. II. WHAT ARE ITS DANGERS? There is danger—1. Lest you slip back from this hopefulness. 2. Lest you rest content to stop where you are. 3. Lest you grow proud and self-righteous. 4. Lest instead of candid you become indifferent. 5. Lest you die ere the decisive step is taken. III. WHAT ARE ITS DUTIES? 1. Thank God for dealing so mercifully with you. 2. Admit with deep sincerity that you need supernatural help for entrance into the kingdom. 3. Tremble lest the decisive step be never taken. 4. Decide at once, through Divine grace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *For the candid and thoughtful:*—I. THE COMMENDATION WHICH IS HERE EXPRESSED. 1. He possessed candour. 2. He possessed spiritual knowledge. 3. He knew the superiority of an inward religion over that which is external. 4. He saw the supremacy of God over the whole of our manhood. 5. Yet he did not despise outward religion so far as it was commanded of God. II. THE QUESTION WHICH IS HERE SUGGESTED. This man came so near to the kingdom; did he ever enter it? 1. There is no reason why he should not have done so. (1) His knowledge of the law might have taught him his inability to obey it. (2) The presence of Christ might have drawn forth his love. (3) His knowledge of sacrifices might have taught him their spiritual import. (4) The Holy Spirit may have changed his heart. 2. But perhaps he never did enter the kingdom. If he did not enter, one of the reasons, no doubt, would be—that he was afraid of his fellow-men. (*Ibid.*) *Not far from God's kingdom:*—I. We find many excellent people WHOSE GOODNESS IS OF A NEGATIVE KIND. By judicious management and advice of parents and teachers, they have grown up free from the grosser sins. II. Another class of persons are fitted by the character of their minds, and the nature of their studies, TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH FROM AN INTELLECTUAL POINT OF VIEW. But let such remember that religion is something more than correctness of intellect; it is a life-giving principle, regulating the will, as well as directing the creed. III. A third class who, in disposition and habits are not far from the kingdom of God, may be described as THE AMIABLE. IV. One other class which I shall speak of, as embracing many "not far from the kingdom of God," is that of THE GENEROUS AND LIBERAL-SPIRITED. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Not quite in time:*—To see a friend riding briskly away, by the time we have reached the door to deliver a parting message; to have the boat pushed off from the dock, while we are hurrying down to get on board. These small disappointments will serve as illustrations in greater things. (*Ibid.*) *Indecision dangerous:*—I. Are

there not many bearing the Christian name who, though not far from the kingdom of God, HAVE NEVER YET PASSED THE BOUNDARY WHICH SEPARATES THEM FROM THE WORLD? 1. In this state there are those who have correct views of doctrinal truth without a spirit of devotion. 2. They are not far from the kingdom, but do not belong to that kingdom, who are the subjects of frequent and powerful convictions, yet have never been converted to God. 3. They are not far from the kingdom, but do not belong to it, who cultivate amiable tempers and agreeable manners, and yet are strangers to the influence and grace of the Divine Spirit. II. ARE THERE NOT SOME REASONS TO BE ASSIGNED AS CAUSES WHY MANY OF YOU CONTINUE SO LONG TO HOVER ROUND THE BORDERS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, YET NEVER ENTER IT? Your conduct carries in it a multitude of strange inconsistencies. 1. Your hovering still round the outer borders of the kingdom of God must be ascribed to a want of firm decision of mind. 2. It must be ascribed to a want of warm and loyal attachment to the blessed Immanuel, the Prince of life. 3. It must be ascribed to a want of true faith and humility. III. While you continue without the boundary of the kingdom of God, at whatever point of nearness, is not your state A STATE OF AWFUL DANGER? You are more liable to self-deception than vile profligates; you are commanded; you are in danger of attaching too much consequence to the soundness of your creed and strictness of your morals. Do not expect to glide into the kingdom without effort or hindrance. 1. You must press into the kingdom by casting off every incumbrance, and by forsaking every prejudice and passion which has a tendency to entangle and obstruct your progress. 2. You must press into the kingdom through all possible resistance. (*J. Thornton.*) "*Not far from the kingdom*":—True praise never does harm; it softens and humbles. Yet this man belonged to a class which had no right to expect any indulgence at Christ's hand. Christ sees the good points of the scribe. There is a "kingdom of God" in this world, and it has distinct boundary lines. What was there in the man which made Christ speak of him as "near to the kingdom"? I. That the scribe spoke practically and sensibly, and without prejudice—as Christ expresses it, "discreetly." Such a mind will always be approximating to the kingdom of truth. II. There were further indications, in the particular thoughts which were in the scribe's mind, that he was nearing the shores of truth. It is plain that he saw before his eyes the true, relative value of the types and ceremonies of the Jewish church. He recognized them as inferior to the great principles of truth and love. His mind had travelled so far as to see that the sum of all true religion is love to God and man. How is that love of God implanted in a man's breast? Will the beauties of nature do it? Will the kindnesses of Providence do it? Will the natural instincts of gratitude do it? I think not. There must be the sense of forgiveness. Within this he distinguished and magnified the unity of God. "For there is one God," &c. The unity of God the argument for a unity of service. III. And perhaps, still more than all, that enlightened Jew had been drawn near to the Person of Christ. Consequently he consulted Him as a Teacher. Do we not know that Christ is the kingdom of God, and that we are all in or out of that kingdom just according to what Christ is to us? To be indifferent to Him is to be very "far off;" to feel the need of Him is to be "near." IV. The most affecting of all possible conditions is a nearness which never enters. If I had to select the most awful passage in history, I should select the Israelites on the Canaanitish boundary—they saw, they heard, they tasted, they were on the eve to pass;—they disbelieved, they did not go in, they were sent back, and they never came near again; but their carcases fell in the wilderness. It will be an unutterably solemn thing if Christ shall, at the last, say to any of us, "Thou wast not far from the kingdom of God." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Critical hours*:—The kingdom of heaven is a certain condition of the human soul. Christ stands contrasted with the condition of selfishness, vulgarity, animalism. See how it comes directly out of the controversy here: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The superior love of God is what we mean by spirituality—the fulness of thought, imagination, and feeling in the direction of the Infinite. We know how men divide themselves up, and live under the dominant influence of certain parts or faculties of their nature. One man lives under the dominion of his passions; another class of men build themselves into a power in which property and collateral influences shall be central. These dominant states in which men dwell will give us an idea of what it is to be in that condition in which Christ says men are not far from the kingdom of heaven. When a man has attained the higher spiritual state, then he is in the kingdom of God. Then his mind becomes luminous. The man comes into union with God, and discerns

truths which in his lower state he never could discern. When, therefore, a man is said to be not far from the kingdom of God, he is where he can easily enter into these higher perceptions and conditions. There are a great many persons who are bordering on the kingdom of heaven even in this life. There are luminous hours given to most men, and especially to men of large brain and intelligence. Persons in vulgar conditions of life have certain hours given to them which they do not understand, but which render them susceptible of being drawn into the kingdom of heaven. 1. There are hours of vision in which men are under the direct stimulus of the preached truth. 2. Sometimes the same result is produced because they have seen the truth embodied somewhere. A man goes to a funeral, and comes home and says, "That was a great man; I wish I were like him. I wish I were living on a higher plane." 3. There are times of awakening that are the result of great sorrows and affliction in some natures. When men see how uncertain is everything that pertains to life, they say, "I ought to have an anchor within the veil." 4. When men are in great distress in their social relations there is oftentimes a luminous hour. I do not say that if men neglect the first impulse to change their course they will never have another; the mercy of God calls a great many times; but very likely they will not have another that is so influential. If, however, in such hours of disclosure, hours of influence, hours in which everything urges him toward a nobler and a better life, a man would ratify his impulse to go forward, even though at first he stagger on the journey, he would not be far from the kingdom of God; but if he waits, you may be sure that these hours will pass away and be submerged. That is where the real force comes in. All the civilized world sent out men to take an observation of the transit of Venus; and when the conjunction came it was indispensably necessary to the success of the undertaking that the very first contact should be observed. An astronomer who had devoted six months to preparation, and has gone out to take this observation, eats a heavy dinner and takes copious draughts of liquid to wash it down, and lies down, saying, "Call me at the proper time," and goes to sleep; and by and by he is waked up and is told, "The planet approaches," and, half conscious, he turns over and says, "Yes, yes, yes, I will attend to it; but I must finish my nap first;" and before he is aware of it the thing is all over, and he has thrown away the pains he has taken to prepare himself. It was important that he should be on hand to take the observation on the second; and the whole failed, so far as he was concerned, for want of precise accuracy. A little girl sickened and died. She might have recovered; for the nature of the disease was such that if it had been watched, and if stimulants had been applied at the critical moment, they would have been like oil in a half or wholly exhausted lamp. But this was not known, and the child slept, and the caretaker thought the sleep was all right, and it slept itself out of life. The child might have been alive, walking and talking with us to-day, if it had not been for that. There are such critical moments as those, and they are occurring in human experience everywhere—in health, in sickness, in business, in pleasure, in love, in political affairs, in all the congeries of circumstances in which men live and move. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Pharisaical righteousness to be exceeded*:—I. WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY THE KINGDOM OF GOD? II. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING FAR FROM THIS KINGDOM? 1. In regard of the means (1) absolute: Such as are wholly and universally deprived of all the ordinances of religion, as are the heathen (Ephes. ii. 13). (2) Comparative remoteness, which we may notice of such as live within the bounds of the church and compass of the Christian commonwealth, and yet have little of the gospel sounding in their ears; they live in some dark corner of the land. (3) Besides all this there is a remoteness voluntary and contracted in those which are near the means, and yet never the nearer, who put the Word of God from them. 2. In regard of the terms: Namely, the state in which they are at present, compared with the state which they stand in opposition unto. They are far from the kingdom of God as being destitute of those personal qualifications in order to it. Their principles and life are remote. The notoriously wicked (Ephes. v. 5; Rom. xxi. 8; Rev. xxii. 15). Hypocrites or secret enemies. All such as are formal but not pious. 3. In regard of the event. In regard of God's purpose and degree concerning them. This was the case of Paul. He was far from God's kingdom in regard of the terms and his personal qualification; yet, in regard of the event, was very near. Sometimes the most notorious offenders are nearer conversion than civil persons. Let us look more minutely at the text. III. IT IS A WORD OF COMMENDATION: an acknowledgment of that reality of goodness which was in the Scribe, and so encouraging him in it. If we see beginnings of good in any, to cherish them.

We should not break the bruised reed, &c., nor nip the sproutings of grace. 1. This does honour God Himself in the bestowing of His graces. He that takes notice of the streams acknowledges the fountain whence they proceed. 2. We draw men on further and make them more willing to improve; it is the whetstone of virtue. 3. By this course we occasionally work upon others who are much moved by such examples. IV. IT IS ALSO A WORD OF DIMINUTION. Thou art not quite at home; you must go further; an excitement. We must not flatter so as to make beginners satisfied with less grace, but urge them forward. The speech of our Lord was effectual to him hereunto in sundry respects. 1. It showed him his defects and imperfections, for which he had need to go further. There is no greater hindrance to improvement than a conceit of perfection: when men think they are at their journey's end, they will not step any further; but when they are persuaded that they are not at home, they will set them upon going (Phil. iii. 12, 13). 2. It showed him also his hopes and possibilities: that is another excitement to endeavour. There is hope of coming hither, for you are almost there. 3. It showed him also his engagements, from what he had done already, to proceed. You have already made some endeavour, do not decline and grow worse. We should imitate Christ in helping others forward in religion, as Aquila and Priscilla did Apollos. Consider these words as reflectively, as coming from Christ the speaker of them. We should discern and distinguish persons. He discerned the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees in the foregoing part of the chapter; now He discerns the sincerity of the Scribe. V. THE OCCASION WHEREUPON HIS CENSURE WAS PASSED. "When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly." This includes those things. 1. Distinctly as to the matter of his answer. He was right in the notion and in the thing itself. He who knows anything of religion knows that it does not lie in outside duties, but in a gracious soul; yet he does not take away the forms. Those which are above ordinances are below heaven; and they which hate instruction shall never partake of salvation. 2. He answered intelligently as to the principle from whence he answered. He did not speak by rote, but he was able to give a rational account of his religion. We must believe more than we can understand, and yet we must also understand why we believe. 3. He was hearty and serious in it. He spoke as a man that had some savour of that which he spoke. A man may be an orthodox divine, and yet but a sorry Christian. 4. He answered discreetly; that is prudently, as to the manner of it. It was with humility, teachableness, and submission to Christ. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Near but not secure*:—He perishes for want of that remedy which otherwise might be supplied withal. As it is sometimes in the body; those which have great sicknesses, they many times get up and recover, whilst those which have some smaller distemper, do perhaps die under it. What's the reason of it, and how comes it about? Why, the one, thinking himself to be in danger, goes to the physician; the other, being more secure, neglects him, and looks not after him. Thus it is with men also in religion; civility trusted in is further off from conversion than profaneness in the effects and consequents of it. This was the case of the Jews in comparison of the Gentiles. (*Ibid.*) *Mere morality alone is remote from the kingdom of God*:—Civility left alone to itself would never be grace, nor attain to the consequents of it. These two are at a very wide distance one from the other, and left alone, would never meet together. Though mere civility be not so far from the kingdom of God as absolute profaneness, yet it will never come thither, no more than profaneness itself. A mere civil man is as truly excluded from heaven as a profane man. I say as truly, though not in so great a degree. To explain it to you by an easy and familiar resemblance: Dover (for example) is not so far from Calais as London, yet he that goes no further than Dover shall never come to Calais, no more than he that stays at London. So here, a mere moral or civil person is not so remote from salvation as a debauched; but yet if he goes no further than morality, he will come short of it as well as the other. (*Ibid.*) *Nearness not possession*:—A man may be almost in possession of a fortune; but that adds not to his credit at the bank. A man may be almost honest, or almost sober; but that will be no recommendation to a position of trust and responsibility. And as with these, so with the kingdoms of mental force, health, and social influence; nearness is not sufficient. How near it is possible to be to the kingdom of God without being in, we know not. Nor do we know how it is possible to remain near without entering; unless it be that those who are near mistake nearness for possession. Notice: (1) A man is not necessarily in the kingdom of God because an intelligent inquirer. Distinguish between questioning with a view to information, and questioning with a view to disputation. (2) A man is not

necessarily in the kingdom of God because he knows truth when he hears it. We may assent to all Christ's utterances, and yet have no affection for Him as Saviour. It is possible to make a false god of orthodoxy. A man may be a capital judge of the *soundness* of a sermon, an adept as regards scripture knowledge, and yet only "not far from the kingdom." (3) A man is not necessarily in the kingdom because he can answer questions on Christianity. You may know the creed without knowing the Christ. Mere knowledge is not enough. You must repent, confess, believe, serve. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Not far from the kingdom of God*:—There are, then, different degrees of approximation to the light. Let us consider—I. SOME OF THOSE THINGS WHICH BRING A MAN NEAR THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (1) A life associated with some of its members and privileges. We have all known many whose lives proved that they were true disciples of Christ; we have observed the deepening earnestness of their character, and seen it growing up into a purpose and consistency unknown before. How have we been affected by this connection? (2) A spirit of reverence and candour towards Christ. Few things short of positive immorality so deaden the spiritual perception as does habitual flippancy. It is, therefore, a hopeful sign in a man, if he is not ashamed to own that he considers some things too sacred to be sported with. (3) Kindliness and amiability of nature. Christ never cast a chilling look on anything that is beautiful in human nature. He acknowledged it to be good as far as it went, and sought to gain it for the Divine and eternal. All kindly and generous impulses are wild-flowers of nature, which, with the enclosure of Christ's garden and the hand of Divine culture, would put on a rare beauty. (4) A desire to conform to God's law as far as he knows it. If conscience be at work in any man, if it is keeping him from doing what he believes to be sin, and leading him to aim at the true and right, he is to be commended. And if there be any measure of humility and charity with it, that man is certainly nearer the kingdom than he who is going on in known sin, searing his conscience, hardening his heart, and building up obstacles against his return to God. (5) An interest in the spiritual side of things. We meet with so much indifference and materialism among the unconverted, that it is refreshing to light upon one who rises above such a chilling element, and who gives evidence that he believes there is a God, and a soul, and a spiritual law laid down for man's guidance—to see him not only listening, but putting intelligent questions, and avowing, with honest conviction, how far he goes, though it may not be so far as we desire. If we meet such a man in a kindly, candid spirit, we may win him to the kingdom of Him whose heart yearns over the most distant wanderers, but who cherishes a peculiar interest in those whose souls are feeling their way, however faintly, to the eternally true and good. II. WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE A MAN DECIDEDLY BELONG TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD? Our Lord's words imply that, with all that is favourable in this man, there is still something wanting. He perceived the claim of God's law, and admitted it to be spiritual; but, so far as we can see, he had no conviction of that hopeless violation of it which only a Divine deliverer like Christ could meet. Then, too, while admiring Christ's teaching, he gave no sign of his soul bowing before Him as a teacher sent from God, still less of his being ready to follow Him as his spiritual leader, to cast in his lot with Him, to walk in His steps and do His will. He lacked (1) the new birth. (2) The new life. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *On the verge of the kingdom*:—I. THE QUALITIES WHICH CONSIST WITH THE STATE HERE DESCRIBED. 1. Religious knowledge. You may have an accurate creed, an extensive acquaintance with the Bible, a power to discuss with clearness and precision controverted points, without the will being influenced, the affections purified, the life and conversation regulated. 2. A life of blameless uprightness and integrity. Many things may tend to preserve you from the commission of great sins, besides real love for God, *e.g.*, a prudent regard to your own well-being and well-doing in the world. 3. Strong convictions of sin, and even consequent amendment. You may, like Herod, do "many things," and yet neglect "the one thing needful." Outward reformation is not necessarily the result of an inward moral change. 4. Carefully maintained habits of public and private devotion. The form may be kept up long after the spirit has vanished. II. THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE REMAIN IN THIS DANGEROUS STATE. 1. A want of real and heartfelt love to God. We must give God and the things of God not only *a* place, but *the first* place in our heart. The service He requires is that which springs from a real preference of Himself. 2. If God is not loved, something else must be receiving an undue share of the affections; for man must bestow them somewhere, whether in the attractions of his calling and profession, or in the cultivation of

refined and intellectual tastes, or in an idolatrous fondness for the comforts of social and domestic life. The more naturally amiable a man is, the more beloved, the more honoured, the more respected for his social and moral worth, for the largeness of his charities, for the constancy of his friendships, for the kindness of his heart, and for the blameless purity of his life, the greater danger there is lest that man should be ensnared by mere human approbation, and close his eyes to the danger he is in of falling short of the kingdom of God. III. Now, WHAT IS THE MORAL VALUE OF THE STATE HERE DESCRIBED? If a long journey were set before me, it would be some comfort to have one to say, "Thou art not far from thy journey's end." If all through life I had been proposing to myself the accomplishment of some great object, it would be some comfort to know I was not far from attaining the object of my ambition. This is on the supposition of continual progress, constant advancement towards that object. But the spiritual condition we have been considering is that of a person who is standing still—continuing year after year in the same state of dead, motionless, unadvancing formalism, ever seeking, but never *striving* to enter in at the strait gate, ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. What, then, is the moral value of being, and continuing, *not far* from the kingdom? There is a door. We must be on one side of it, or the other. There is no paradise of mediocrity. How sad to be overtaken by the avenger, when close by the city of refuge—to have made shipwreck of our souls, when just within sight of the harbour! (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Reasons why a man who is near the kingdom should strive to enter it:*—If there are some so far away that they at times fall into a despair of ever reaching it, there are a greater number so near that they sink into an apathetic contentment with being almost Christians. Those who are far off may come to be nigh, when the children of the kingdom are cast out. 1. Though the distance may not seem great, there is momentous importance in it. A great deal depends on being a Christian, and to be a Christian needs something more than a decent arrangement of the natural life. The end of man's soul can only be found in looking to God, and learning to stand right with Him. Otherwise, it is to let a plant cling to the earth that was made to climb, and that can bring forth its best flowers and fruits only when it ascends; as if a palace were tenanted in its dungeons and lower rooms, while the higher apartments, commanding infinitely the best view, were left desolate; or as if a city had its streets crowded with traffic, and filled with the labour and din of busy life, while the temples, which tell of man's dignity by pointing him to God, remained in untrodden silence, and became the homes only of the dead. Can a man, who has a soul, feel that it is well with him in such a state? And yet thus he stands while he refuses to admit God to His rightful place. 2. The harmful effect of this position upon others. When there is a nature which has so much of the beautiful and attractive outside the proper Christian sphere, it is apt to give shallow-minded persons the idea that the gospel is not so necessary as the Bible declares. 3. The only security for permanence in what is naturally attractive in man, consists in connecting it with God. The brightest and most beautiful things of the heart lie all unshielded if God's shadow be not over them. The conflicts of life, the assaults of passion, the irritations of care and ill-success, and the resentments against man's injustice, will corrode and canker the finest heart if it be not constantly drawing the corrective from a Divine source. Even without these trials, whatever has not God in it is smitten with the inevitable law of decay. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Crossing the line:*—It is as if a man were standing on the shore, close to where a ship is moored. There is but a line between, and a step may cross it. But the one is fixed, the other moves, and all the future of existence depends upon that step,—new lands, a new life, and God's great wide world. In the spiritual sphere to stand still is to fall away, to be left on that shore, doomed to decay and death. To pass into God's kingdom is to move with it, not only up to the grandeur of His universe, but into the heritage of Himself. (*Ibid.*) *Some are in the suburbs of the city of refuge:*—I warn you against staying there. Oh, what pity is it that any should perish at the gates of salvation for want of another step!

Ver. 37. **And the common people heard Him gladly.**—***The gospel and the masses:*** —This passage refers to the reception given to the teachings of our Lord by the masses of the people. I. The HEARERS OF CHRIST referred to in the text are designated "the common people." As the words in the original Greek mean, literally, "the great multitude," it has been suggested that the better rendering of

the passage would be "the great multitude heard Him gladly." The revisers of the New Testament, however, have adhered to the rendering of the Authorized Version, and in the text of the Revised New Testament we have the long-familiar words, "the common people heard Him gladly," while the alternative rendering, "the great multitude," is relegated to the margin. A critic has remarked that in the words "the great multitude" there is no intended antithesis or opposition to the upper classes. This, to say the least, is questionable; but of this we are certain, that, whether any distinction of classes was intended or not, "the great multitude" necessarily includes the common people, By "the common people" is meant, in every country, the people without wealth, or power, or exalted rank, or intellectual culture, or refinement of manners. They are the vulgar, the uneducated, the lowly, the poor, the masses. The phrase "the common people" is suggestive of human inequality, and implies that the gradations of rank and class obtain amongst men. But why, and how, it may be asked, should there be these distinctions? Are not all men equal? To this I reply that in certain important senses all men are equal. All men are equal by natural descent, as the offspring of the same first parents. Then there is the base equality of natural depravity and guilt. Over the entire race is written the inspired description: "There is none righteous; no, not one." And, thank God, there is the blessed equality of a common redemption, an equal connection with the second Adam as with the first. Notwithstanding the universal equality of man in the essential aspects to which I have referred, there are other important respects, some of them natural, and some of them artificial, in which men are not equal. There are differences in physique, in stature, and strength, which are obvious to all. There are still greater differences to be found amongst the minds of men. And whilst the native and constitutional varieties of human intellect are numerous and great, these differences are further increased in number and variety by education and culture. The social inequalities which exist in society, and which are not removed, but are aggravated, by civilization, comprise, with other classes, the common people. However class distinctions may be disliked, they appear to be inevitable, at least to some extent, and in some variety. In recognizing the distinctions of ranks, classes, and conditions of men, we, as Christian preachers, recognize existing facts—facts which exist now, and which have always existed. The mission of the gospel, however, is to all men without distinction; and if the most numerous class, the great multitude, give it a favourable reception, it is a matter of thankfulness now, as it doubtless was when the Author of the gospel was a preacher of the gospel, causing the evangelist to make, in the midst of Christ's sayings, the abrupt record, "and the common people heard Him gladly." II. THE RECEPTION GIVEN TO THE MINISTRY OF JESUS BY THE MASSES IS WORTHY OF THOUGHT AND INVESTIGATION. The question, Why did the common people hear Him gladly? is a very natural question, and is worthy of the best answer that can be given to it. The reasons for their gladness are not assigned, and must be gathered mainly from inference and from the hints of Scripture. No doubt the principal causes were connected with the character of the Great Teacher Himself; with the nature of the truths which He taught; with the style and methods of His teaching; and with the receptability of the hearers. 1. Jesus was no ordinary teacher, but in the singularity of His greatness stood out in marked contrast to the scribes and rabbis of His day, and even rose vastly superior to the ancient prophets of Israel, although grand to sublimity were the characters of these holy men of old. There is an impressiveness amounting to awe in the quiet self-assertion of His Messianic professions and Divine claims. 2. The favourable reception given by the masses to the ministry of Jesus may be further accounted for by the nature of the doctrines and precepts which He taught, and especially by the methods, style, spirit, and sympathetic feeling of His teachings. Not less striking was the system of morals which He set up and enforced. The common people heard Him gladly because of the tone of certainty with which He taught. This teaching, as beautiful as it was true, is intelligible to the humblest intellect. No wonder that at Jerusalem, when He taught in the temple, "the common people heard Him gladly." III. THE TEXT IS SUGGESTIVE OF THE RELATIONS OF THE GOSPEL TO THE MASSES OF MEN NOW, AND TO THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT. The gospel is for the masses, because the gospel is for all. It comes with good news to every man, without distinction of rank or condition. The gospel, like the Sabbath, was made for man—for universal man. The impartial manner in which the Bible treats of the different classes of society is to me an additional proof of its Divine origin. Nor does it, on the other hand,

denounce the less favoured classes, and call them "the swinish multitude," "the great unwashed," "the many-headed beast," "the *canaille*," "the dregs," "the scum." Such offensive language is never employed in that Holy Book, which teaches us to honour all men; which declares God to be the common Parent; "the Father of the spirits of all flesh"; which says, "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." And then, in consequence of the saving grace of God, it places all upon the one platform of common privilege and blessing. It levels up by dignifying the lowly; it levels down by clothing the lofty with humility; and it says to both, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice, in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low." The masses should listen to the gospel now with delight, just as the common people in the days of our Lord heard with gladness the Author of the gospel Himself. To hear at all is a point gained, and is matter of thankfulness. The most deplorable characteristic of the masses of the wage-earning classes is their habitual absence from the house of God. They do not hear the gospel gladly, because they do not hear it at all. How to get the masses to hear the gospel is one of the great religious problems of the day. In order to success, the Christian ministry must enlarge upon the right theme. That theme is gospel truth, of which the atonement is the principal article, around which others are grouped. Hearing the gospel gladly is the duty and privilege of all alike—the rich man with his gold ring and goodly apparel and the poor man in vile raiment. (*T. M'Cullagh.*) *The gospel and the common people*:—The state of society in Palestine when Jesus appeared in one respect resembled that of our own age and country—the habit of going to the synagogue was for the most part restricted to the upper and middle classes, led by the scribes and Pharisees. The mass of the working people were "scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." They had sunk into a state of general neglect of religion. To these common people Jesus Christ specially addressed Himself; for, while the learned men rejected Him, and sought only to entangle Him in His talk, these heard Him gladly, welcomed His discourses, recognized His Divine mission, and many of them repented at His reproof. We have an indication of this willingness on the part of the common people to hear Him, in the words of this text. I. Leaving the context, however, we shall first make some remarks on the expression "The common people"—an English phrase, which, without being an exact translation of the original, sufficiently well conveys its meaning. The common people: This is a description of the multitude of the population—comprising the whole of the working orders. The phrase implies that there are other sorts of people who are not so common, but fewer and scarcer, and distinguishable by certain eminent qualifications from the crowd around them. Well, there are everywhere such common people, and people less common. What makes the difference? Society is built up of three classes of men—those who have remarkable mind, those who have money and rank, and those who labour with their hands. The latter class are by far the most numerous. They are nearly a hundred to one of the others. These are the common people. The others are distinguished from the crowd by some personal qualification. Illustration:—There always will be a real difference between educated and uneducated men. A man may grow rich, and push his way up into the middle or higher classes; but, if his education has been neglected and his taste uncultivated, neither he nor his family will be able to establish themselves as the equals of their neighbours in a similar position of wealth. It is not an artificial—it is a real difference that separates the two. A cultivated rose really is a different flower from a dog-rose that grows in a hedge; and not all the airs of the hedge-flower will give it a place of equal rank with its betters. There is, and there ought to be, a difference in rank between educated and uneducated persons; and, so far as the differences in English society represent differences, not merely of wealth, but of mind and culture, you will never be able to break them down, except by converting the common people into uncommon. How very common many of the common people are—common in the sense of low and degraded in thought, in feeling, in habit, in speech, in character! It is sad to think how the wretched lives of the labouring multitude might be varied, and rendered infinitely more comfortable and respectable, if they would. The single particular of more cleanliness would itself double the comfort of life. The most sunken type of human life may be raised into a fellowship with saints and angels. The ladder Jacob saw was a glorious scale on which the lowest grade of humanity may rise to heaven and to God. This "common people" may all be clothed in glory, honour, and immortality, and put on for ever the splendours of eternity.

When, therefore, we look upon our own multitudes of common people, alienated from the redeeming influence, despising the ministers of Christianity, and abhorring the churches, we ask, Why is it that we have so sadly failed? When Jesus preached, the common people heard Him gladly; and, believing in Him, they were changed into the same image, and became the sons of God. What was it in His preaching that made them hear Him so gladly—that won their hearts, and drew them to Him and to God? Let us first mention two or three things that cannot be alleged as Christ's means of influencing the multitude. 1. It was not a comical, a jocose mode of address. 2. Neither did He seek to propitiate the common people by flattering them with the promise of great temporal and social rewards for adhering to His cause. 1. Then, the common people heard Him gladly, because of the great and obvious sincerity and disinterestedness of His character. All the suspicions which attended the ministrations of the Pharisees were absent from Him. 2. They heard Him willingly because of the spiritual depth of His doctrine, and the suitableness of His teaching to the mind of the populace. He did not approach them with a long array of puzzling articles and creeds, which a man must believe, or pretend to believe, or "without doubt perish everlasting." But He showed both His wisdom and His patience by teaching even His own apostles only "as they were able to bear it." Love is still more powerful than argument; or, rather, it is the most powerful of arguments. 3. I think we should mention that one of the most characteristic traits of our Lord's teaching was its perfect manliness and freedom from affectation. 4. Once more: Jesus commanded the attention of the common people because He spoke to them with a compassion which reached their hearts and won their affections. (*E. White.*) *On preaching to the common people*:—I. First, then, we have no quarrel with you because you are of the number of those who hear gladly. This is so far well. It is one of the deadliest symptoms of those who perish, that to them the preaching of the cross is foolishness. A very promising symptom most assuredly; and it may evidence the beginning of a good work which God may carry forward and bring to perfection. II. But, secondly, though your hearing gladly be a promising symptom, it is not an infallible one. The common people of Jerusalem heard gladly; and we need not repeat the awful disaster and ruin which, in the course of a few years, overtook the families of that common people. III. But though to hear gladly be not an infallible symptom, yet to hear the whole truth gladly is a much more promising symptom than only to hear part of the truth gladly. We fear that it is this partial liking for the Word which forms the whole amount of their affection for it, with the great majority of professing Christians. They like one part; but they do not like another. Some like to hear of the privileges of the gospel; but they do not like to hear of the precepts of the gospel, and that the soul in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory, will purify itself even as Christ is pure. IV. But lastly, if it do not follow that because a man is a delighted hearer of the word, he is therefore an obedient doer of it, how is he to become one? What is there which can bring relief to this melancholy helplessness? We assert that the glow of a warm and affecting impression is one thing, and the sturdiness of an enduring principle is another. We again, then, recur to the question, how shall we give the property of endurance to that which in time past has been so perishable and so momentary? The strength of your own natural purposes, it would appear, cannot do it. The power of argument cannot do it. The tongue of the minister, though he spake with the eloquence of an angel, cannot do it. (*Dr. Chalmers.*) *Common people heard him gladly*:—Luther when preaching to a mixed assembly, said: "I perceive in the church Dr. Justus Jonas and Melancthon, and other learned doctors. Now, if I preach to their edification, what is to become of the rest? Therefore, by their leave, I shall forget that Dr. Jonas is here at all, and preach to the multitude." So must I do at this good hour, asking those of you who are advanced in the Divine life to unite your prayers with mine, that the word of the gospel may be blessed to the unconverted. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus and the common people*:—We are all common people as to the ground covered by His teachings. The duties incumbent on us to God and man have in their principles, their motives, their spirit, no diversity corresponding to the differences of condition and culture. You cannot specify a primal obligation that admits of any exceptions. You can name none that belong to the highly endowed and privileged, but not to the simple and unlettered—none that appertain to the lowly, and not to those who hold a superior position in the social scale. The Sermon on the Mount may be all lived out by the labourer, the poor widow, the person whose intelligence and sphere of action are of the very

narrowest; and at the same time there is no life so large, so high, so extended in its relations and responsibilities, that it may not find here all that it is bound to be and to do. Still more, we can conceive of no broader, fuller, loftier law of duty for the redeemed in heaven, or for any created being in the universe. As regards our trials and our griefs, too, we are all common people. There is no resource for high or low, when the heart is overwhelmed, but trust in Almighty love—no prayer that can bring an answer of peace, but "Father, Thy will, not mine, be done." In the presence of the mighty leveller Death we are all common people. (*A. Peabody, LL.D.*) *The Model Preacher*:—Why did the common people hear Him gladly? I. BECAUSE CHRIST GAVE A NEW AND BROADER MEANING TO RELIGION. He proclaimed God's love to all, Jew and Gentile. Christianity touches the great heart of humanity. Those who live at the bottom of society are, by nature, most open to conviction. They are governed largely by their feelings: but religion is a matter of feeling; it is love. II. THE AFFECTIONS OF LIFE HAVE THEIR LARGEST SCOPE AND EFFECT AMONG THE LOWEST. He said, "Come unto Me, all ye weary," &c. Look at the manner of our Lord's preaching. 1. He spoke as one having authority; He revealed truth. 2. Much of our Lord's preaching was outside of synagogues, and in conversation with the people. 3. His ministry was in the "demonstration of the Spirit and with power." (*W. E. Griffith.*) *Other gospels hidden from the common people*:—In Greece and Italy, while a few superior minds acknowledged a spiritual worship, the common people were kept in brutish ignorance by the celebrated philosophers of Greece and Rome. In Hindostan, though the doctrines of their complicated faith are freely revealed to the Brahmins and their pupils, it is a law never to be violated that the sacred books shall be locked up from the bulk of the people, and the Paria, or lowest caste, is not only excluded from the common assemblies of the people, but forbidden even to enter the temples to pray or to sacrifice. Nay, the Gentoo code even enacts that, should a priest read the sacred books to the inferior orders, heated oil, wax, and melted tin shall be poured into his ears; and that, should any member of these classes get passages by heart, he shall instantly be put to death. (*Eastern Manners and Customs.*) *Preaching so as to be understood by the common people*:—Archbishop Tillotson, who has left imperishable memorials of his excellence in his sermons, as well as in the traditional reports of his voice and delivery, regarded it as the highest compliment ever paid him, when, on descending from the pulpit, he overheard a countryman who came to London to hear him, ask his friend with evident surprise, "Is that your great Archbishop? Why, he talks just like one of ourselves." And the greatest of all preachers, who "spake as never man spake," must have been characterized by the same sublime simplicity; for it is written of Him, "The common people heard Him gladly." *Study the people*:—Mr. Hill always wished to be considered the apostle of the common people, in resemblance of Him whom the common people heard gladly, and in whose teaching "the poor had the Gospel preached unto them." But he who undertakes this work of faith and labour of love will find that he has not to address angels, and sometimes hardly men. He will need to learn the advice which the philosopher was wont to give his pupils, "Study the people;" or that which Cromwell gave to his soldiers, "Fire low." Had his men fired high they would have done no more execution than some of our preachers, who shoot over their hearers' heads. (*Rowland Hill.*) *The intuitions of the multitude*:—"When an uninstructed multitude," says Nathaniel Hawthorne, "attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so unerring as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed."

Vers. 38–40. Beware of the Scribes which love to go in long clothing.—*Recklessness of ambition*:—There is the Synagogue of Ambition, whose bond of union is the lust of place and of power. Let Diotrephes be its representative, who, "loved to have the pre-eminence," and whom St. John censured for this ambitious temper, which tempted him, though nominally a member—perhaps a minister—of the early church, violently to reject the best Christians. What are not men ready to do to gratify an inordinate and insatiate ambition! You know how the old Romans built their military roads. They projected them in a mathematical line, straight to the point of termination, and everything had to give way, there could be no deviation. And so on went the road, bridging rivers, filling up ravines, hewing down hills, levelling forests, cutting its way through every obstacle! Just so men set their lust upon self-

emolument, some height of ambition, the attainment of place, rank, power, and hew their way toward it, not minding what gives way. No obstacle is insurmountable, health, happiness, home-comfort, honesty, integrity, conscience, the law of God, everything is sacrificed to the god of ambition. (*Christian Age.*) *Yielding the pre-eminence:*—Old Dr. Alexander used to say to us students, "Young brethren, envy is a besetting sin with the ministry: you must keep that abominable spirit under." When a servant of Christ is willing to take a back seat, or to yield the pre-eminence to others, he is making a surrender which is well pleasing to his meek and lowly Master. One of the hardest things to many a Christian is to serve his Saviour as a "private," when his pride tells him that he ought to wear a "shoulder-strap" in Christ's army. (*Ibid.*) *Long prayers.—Prayers judged by weight, not length:*—God takes not men's prayers by tale, but by weight. He respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many there are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, the sweetness of our voice; nor the logic of our prayers, nor the method of them; but the divinity of our prayers is that which He so much esteemeth. He looketh not for any James with horny knees through assiduity in prayer; nor for any Bartholomew with a century of prayers for the morning, and as many for the evening; but St. Paul, his frequency of praying with fervency of spirit, without all tedious prolixites and vain babblings, this it is that God makes most account of. It is not a servant's going to and fro, but the despatch of his business, that pleases his master. It is not the loudness of a preacher's voice, but the holiness of the matter and the spirit of the preacher, that moves a wise and intelligent hearer. So here, not gifts, but graces in prayer move the Lord. But these long prayers of the Pharisees were so much the worse, because thereby they sought to entitle God to their sin, yea, they merely mocked Him, fleering in His face. (*John Trapp.*)

Vers. 41–44. **And Jesus sat over against the treasury.**—*The treasury test:*—The lesson taught by this narrative is—man's treatment of God's treasury the true touchstone of piety. I. GOD HAS A TREASURY IN HIS CHURCH. God has conferred on man various kinds of material possessions and property for use and enjoyment. Among these, money has become the portable representative and circulating medium of all. Far above these possessions is the privilege of sacred worship. This would be an urgent necessity and a lofty privilege even if man were holy. How much more now that he is a sinner! As all material arrangements are costful, so also is worship. If man could not meet this cost, God would. As man can, Why should he not? Is he not honoured in being allowed to do it? Does not this test his character? II. MEN CONTRIBUTE TO GOD'S TREASURY IN VARIOUS MEASURES AND FROM VARIOUS MOTIVES. The Divine rule has ever been according to one's power. This principle is definitely stated in an instance for universal guidance (Lev. v. 7, 11.): "As God hath prospered." "According to that a man hath." In the temple scene before us, we behold the devotion of every coin, from the golden mineh, of three guineas value, to the mite of brass, three-quarters of a farthing. Motives also differ, often as much as coins. Some give from necessity. Some give from a sense of honesty; if they did not give, debt and dishonour must ensue. Some give with pride and self-righteousness even before God. Some give from habit acquired from youth. Some give with holy love and joy, as a blessed privilege and rich delight: thus did the widow; so also have many done till now. III. THE SAVIOUR OBSERVES HOW MEN TREAT HIS TREASURY, AND BY THIS HE TESTS THEIR LOVE TO HIMSELF. As worship is man's highest act, its gifts should be rich and substantial. Jesus beheld men at the treasury. He still directs His eye thither; not that He needs man's gifts; but deeds and gifts test man's love; also they elevate and refresh man's heart. Men test others' love by deeds and gifts. Jesus challenges us to test the love of God thus. IV. JESUS ESTIMATES GIFTS CHIEFLY BY WHAT IS RETAINED. This principle alone accounts for the higher worth of the widow's gift. 1. This estimate of gifts according to what is retained agrees with reason. Man's gauge of the moral value of a deed is the power of the doer. The child is not expected to put forth the strength of a man. Less force is looked for from the feeble than the strong man. A small gift from a narrow income is esteemed as much as a large gift from a vast income. 2. This treasury test accords with general life. This principle is acknowledged in all departments of life. Men readily meet the cost of their chosen pursuits and pleasures, in the measure of their means. True patriots willingly pay national charges, according to their ability.

Faithful husbands provide for their wives, in the measure of their power. Loving parents nourish their children, as their resources allow. Should not Christians thus provide for the service and glory of Christ? Notice God's rebuke of Israel's neglect of this principle (Isa. xliii. 22–24; Jer. vii. 18). 3. This treasury test accords with universal Scripture demands. God tested man's confidence and honesty by the forbidden fruit. We know the sad issues. Jesus tests our obedience, love, and devotion by a treasury. Besides the large dedication of their property to the national religious service, Israel were commanded to open a treasury to the Lord, to build a tabernacle (Exod. xxxv., xxxvi.); David to build a temple (1 Chron. xxix.); Joash to meet the expenses of worship (2 Kings xii. 1, 9). This woman would give her all to His worship. Who doubts her love? But did she act prudently? She acted according to the rule. She acted for the hour and the occasion. She would not make herself an exception to the rule. She gave her all to God. She left the future to Him. Does any one think she starved by this? Behold what a grandeur the smallest service acquires, when it is done for God! Observe what magnificent interest and enduring renown accrue from the devotion of a creature's all to God. Jesus did not disparage the other gifts; He simply indicated their true relative value, and attached to the widow's His highest commendation. Application:—1. God has a treasury for human hearts, His own heart. He would have your heart centre in love, safety, and joy in His own heart. He wants you there, as a creature who can love, serve, and delight in Him. He claims and demands you for His. Christ has died to redeem and win you back to Him. Will you give yourself to Him now just as you are, that He may make you all that He can delight in, that you may find Him all that your soul can desire? 2. Christ gathers the funds of His kingdom in His Church. 3. All worshippers are required to give as a duty. 4. To give cheerfully is to elevate a duty into a privilege. 5. Jesus thus tests His friends and foes, the obedient and the disobedient. 6. Jesus waits at the treasury for your gift, to receive it at your hands, to bless it, and to teach you how to use it. If Christ is Lord of your mind, and heart, and life, let Him be also of your silver and gold. (*John Ross.*) *Helpers of sacred institutions*:—Surely this must tell us what it did to those that stood by the Messiah. The principle now is exactly the same as it was then, as certainly as any principle governing matter in natural laws. The young man may say, "I am willing to do my share for sacred causes and institutions;" but if he means by that, he will aid them after he gets all his parties, and operas, and sleigh-rides, and everything besides that his heart can wish—the gift for which he will not deny himself the least of these things, must be before heaven less than the least. And the man of business may say, "I will help; the Lord has been good to me, I will be grateful;" if gratitude takes the form of that he can well spare, and yet spare nothing out of his life. But after he has purchased with the talents God gave him as a steward everything for himself that he can possibly need, then he really spares nothing, makes no sacrifices, gives only out of his abundance, and is still open to that touch of fear, that he may not even be dealing fairly with the Principal who has committed the talents to his trust; the fear which good old brother Cecil used to say, always gathers about stewards and agents that grow uncommonly rich. So may we all give, no matter what we are, a poor selvage out of the web in our ample and voluminous robes; give the crusts after we have eaten the dinner; spare in the Lent what we could not spend in the Carnival—and it will be the same to every one of us. The wise all-seeing eyes will see us, and what we are doing, and the angel will write in his book of life, "He gave to God and good uses what he did not need himself for any uses." Or we may give out of the real substance; but if we do not give with a real sacrifice, I have no authority from the Lord to say that the poorest Irish washerwoman in this town who gives to the Lord, according to her light, her two mites, which make one farthing, gives it out of her life to say a mass, even for the soul of her wretched sot of a husband who was found dead in the Bridewell—does not take infinite precedence of the best and most generous who have all they want, and then do ever so nobly out of the rest. (*R. Collyer.*) *The widow's mites*:—I. SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH THE INCIDENT REVEALS CONCERNING CHRIST HIMSELF. 1. It presents Him as the omniscient Teacher of hearts. 2. By what a different standard Christ judges men's actions from that they themselves judge by. 3. His eyes are upon the treasury and those who contribute to it. II. SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH THIS INCIDENT REVEALS RESPECTING OURSELVES. 1. It shows that offerings to the Lord's treasury must bear some decent proportion to what He has bestowed upon us. 2. Our offerings to be

acceptable must be felt to involve some sacrifice. 3. Liberality is a means of grace. III. THERE ARE HERE LESSONS FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH. 1. What value God sets on tittles. 2. Christ will strictly reckon with the Church for all the wealth bestowed upon her. (*James Moir, M.A.*) *Giving ourselves in the sacrifice*:—Æschines, when he saw his fellow-scholars give great gifts to his master, Socrates, he being poor and having nothing else to bestow, did give himself to Socrates, as confessing to be his in heart and goodwill, and wholly at his devotion. And the philosopher took this most kindly, esteeming it above all other presents, and returned him love accordingly. The widow's two mites were welcome into His treasury, because her heart was full, though her purse was empty. (*Dr. Donne.*) *The power of mites when combined*:—There is now—A.D. 1887—in the French savings' banks the sum of £100,000,000 sterling. These savings' banks are patronized only by workmen, servants, and small shopkeepers. What missions might be founded and Christian work accomplished, if professors would but cast their mites into the treasury. (*Somerset Express.*) *Over against the treasury*:—One form of gift which is found with increasing frequency is the *in memoriam* gift. This touching form of offering in rememberance of some loved one is a beautiful new departure from the old mode, which too often expressed its loss only by the stately monument in the quiet churchyard. The Christian inventiveness revealed in many of the contributions is significant. A young lady gathers snowdrops in the fields around Carnarvon, and realizes £2, which she sends to Dr. Barnardo. A friend of missions puts on one side all the threepenny pieces he receives. Talents, such as painting and drawing, are made to contribute towards sending the Gospel across the seas. In many quaint ways Christian inventiveness helps on the work of God in the world. Another class of contributions are the thank-offerings. One sends a shilling—"a thank-offering for God's kindness to me on the evening of March 1, when I was out in that severe snowstorm." An old lady of eighty sends a thank-offering because she has had no doctors' bills for two years! The thank-offerings of parents for the recovery of children from sickness are also frequent. Then there is the sacrifice pure and simple. The ring, the pencil-case, the brooch, the treasured coins, given by devoted hearts who feel that "if missionaries are willing to give up the comforts of home and kindred, and to sacrifice their lives even for the love they have for the Master, Christians in England should be joyfully ready to support them at all cost.' A form of contributions peculiar to these days springs from the growing practice of abstainers to devote the money saved by giving up stimulants to missionary and charitable societies, who thus save their money from doing harm, and spend it in doing good. The last, but not the least, kind of offering is that which comes from the stricken themselves. The life-long invalid, the afflicted, the maimed, with a sympathy born of pain, and a Christ-like desire to relieve and help other lives, are among the most frequent contributors to our societies. The concealment by many of the donors of their identity is another feature of present-day charity. In this present time this anonymity brings its reward, for it saves them from the reiterated requests of the importunate letter-writers. "If thou hast abundance give alms accordingly; if thou hast but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little. (*Edward Dakin.*) *Small gifts*:—Jesus commends the worshipper who put in the smallest gift. This was strange. Why did He do it? Two reasons. 1. Because she gave her heart with it: and God wants hearts, not coins, and coins only when they carry with them hearts. 2. Because hers was really a great gift in proportion to her means. Sixpence from one may be really more than a sovereign from another. The sixpence may come from one who has but few shillings a week; the sovereign from one who has thousands a year. This woman gave all. Hers was a great sacrifice. *The duty of giving in proportion to our means*:—Dean Ramsay relates of a certain penurious laird in Fife, whose weekly contributions to the church collection, notwithstanding his largely increasing wealth, never exceeded the sum of one penny, that he, one day, by mistake, dropped into the plate at the door a five-shilling piece, but, discovering his error before he was seated in his pew, hurried back, and was about to replace the silver coin by his customary penny, when the elder in attendance cried out, "Stop, laird, ye may put what ye like in, but ye maun tak' naething out." The laird, finding his explanations went for nothing, at last said, "Aweel, I suppose I'll get credit for it in heaven." "Na, na, laird," said the elder, "ye'll only get credit for the penny." It is not the amount of our gift, but the proportion of it, and the spirit of it which are noticed, and commended by Christ. *The widow's gift of her sons*:—The eldest son of a widowed mother went out to missionary work in Western Africa. In a short time he filled

a missionary's grave. There was another son left at home, and he came to his mother and said, "Mother, let me go, and I will take my stand by my brother's grave. I will preach to my brother's people. I will tell them of my brother's God." He went, and it was not long before there were two graves in that heathen land, and the brothers were sleeping side by side; at least their ashes were; their spirits, no doubt, were safe in the heavenly land. The news came to the mother, and the story said she wept sore. Her mourning friends tried to comfort her. "Oh," she said "you do not understand my grief. I am not mourning because two of my lads have filled a missionary's grave in Africa. I grieve because I have not a third son to die in the same cause." (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *Motive the measure of the acceptability of gifts:*—Xenophon tells us of Socrates, that when he sacrificed he feared not his offering would fail of acceptance in that he was poor; but, giving according to his ability, he doubted not but, in the sight of the gods, he equalled those men whose gifts and sacrifices overspread the whole altar; for ocrates ever deemed it a most indubitable truth, that the service paid to the Deity by the pure and pious soul was the most grateful service. As with what Plutarch relates of Artaxerxes, out on a royal progress, during which people presented him with a variety of gifts; but "a labouring man, having nothing else to give him, ran to the river, and brought him some water in his hands. Artaxerxes was so much pleased that he sent the man a gold cup and a thousand darics." (*Francis Jacox.*) *Give till you feel it:*—A religion which costs nothing is good for nothing. Like a certain kind of faith which we read of, "it is dead, being alone." How much meaning was conveyed in the reply which one man made to another who offered to contribute a small amount to some benevolent object, and said, "I can give this and not feel it!" "Would it not be better for you, my friend, to increase it to such an amount that you will feel it?" So in every case. A person should feel what he does, and should do what he will be likely to feel, or morally there will be but very little good resulting from it. (*Quarterly Journal.*) *Giving her all to God:*—In the beautiful Island of Ceylon, a few years ago, the native Christians decided that they must have a church built for themselves. To the amazement of all, Maria Peabody, a lone orphan girl who had been in the schools at Oodooville, came forward and offered to give the land upon which to build—the best site in her native village. Not only was it all she owned in this world, but it was her marriage portion, and in making the gift she renounced all hopes of being married. As this, in the East, is regarded as an awful step, many thought her beside herself, and tried to dissuade her from her purpose. "No," said Maria, "I have given it to Jesus, and as He has accepted, you must." Maria Peabody's schooling had been paid for years by a coloured servant in Salem, Massachusetts, whose wages were rather more than a dollar (4s.) a week. (*Light and Life.*) *The widow's donation:*—Religion is the road to honour. Little did this woman imagine she was doing an act that would be handed down, for the admiration of mankind, to the end of time. This is the only instance recorded in history, of an individual going the whole of his or her possessions. Observe from this incident:—1. That God employs man's instrumentality, for carrying on His work. Not of necessity, but to exhibit His grace and power. 2. That we should combine in our religion, piety, zeal, and humanity. We must come to Christ ourselves, before trying to benefit others. We must make it a matter of conscience to influence others for good. While caring for men's souls, we must also have regard to the comfort of their bodies. 3. That the Saviour is ever watching His treasury, and those who come up to it, or pass it by. He notes all our opportunities for doing good, and whether we embrace or reject them. How this should impel us to look to our motives, spirit actions; and stimulate us to do our utmost. 4. That there is great propriety in contributing to collective funds for public objects. The relief of men's bodily miseries cannot be met without hospitals, dispensaries, &c.; so it is our duty to support them. Especially should we take care that everything connected with public worship is well sustained. It was a gift for the service of the temple that won this high commendation from the Saviour. (*J. A. James.*) *The widow's farthing:*—In that court of the temple called the court of the women, there stood thirteen vessels, shaped liked trumpets, to receive offerings. Shaped like trumpets! surely a sarcasm is lurking here. As the rich man drops in much, the clash of it sets the trumpet blowing, and all the temple knows what a liberal man is passing by. But two mites would cause the trumpet to sound very faintly, if at all. Yet Love can see love, and will honour it. Christ views it not relatively to what it will buy, but to the love that gave it. But there is no ascetic or envious disparagement

of riches in Christ's praise of this tiny offering. Great gifts are just as capable of illustrating pure motives as small ones. 1. If, then, Christ thought much less of the rich men's gifts than they did themselves, it was because they gave (1) for ostentation, loving (so to say) the trumpet much more than the temple, (2) without a grateful sense of personal obligation, and (3) with little spiritual appreciation of the true glory of Jehovah's service, or (4) because usage so required, and policy urged their observance of the usage, though their heart inwardly grudged the offering. 2. And if Christ thought much more of the widow's gift than any of these men would have done, or even His own disciples, it was because of (1) the grateful love she manifested, (2) the deep sense of religious blessings she evinced, (3) the self-respect that valued a share in spiritual obligations, and would not allow penury to be an excuse for withholding an offering, (4) that confiding trust shown towards God, which would not divide the last farthing with Him, giving Him one mite and keeping the other, but which gave him both. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Offerings for God's treasury:*—Observe these four points. I. THE CONTRAST. It is not the poor, or widows, that Christ contrasts with rich men, but *a widow*. She was, perhaps, in almost as great contrast to many of her own class as to these; for many of the poor forget God, and offer Him nothing, because they have but little; and many widows make widowhood worse by murmuring. But circumstances may be imagined in which it would not have been right for the widow to give away her last farthing. But why suppose she was in such circumstances? A heart that so loved God, as hers did, would understand Him too well to divert the last farthing from the service of her sick child, if she had one. Then, perhaps, God would have received only a mite. She threw herself utterly on God's Providence, and would not withhold from Him even the half of her last farthing. II. THE LESSON. Christ might have said, "See how these rich men can offer openly in the temple; how much better would it be to give private aid to this poor widow. That would be real love; this is but paraded zeal." He might have said this, but He did not. Instead of directing attention to what the poor want done for them, He pointed to what they (in spite of their poverty) do; instead of teaching His disciples liberality towards them, He here bids all men learn from their liberality. III. THE MASTER'S ATTITUDE. Christ "sat over against the treasury," as if placing Himself there on purpose to observe. Our gifts are offered under the Divine eye. We know the difference between a bad half-crown and a good one; but we think a half-crown from a bad man and from a good one of the same value. Christ, doubtless, thinks otherwise. He tries the heart as well as the money; notices what our spiritual temper is, and what proportion our gifts bear to our possessions. IV. THE MOTIVE. Though money came plentifully to the treasury, and the splendid temple was sustained by splendid offerings, yet this vigour of the "voluntary principle" did not prevent Christ from being crucified, nor avail to keep the temple standing. It was not the purified will of believing hearts that brought the plentiful money. There may be strong motives for supporting "religion," when there is in the heart bitter enmity against the very religion sustained. (*Ibid.*) *The woman who gave her all:*—I. God still has a treasury open. II. The poorest may make some offering. III. Christ still watches over against the treasury. IV. God's estimate of gifts differs from ours. V. God looks at motives as well as gifts. VI. An individual unconscious of God's high estimate. (*T. Sherlock, B.A.*) *The widow's acceptable offering:*—I. Great hearts are often found where great sorrows have been before them. II. Little services and little gifts are needed by man and noted by God. If we can only give even two mites, God will not despise the offering. III. Had this woman listened to excuses, she would have lost her great honour and reward. IV. More justice should be done to the giving of the poor, for their generosity still supasses that of any other class. God notes their gifts of money, whose necessary smallness permits them to be overlooked by men. O what a gospel for the poor is here! (*R. Glover.*) *The widow's offering:*—I. THE OCCASION DESCRIBED. Gill says there were thirteen chests placed, six of which were to receive the freewill offerings of the people. Macknight says they stood in the second court, and each had an inscription, signifying for what use the offerings were destined. The chief objects were to repair and beautify the temple. The whole, however, was voluntary. II. THE LESSON TAUGHT. That the value of the offering depends chiefly on the state of the heart. 1. Some that were rich gave liberally. (1) No doubt, some gave ostentatiously. (2) Perhaps some gave in a self-righteous spirit. (3) Probably some gave only because it was customary. (4) Possibly some gave dishonestly, who should have paid their debts; and thus gave "robbery for burnt-offering," which God declares that He

abhors. (6) Others, no doubt, gave grudgingly. 2. Of the poor widow it is said that she gave but two mites, which make a farthing. What were the motives which rendered her offering so precious in the Saviour's sight? (1) Her love to God. (2) Her trust in His providing care. III. BUT WHAT WOULD CHRIST HAVE SAID TO THOSE WHO GAVE NOTHING, IF THERE WERE ANY SUCH WHO PASSED IN REVIEW BEFORE HIM? (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *Two mites*:—A woman who was known to be very poor, came to a missionary meeting in Wakefield, and offered to subscribe a penny a week to the mission fund. "Surely," said one, "you are too poor to afford this?" She replied, "I spin so many hanks of yarn a week for my living, and I'll spin one hank more, and that will bo a penny a week for the society." *Loving and giving*:—From this passage we may learn: I. That God is pleased with offerings made to Him and His cause. II. That it is our duty to devote our property to God. We received it from Him; we are stewards, &c. III. That the highest evidence of love to the cause of religion is not the amount given, but the amount compared with our means. IV. That it may be proper to give all our property to God, and to depend on His providence for the supply of our wants. V. That God does not despise the humblest offering, if made in sincerity. He loves a cheerful giver. VI. That there are none who may not in this way show their love to the cause of religion. The time to begin to be benevolent is in early life. VII. That it is every man's duty to make inquiry, not how much he gives, but how much compared with what he has; how much self-denial he practises, and what is the motive with which it is done. VIII. Few practise self-denial for the purpose of charity. Most give of their abundance—what they can spare without feeling it, and many feel that this is the same as throwing it away. Among all the thousands who give, how few deny themselves of one comfort, even the least, that they may advance the kingdom of Christ. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The widow's mites*:—I. CHRIST'S NOTICE OF APPARENTLY TRIVIAL THINGS. This is not incompatible with true greatness. Things are not always as trivial as they appear. The fact affords encouragement to those whose means are small and whose opportunities are few. II. THE NATURE OF TRUE BENEVOLENCE. 1. It is unobtrusive. The widow did not want to be observed. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men," &c. The gifts most acceptable to God do not always appear in the subscription list. 2. It is spontaneous. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Love must rule us in giving, as in other matters. The word charity stands for love. 3. It is self-denying. God is best pleased when our gifts cost us something. He judges less by what is given than by what is left behind. 4. It involves trust in God. She cast in all that she had. Faith asks no questions. It concerns itself with present duty, and leaves the future with God. Have you of your abundance or of your penury cast into the treasury? If Christ gave Himself for you, is it unreasonable that He should ask you for your money? (*Seeds and Saplings.*) *The due proportion of Christian benevolence*:—I. AS IT REGARDS THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTING. 1. There should always be a due proportion observed between an individual's contributions and his means. Appearances are often considered. Precedent and example have a painful influence. Strongly excited feeling is not unfrequently a cause of error and of sin in our benevolent contributions, nor must it be concealed that men are often lured, in the present day, by the fame and splendour of an institution, rather than by its intrinsic merits, to contribute to its funds. There should be a due proportion observed between an individual's contributions and his means; a man's means are to be determined by what he has—what he owes—what he can obtain by exertion—and what he can save by economy. 2. There should be a proportion observed between an individual's contributions and his station. 3. There should also be a proportion between our benevolent contributions and our opportunities of doing good. II. TO THE OBJECTS OF BENEVOLENT CONTRIBUTION. The souls of men are to be preferred before their bodies; we must do good to them who are of the household of faith. Remarks: 1. See that what you give in the cause of Christian benevolence is from love to Christ, and to the souls of men. 2. Give as much as possible in secret, and this will at once relieve you from the suspicion that you give to be seen of men. 3. Never pride yourself on what you give. 4. Consider what Christ gave for you, and be ashamed that you should give Him so little in return. (*T. Raffles, LL.D.*) *The widow's gift*:—I. THE GIVER: a widow, and a poor widow. The widow alone understands widowhood; it must be felt to be known. God knows its grief. Sorrow often makes people selfish, but this benevolent donor was a widow, and she was poor. Perhaps a young widow whose husband had been cut off before he could provide for his own house. Poverty, like rain, comes from several quarters, and is not easy to be borne,

whether the wind that brings it blow from east or west, from south or north. With poverty we generally associate getting, not giving. This poor widow was pious and generous; the tree is known by its fruit. II. THE GIFT. Money was her gift; hard to get, hard to hold, hard to part with; the severest test of religious integrity. The commercial value is small, but the value to her is great. Wealth called it small, commerce called it small, religious custom reckoned it small; but in relation to the means and heart of the donor, and in the judgment of God, the gift was exceeding great. III. THE PLACE, OR SCENE OF THE GIFT. It was bestowed in the temple of God, deposited in one of the thirteen boxes in the women's court. It is meet and right that we give where we receive. IV. And what, fourthly, WAS THE OBJECT OF THIS GIFT? These two mites were given as a freewill offering to the support of the temple, its institutions and its services, and the offering them with this intent constituted this "certain poor widow" a contributor to all that he temple yielded—to all it offered to heaven, and to all it gave to the children of men. The incense and the light and the fire and the shewbread and the daily sacrifices were, in part, this woman's oblation. She helped to clothe the priests in their holy garments, to supply the altars with oblations, and to preserve the order, decency, and beauty of the house of God. Say not, she gave only two mites. This voluntary offering, although commercially so small, as really contributed to support the temple, as the immense revenue derived from tithes and other appointed contributions. Jehovah received these two mites, and the world was by this offering made a debtor. V. THE SPIRIT OF THE OFFERING. Was it gratitude for benefits received? She may have valued more highly the benefit of God's sanctuary, since she became a mourning widow, than while she was a rejoicing wife. She had there heard words of consolation which had healed her wounded heart (Psa. lxviii. 5; cxlvi. 9). What impulse opened her hand? Was it the force of hallowed and pleasant association? Her fathers worshipped there. She could say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house" (Psa. xxvi. 8). The spirit of the offering was the spirit of true piety and of real godliness. VI. THE DIVINE RECOGNITION OF THE GIFT. Jesus Christ saw the gift, estimated, approved, and commended the giver. He did not speak to her, but of her, in an undertone to the disciples. "No person takes any account of what I do," some disciples are heard to complain. Thy fellow-servants may fail to recognize, but the Master never fails. Jesus is in a position to see, and He is disposed to observe. Everything that is human is interesting to Him, and all that is right is attractive. Some people only see faults. Jesus approves all that He can approve. He gives the testimony of a good conscience. VII. LOOK AT THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST CALLS ATTENTION TO THIS GIFT. 1. That the greatness of a gift depends upon the possessions of the individual after the gift has been made. 2. That grief need not hinder giving. The child of sorrow doubly needs the returns which acts of piety and charity invariably bring. 3. And shall we not be taught by this incident to learn well-doing from each other? The Head Teacher bids His disciples learn from this certain poor woman. He makes her a kind of object lesson. 4. Let us learn to act as under our Great Master's eye. He sees us. He speaks of you, it may be to His angels and glorified saints. And what can He say of you? (*S. Martin.*) *Giving in the sanctuary*:—It is meet and right that we give where we receive. The tree yields its fruit on the very spot where it has been nourished by the earth; there, where it has received the light and air and heat of heaven, does it hold up as into the face of heaven its increase. The child gives joy to the parent in the home whose very walls remind the mother of her anguish. The place of an unsealed spring is the seat of a flowing fountain. And it seems but meet that, in the place where we receive, we give. And what a place of blessing is a true house of the Lord; it is Bethel and holy ground, it is beautiful Zion and Bethesda, a house of light, and life, and love, of healing, and salvation, and redemption. (*Ibid.*) *Christ mindful of our love service*:—He who knows how much I am loved, knows how I love; He who knows all that I receive, and how I receive, knows what I give, and in what spirit. It is possible that my very gifts to His Church may grieve Him. Not that He is hard to please; He waits, looks, longs to delight in the doings of His disciples. Their good works may be concealed like violets in the tall grass of the forests, but He will scent their fragrance; they may be feeble as the new-born infant, but He will rejoice over them as over the bright beginning of blessed life; they may be imperfect as some flower or fruit in a formative state, but He will see the end from the beginning; they may wear an appearance of evil, but He will look deeper than the surface; they may be condemned by His disciples, but they

shall be approved by Himself, and He will show to the universe that He is not unrighteous, to forget any work of faith or service of love. (*Ibid.*) *The two mites*:—I. THAT THERE MAY BE MORE SPLENDOUR IN SOME OBSCURE THING we never stop to notice, and would not care for if we did, THAN THERE IS IN THE THINGS THAT DAZZLE OUR SIGHT AND CAPTIVATE OUR HEARTS. 1. We have all tried to notice this among children. One little child runs all the errands, makes all the sacrifices, but beyond that is a little nobody; plain, small; not brilliant. This is the two-mite child of the family; the small piece of home heroism, of a worth surpassing all the gifts and graces of the household besides; the little one Christ would see if He came and sat down in the house. 2. We notice this again in the Church. Some naturally attract applause by their gifts; others no more attention than this widow with her two mites. They say their poor word. It is their sorrow that they cannot do more; but the joy of heaven that they do so much. 3. This is true of the whole life we are living. There are many never seen or known who cast in more than the brilliant characters who cast in of their abundance. II. It was an illustration of this law of our life, THAT THE MOST GOD-LIKE DEED IS THAT WHICH BELONGS TO THE SACRIFICES WE MAKE, giving for sacred things and causes that which costs us most, and is most indispensable, and yet is given back to God. Nothing was worth a thought in this poor widow's gift, but the sacrifice it cost her to give. The whole worth of it lay in that piece of her very life which went with it, but that made the two mites outweigh the whole sum of silver and gold cast in by the wealthy, which cost nothing, beyond the effort to give what a very natural instinct would prompt them to keep. They gave of their fulness, she of her emptiness; they of the ever-springing fountain, she, the last drop in her cup. It was not the sum, but the sacrifice that made the deed sublime. III. We learn, in this simple and most obvious way, of that whole world of grace and truth that culminated on Calvary. (*R. Collyer.*) *The scene*:—Here comes a merchant; the times are hard, he tells you; nothing doing, taxes heavy, losses large, and things so bad generally, that you have to say, "What a misfortune it must be to be a merchant." But you have to notice that his chariot is of the latest style, and by the best maker; his robes of the finest texture and colour; his diamonds of the purest water; and, altogether, for a man in such hard trial, he looks very well. Yesterday he looked over his accounts; he will not tell you what he saw there, but, certainly, he did not seem any worse for the sight. This morning, before he goes to his store, he will go to the temple; he will be thankful, to the extent of offering a lamb; and then there is a little balance, when all is done, that he would like to drop into the treasury. A little balance! but it would buy all that widow has in this world,—the hut she lives in, all the furniture, and all the garments she has to keep her from the cold. Very low the priest, who stands by the chest that day, bows to the generous gift; the holy man would be horrified if you told him he was worshipping a golden idol, but it is true for all that. Then the great merchant passes on, and you see him no more; he has given out of his abundance; he will not need to deny himself one good thing for what he has given. If a new picture strikes his fancy, he will ask the price, and then say, "Send that round to my house;" he will have his venison, all the same, whether it is a sixpence a pound or a dollar; and at the end of the year he will have his balance undamaged, in spite of the hard times. He has given out of his abundance; but, considering the abundance, he has not given as the widow did. Then there comes a lady. You can see that she is not looking well, and the world goes hard. This has been a hard year for her. She has had to give parties, and attend parties; to dress, and dance, and smile when she wanted to weep; and lose her rest, and be a slave that the slaves themselves, if they had any sense of what she is, and has to do, might pity. The season is over, and now she must think of her soul—her poor soul. She must repent in dust and ashes; go to the temple; give to the poor, and to the support of the true faith; and altogether lead a new life. It is the most exquisite "make up" of dust and ashes on the avenue that morning. She sweeps on in her humility, gathering her garments of penitence about her, lest even a fringe should touch the beggar at the gate. She stops a moment to give her gift; low bows the priest again as she passes, and she takes her place among the women, and says her prayers, and her soul is shriven. May we venture to watch her back to her home, and see the luxury that waits her? Is there one jewel, or one robe the less for what she has given, or one whim the less gratified, when the time for penitence is over, and the season opens? I see no sign of that. I never hear her say, "This and that I will forego, that I may give. She has given of her

abundance; she simply purchased a new luxury, and got it cheap, and she fades out of sight and out of life. You see others come with better gifts, not so much, it may be, in mere money value, but more in those pure eyes that are watching that day, not for the amount of the gifts, but for their meaning. A decent farmer follows the fine lady, forehanded, and full of industry. His crops have done well; his barns are full; his heart is open. He has come to the city to sell his produce; has sold it well, and is thankful, and he will make his offering of two doves in the temple, and give something for the sacred cause, and to the poor besides, because his heart is warm and grateful, and, as he says, he will never feel what he gives to God and the poor; there will be plenty left at the farm when this is given; and then who knows but that the Lord will give a greater blessing next year, for does not the wise book say, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he giveth shall be rendered to him again?" So it is at once a free gift, and in some way, a safe investment. He is glad to give the money, and yet to feel that this is not the last of it. Very pleasantly the holy man smiles on him too, as he drops his shekels and passes on; he has been there before; he will come again. He is one of those fast friends who can always be counted on to give while the fruitful fields answer to the diligent hand. He is a sort of country connection to these commissioners of the Most High, and will always be received, as he is to-day, with grace and favour. And very low indeed the good man bows to that stately centurion who comes now. He is not a member of this church; indeed, he is not a member of any church; for, like all his nation of that rank, he thinks that all churches are very much alike, and none of them of much account, except as managers of the common people. But it is a good thing to keep in with them; there is no knowing what you may want; and so he comes now and then, and looks on at the service, tosses his Roman gold into the chest, nods and smiles to the cringing priest, and feels that he has done well. Then with all these come the good and sincere men and women, with not much to spare, but who make a conscience of giving, and manage to get an education for their children, and everything decent; who never want any simple and wholesome thing they need, and are able to lay up a little beside for a rainy day; as various as they are now, they were then, who would do something for these things which to them were so sacred; and it was when givers like these came, that the widow came with her two mites—the smallest matter, possibly, that anybody ever thought of giving. I think if she was like most women, the utter littleness of what she had to spare, would be a shame to her; she would be tempted, on the mere ground of her womanly pride, to say, "Since I cannot give more, I will not give anything: to put in these two mites when others are pouring in their gold and silver, will only show how poor I am." So it was like giving her life to give so little; and yet these two mites that meant so little to the treasury, meant a great deal to her. They meant darkness, instead of a candle on a winter's evening; a pint of milk, or a fagot of sticks, or a morsel of honey, or a bit of butter, or a bunch of grapes, or a pound of bread. They meant something to be spared out of the substance and essence of her simple and spare living. And this these wise and loving eyes saw at a glance. Jesus knew that the two mites were all she had; and so as they made their timid tinkle in the coffer, they outweighed all the gold. He saw what they came to, because He saw what they cost, and so His heart went with the two mites; and while the holy man, who had made such deep obeisance for the larger gifts, let this trifle pass unnoticed, Christ caught up the deed and the doer, and clad them both in the shining robes of immortal glory. *The poor widow's two mites:*—I. SEE GOD'S ORDINANCE THAT HIS CAUSE SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY OUR GIFTS. II. THAT THE LORD NOTICES THE GIFTS WE CAST INTO HIS TREASURY. III. THAT THE LORD PASSES JUDGMENT ON THOSE WHO CAST THEIR GIFTS INTO HIS TREASURY. He declared she had given more than all the rest. 1. She had given more, because she had given with a larger heart, with more real love. 2. She had given more in proportion to her possessions. 3. She had given more in the force of her example. 4. She had given more in its beneficial influence on the character of the giver. 5. She had given more in the relation of the gift to its future reward. Learn: 1. The right use of money. 2. The value of the offerings of the poor. 3. That the Lord sits over against the treasury. (*W. Walters.*) *The power of pence:*—Those whose means are small may take encouragement to give what they can. There is a mighty power in the combination of littles. We see this in nature, and in the institutions of society. One star would afford small light to the midnight sky, but countless myriads shining together brighten it with their glory. One drop of rain could have no moistening effect on the earth's dry and thirsty soil, but

millions of such drops make the barren land fruitful. There are two bodies of religionists who show us in a striking manner what may be done by the combination of a large number of small contributions, by regular, systematic giving on the part of all their members, even the poorest. I refer to the Roman Catholics and the Wesleyan Methodists. Both sects number the poor largely among their members, and derive no inconsiderable support from their offerings. The sums they annually raise furnish in a most striking manner an illustration of the power of pence. (*Ibid.*) *The power of humble fidelity*:—There were many gifts, many of them of vanity, many of them of pride, many of them of superstition, many of them of mere custom and necessity; but hers was a voluntary gift of love. And that fact consecrated it. Love imparts a value to a gift which nothing but love can stamp upon it. I. THIS IS A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF OUR LORD'S SYMPATHY FOR THE HEART OF HUMAN LIFE, INSTEAD OF FOR ITS EXTERIOR. He was sitting in the very culmination of the pride and beauty of the Jewish ceremonial. He was not attracted by sumptuous trains of these gorgeous gift-bringers. He saw that which interpreted the innermost and the best nature, the gentle, generous, and piteous. When human strength disdains to notice, there is the very point at which Divine strength notices most. Where men see least to be admired, under uncouth forms of helplessness, there Christ looks with sympathy and compassion. This imparts to the Divine government an aspect of comfort and encouragement. If human life takes care of the successful, the Divine government takes care of the weak and obscure. The great Eye is not looking out for the great deeds alone, but for those whose deeds are in secret. II. MANY OF THE SECRET FIDELITIES OF LIFE HAVE POWER TO OUTLIVE, IN USEFULNESS, THE PRODUCTS OF AMBITIOUS DESIRES AND DEEDS. All the rich gifts of the temple are now forgotten. We do not know what Rabbi was syllabled with admiration among his fellows on that day. The only person who has come down to us was the least conspicuous. The gentle light of that example shines still. All the ages have not buried her. How little she thought she was enriching the world. Christ is still the same. We think those gifts most influential which have most of record; but it is not so. While many a proud philanthropist will scarcely be seen, many strange philanthropists will emerge from among the poor, and take their places as princes in God's glory. So God works Himself, in secret might. So gives He a pattern for us to work after. It is not the thunder which makes the most racket, that does the most work. The things in this world that are accomplishing great deeds are silent things, and hidden things. And we are told, in a kind of strange paradox, that the things which are not, are ordained to bring to nought the things that are. The most inconspicuous things often belong to God's most potential working. The root neither strives nor cries, and yet, all the engines of all the ships and shops on earth, that puff and creak with ponderous working, are not to be compared for actual power with the roots of one single acre of ground in the meadow. All the vast pumps of Harlem Lake, and all that serve our needs, adjoining, are not to be compared for force with that might which inheres in one single tree. It is a fact revealed only to those who study natural history, that leaves, that vegetation, that dews, and rains, and heat, that the natural attractions which prevail in the world, without any echo or outward report, have an enormous power in them, and that they are the means by which God works. He works in silence, and inconspicuously, and almost hiddenly. And so they work importantly who work by thought, by love, by zeal, by faith unrevealed; who work in places not seen by the public eye, in season and out of season, from the mere desire to do good, and not from the mere love of being found out in doing it. Look upon your scarfs, so brilliant. The colour shines afar off. Comely it is on the shoulder of beauty. How exquisite is the dye that comes from the cochineal insect. And yet how small is that insect—scarcely, I may say, so big as the point of a pin—which feeds so inconspicuously on the under side of the leaf of the cactus, nourishing his growth quite unconscious that as one of all the myriads of all these little shining points he will by and by help to produce those glowing colours which civilization and refinement will make so meet and comely in distant lands! So it is with good deeds. The great things in this world are the sum of infinitesimal little things. And those who are in sympathy with God and nature, are not to reject in men the ripening, the development of themselves or their true spiritual life, because the effect is but little. That effect will be joined to other things which are like itself obscure, and others and others will make their contributions; and little by little the sum of these specks of gold will make masses of gold; little by little these small insects will make great quantities of colouring matter; little by little small things

will become large in magnitude. Do not be ashamed, then, to live in humility, if you fill it up with fidelity. Never measure the things that you do, or do not, by the report which they can make. III. THERE ARE TWO SPHERES IN WHICH MEN MUST WORK. The first is that which judges of causes by their apparent relations to the end sought. That is important; but it is not the only sphere. It is the visible, material sphere—the one which belongs to the region of physical cause and effect. We are obliged to work in that sphere according to its own laws. But in the moral sphere men must judge of acts by their relations to the motives and dispositions which inspire them; and they are great or little, not according to what they do, but according to the sources from which their actions spring. In engineering that only is great which does. It matters not what the intention is; he who in the day of battle is not victorious, is not saved by his intention. No matter how wisely you mean, if your timber is not squared and fitted right, the result is not right. In the outward sphere effect measures the worth of the plan. In that sphere effect must always be measured by the cause; and the worth of the cause must be proved by the effect. And that is the lower sphere. In the moral sphere it is the other way. There, no matter what the effect is, you do not measure in that direction. Pray. Your prayer accomplishes nothing? The measure is not "What did it do?" Speak. Your words fall apparently uncaught and unprofitable? You do not measure in that direction. You measure the other way. What was it in your heart to do? What was your purpose? In the moral sphere we look at the bow—not at the target. From what motive did the soul project its purpose? What gave that sigh? What issued that speech? What created that silence? What produced that moral condition? In that sphere the heart measures, estimates, registers. This gives rise to thoughts which, perhaps, may have relation to ourselves. There are many who will work if you will show them that their working will insure immediate good results. They will work in the moral sphere if they can work according to the genius of the visible or the physical sphere. They will work if they can do what others do. They do not work because they love to work. They do not work because they feel that it is their duty to work, simply, without regard to consequences. They are willing to work under the stimulus of a vain ambition. They will work if they may be praised. They will work if they are to receive an equivalent for their working in some appreciable form. The equivalent, oftentimes, for exertion, is praise or popularity. Do, then, whatever there is to be done without questioning and without calculation. Make progress in things moral. If need be, utter stammering words. Would you console the troubled if you only had a ready tongue? Take the tongue that you have. Ring the bell that hangs in your steeple, if you can do no better. Do as well as you can. That is all that God requires of you. Would you pray with the needy and tempted if you had eminent gifts of prayer? Use the gifts that you have. Do not measure yourself according to the pattern of somebody else. Do not say to yourself, "If I had his skill," or, "If I had his experience." Take your own skill and your own experience, and make the most of them. Do you stand over against trouble and suffering, and marvel that men whom God hath blessed with such means do so little? Do you say to yourself, "If I had money, I know what I would do with it"? No, you do not. God does; and so He does not trust you with it. "If I had something different from what I have, I would work," says many a man. No; if you would work in other circumstances, you would work just where you are. A man that will not work just where he is, with just what he has, and for the love of God, and for the love of man, will not work anywhere, in such a way as to make his work valuable. It will be adulterated work. What if you have not money? If you have a heart to work, it is better than if you had great riches. And if you find that you are hesitant, reluctant, and are acting accordingly, be sure that you do not belong to the widow's school. Did she say to herself, as she handled her fractions of a penny, "What is the use of my throwing these in? They will scarcely be taken out. They are all that I have, with which to buy my day's food. There it will do very little good; here it will do a great deal of good"? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Consecrated womanhood*:—What is it to be a consecrated woman? I. Such consecration involves heart-dedication to Christ and His service. II. Such consecration embraces the sacred devotion of time to the work God carries on through female agents. She saves her odd minutes as the jeweller saves the cuttings of gems and gold. III. Such a consecration implies the devotion of culture to the Divine glory and uplifting of humanity. IV. Such consecration embodies the ability to do varied work of a beneficent nature, whereby God is glorified.

V. Such consecration involves the sanctification of the pence to the Divine glory. (*S. V. Leech, D.D.*) *The Lord's searching eye*:—The Saviour noticed not merely the fact or acts of contribution, but also the wonderfully diversified modes in which the acts exhibited themselves. Mode is inseparable from act, and, when outward, reveals the inward essence of the act. We may suppose that our Saviour looked in, through the diversified modes that struck His outward eye, to the diversified characters of the contributors, as they passed in succession before Him. If so, it would be with far more interest and innerliness than was ever manifestated by Lavater, and with an intuition that was unerring. "On Sundays, after the sermon," says the poet Goethe, "it was Lavater's duty, as an ecclesiastic, to hold the short-handled, velvet alms-bag before each one who went out, and to bless as he received the pious gift. Now, on a certain Sunday he proposed to himself, without looking at the several persons as they dropped in their offerings, to observe only their hands, and by them silently to judge of the forms of their donors. Not only the shape of the finger, but its peculiar action in dropping the gift, was attentively noted by him, and he had much to communicate to me on the conclusions he had formed." As the idiosyncrasy and form of the whole body was revealed to Lavater's eye by the form and action of the fingers, so the idiosyncrasy and moral condition of every soul were unveiled to our Saviour's gaze, as He noticed "how" the offerings were cast in. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Liberality of the poor*:—Peggy had been consigned by her dying mother in Ireland to the care of a lady, who brought her up as a servant, giving her only clothes and food as her wages. Her residence with this lady led to Peggy's attendance on the ministry of the gospel, which met, in her case, with a heart prepared by Divine grace to receive it. She imbibed it as the thirsty earth the shower; her appearance became altered, and her whole demeanour greatly improved. Her mistress, finding her services increasingly valuable, and fearing that the temptation of higher wages might cause her to seek another place, offered, of her own account, to give her a small sum of money annually. For this she was truly thankful; and some months having elapsed, she came to me (says a Christian minister in London) one evening after service, apparently with great joy, and slipped a piece of paper into my hand. On examination I found it to be a one-pound note. "Peggy," said I, "what is this?" "Your reverence," said she, "it is the first pound I could ever call my own since I was born; and what will I do with it? Ah! will I forget my country? No; it is for poor Ireland; it is for my countrymen to have the blessed gospel preached to them." I admired her disinterestedness, but thought the sacrifice too great, as I knew she must want such a sum for very important purposes. "Peggy," I said, "it is too much for you to give; I cannot take it." "Oh, your reverence," she replied, with her characteristic energy, "if you refuse it, I shall not be able to sleep for a fortnight!" And she went away, leaving the money in my hand, and exclaiming, "God bless my poor country with the ministry of the gospel." *Costly gifts*:—A missionary, in a report of his field of labour says: "I can imagine some one saying, as he reads this report, 'Well, I will give £5 to the cause; I can give that, and not feel it.' But suppose, my Christian brother, you were to give £20, and feel it?" There is vast meaning in the advice, "Give till you feel it." It is by this principle that churches are founded, and gospel institutions sustained. If this rule were to be put in operation everywhere, there would hardly be a feeble church in our land, or a church in debt, or a sanctuary out of repair, or a minister half-sustained, or a true cause of charity without adequate support. (*Anon.*) *Religion the first thought*:—A poor negro woman, after the death of her husband, had no means of support for herself and two little children, except the labour of her own hands, yet she found means, out of her deep poverty, to give something for the promotion of the cause of her Redeemer; and would never fail to pay, on the very day it became due, her regular subscription to the church of which she was a member. In a hard winter she found it very difficult to supply the pressing needs of her little family, yet the few pence for religious purposes had been regularly put by. As one season for the contribution came round, she had only a little corn, a single salt herring, and a five-cent piece remaining of her little store. Yet she did not waver. She ground the corn, prepared her children's supper, and then with a light heart and cheerful countenance set out to service, where she gave joyfully the five cents, the last she had in the world. Returning from the church she passed the house of a lady, to whom a long time before she had sold a piece of pork—so long, indeed, that she had quite forgotten all the particulars of the transaction; but

seeing her this evening, the lady called her in, apologizing for having been so tardy in the settlement, and then inquired how much it was, The poor woman could only reply she did not know; but the lady, determined to be on the safe side, gave her two dollars, besides directing her housekeeper to put up a basket of flour, sugar, coffee, and other good things for her use. She returned home with a joyful heart, saying, as she displayed her treasures, "See, my children, the Lord is a good paymaster, giving us a hundredfold even in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting." *The gift of love*:—Once upon a time there was a king, and he was very powerful and great. He was also very good, and so kind to his people that they all loved him very much. To show their gratitude to him for all his kindness and the many favours he was constantly bestowing upon them, and also to show the very great love which they had in their hearts for him, the people resolved to make him a present. Now there was a poor woman who loved the king very, very much, and she wished to contribute something to the present for her dear sovereign; but she was so very poor that she had nothing at all in the world to give but only one little brown farthing. And a rich neighbour came to her, and said, "You can never put that dirty brown farthing among the bright gold pieces offered to the great king. Here are some new silver shillings, they will not look so bad; you can put them in, and it is all the same, for I was going to give them at any rate." But this poor woman replied, "Oh no; when I bring a gift to the good king, it must be my very own. I am very sorry I have nothing better to give; but I will just slip it in quietly, so that the king won't take any notice of it; and if he throws it away afterwards, I don't mind. It is all I have, and I will have the pleasure of giving it to him whom I love so very, very much." So this poor woman went forward with the rest; but she walked very slowly, and hung down head, being sorry her gift was so small; and when she passed the king she never once looked up, but just slipped her little brown farthing into the plate among the rest of the gifts. When she was turning away she felt some one give her a tap on the shoulder, and when she looked round the king was looking down at her, and smiling very graciously. "My good woman," he said, "was it you who put in this costly gift?" And as she looked in his hand she saw something very like her old brown farthing; but just as she was wondering if that could be what the king meant, the farthing began to grow brighter and brighter, till the poor woman could scarcely look at it, for it had changed into a beautiful locket, all shining with gold and diamonds and other precious stones. The poor woman gave a little sigh of disappointment in her heart, but she looked up straight into the king's face, and said, "Oh no, I only gave one little brown farthing." "Take it into your hand and see," said the king, still smiling. So she took it as he bade her, and then she saw that it was her farthing after all. "Yes," she said, feeling greatly surprised, "that is the very farthing I put in, for I tried hard to clean it up, and could only get it to look a little bright at the edge." So she laid it back again in the king's hand, and as soon as he touched it, there it was shining and sparkling as before. Then the king said, "I thank you very much for this beautiful gift; it is very precious to me." And he took it, and hung it upon the chain that was round his neck, and the poor woman went home quite happy, because the king had been pleased to accept her gift, and loving him a thousand times more than before, if that were possible. Now it is more than eighteen hundred years since that day, and the great and good king has been wearing that poor woman's brown farthing at his chain all the time. And whenever any poor woman wishes to offer him a gift from the great love that is in her heart, and is afraid to bring it because it seems so small, he points to the shining locket, and says, "Why, this was once only a little brown farthing, and it pleased me as much as the rich man's gold; for with me 'a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not?'" (*C. P. Craig.*) *Covetousness cornered*:—A gentleman called upon a rich friend for a contribution to some charitable object. "Yes, I must give you my mite," said the rich man. "Do you mean the widow's mite?" asked his friend. "Certainly," was the reply. "I shall be satisfied with half as much as she gave. How much are you worth?" "Seventy thousand dollars." "Give me, then, your cheque for thirty-five thousand; that will be half as much as the widow gave, for she, you know, gave 'all that she had, even all her living.'" The rich man was cornered. Covetous people often try to shelter themselves behind the widow's mite; but it is a dangerous refuge. *Almsgiving, false and true*:—Almsgiving is degraded in two ways—when it is done to be seen of men, and when it is done to save your soul. You cannot tender to God 1s. 6d. or £1 for a sin committed. You cannot wipe out guilt with half-a-crown.

The Jews thought you could. The Roman Catholic Church, in its worst days at least, openly taught that you could. The priests invited the dying to insure against hell or purgatory by leaving their property to the church or the poor. The fallacy is not yet quite extinct. The other day a witty ecclesiastic was listening to a rich merchant who, after dinner, boasted that, although no better than he should be, he gave £2,000 away to the poor every year. He did not know, nor apparently care, who got it, but it went. "Well," said his clerical listener, "that is the largest insurance against fire I ever heard of!" Now, mark this, if in almsgiving the donor is thinking more of himself than of the recipient of his gift, his act is not Christian charity, but selfishness. If he gives, in order to be praised, or to save his soul, or merely to relieve his own feelings, without regard to the effect of his gift, that is not Christian charity. The impulse is good, but not alone. It does more harm than good, without reflection, common-sense, and even wisdom. Every penny given to a knave robs a deserving person. There are plenty such: find them out, and when you find them, do not pauperize them. Help them to help themselves. Every Christmas we are deluged with circulars; choose the right institutions and pleas to support; avoid the professional beggars of this world, in print or out of print, who prey on the credulous and impulsive, and can give no satisfactory account of their stewardship. I am not against extras at Christmas. If we brighten our homes for our friends, God forbid that we should forget the poor; but again I say, be careful. Let us comfort the sick, seek out the deserving poor, think of poor dependents, old servants, the people in our own neighbourhood; let us do all we can to lighten the burden of unobtrusive sufferers, helping the thrifty poor, the sick, the aged; but let us avoid bolstering up the blatant impostor! (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *All her living.—Mr. Skelton's devotion to the poor*:—The salary of the Rev. Philip Skelton, an Irish clergyman, arising from the discharge of his ministerial duties and from tuition, was very small; yet he gave the larger part of it away, scarcely allowing himself to appear in decent clothing. Returning one Lord's day from public worship, he came to a cabin where an awful fire had occurred. Two children had been burnt to death, and a third showed but faint signs of life. Seeing the poor people had no linen with which to dress the child's sores, he tore his shirt from his back piece by piece for their use, and cheerfully submitted to the inconvenience to which it exposed him. Some time after this, when a scarcity of food was felt around him, he sold his library, though his books were the only companions of his solitude, and spent the money in the purchase of provisions for the poor. Some ladies hearing of this, sent him £50 to replace some of his most valuable books with; but, while gratefully acknowledging their kindness, he said he had dedicated the books to God, and then applied the £50 also to the relief of the poor.

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 1, 2. **Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.**—*Men admiring doomed things*:—"What manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" An outburst of admiration this. The stones were indeed beautiful. That sacred building was constructed of prodigious blocks of white marble, some of which seem to have been upwards of thirty feet long, eighteen broad, and sixteen thick. They did not view the temple in the light in which Christ viewed it. It is worthy of note that Christ, in His discourse, speaks in a very different spirit of doomed *things* to what He does of doomed people. Mind was infinitely more interesting to Him than masonry. When He refers to the temple He says, "As for these things" with an air of comparative indifference; but when He refers to doomed people He weeps, and says, "O Jerusalem," &c. The language of Christ and His disciples here will apply—I. To SECULAR INTERESTS, WHICH ARE DOOMED THINGS. Markets, governments, navies, and armies are doomed. II. To ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS, WHICH ARE DOOMED THINGS. III. To SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS, WHICH ARE DOOMED THINGS. IV. To RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS, WHICH ARE DOOMED THINGS. V To THE WORLD ITSELF, WHICH IS A DOOMED THING. Why set your hearts on doomed things? (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The destruction of Jerusalem*:—It is interesting to mark the site and trace the history of edifices built for God, some of which have been signally honoured by Him. The temple at Jerusalem was one of these. It stood contemporary with great events, and was the scene, for four hundred years,

of the perpetual sacrifices, those august national solemnities, the divinely appointed services that distinguished the worship of the God of Israel. But that which piety erects, sin often lays in ruins. This temple accomplished its service and shared in the national fall, when the people by whom it had been profaned were carried to their seventy years' captivity. The second temple was designated to still higher distinction, inasmuch as it was that which Messiah's feet trod, and within whose walls He joined as a worshipper. What have been the bearings of the destruction of Jerusalem, upon Christianity on the one hand, and Judaism on the other? I. THIS EVENT FURNISHED A MOST STRIKING PROOF OF THE TRUTH OF OUR LORD'S PREDICTIONS, AND CONSEQUENTLY OF HIS DIVINE MISSION AND AUTHORITY. II. The destruction of Jerusalem served a most important purpose in reference to Christianity, BY LIBERALISING THE MINDS OF THE BELIEVERS, AND PARTICULARLY BY EMANCIPATING THE JEWISH CONVERTS FROM THE AUTHORITY OF THE MOSAIC RITUAL. III. The destruction of Jerusalem, by weaning the believing Hebrews from their national attachments, AND SCATTERING THEM ABROAD IN THE EARTH, CONTRIBUTED ESSENTIALLY TO THE DIFFUSION OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL. But what are its bearings upon Judaism? 1. Whether the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews is not to be regarded as an act of righteous judgment upon the nation, incurred by the dreadful crime of rejecting the promised Messiah? 2. I ask whether the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple was not a clear intimation of the final abolition of the Mosaic economy? Here only could the sacrifices be offered, so that when it was destroyed, the institution itself was abolished. (*H. Gray, D.D.*) *The discipline of destruction*:—"For as a physician, by breaking the cup, prevents his patient from indulging his appetite in a hurtful draught, so God withheld them from their sacrifices by destroying the city itself, and making the place inaccessible to all of them." (*Warburton's Julian.*) *The ruins of the earthly Jerusalem*:—In the very ruins of the earthly Jerusalem you will find a salutary memorial, not only of the transitory character of all this world's glory, but of the exchange of the shadow for the substance; of the introduction of that kingdom which is not of this world, and of that temple, built upon everlasting foundations, in which all believers are living stones, fashioned after the model of "the chief corner stone," even Jesus Christ. (*H. Gray.*) *The religious use of archæology*:—What is the true religious aspect of archæology? We must all profit by that warning voice which did for a moment check the enthusiasm of the antiquarian disciple. The admiration for stones and buildings, however innocent and useful, is yet not religion. The regard for antiquity and the love of the past, if pushed to excess, have often been the ruin of religion. Christianity is not antiquarianism, and antiquarianism is not Christianity. There must be times and places when antiquity must give way to truth, and the beauty of form to the beauty of holiness, and the charm of poetic and historic recollections to the stern necessities of fact and duty. It is well to remember that there is something more enduring than the stones of the temple. If archæology is not everything, it is at least something. I. IT AWAKENS THAT LOVE OF THE PAST WHICH IS SO NECESSARY A COUNTERPOISE TO THE EXCITEMENT OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE. "I have considered," says the Psalmist, "the days of old, the years of the ancient time." They were to him as a cool shade, a calm haven. The study of them carries us back from the days of the man to the days of the child; it opens to us a fresh world; it makes us feel that we do not stand alone in our generation on the earth, but that under God, we are what we are because of the deeds and thoughts of those who have lived before us, and to whom we thus owe a debt which we have constantly to repay to our posterity. How this insight into the past has been increased in our own age. Not only Greeks and Romans, but Egyptians and Assyrians, are familiar to us in this century. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE STUDIES IN DEVELOPING THOSE RAREST OF GOD'S GIFTS TO MAN, A LOVE OF TRUTH, AND A LOVE OF JUSTICE—the will and the power to see things as they really are, and in their just proportions to one another. III. The more thoroughly we can understand these ancient forms, the more eagerly we can restore and beautify ancient buildings, SO MUCH THE BETTER IS THE FRAMEWORK PREPARED FOR THE RECEPTION OF NEW THOUGHTS AND NEW IDEAS. It has been sometimes said that the great periods of building and of admiration for the past have been the precursors of the fall of the religion of the nations which they represented. It has been said, for example, that the burst of splendid architecture under the Herods, immediately preceded the fall of Judaism; that the like display under the Antonii preceded the fall of Paganism; that the like display at the beginning of the sixteenth century preceded the fall of

the Church of the middle ages. There is no doubt a truth in this. There is a tendency in an expiring system to develop itself in outward form, when its inward spirit has died away. But this is not at all the whole truth, and the higher truth is something quite different, namely, that these magnificent displays of art, these profound investigations into the past, in those eras of which I have spoken, were part of the same throes, of the same mind and spirit, which accompanied the birth of the new and higher religion, which in each case succeeded. Those Augustan buildings suggested to the apostles' hearts the imagery by which they expressed the most sublime of spiritual truths. "The chief corner-stone;" the stones joined and compacted together; the pillars which were never to be moved; the whole idea of what the apostles called "edification,"—that most expressive word when we understand it rightly—the architecture, so to speak, of the Christian soul—all these images were drawn from the superb edifices which everywhere rose before the apostles' eyes. And so in the last great efflorescence of mediæval architecture, religion, instead of dying out with that effort, took a third start throughout Europe. Oh! may God grant that the glory of the third temple, the glory of the living temple, may as much exceed the glory of the second, as the glory of the second exceeded the glory of the first! Cast not away the old, but see what it means; see what it embraces, see what it indicates, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here," and then, as in the case of sacred and of ancient words, so also in the case of sacred and ancient edifices, they will become as Luther said of words, not dead stones but living creatures with hands and feet; living stones which will cry out with a thousand voices; stones which will be full of "sermons;" dry bones which when we prophesy over them, will stand on their feet an exceeding great army; ancient, everlasting gates, which shall turn upon their rusty hinges and lift up their hoary doors that the Lord of Hosts may come in; a heavenly city within the earthly city, a city which hath foundations deeper than any earthly foundations, a city whose builder and maker is God! (*Dean Stanley.*) *Ruin ever near:*—Jesus and the disciples of Jesus differ in just this way about the strength and durability of a great many things in this world. The disciples point to the wealth of the millionaire, to the reputation of a man of world-wide fame, to the influence of a popular leader, to the power of a national government, to the strength of some system of wrong; and they say, "Behold what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" Jesus says, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another." And the word of Jesus never fails. Wealth is no sure support even for the life that now is. The splendid fabric of a fortune, which a man has toiled a life through to give as an inheritance to his family, crumbles in a night, and the millionaire's children are beggars, or worse. The man whom all the world honoured has become a by-word of the scoffer and jester. He who swayed multitudes at his will, and who defied the voice of an outraged public sentiment, is a wretched outcast denied help or pity from the very creatures of his influence. A system of iniquity edged in by law, and venerable for ages, is overthrown and swept away as by the breath of Omnipotence. No nation on earth, to-day, is beyond the possibility of ruin to-morrow. A few pounds of dynamite may scatter the last vestiges of the strongest dynasty. The traditions of the ages, the superstitions of entire races, ignorance, vice, evil in high places, Satan himself, and all his hosts combined, cannot keep one stone on another, when the word of God is spoken for the fabric's fall. If we only really believed this truth, which is as true as any other truth of God, and which has been verified anew before our own eyes again and again in the present generation, how much more restful we should be, and how much more courage we should have. (*Sunday School Times.*) *God's great judgment on Israel:*—Privilege and responsibility go hand in hand, and the higher the opportunity, the greater the penalty for neglecting to improve it. The occasion of the uttering of this prediction is suggestive. The Saviour had marvelled at the widow's mite; the disciples marvel at the temple's magnificence. Forty and six years had the temple been in building, and had not long been completed. Occupying a site which seemed impregnable, its massive structure seemed to defy the destructive arts of war, while the exquisite beauty of its golden roof, of its courts, of its cloisters, of its pillars, of its gates, made it one of the wonders of the world. As to-day, a visitor to the cathedral of St. Isaac's, at St. Petersburg, would mark outside the great pillars, made of single stones of granite, and within the marvellous pillars of Malachite and Lapis Lazuli, so the twelve point to stones of vast dimensions and beautiful in their veins and workmanship, and ask His admiration at once for these individual stones, and for the whole temple, which,

like a jewel, crowned that hill of Zion, which the Psalmist had thought so beautiful for situation. It was a time of peace, for the horrors of war were being forgotten as a troubled dream. The absorption of Judæa in the Roman Empire seemed to promise a degree of security, which would be not an altogether unsatisfactory compensation for the loss of dignity of freedom. Just as our rule in India prevents wars amongst the various nations peopling that continent, so "The Roman peace," as it has been termed, prevailed between and blessed the various peoples blended together in the great Roman Empire. The scene was made more impressive by the multitudes from every land who had gathered to the feast, wearing various costumes, speaking various languages. The candid observer would regret the absence of many of the signs of devotion he had hoped to find; but would at the same time indulge the feeling that there must be some vitality in the religion which felt such a mighty attraction to the House of God. A nation so united in what was deepest and holiest could not, he would think, fail to have some future still awaiting it. And whether the cloudless sun gilded the scene of cheerful activity, or the silver light of the passover full-moon rested like a benediction on the whole, hope rather than solicitude would fill his heart; and the holiest spot on earth would seem destined to wear an eternal bloom of glory. Unexpected by His hearers, Christ's words thrill them with horror. We still feel Christ's sayings hard. We still find, on earnest study, that some hard sayings are yet helpful. 1. Taste is not everything in religion. The temple of Jerusalem was perhaps the most beautiful religious building ever raised by men; yet it was built by Herod the Great, a man as wicked in his life as he was exquisite in his taste. And all this beauty is so valueless in God's sight that, costly and marvellous as it was, it had no endurance, but like the grass of the housetop, which withereth afore it groweth up, the world had hardly time to marvel at its aspect before they lamented its end. The true beauty of a church is that of hearts: the kindly thought, the gracious prayer, the consecrated life. 2. There is only one thing that can give endurance—righteousness. Where it is absent, nothing can secure man, city, or institution from a grave fate. So the Saviour begins His teaching on the judgment of Jerusalem. Was it any wonder that, sickened with the thought of such calamity, Christ could not enjoy the outward beauty of the temple as others did? (*R. Glover*). *Christ's double prophecy:*—The difficulty in explaining this discourse of our Lord lies in the appropriateness of its terms to two distinct and distant events,—the end of the world and the destruction of Jerusalem. But whether we assume, with some interpreters, that the one catastrophe was meant to typify the other; or, with another class, that the discourse may be mechanically divided by assuming a transition, at a certain point, from one of these great subjects to the other; or, with a third, that it describes a sequence of events to be repeated more than once, a prediction to be verified, not once for all, nor yet by a continuous progressive series of events, but in stages and at intervals, like repeated flashes of lightning, or the periodical germination of the fig tree, or the re-assembling of the birds of prey whenever and wherever a new carcase tempts them; upon any of these various suppositions it is still true that the primary fulfilment of the prophecy was in the downfall of the Jewish state, with the previous or accompanying change of dispensations; and yet that it was so framed as to leave it doubtful until the event, whether a still more terrible catastrophe was not intended. However clear the contrary may now seem to us, there was nothing absurd in the opinion which so many entertained that the end of the world and of the old economy might be coincident. This ambiguity is not accidental, but designed, as in many other prophecies of Scripture. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Beauty of Jerusalem:*—When I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilded each dome of mosque and church, and at length bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram. No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet. (*Dr. Porter.*) *Trouble just ahead:*—The chapter now coming under our perusal for two Sundays in succession, is not easy of interpretation in a good many of its particulars, because the suggestions of doctrine glide so imperceptibly and fitfully between the predictions of Jerusalem's downfall and the prophecies of the world's end that we

cannot always fix their exact application. It appears as if it might be as well on the present occasion to occupy ourselves with what is plain and practical, and not lose our time in speculation upon what is not certainly revealed. I. We learn, in the beginning, THAT JERUSALEM WAS OPENLY ANNOUNCED AS DOOMED TO FALL, BEFORE IT FELL. Some specific incidents were related beforehand which would test the prophetic power of Jesus Christ there at once, and put within reach of His disciples a confutation or a confirmation of His claims. It hardly needs to be stated, for the whole matter is so familiar, that the predictions of this city's overthrow showed that our Lord spoke with a perfect knowledge of the events He mentioned as coming on the earth. The site of that old town is a well-known fact; no one thinks of disputing the locality. The historic books of the Jews tell how Jerusalem was overthrown by the Romans. Any one can ask and answer whether the stones are large, whether they are in position or not. The city lies "on heaps." Mount Zion is "ploughed." The temple is gone. Those vast walls are scattered. Some few stones of prodigious size yet remain in what were the foundations of the edifices, and in the cavernous substructions underground. No one can pass out of the modern Jaffa gate, and push on around along the declivity of Zion till he enters again the gate of Stephen, without unconsciously saying to himself, "See what manner of stones!" II. We learn, next, as we continue to read the verses (vers. 3, 4), THAT IT IS LAWFUL TO INQUIRE FOR THE TIME OF FULFILMENT OF SCRIPTURAL PROPHECY. It is not right to attempt to set it, but if it can be ascertained, so much the better for our understanding, and in that direction our duty lies. Christ makes no rebuke for what some consider their curiosity. On the contrary, He tells them most important facts concerning the great times coming. III. We learn also, just here, THAT THERE WILL BE ONE SPECIAL TOKEN OF THE WORLD'S END WHICH WILL NOT FAIL: "the gospel must first be published among all nations" (ver. 10). Very carefully chosen is this phraseology. We are not told that all the nations are to be converted by the gospel before the true Christ shall come again, but that they are all to hear it. It would seem as if it could not be a difficult thing to decide so evident a fact as this assumes, whenever it should occur. Most of us would, no doubt, be surprised to learn how many of the nations on the face of the earth have, really, already heard the tidings of salvation; and it is not impossible that the joyous moment is very nigh. It is time, certainly, to be thoughtful. It is within the memory of almost all of us that the fixed, and with some good old men the stereotyped, prayer for monthly concert, for many a year, was that God would open China to the gospel, and break down the barriers in Japan. Now there is in all the world nothing in the way except the hardness of men's hearts. Growth has been made in evangelizing effort that startles us when we think of it. Lately, the sudden conversion of nations in a day, as once seemed to be the case in Madagascar, has come to appear less and less strange. Spiritual uprisings of whole peoples at a time have been recorded in our generation. IV. We learn, also, that when the end of the world draws nigh, IT WILL BE HERALDED AND ACCOMPANIED WITH MOST DIRE CONVULSIONS AND TROUBLES (vers. 19, 20). VI. So we are ready for our final lesson from the passage: MEN NEED TO PREPARE FOR SUCH A DAY AS THIS BEFORE IT SHALL PROVE TO BE TOO LATE. It is easy for us to see now the relevancy of what has been given us as the golden text (Prov. xxii. 3), "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." There is but one refuge for any human soul: Christ is our "hiding-place;" He will "preserve us from trouble" (Psa. xxxii. 7). If we believe in Him, we are safe. It is revealed in the Scriptures that the coming of our Lord to judge the world will find men in a condition of apathy and listlessness. They will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, as they were in Noah's time (Matt. xxiv. 37–39). They will be buying and selling, planting and building, as they were in Lot's time (Luke xvii. 28–30). Better for us who are studying to know God's will this impressive hour to call on the Lord at once, and be secure. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Tell us, when shall these things be?**—*Date fixing:*—That's it! Fix the date of the coming failure, or the coming triumph. All of us are ready to join in that request. How we long to have the veil of the future lifted; and how well it is that the Lord does not gratify our longing in this. There is no greater blessing to us than God's concealment of our future. There could be no surer curse from God than his opening before our eyes the pathway of our lives, so that we could see it to its very end. What heart-breaking that would bring into a myriad homes! What a checking too, on every side, of hope and aspiration and noble endeavour!

How it would paralyze loving effort, and check or destroy needed tenderness of love and deed in kindly ministry! We know not what we ask, when we crave an insight into the future. God knows what He does, and why, when He refuses every request of this kind from His loved and loving ones. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Leading astray:*—It is quite as important not to be led astray by false religious teachers as by any other class of deceivers or deceived; and there is quite as much danger in this line as in any other. Sincerity on our part is no guard against deception or wandering; nor is sincerity a safeguard to a religious teacher. Those who are themselves both honest and sincere would lead us astray if we followed them in their wrong path. There is danger of our being led astray by the sermons we hear, the papers or the books we read, the counsel or example of those whom we have supposed to be godly, or by the impulses or convictions of our own minds and hearts. There is such a thing as conscientious error-teaching and devil-serving. The warning of Jesus is, that ye take heed that no man lead you astray in doctrine or morals, through holding up a false standard of conduct, or a false interpretation of God's Word. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **And when ye shall hear of wars.**—*Troublous times:*—I. WE ARE HERE FOREWARNED TO EXPECT TROUBLE, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars"; and it follows, "such things must needs be"; look for no other. Is not our life a warfare? 1. This points immediately at those wars which brought on the final ruin and overthrow of the Jewish church and nation. 2. It looks further, and is intended as an intimation to us all, and to all Christians, to count upon trouble in this world. When ye hear wars (so the word is), when ye hear war at home, the noise of it, for war in a country makes a noise; never more than since the invention of guns, the most noisy way of fighting; yet of old they complained of the noise of war (Nahum iii. 2; Exod. xxxii. 17, 18). When we hear the rumours of wars, the reports or tidings of wars. We commonly call uncertain reports rumours, and in time of war we often hear such, but the original word signifies intelligences, that of which we hear. Doctrine: That though it be very sad, yet it is not at all strange in this world, to hear of wars and rumours of wars. There are three sorts of wars: 1. Law-wars among neighbours and relations, bad enough, and very common, through too much love of the world, and too little of our brother. There are few of the spirit of Abram (Gen. xiii. 8). 2. Book-wars among scholars and Christians. Different sentiments maintained by each side with great heat, too often greater than the occasion demands. 3. Sword-wars among nations and public interests: of these the text speaks. Whence is it that so much mischief should be done in the world by wars? considering (1) What principles there are in the nature of man. Is there not such a thing as humanity? Man is not born for war, but naked and unarmed; not fierce, as birds and beasts of prey. (2) What promises there are in the Word of God. It seems hard to reconcile this text with Isa. ii. 4. and with Isa. xi. 6, &c. The Jews object it, Christ Himself has said otherwise (Luke xii. 51, and in the text). How shall we reconcile these two? I reply, Those promises are in part fulfilled already. Christ was born at a time of general peace. The gospel has prevailed much to the civilizing of the nations, and as far as it is received, it disposes men to peace. The primitive Christians were of a peaceable disposition. They will have a more full accomplishment in the latter days. Though contrary events come between, that word shall not fall to the ground. Yet the commonness of war in every age takes off the strangeness of it. What do we hear of at this day so much as of wars? Now this we are not to think strange. Because men are so provoking to God, and He does thus in a way of righteous judgment punish them for their sins (Isa. xxxiv. 5). War is one of God's sore judgments, with which He corrects the people of His wrath (Ezek. xiv. 17, 21). Sometimes God thus makes wicked men a scourge one to another, as Nebuchadnezzar was to the nations. Sometimes a scourge to His own people (Isa. x. 6). Because men are so provoking one to another, and they do thus give way to their own lusts (James iv. 1, 2). No war carried on but there is certainly a great deal of sin on both sides, as 2 Chron. xxviii. 9. But as to the cause of war. 1. Sometimes men's lusts on both sides begin the war, and where there may be a right and colour of reason on both sides, yet not such as on either to justify the taking up of arms, and while there are such follies set in great dignity (Eccl. x. 6), no marvel if we hear much of wars; punctilios of honour, inconsiderable branches of right, to which lives and countries are sacrificed by jealous princes; the mouth justly opened to denounce war, but the ear unjustly deaf to the proposals of peace. 2. Where the war on the

one side is just and necessary, it is men's lusts on the other side that make it so. And if we see it, we need not marvel at the matter. Here is the original of war and bloodshed. (1) Men's pride and ambition sometimes make a war just and necessary. (2) Men's covetousness and injustice sometimes make a war just and necessary. (3) Men's treachery sometimes makes war. No marvel we hear of wars, when all men are liars, and no confidence is to be put in them. (4) Oppression and persecution sometimes make war just. II. WE ARE HERE FOREARMED AGAINST THE TROUBLE WE ARE BID TO EXPECT. When you are yourselves disturbed with the alarms of war, be not troubled, *i.e.*, be not inordinately dejected and cast down, be not terrified, whatever happens; keep trouble from your heart (John xiv. 1) if war come to your door. It is both for caution and comfort. You need not be troubled, therefore give not way to it. Doctrine: That the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ ought not to be inordinately troubled, when there are wars and rumours of wars. 1. As for others, they have reason to be troubled. Those that are not the disciples of Jesus Christ, and are not interested in His merit and grace, have cause for trouble when God's judgments are abroad (see Isa. xxxiii. 14). Terrors belong to them, and as for comforts, they have no part nor lot in the matter (see Luke xxi. 25, 26). Those that have the most cause to be troubled commonly put trouble furthest from them. 2. There is cause for the disciples of Christ themselves, upon some accounts, and in some degree, to be troubled. Christ would not have His followers to be without feeling. God calls to mourning at such a time. This is a doctrine that needs explication and limitation. When you hear of wars be ye troubled after a godly sort. There is a threefold trouble commendable: (1) Sympathy with the sufferers. (2) Sorrow for sin. It is sin that makes all the mischief. Mourn for the sin that is the cause of the war, and the sin that is the effect of it. (3) Solicitude for the ark of God. For this our hearts should tremble, lest religion in its various interests suffer damage. The desolations of the sanctuary should trouble us more than the desolations of the earth: this is a holy fear. 3. Christians ought not to be inordinately troubled. When ye hear this, be not troubled, *i.e.*, (1) Be not disquieted, but make the best of it. It is not our wisdom to aggravate to ourselves the causes of trouble, nor to make them worse than they are. (2) Be not affrighted, but hope the best from it. When we hear the rumours of war, we must not be of doubtful mind; not as Ahaz (Isa. vii. 2; viii. 11, 12). We must not give up all for lost upon every disaster and disappointment. Courage is an excellent virtue in time of war, and needful at home as well as abroad. (3) Be not amazed, but prepare for worse after it. There seems to be this also intended in the caution; compare *v.* 8, "These are the beginnings of sorrows." Weep not for this, but get ready for the next (Luke xxiii. 28, 29.) Faint not in these lesser conflicts, for then what will you do when greater come (see Jer. xii. 5). Several considerations will be of use to keep trouble from the heart of good Christians, when we hear of wars. (*a*) The righteous God sits in the throne judging right, therefore be not troubled. God is King of nations, and presides in the affairs of nations. Men talk of the fortune of war, but it is not a blind fortune; the issue is determined by a wise God. (*b*) The church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, therefore be not troubled. (*c*) Christ is His people's peace, therefore be not troubled. The remnant of those that fear God, find rest in Christ, even in troublous times (see Micah v. 5; John xvi. 33). (*d*) The name of the Lord is a strong tower, therefore be not troubled. Into this citadel the vanquished may retire and find shelter, and a refuge that they cannot be beaten out of (Prov. xviii. 10). This is a stronghold, inaccessible, insuperable, and which cannot be taken. The power and providence of God are fortifications which cannot be scaled, nor battered, nor undermined. What need good people fear? (Psa. xlvi. 1, 2) They have always a God to whom they may go. (*e*) Men are God's hand, therefore be not troubled. God is doing their own work by them all this while, and they are accomplishing His purpose, though they mean not so (Isa. x. 5, 7, 15; Psa. xvii. 13, 14). (*f*) There will come a reckoning day, when all these things shall be reviewed; therefore be not troubled. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door and the mighty men shall shortly stand at His bar (Isa. xxvi. 21; Rev. vi. 10). (*g*) The wars of the nations perhaps may end in the peace of the church. God can bring light out of darkness, and meat out of the eater. (*h*) However, we are sure in heaven there are no wars nor rumours of wars, therefore be not troubled. All will be well there. To conclude: 1. Let us thankfully own God's great goodness to us in this nation—that we have peace at home, a happy government, peaceable habitations, a defence on our glory (Isa. xxxiii. 20). 2. Let us

not complain of the inconveniences that attend our being interested in the present war; the expense of it, or the abridging and exposing of our trade and property. 3. Let rumours of wars drive us to our knees. Pray, pray, and do not prophesy. Spread the matter before God, and you may greatly help the cause by your supplications. 4. Patiently wait the issue with a humble submission to the will of God. Do not limit Him, nor prescribe to Him. Let Him do His own work in His own way and time. (*Matthew Henry.*) *The sorrow of war*:—The conqueror of Bonaparte at Waterloo wrote, on the day after the 19th of June, to the Duke of Beaufort:—"The losses we have sustained have quite broken me down, and I have no feeling for the advantages we have acquired." On the same day, too, he wrote to Lord Aberdeen:—"I cannot express to you the regret and sorrow with which I look round me and contemplate the loss which I have sustained, particularly in your brother. The glory resulting from such actions, so dearly bought, is no consolation to me, and I cannot suggest it as any to you and his friends; but I hope that it may be expected that this last one has been so decisive as that no doubt remains that our exertions and our individual losses will be rewarded by the early attainment of our just object. It is then that the glory of the actions in which our friends and relations have fallen will be some consolation for their loss." He who could write thus had already attained a greater victory than that of Waterloo; and the less naturally follows the greater. (*Julius C. Hare.*)

Ver. 8. **These are the beginnings of sorrows.**—*The beginnings of sorrows*:—I. THE VALUE OF THESE FACTS IN RELATION TO THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE LORD. He is the prophet of the church. He was a revealer of secrets. His word was verified to the letter. The church lives in evil times on the word of her unseen Lord. II. THERE IS ALSO A SUGGESTION OF THE CONNECTION OF SORROWS AND SINS. Jerusalem's fate is a series of such sorrows. They arise out of religious unfaithfulness and moral deterioration. Nations are doomed by their own acts. III. If we do not and will not learn the Divine uses of adversity, then the things we regret, and which are most painful to us, WILL ONLY PROVE TO BE THE BEGINNINGS OF SORROWS. If lesser Divine chastisements do not raise us to higher moods of being, there must be held in reserve some hotter fire of discipline. We should immediately yield to the disciplines of God. (*The Preacher's Monthly.*) *The Christian's support in troublous times*:—Whatever happens, we must calm ourselves by remembering that the great Christ is still in heaven, ruling by the changeless laws of righteousness. In presence of extraordinary events, the ordinary methods of God's grace and providence will seem too slow, and the common gospel too calm; but it is exactly at such times that we most need to maintain our faith in them. (*R. Glover.*) *Horrors of famine at the siege of Jerusalem*:—During this dreadful time, the extremity of the famine was such, that a Jewess of noble family, urged by the cravings of hunger, slew her infant child, and prepared it for a meal. She had actually eaten one-half of it, when the soldiers, attracted by the smell of food, threatened her with instant death if she refused to show them where she had hidden it. Intimidated by this menace, she immediately produced the remains of her son; but, instead of sitting down to eat, they were utterly horror-struck; and the whole city stood aghast, when they heard the horrible tale, congratulating those whom death had hurried away from such heartrending scenes. Indeed, humanity at once shudders and sickens at the narration; nor can any one of the least sensibility reflect upon the pitiable condition to which the female part of the inhabitants must at this time have been reduced, without experiencing the tenderest emotion of sympathy, or refraining from tears, when he reads our Saviour's pathetic address to the women who bewailed Him as He was led to Calvary; for in that address He evidently refers to these very horrors and calamities.

Ver. 10. **And the gospel must first be published among all nations.**—*Extent of apostolic missionary labours*:—Doubtless this prediction will only receive its complete accomplishment in the secondary application of the prophecy, but we hardly realize how near it was to fulfilment before the destruction of Jerusalem. "The Acts of the Apostles" fill us with amazement at the rapid progress of Christianity in Europe and Asia, under the teaching of two of them. What should we not learn if the whole Twelve had found chroniclers to record their labours? Scattered traditions, with more or less of certainty, show at least this, that missionary work was carried on throughout the then known world. There is little doubt that St. Thomas established the church in Parthia and on the shores of India; that St.

Andrew penetrated far into Russia; that Bartholomew preached in Arabia and among the fire-worshippers of Persia; and it has been said that even Central Africa, which the present generation burns to win back to Christ, was the scene of St. Matthew's labours eighteen centuries ago. St. Paul's appeal to "the hope of the gospel which was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. i. 23), though doubtless written with Oriental exaggeration, testifies to a widespread diffusion of the truth. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Progress of the gospel:*—I remember hearing a story in connection with our battle-fields. One weary, dreary night, while our army was on the eve of a great and important battle, a soldier paced up and down before the tent of his general. Wearied with his work, he began to sing half to himself, "When I can read my title clear." After a little his voice grew louder, and he sang the hymn as though it were a song of victory. His tones rang out on the still night air. After a little another soldier, off yonder, hearing the music, and fascinated by it, joined in. There was a duet. A little longer, and another voice, farther off, joined, and there was a chorus, and it was not long before the whole army, as far as the mind could reach on either side, were joining in that wondrous chorus, and singing in the presence of the enemy,

"When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the sky."

Well, brethren, when I heard the story, it seemed to me that I could see in the far-off distance that wondrous carpenter's Son of Nazareth, standing alone and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill to men." After a little twelve disciples took up the refrain, and joined in the chorus. After a little longer, in the next century, a still larger company gathered and sang it with all their hearts. In the next century a still larger number added their voices, and now, after eighteen hundred years have gone by, the music of that wondrous song, which began with Him who stood in His father's workshop, is sung, and echoed, and re-echoed the whole wide world over. It is our revelation from God, and it is the impulse that lifts us all up to God. (*Christian Mirror.*)

Ver. 11. **But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up.**—*The disciples led, delivered, and taught:*—Our Lord is here foretelling the persecutions which the disciples would be called upon to suffer for the gospel's sake, and is arming them against the errors, the deceits, and the cruelties of those times. He is also enjoining upon them how they are to conduct themselves under the subtlety and fury of the oppressor, and is giving them directions which, if they rightly follow, will not only determine the excellence of their discipleship, but the certainty of their triumph over the jeopardy and envy of circumstances and foes. (See verses 9 to 13.) Dealing directly with the eleventh verse, we see—I. That when suffering persecution the disciples were to be led, and not driven. "But when they shall lead you." It is always better to be led than forced; more is to be gained from obedience than coercion. We are led, or we lose that obedience which constitutes the soul of godliness. We follow, or we are not led as Christ was and would have us to be. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, &c. Stephen, the martyr, was led; so Paul the apostle. So also was Ridley and Latimer, each ending their earthly lives in the very track and spirit of their Lord and Master. But observe again—II. The disciples were to be delivered in opposition to becoming resistful and violently taken sacrifices. "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up." Both led and delivered. Not to be led, and then to take a final stand of opposition. The deliverance must not be less loyal and true than the leading has been. The sacrifice must be complete. Begun in being led, in true following, it must not end in rebellious resistance and forsaking. No; we are to be delivered up, not thrust up—self-offered and complying rather than conflicting with our foes. (See Isa. l. 6; 1 Peter ii. 21–23). Then further, the text teaches—III. That in times of persecution the disciples were not to prepare and to rely upon mechanical defences. "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever," &c. The reasons for this are evident. Self-thought, self-prepared plans of defence, would—1. Disturb and disorder their minds. Scheming for words of reply and methods of escape would result in mental distraction. They would be confused. And, moreover, trusting to means of self-defence would—2. Deny and neutralize the proper office and power of the Holy Spirit. "Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy

Ghost." Thus, then, acting as true believers should—serving Christ fearlessly, all our self-reserve given up to His guidance and power—we shall find the Holy Spirit (in all those cases morally correspondent to the circumstances of our text) to—(*a*) Sufficiently enlighten our minds. (*b*) To be timely and powerful in the exercise of His help. Either the help of deliverance, or that of loyal resignation; complete escape, or patient endurance. In illustration and proof of these, see Exodus iv. 10–12; Jer. i. 7–9; Luke xxi. 14, 15; 1 Cor. ii. 13. In this aspect of heaven's cause the answer and the help must be from heaven, and not from the earth. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27). Here alone is the true light and the power that prevails. It is therefore plain—IV. That where the Holy Spirit thus operates all human self-assertion is suppressed. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." And this takes place—1. For our sake as Christ's true disciples. This is the victory He gives, and without which we could not overcome the world. 2. To prevent self-glorying. In these crises the tongue of the learned and the pen of a ready writer come from God. Human sagacity can claim no credit. This wisdom is not of man, lest he should boast. And—3. To secure the Divine victory and praise. To Him who directs and speaks belongs the glory. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Thine, therefore is the victory, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen. (*Thomas Colclough*).

Ver. 12. **Now the brother shall betray the brother to death.**—*Christianity causing division*:—As Christianity gives birth to and cherishes the most perfect love, so it calls forth the most bitter hatred. It calls forth a love which is above nature, because it makes men love their enemies. Contrariwise it calls forth a hatred which is unnatural, for it made, and yet makes, men hate and betray, and, if they can, destroy their own flesh and blood. Thus we read that the Emperor Domitian, in his hatred of the Christian name, slew Flavius Clemens and his niece, or near relation Flavia Domitilla; the Emperor Maximin martyred Artemia, his own sister; and Diocletian slew his own wife, and other relatives. St. Barbara also was killed by her own father; and if we had a full martyrology of obscure Christians, we should find multitudes of others similarly betrayed by their own flesh and blood. We are told by Indian missionaries, that as soon as converts are baptized, they become objects of hatred to their nearest relatives; even their wives often desert them. Now, if this be so in a country where Christianity is the religion of the rulers, what would it be if heathenism were unchecked in its power of persecution? (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*).

Ver. 13. **But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**—*Of letting go and giving up*:—The tower of a lofty Christian character and life is not going to push itself up in a night like Jonah's gourd. You cannot wake up some fine morning, in glad surprise, to find it finished to the turret stone. To build that tower costs. It costs sacrifice. It costs skill. It costs patience. It costs resolution. As gravitation pulls stones downward and glues them to the earth, and as, if they go into the tower at all, they must be lifted there with wrench and strain, so this tower of a noble Christian life must be builded in the face of opposition, and at the cost of fight with it. But history has borne out the words of Christ. In other times it has come to that. The Inquisition made it come to that. The massacre of St. Bartholemew, for which Rome sang *Te Deums*, made it come to that. Philip the Second of Spain made it come to that. The Duke of Alva, during his government of the Netherlands, made it come to that. Thank God, Torquemada cannot torture now! Thank God, there is no fuel for Smithfield fires now! But still now, in our time, in this worldly world, no man can give himself in utter consecration to the unworldly Christ, and put his feet squarely in His exemplifying footprints, and go on in resolute practice after Him, and not meet various opposition. It is well worth noting how constant is the insistence of the Scripture on, not simply foundation laying, but also on turret stone lifting, on finishing. "I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end," sings David. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope unto the end," urges the Apostle Peter. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," declares the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And the Epistles to the Seven Churches in the Revelation are full of this doctrine of the importance of the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." This, I am certain, is one of the

commonest assaults of evil; this toward discouragement, toward despondency in the practice of the true life; this toward letting go and giving up. "Well, you have laid the foundation," Satan says; "you have accepted Christ and been baptized and joined the church, and professed yourself a Christian. You have started, but think how long it is before you can come to that turret stone. You are a fool to try. Give up. Have done with it. Anyway, you are a fool to try in your circumstances; or certainly you are a fool to try with your disposition. What may under more favourable circumstances, or with another sort of inherited disposition, be possible for others, is surely impossible for you. Why strain and struggle and wrench at the impossible? Don't! Quit!" Who has not felt the subtle acid of this temptation eating out the substance of his high endeavour? Some time since, I was talking with a young Christian business man in another city. He was troubled with the very problem which tormented the Psalmist long ago: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." That is precisely what he was saying: "Here am I. I have determined to be straight and true, and Christian in my business; and I have been. But look at that man; he isn't, but see how he gets on. What's the use of my toiling at this tower of a Christian business integrity, when it is work so hard and slow? Why wouldn't it be better for me to stop toiling at this Christian tower, and go on with one which men would call—well, at least measurably decent, like that man's, but which mounts into the sky of success in such swift and easy fashion?" It was only a momentary temptation. But I am sure he is not the only Christian business man, be he young or old, who has felt the force of it. Or, here again, is a young Christian. He has laid the foundation of this Christian tower well and thoroughly in prayer and penitence and faith in Christ. He is full of the beautiful enthusiasm of the new life. He has confessed his Lord and is going on in the rejoicing purpose of building a life his Lord can smile on. And then, as sometimes in the early summer the flowers come upon a frost that bites and draggles them, the chill of the inconsistencies of some older Christians smites all his beautiful enthusiasm down. Why am I under obligations to be any better than they, the older, more experienced, more prominent Christians? Why cannot I at least loosen the tug of my endeavour, if I do not altogether give up and let go?" Or, here is a Christian wife and mother. To be the sole source and centre of religious influence in the home is very hard; to seek to breathe about the home a Christian atmosphere, when the husband, if he do no more, does meet and chill it by the icy air of his indifference; to have to train the children away from, instead of towards, the example of the father in the topmost and most important thing, the matter of religion; to have to meet this objection, falling from the lips of her own child: "Father never prays; why should I? Father never cares much for Sunday; why should I? Father never says he loves the Saviour; why should I try to?"—well, I do not wonder that she feels sometimes like letting go and giving up. I do not wonder that sometimes her cross seems too rugged and too heavy. And now that we may arm ourselves against this so common temptation of letting go and giving up, let us attend together to certain principles opposed to it. I. LET US GET CHEER FOR OURSELVES BY REMEMBERING THAT THE WORLD'S BEST WORK HAS BEEN DONE AND THE NOBLEST LIVES HAVE BEEN LIVED BY MEN AND WOMEN WHO, LIKE OURSELVES, HAVE SOMETIMES FELT LIKE LETTING GO AND GIVING UP. There is a verse of Scripture which many a time has been to me both a comfort and a girding. It is written in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the tenth chapter and at the thirteenth verse: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "So I am not," I have said to myself, in darker and more despairing moments, "one singled out for unusual and separate trial; others have been wrapped in clouds similar, others have stood in ways as thorny." That is a twisted and bubble-blown and distorting glass, which trial so often bids us look through, out upon the landscape of our lives—that nobody else has ever had to meet such chastening discipline as our own. Why, there was Moses; he had just this very feeling toward letting go and giving up. It was immensely hard to satisfy those Israelites. There was David, hunted and hounded; turned against and betrayed by his trusted counsellor, Ahithophel. "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." There was Elijah under the juniper tree, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." What

failing feeling toward letting go and giving up in him! And if you leave the Scripture and turn to the record of great lives anywhere, you shall find that in them, too, feeling faltered, and suggestion came to cease from their great tower building this side the turret stone. I suppose a sermon scarcely ever did more, both for the man himself and the great cause it advocated, than Dr. Wayland's sermon on the Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise. But the evening of its preaching was chill and rainy, and possibly fifty persons made up the audience, and the church was so cold that the preacher had to wear his great coat throughout the service, and nobody seemed to listen, nor anybody to care; and the next day the discouraged preacher, throwing himself on the lounge in the house of one of his parishioners, in one of his most despairing moods, exclaimed: "It was a complete failure; it fell perfectly dead!" I am sure he felt like letting go and giving up, when he remembered that he had rewritten that sermon eleven times that he might make it more worthy, and that such was the outcome of it. But that sermon, published, made him, and, more than any other influence in those beginning days of the Foreign Missionary enterprise, made the cause. The Duke of Wellington, when a subaltern, was anxious to retire from the army, where he despaired of advancement, and actually applied to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland for the poor post of a commissioner of customs. And his great antagonist, the great Napoleon, was in early life tempted to commit suicide because he could do nothing and could get no chance, and was only saved from it by a cheerful word from somebody. Oh! friend of mine, you are not the only person in the world who has been assaulted by this suggestion of letting go and giving up. There has never been a noble or achieving life anywhere that has not had to push its tower up in spite of it. II. Let us remember that this failing to endure to the end, this giving up and letting go, MUST NECESSARILY CARRY WITH ITSELF A COMPLETE FORFEITURE OF THE PAST. If our Past has been true and noble, we may be helped by it in the Present. But we cannot live upon the Past. The tower is unfinished if we stop this side of the turret stone. It is but an unturning and useless wheel if we do not take advantage of the present water. All its previous turning helps it not. There at Muckross Abbey I saw a yew tree hundreds of years old, as old as the crumbling abbey rising round it, yet still growing bravely on. It was growing, because, standing on the Past of gnarled trunk and spreading branches, it was using the Present, forming its leaf buds every season, and drinking in the dew and light. But the abbey in whose court it stood was only a disintegrating pile of crumbling stone, because it had ceased relation with the Present. It had no use for the Present, nor the Present for it; no longer were busy hands of inmates putting it to function, keeping it in repair. It was a Past thing, so the severe Present was treading it under foot. To give up and let go is to forfeit what we have done and have been. The Past is useful only as a preparation for the Present; and if in the Present we will not steadily push on toward the finishing, we lose the value and meaning of the Past. Resist, therefore, the temptation of letting go and giving up. III. Let us resist the temptation of letting go and giving up, BY HOLDING OURSELVES TO THE SHORT VIEW OF LIFE, BY DOING THE NEXT THING. Each day's stone laid in each day's time; the short view method, the next thing method, that is the only method of strong endurance and shining achievement. Wise words those which George Macdonald puts into the mouth of Hugh Sutherland in his story of David Elginbrod; they are words worthy the careful heeding of every one of us: "Now, what am I to do next?" asks Hugh, and he goes on thinking with himself: "It is a happy thing for us that this is really all we have to concern ourselves about, what to do next. No man can do the second thing. He can do the first. If he omits it, the wheels of the social Juggernaut roll over him, and leave him more or less crushed behind. If he does it, he keeps in front and finds room to do the next again; and so he is sure to arrive at something, for the onward march will carry him with it. There is no saying to what perfection of success a man may come who begins with what he can do, and uses the means at hand; he makes a vortex of action, however slight, toward which all the means instantly begin to gravitate." True words, the very gospel of achievement, these. So against this temptation toward letting go and giving up, let me take the short view, let me seize the next thing, and not trouble myself about the fortieth thing, sure that God's grace will give the strength for the coming day to which the fortieth thing belongs; but that, if I want God's strengthening grace for that, I must use God's strengthening grace which offers itself to-day, and for this next thing, which belongs to no other day in all time's awful calendar but this. IV. LET US REMEMBER THAT REFUSING TO YIELD

TO THE TEMPTATION OF LETTING GO AND GIVING UP IS THE CONSTANT FIXING OURSELVES BUT THE MORE FIRMLY IN THE HABIT OF GOING ON IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Dark law that, which through and because of momentary decisions against righteousness, ends in the awful doom, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." But that same law has a sunward side bright as the light that flashes from God's throne, viz., that momentary and constant decisions towards righteousness end at last in that celestial turret stone, piercing the far radiances of Heaven—"Let him that is righteous be righteous still." V. Let us remember that for us, keeping hold and refusing to let go, THERE IS THE CONSTANT HELP OF CHRIST TOWARD TRIUMPHING. That is a sweet legend hanging about an old church in England, and it tells the great truth well; how centuries ago, when the monks were rearing it, a new temple for the worship of their God, there came among the workers a strange monk, unasked, who always took on himself the heaviest tasks; and how at last, when a particularly gigantic beam was needed for a position as important as that of the keystone of an arch, and how when, with sweating strain and united effort, it was lifted to its place, it was strangely found to be some feet too short. No device of the builders could remedy it; they had tried their best with it, they had used the most careful measurement they knew, but how sadly they had failed! There it was, too short, and their utmost skill could not find remedy. The night shut down upon the tired workers, and they went to their rest with sore hearts, leaving only this unknown monk, who would go working on. But when the morning came, and the workers came forth again, they saw the sunlight falling on the beam exactly in its place, lengthened to the precise dimensions needed, and resting accurately on its supports. But the unknown monk had disappeared. Yet the workers knew Him now, and were certain they could carry the temple onward to its topmost turret. For He who had been working with them and supplying their lack of perfect work, they came now to know, was none other than the Lord Himself. They were not unhelped toilers. Nor are we. "Lo! I am with you always," declares our Lord! It is our privilege to answer with the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." VI. And now for the last word. Let us determine that as we hope to carry the tower of a Christian life and service onward to its finishing ourselves, WE WILL BE VERY CAREFUL NOT TO DISCOURAGE ANY ONE BESIDE US, TOILING LIKE OURSELVES AT THE SAME ACHIEVEMENT. Once a building was wrapped in flame; at a high window, a little child was seen vainly endeavouring to escape; a brave fireman started up a ladder to try to rescue it. He went up, and still further up: he had almost gained the window, but the flames darted at him and the flames smote him, and he began to falter; he hesitated, looked upward at the raging fire; he shook his head; he was just about to turn back. Just then some one in the throng below cried: "Cheer him! Cheer him!" From a thousand throats a loud heart-helping cheer went up. He did not turn back. He went on toward the finishing, and in a minute he was seen through the thick drifts of smoke, with the little child safe in his arms. So let us, every one, see to it that we cheer on all we can who, like ourselves, are struggling upward toward any nobleness. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *Unflinching endurance*:—I have read of that noble servant of God, Marcus Arethusius, minister of a church in the time of Constantine, who in Constantine's time had been the cause of overthrowing an idol's temple; afterwards, when Julian came to be emperor, he would force the people of that place to build it up again. They were ready to do it, but he refused; whereupon those that were his own people, to whom he preached, took him, and stripped him of all his clothes, and abused his naked body, and gave it up to the children, to lance it with their pen-knives, and then caused him to be put in a basket, and anoint his naked body with honey, and set him in the sun, to be stung with wasps. And all this cruelty they showed because he would not do anything towards the building up of this idol temple; nay, they came to this, that if he would do but the least towards it, if he would give but a half-penny to it, they would save him. But he refused all, though the giving of a half-penny might have saved his life: and in doing this, he did but live up to that principle that most Christians talk of, and all profess, but few come up to, viz., that we must choose rather to suffer the worst of torments that men and devils can invent and inflict, than to commit the least sin, whereby God should be dishonoured, our consciences wounded, religion reproached, and our own souls endangered. (*Brooks.*) *Enduring to the end*:—Under this revival of the persecuting spirit, in a few days nineteen Christians, conspicuous for their character and zeal, were apprehended, and it was resolved to make a severe example. All were condemned to die; the four nobles (one of them a lady) were ordered to be burned alive; fifteen

others were to be thrown over a precipice. At one o'clock the night before their execution, a large gathering of their companions secretly took place, not to break prison or attempt a rescue, but to commend the sufferers specially to God in prayer. "At one at night, we met together and prayed." With the early dawn the whole city was astir: it had been whispered that the Christians were to die, and an immense multitude gathered to witness the sight. On the west side of Antananarivo, is a steep precipice of granite, a hundred and fifty feet high; the terrace above which has long been used as a place of execution. Above the terrace the ground rises rapidly to the crest of the ridge, on which the city is built, and on which the palace enclosure, with its lofty dwellings, stands conspicuous. Beneath the precipice the ground is a mass of jagged rocks and boulders, upon which the unhappy criminal would fall headlong, when rolled or thrown over the ledge. The refined cruelty which invented this terrible punishment has, in the modern world, been repeated in but one country and among one people, the half-savage population of Mexico. Through the thousands that had crowded every point of the sloping hill the condemned brethren were carried, wrapped in mats and slung on poles. But they prayed and sang as they passed along the roadway; "and some who beheld them, said that their faces were like the faces of angels." One by one they were thrown over the precipice, the rest looking on. "Will you cease to pray?" was the only question. "No," was the firm answer in every case. And in a moment the faithful martyr lay bleeding, and mangled, and dead, among the rocks below.—(*Trophies of Grace in Madagascar.*) *The finally saved:*—I. IT IS A FAIR SUBJECT OF INQUIRY: WHERE AND FROM WHENCE DO WE EXPECT THESE TRIALS? 1. From our own heart. 2. The wiles and the machinations of Satan. 3. The world will assault you. 4. Sin in all its phases, its fascinating aspects, will seek to seduce you. 5. Error will assail you. II. THOSE FORMS OF RELIGION, THOSE SHADES AND SYSTEMS OF BELIEF, WHICH WILL NOT ENDURE, BUT MUST COLLAPSE IN THE ORDEALS TO WHICH THEY WILL BE SUBJECTED IN A WORLD WHICH TESTS THE REAL EVERY DAY, AND REJECTS ALL THAT IS PRETENTIOUS. Nothing will endure but vital, scriptural Christianity. 1. The religion of mere impulse. Excitement is not conviction. 2. The religion of sentiment, not the religion of conviction nor of the adoption of the heart, but purely of the imagination. 3. The religion of intellect. A very striking and, so far, commendable form. The understanding is convinced that Christianity is true. It is orthodoxy, not regeneration; it is light in the head without love in the heart. 4. The religion of the conscience. 5. The religion of the natural affections, than which nothing is more amiable, beautiful, or lovely; and yet it is a religion that will not endure. 6. The religion of tradition. 7. The religion of form. There is no endurance in it; it collapses the moment it is exposed to trouble. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Perseverance:*—The leopard doth not run after his prey like other beasts, but pursues it by leaping; and if at three or four jumps he cannot seize it, for very indignation he gives over the chase. There be some who, if they cannot leap into heaven by a few good works, will even let it alone; as if it were to be ascended by leaping, not by climbing. But they are more unwise who, having got up many rounds of Jacob's ladder, and finding difficulties in some of the uppermost—whether wrestling with assaults and troubles, or looking down upon their old allurements—even fairly descend with Demas and allow others to take heaven. (*T. Adams.*) *Constancy:*—Some dyes cannot bear the weather, but alter colour presently; but there are others that, having something that gives a deeper tincture, will hold. The graces of a true Christian hold out in all sorts of weather, in winter and summer, prosperity and adversity, when superficial counterfeit holiness will give out. (*R. Sibbes.*) *Incentives to perseverance:*—Here are some grounds or motives to the patient suffering of persecution and troubles for the profession of Christ and of the gospel. 1. Of all afflictions and troubles, those are the most comfortable to suffer and endure, which are suffered for Christ. 2. By these kinds of sufferings we glorify God, and bring honour to the name of Christ, and credit to the gospel, more than by any other sufferings. 3. It is a most honourable thing unto us, yea, the greatest glory that may be in this world, to suffer anything for Christ. 4. Consider how much Christ has suffered for us, and for our salvation; how great reproach and shame; what bitter pain and torment of soul and body; and let this move us, patiently and willingly to suffer any persecution and trouble for His sake. 5. Consider how much wicked men suffer in the practice of sin, and to satisfy their wicked lusts, and let this move us to suffer any persecution for Christ. 6. Consider the great and excellent reward promised to those who endure for Christ's sake. (*George Petter.*) *Endurance:*—

This is another word for constancy or perseverance. Suppose, now, the case of individuals desirous of realizing, as a matter of experience, the great vital truths of the gospel in the heart. They have great doubts about the correctness and safety of their former mode of life, and consequently feel in some measure attracted towards the hopes, and aspirations, and privileges of the Christian. But they have to stand up against many oppositions; they have to withdraw from the society of the giddy and thoughtless, and from habits of dissipation and worldliness. They have to contend with disinclinations for public and private religious duties, for prayer and Scripture reading. They begin to find that it is no easy thing to act the part of self-denial—to wrestle against the warm passions and earnest longings of a corrupt nature. They feel, too, the trial of a wayward and treacherous heart, ever tending downwards, cleaving to the dust. Such persons as these are like the Israelites upon the shores of the Red Sea, with its surging breakers and rolling waves before them, and the Egyptians behind them. And yet God said unto Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." They must not turn back to Egypt again, but must step onward to brave the sea. And so with those in the state described. Do not turn back. Do you not yield to tempting solicitations to return to former haunts. Be faithful to your convictions. By perseverance in treading the path of duty the victory shall be yours—the path shall be ever brighter and broader as you near your everlasting home. The young eaglet looking up from its nest upon the high floating clouds and the broad expanse of the clear blue sky, may, perhaps, in its first efforts to mount through and above them, sink with discouragement; but the parent bird is close at hand to give help; and so by perseverance, at last the eaglet soars in the path of its mother, and rivals her in distance as well as in rapidity. Even so the weak in faith shall be made strong. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *Enduring to the end:*—Among the different games and races at Athens, there was one in which they carried a burning torch in their hand. If they reached the goal without its being extinguished, they obtained the prize. Thus, they only shall be saved, says the Saviour, who endure to the end. It is not the man who makes a splendid profession for a season—it is not the man who appears to carry the torch of truth only a part of the way—that shall be crowned; but he who perseveres, and whose lamp is trimmed, and who holds fast his confidence, and the rejoicing of his hope, unto the end. Yet, alas! how many seem to bid fair for a season, but in time of temptation fall away. Epictetus tells us of a gentleman returning from banishment, who, on his journey homewards, called at his house, told a sad story of an imprudent life; the greater part of which being now spent, he was resolved for the future to live philosophically; to engage in no business, to be candidate for no employment, not to go to court, nor to salute Cæsar with ambitious attendances; but to study, and worship the gods, and die willingly when nature or necessity called him. Just, however, as he was entering his door, letters from Cæsar, inviting him to court, were delivered to him; and, then, alas; he forgot all his promises, and grew pompous, secular, and ambitious. Thus many form resolutions in their own strength, and make for a season some pretentions to seriousness; but prove like the children of Ephraim, who, though armed and carrying bows, yet turned back in the day of battle. *Enduring to the end:*—To endure, that is the great point. It does not simply signify that a man should hold on, but that a man should hold on in spite of, and in the face of discouragements, and difficulties, and disappointments. It is more than "dure," it is "endure." It is a very great mistake for Christian people to imagine that all will be light and liberty, and peace and joy. There are representations in the Word of God of the Christian course that seem to be contrary, but they are only different aspects of the whole subject. For instance: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Your joy no man taketh from you." "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Yet, on the other hand, as we had it this morning, "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily." Again, we are told, we must "mortify" our evil and corrupt affections; that we must "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" that "the right hand" must be "cut off," and the "right eye plucked out," in order that we may follow and obey our Lord and Master. Now all these things are not contrary, but they are reconciled. There is joy, but it is joy in the midst of trouble; there is peace, but it is peace maintained by constant warfare; and there is blessed rest, but it is rest in labour and toil. If we have a battle to fight, if we have a race to run, if we have a building to erect, it must be with toil, and trouble, and effort. We shall have to "endure to the end." It will not avail to be constant and enduring in the outset, but we must endure to the end.

Many will try to prevent our following the Lord fully, they will try to discourage us. And then, too, do we not find very many, from following into different companies, and amongst gay, thoughtless, and worldly companionships, get absorbed in the vortex of life, their holiness is gone, they tumble down in the mire, their hope is withered, and passes away as a dream. Then, again, are there not very many who get into some peculiar state of trial from persecution, or reproach, or something they did not count upon; they are ashamed of Jesus, they are ashamed of the cross, and so they betray the Master with a kiss. Then, again, how many are disheartened and discouraged with the struggle in their own hearts. They set out with much emotion, but feeling too little faith. How many things lead a man to come short of eternal life! It is, perhaps, more beautiful to see a man in little comfort and in darkness, holding on, than one who walks in the full sunshine. Job was able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Was not that a beautiful instance of enduring to the end? When he was stripped of everything,—without were fightings, and within were fears; clouds, and tribulations, and adversity were about him; yet he says, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have not full salvation now; it is in progress, it is not complete; it is the man that endures to the end that attains the full recompense, and enters into the joy of the Lord. This is the great purpose and end. We do not set out on a voyage just for the purpose of setting out; we have to seek to reach the haven. We do not cover ourselves in armour simply for the sake of being ready for the battle, but that we may fight and win the victory, and gain the crown; therefore, after all, this is the grand test of our having true faith in Christ, that we continue in Christ, that we abide as branches in the vine, and bear fruit. How much blossom of promise there is that has no measure of fruit? Let us never forget that there may be a good deal of seeming fruit; but if it does not last, if it drops off it is because it is worthless, rotten at the core. You sometimes see under a fruit tree the ground strewn with fallen fruit. Somebody may say, perhaps, some great storm has passed over, or some sudden frost, when probably the truth has been that the fruit itself was unsound at the core, and that, therefore, it rotted and fell off. Brethren, it is so with the fruits that grow in the orchard of God; many are fair and seeming good to the sight, but they are not sound at the core. The proof that they are sound is, that they still cling to the tree and ripen, until, as it is beautifully said, "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." (*Hugh Stowell, M.A.*)

Ver. 14. **Let him that readeth understand.**—*Need of an attentive mind*:—Let him strive to understand (this means) by reading with utmost attention, diligence, and devotion, weeping as John did, till the sealed book was opened; digging deep in the mine of the Scriptures for the mind of God, and holding it fast when he hath it, lest at any time he should let it slip. Admirable is that, and applicable to this purpose, which Philostratus relates of the precious stone Pantarbe, of so orient, bright, and sweet a colour, that it both dazzles and refreshes the eyes at once, drawing together heaps of other stones by its secret force (though far distant), as hives of bees, &c. But lest so costly a gift should grow cheap, nature has not only hid it in the innermost bowels of the earth, but also has put a faculty into it, of slipping out of the hands of those who hold it, unless they be very careful to prevent it. (*John Trapp.*) *Reading the Scriptures*:—Motives to the diligent reading of the Scriptures in private. 1. Consider the excellency of the Scriptures above all other books and writings of men. They are the books of God Himself; the letter of the Creator to the creature. 2. Consider how much spiritual fruit and profit is to be reaped by the diligent reading of the Scripture: this being an excellent means not only to build us up in the knowledge of those things which concern God's glory, and our own salvation; but also to confirm and strengthen our faith, and to quicken and stir us up to all conscionable obedience to the will of God, as well in doing, as in suffering what He requires of us. 3. Consider the examples of such as have been most diligent, and taken great pains in reading the Scriptures. Cromwell could say the New Testament without book. Bishop Ridley learned all St. Paul's Epistles by heart. (*George Petter.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Not go down into the house.**—*Opportunity to be seized*:—Opportunity is like a string of stepping-stones across a ford. The traveller, coming up to them, may find the river so swollen with the rains that the stones are all but covered. If he delay, though his home be on the opposite bank, and full in sight,

it may be too late to cross, and he may have a journey of several miles to reach his home. (*Union Magazine.*) *Danger of delay*:—Opportunity is like a narrow passage in the Arctic Seas. Sometimes, in these northern regions, ships get enclosed in a narrow space between ice-islands. The floating rocks glide nearer the ship on every side, and the dismayed seamen behold their only chance of escape from the fatal crash lies in a narrow channel, that every moment grows still narrower. How hurriedly they press their vessel through that strip to reach the safety of the open ocean! Even so must we press along the narrow way that leads to eternal life; for who knows how soon that narrow way may be closed against him. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 18. **That your flight be not in the winter.**—*The difficulty of conversion in old age*:—There is a winter in human life, as there is a winter in the seasons of the year. Infancy is our spring; and the bud of existence which is then nourished and cherished, opens its flowers during the summer of youth. In riper years, and in the vigour of manhood, the fruit is put forth: and this period we call the autumn of our days. But if death spare us a little longer, there will come ice in the blood, and snow on the brow; and all the emblems of a moral winter are thickly strewed over the man. And if there has been no fleeing to the mercy of the Lord, whilst the advance of summer and autumn has warned us that our year would soon draw to a close, it will be a hard thing, and a scarcely possible thing, when the limb has grown rigid, when the blood is congealed, and when the branches hang withered from the stem, to drag ourselves along; and the man, in the winter of his days, when his foot is halting, and his eye is darkening, and his blood is freezing, is so unfitted to brave the difficulties of the rugged path of winter, that no consideration should have more weight with the young and with the impenitent than the recommendation of our text. It will not be supposed, then, that, by any of my statements, I do at all limit the operations of grace, or insinuate that there can be no flight during the winter because there has been none before the winter. On the contrary, the mere fact of its being subject of prayer that our flight may not be in the winter, implies that flight is at the least practicable, though not then easy. First, the difficulty of flight in the winter.—Secondly, the danger that flight, if deferred to the winter, will not then be practicable. I. THE DIFFICULTY OF FLIGHT IN THE WINTER; or, to drop the metaphor, THE DIFFICULTY OF CONVERSION IN OLD AGE. The Spirit doth strive with every one; and by secret admonitions and suggestions, by working upon hope and exciting fear, it does summon all men to consider their ways, and allows not that any sinner should go on in transgression, and not have its ruinous result set before him. Well, then, if this statement be accurate—if it be true that all men are plied with inducements and threatenings, and that the Divine machinery is brought to bear on their consciences; it follows that the aged sinner must have resisted many godly motions: and now he stands, in the winter of his days, the hero of a succession of victories. But then, they have been victories won by the lust of the flesh, by the lust of the eye, and by the pride of life—over the benevolent strivings of holy angels, and the merciful interpositions of Deity Himself. And I ask whether it will not be necessarily true, that the man who has resisted such impressions will be found correspondently hardened against threatenings. The aged sinner must have been successful in stifling anxiety, and in drowning conscience: and thus he hath closed up, so to speak, the common avenues through which the gospel message finds entrance. Hence, there is less hope of the aged sinner. But not only has the aged sinner resisted much; but it will generally happen that he has invented much. He will have his own scheme of salvation: he will have devised some method of quieting alarm: he will have arranged some system of religion for himself. I cannot but suppose that this is ordinarily the case. I cannot suppose that there are many aged men, who give themselves no concern touching the things of eternity. Sometimes indeed we are presented with that sad spectacle—an old man hunting after money which his trembling hands cannot grasp; or an old woman tottering into the grave with a heap of new fashions hung on her shrivelled body. But I am ready to believe, that very commonly old people have some thought about the future; and, to use the common-place phrase, cast up their account with God, and contrive by the most ingenious arithmetic to strike a balance in their own favour. They have sinned in their youth; but, thank God, He has given them time for repentance; and the seriousness of later years has made amends for the frivolities of the earlier. They may have offended a great deal, but then they have suffered a great deal; and the afflictions will be taken as an atonement for the transgression. Their lives have been excellent lives: no

man was ever wronged by them: they were in trade for half a century, and kept unsullied the character of honourable dealers. They were engaged in the management of various societies, and received pieces of plate as compliments to their integrity. One old man is comforted because he has been a very moral man; and another, because he has been a very charitable man; and a third, because God is a God of wonderful mercy; and a fourth, because it is too late to alter. and things will probably not turn out so bad as they have been represented. I believe the observations I have thus advanced are grounds for deciding that conversion in the winter of life must be a work of great difficulty. It must be further obvious to you, that, as it would be in natural, so in spiritual things, the infirmities of the old man incapacitate him for flight. I ask you whether the old man, the withered man, the wasted man, is adapted for grappling with so stern a communication? Is his mind calculated to take in what is thus overpowering? Are his apprehensions likely to grasp the tidings in their length and breadth? Is one so timid, the being who is expected to arm for the battle, or to gird himself for the fight? If it be a time of hazard to set out upon a voyage when the vessel has just sprung a leak—and if it be an hour of peril to commence a journey in a foreign land when the sun has faded from the heavens—and it be a moment of danger to sit at the base of the mountain when the avalanche is just loosening from the heights—and it be an instant of imminent risk when the draw-bridge is trembling between us and the citadel—then is old age and winter a dangerous season for man to flee from his present condition. II. We have thus shown you that great difficulties are attendant on flight in the winter. We are next to consider THE DANGER THAT FLIGHT, IF DEFERRED TO THE WINTER, WILL NOT THEN BE PRACTICABLE; in other words, the grounds for believing, that, if men repent not before old age, they will never repent at all. One reason for praying against postponement is, the possibility that flight, if delayed, may never take place. It is a trite saying, that "to-morrow never comes;" and I may add, that few men practically think themselves a year nearer the grave, because they are a year older. Once more. It is the testimony of experience that men are seldom converted in old age. Who, then, would defer flight, when the Almighty is inviting him to join the ranks of the redeemed? Let us address ourselves to the journey. The days are short, and the sunbeams are watery; the time for repentance may soon be at an end. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Winter useful and beautiful:*—However disagreeable a very severe winter may be, in some respects, it yet serves most important purposes. The sap retires from the extremities of shrubs and trees, and takes refuge in the roots, thus giving them a time to rest and recuperate. The covering of snow which is spread over the earth protects the grass and the grain, and keeps all things which grow out of the ground snug and warm. Moreover, the nipping frost kills off the myriad hordes of insects; dries up the seeds of infectious and deadly diseases; improves the blood, on which our very existence depends; and gives new vigour to the worn-out and wasted system. Consumptive patients are no longer sent to gasp and faint beneath the orange-groves of a debilitating southern clime, but uniform and invigorating cold weather is found much better for them. Winter, besides being an useful season, is certainly a very beautiful one. The earth spread smoothly over with its white coverlid; the icy tracery of the trees; and the fantastic pictures which the frost draws on the window-panes—what could be more beautiful than these? The goodness of our heavenly Father is plainly discovered in the provision which He makes for the lower orders of creation, to protect them from the rigours of winter. The more delicate birds are instructed by their instincts to fly off to warmer latitudes. The creatures which are to remain behind, need not go to clothing stores for thick coats! The fur, and hair, and feathers on their bodies, are made abundantly warm to protect them; and the colder the winter which is approaching, the better does their gracious Creator provide for them. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Flight in winter:*—Many of you will remember an instance of such a flight, which was disastrous in the extreme. In the autumn of 1812, Napoleon entered Moscow with 120,000 soldiers, intending to pass the winter there in comfort. On the 13th of October (three weeks earlier than it had ever been known before), snow began to fall. The proud Emperor looked out of his window in dismay, and decided to hasten back at once, and establish his winter quarters in the friendly cities of Poland. It was a march through a dreary and desolate region, of more than a thousand miles; but he put on a bold front, and the troops began to retire in good order. A week later, and the grand army was in full retreat. Bleak, chilly winds howled through the leafless trees; the weary soldiers were blinded by the flakes of snow and sleet; their

embittered enemies attacked them in every unguarded point; order and discipline were forgotten; the ranks were broken, and each man struggled on as best he could; the dead and the dying were trodden down; hundreds of horses were slain for food; all ideas of conquest were banished; Napoleon himself left the army to its fate; and each day's weary march was marked by heaps of broken waggons, and abandoned cannon, and white hillocks of snow, beneath which the frozen bodies of man and beast were buried. With such a dreadful picture of misery before you, it will be easy to understand the tender compassion which prompted the Saviour to say: "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." Especially ought we to remember those who are suffering the sad privations of poverty, and be glad to relieve their wants when we are able. No one can claim to have the love of God abiding in his heart, who is willing to see a fellow mortal destitute of food and clothing, and make no effort to help. The more merciful we are, the better shall we deserve to be called God's children. (*Ibid.*) *A blasphemer's death in the snow*:—It was near the close of one of those storms that deposit a great volume of snow upon the earth that a middle-aged man, in one of the southern counties of Vermont, seated himself at a large fire in a log-house. He was crossing the Green Mountains from the western to the eastern side; he had stopped at the only dwelling of man in a distance of more than twenty miles, being the width of the parallel ranges of gloomy mountains; he was determined to reach his dwelling on the eastern side that day. In reply to a kind invitation to tarry in the house and not dare the horrors of the increasing storm, he declared that he would go, and that the Almighty was not able to prevent him. His words were heard above the howling of the tempest. He travelled from the mountain valley where he had rested over one ridge, and one more intervened between him and his family. The labour of walking in that deep snow must have been great, as its depth became near the stature of a man; yet he kept on, and arrived within a few yards of the last summit, from whence he could have looked down upon his dwelling. He was near a large tree, partly supported by its trunk; his body bent forward, and his ghastly intent features told the stubbornness of his purpose to overpass that little eminence. But the Almighty had prevented him; the currents of his blood were frozen. For more than thirty years that tree stood by the solitary road, scarred to the branches with names, letters, and hieroglyphics of death, to warn the traveller that he trod over a spot of fearful interest. (*Baxendale's Dictionary of Anecdote.*)

Ver. 19. **For in those days shall be affliction.**—*Afflictions God's hired labourers*:—Afflictions are God's hired labourers, to break the clods and plough the land. (*Anon.*) *Trouble a lever*:—Trouble is often the lever in God's hand to raise us up to heaven. (*Anon.*) *Sorrow an instructor*:—Has it never occurred to us when surrounded by sorrows, that they may be sent to us only for our instruction, as we darken the eyes of birds when we wish to teach them to sing? (*Jean Paul.*) *Troubled waters*:—The angel troubled the waters, which then cured those who stepped in; it is also Christ's manner to trouble our souls first, and then to come with healing in His wings. (*R. Sibbes.*) *Tears*:—Tears often prove the telescope by which men see far into heaven. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Tuned by trouble*:—Men think God is destroying them because He is tuning them. The violinist screws up the key till the tense cord sounds the concert-pitch; but it is not to break it, but to use it tunefully, that he stretches the string upon the musical rack. (*Ibid.*) *Trouble a test*:—Men pray to be made "men in Christ Jesus," and think in some miraculous way it will be given to them; but God says, "I will try My child, and see if he is sincere;" and so He lays a burden upon him, and says, "Now stand up under it;" and asks, "Where are now thy resources?" If the ambitious ore dreads the furnace, the forge, the anvil, the rasp, and the file, it should never desire to be made a sword. Man is the iron, and God is the smith; and we are always either in the forge or on the anvil. God is shaping us for higher things. (*Ibid.*) *Extraordinary afflictions* are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. (*Matthew Henry.*) *The fall of Jerusalem a unique calamity*:—One might explain this language on the principle of that graphic hyperbolism that pervaded, to so large an extent, the speech of all peoples. It is quite common, in many languages at least, if not in all, to say of any very extraordinary affliction, it is the greatest possible. Superlatives are often employed, when there is really no definite intention of asserting a perfectly absolute prominence. It is at the same time, however, worthy of consideration, whether there was not, in this catastrophe of the Jews, a minglement

of elements, physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, which was so unique as to render the anguish, consequent on the overthrow of Jerusalem, unprecedented, and incapable of repetition. Many peoples have been vanquished. Often have surviving populations been "peeled," and scattered or led captive. Often have capital cities been stormed and sacked. But the case of the Jews was peculiar. They were convinced that they were the favourites of heaven. They regarded their capital as the "City of the Great King," and the predestined Mistress of the world. Their Temple was to them the one House of God. It could not be dispensed with in the world. Hence they expected, up to the last moment, that the Lord's arm must needs conspicuously interpose in the extremity of their necessity, to smite the beleaguering hosts and and rescue the beloved place and people. When one mingles the elements of such thoughts and feelings, and their effects, with the effects of the utter social disorganization that prevailed, and consequently with the unutterable physical woes that preceded and succeeded the capture of the Temple, it is easy to see that the tribulation endured may have had an edge of agony which never was before in the history of any people, and which will never be again. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Affliction such as never was and never shall be*:—At the siege of Jerusalem, Milman says, "Every kind feeling, love, respect, natural affection, were extinct through the all-absorbing want. Wives would snatch the last morsel from husbands, children from parents, mothers from children. . . . If a house was closed, they supposed that eating was going on, and they burst in and squeezed the crumbs from the mouths and throats of those who were swallowing them. Old men were scourged till they surrendered the food to which their hands clung desperately. . . . Children were seized as they hung upon the miserable morsels they had got, whirled round and dashed upon the pavement. . . . The most loathsome and disgusting food was sold at an enormous price. They gnawed their belts and shoes. Chopped hay and shoots of trees sold at high prices." *Destruction of Jerusalem*:—It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by Josephus: it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen; it remains the tragedy of tragedies; there never was and there never will be anything comparable to it: the people died of famine and of pestilence, and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children, and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city, it was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. Portents amazed the sky both day and night. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept of mercy. The city itself was the banqueting hall of death. Josephus says: "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families: the upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried; but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 20. **Shortened those days.**—*God shortened the siege*:—Many circumstances combined to secure the primary fulfilment of these words. The incomplete state of the fortifications, the paucity of food, the factious fights within the city, &c., shortened the siege; and Titus himself exclaimed, "God has fought for us: what could human hand or engines do against these towers?" (*Stock.*)

Ver. 22. **For false Christs.**—*False Christs*:—David George, *e.g.*, who ultimately settled at Basle, where he died in 1556. He claimed, according to the account of Dr. Henry More, to be the true Christ, the dear Son of God, born not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. He was to restore the house of Israel, and re-erect the tabernacle of God, not by afflictions and death, as the other Messiah, but by that sweetness, love, and grace, which were given him of the Father. He had the power of the remission of sins; and had come to administer the last judgment. He averred that "the Holy Scriptures, the sayings and testimonies of the prophets, of Christ, and of His apostles, do all point, if rightly understood, in their true mystery, to the

glorious coming of David George, who is greater than the former Christ, as being born of the Spirit, and not of the flesh." This David George, says Dr. More, was a man "of notable natural parts, of comely person, and a graceful presence." And he had many adherents, who believed in him. In our own day there are persons—out of asylums—who put forth corresponding claims. There is lying before the writer a "Tract on the Second Advent fulfilled," in which it is said that "the enrolling of the saints commenced on the anniversary of the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles of the year 1868, *i.e.*, on the 9th of October, 1868. The following," it is added, "is the declaration to be made and signed:—I believe Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah at His first coming, and the antitypical Paschal Lamb Who died for sin in allegory, and I believe John Cochran of Glasgow to be that Messiah at His second coming, and the antitypical High Priest who has taken away sin in reality." *False prophets*:—Lodowick Muggleton, *e.g.*, who on the title-page of his "True Interpretation of the whole Book of the Revelation of St. John," describes himself as "one of the two last commissioned witnesses and prophets of the only high, immortal, glorious God, Christ Jesus." Madame Antoinette Bourignon, before him, was a far nobler being, yet she declared to Christian de Cort, "I am sent from God to bring light to the world, and to bear witness to the truth. He has sent me to tell that the last times are come; that the world is judged, and the sentence is irrevocable; that the plagues are begun, and will not cease till all evil be rooted out; and that Jesus Christ will come shortly to the earth to finish this, and then He will continue to reign with 'men of goodwill,' who shall enjoy eternal peace. I am sent with a commission to declare all these things to men, to the end that peradventure some of them may be converted and repent, that they may reign with Jesus Christ in His glory." And again, she says, "I am certainly sent from God to declare the truth of everything." *False prophets in Spain*:—There was great excitement in Madrid owing to the announcement that the world would come to an end on the 24th of June, 1886, that day being the conjunction of the festivals of St. John and of the Corpus Christi. The belief had taken such hold among the lower and superstitious classes of Madrid, that the fright was general, the prophecy having been printed and circulated in thousands. During the past two or three weeks many people have spent their days in fasting, prayer, and weeping, and yesterday the churches and confessionals were crowded with women. (*Freeman.*) *Danger from those coming in the name of Christ*:—In the frescoes of Signorelli we have "The Teaching of Antichrist"—no repulsive figure, but a grand personage in flowing robes, and with a noble countenance, which at a distance might easily be taken for the Saviour. To him the crowd are eagerly gathering and listening, and it is only when you draw close that you can discover in his harder and cynical expression, and from the evil spirit whispering in his ear, that it is not Christ. (*Augustus J. C. Hare.*) SIGNS AND WONDERS.—*Wonder-working impostors*:—"Lying wonders" (2 Thess. ii. 9) no doubt—wonders that serve a purpose of imposition, partly, it may be, on the wonder-workers themselves, and partly on those whom they wish to attach to themselves. There are wonderful idiosyncrasies among men, that give scope for the performance of such wonders. In some natures—as in Valentine Greatrakes and Gassner (see Howitt's "History of the Supernatural"), singular therapeutic energies instinctively well up and flow over. In others there is a singular power of something like "second-sight," or "clairvoyance," turning fitfully its penetrative eye, now upon objects distant in space, and now upon objects distant in time—though in a way far removed from infallibility. This clairvoyant eye often takes cognizance of only frivolous realities, and seems blind to things of moment. Still its peculiarity is fitted—when once a willing and shallow fanaticism tries its hand at understanding it—to be a "lying wonder." There are other remarkable endowments and instincts, which crop up at times in exceptional idiosyncrasies, and may give occasion either to self-delusion, or to deliberate artifice, or to a minglement of the two perversities. (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

Ver. 26. **The Son of Man coming in the clouds.**—*Christ's second advent*:—It has been as much a hope as a fear in all religions of men that there would be a verdict which would on the one hand bring forth men's righteousness as the light, and on the other change their pride in sin to shame. For a new start the great thing to be longed for is that all men and things might find their proper level; the evil, its rebuke and penalty; the good, its crown and its reward. Therefore there will be a judgment, and Christ will be the Judge. Through Him the worlds were made; through Him salvation wrought; and through Him judgment will be executed.

We think too little of that day whose glory pales the sun, and of the fact that many things, now seeming great, will then seem trifling and contemptible, and much obscure faithfulness will be lifted into light and glory. The uses we should make of this truth are various. 1. It should quicken our sense of responsibility. The thought that God ignores our deeds permits good to languish and evil to thrive. The belief that God will bring all into judgment, stimulates good, represses evil. 2. It should give us a more vivid sense of God's providential presence. On this world He walked; on it He again will stand. He is the living God, and is guiding the course of all events by His loving hand. 3. It should comfort us. Man's judgment of us is harsh; our judgment of ourselves unwise. But what could we ask for more than to be judged by Christ? (*R. Glover.*) *The second coming of Christ*:—Brethren! the earnest belief in and the longing for the coming of Jesus Christ has been too much surrendered to one school of interpreters in unfulfilled prophecy, who have no greater claim to possess it than the rest of us. It belongs, or ought to belong, to us all. And I bring it to you, dear friends, as a sharp test—what do you feel about that coming? Can you say, "More than they that wait for the morning, my soul waiteth for Thee"? Does your heart leap when you think that Christ, who is ever present, is drawing near to us? All the signs of the times, intellectual and social, the rottenness of much of our life, the abounding luxury, the hideous vice that flaunts unblamed and unabashed before us all; the unsettlement of opinion in which it is unbelief that seems to be "removing the mountains" that all men thought stood fast and firm for ever; all these things cry out to Him whose ear is not deaf—even if our voice does not join in the cry—and beseech Him to come. And I believe that a "Day of the Lord," dreadful and radiant with the brightness of destructive power, which is also constructive and merciful love, is hanging over much of the world, and not a little of the Church, at this moment. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Sight of Christ as Judge*:—Mr. G—— was mayor of the town of Maidenhead not many years after the late Rev. J. Cooke settled in it. One Sabbath evening he attended the meeting-house, and heard Mr. Cooke preach. The text was, "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him" (Rev. i. 7). His attention was powerfully arrested: an arrow of conviction entered his heart; he became speedily a changed man, and regularly attended the means of grace. He had been a jovial companion, a good singer, and a most gay and cheerful member of the corporation. The change was soon perceived. His brethren, at one of their social parties, rallied him upon Methodism. But he stood firm by his principles, and said, "Gentlemen, if you will listen patiently, I will tell you why I go to meeting, and do not attend your card-table. I went one Sunday evening to hear Mr. Cooke. He took for his text, 'Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.' *Your eye* shall see Him!" In short, he gave them so faithful and powerful an epitome of the sermon, and applied it so closely to them individually, marking the words, "every eye shall see Him," with such emphasis, and pointing to them, said, "Your eye," and "your eye," that they were satisfied with his reasons for going, and never again durst speak to him on the subject. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Science points to the end of the world*:—Is it not probable, it may be asked, that the time will come when the globe itself will come to an end? And if it be so, can science detect the provision that is possibly made for this consummation of all things? We have seen that the atmosphere has for long been undergoing a change; that at a very early period it was charged with carbonic acid, the carbon of which now forms part of animal and vegetable structures. We saw, also, that at first it contained no ammonia; but since vegetation and decomposition began, the nitrogen that existed in the nitrates of the earth, and some of the nitrogen of the atmosphere, have been gradually entering into new combinations, and forming ammonia; and the quantity of ammonia, a substance at first non-existent, has gradually increased, and as it is volatile, the atmosphere now always contains some of it. The quantity has now become so great in it that it can always be detected by chemical analysis. There is an evident tendency of it to increase in the atmosphere. Now supposing it to go on increasing up to a certain point, it forms with air a mixture that, upon the application of fire, is violently explosive. An atmosphere charged with ammonia is liable to explode whenever a flash of lightning passes through it. And such an explosion would doubtless destroy, perhaps without leaving traces of, the present order of things. (*Dr. Kemp.*)

Ver. 28. **That summer is near.**—*A sign of the eternal summer approaching*:—When Dr. Rees preached last in North Wales a friend said to him—one of those

who are always reminding people that they are getting old—"You are whitening fast, Dr. Rees." The old gentleman did not say anything then; but when he got to the pulpit he referred to it, and said, "There is a wee white flower that comes up through the earth at this season of the year—sometimes it comes up through the snow and frost; but we are all glad to see the snowdrop, because it proclaims that the winter is over and that the summer is at hand. A friend reminded me last night that I was whitening fast. But heed not that, brother; it is to me a proof that my winter will soon be over, that I shall have done presently with the cold east winds and the frosts of earth, and that my summer—my eternal summer—is at hand." (*Heber Evans.*)

Ver. 31. **But My words shall not pass away.**—*The perpetuity of Christ's words:*—Contrast the apparent transitoriness of "words" with the solid earth and the "eternal heavens." Yet when these shall have faded away the words of Christ will still endure. I. IN A LITERAL SENSE the text reminds us that the words which Jesus spake while on earth are permanently associated with our whole life. II. ALL OUR LITERATURE IS ENRICHED BY THESE WORDS. III. THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL MUST ALWAYS BE MORE PERMANENT THAN THE MATERIAL. IV. YET THE MATERIAL PREPARES THE WAY FOR THE SPIRITUAL APPLICATION. 1. A lesson of warning, since we are in danger of attaching too much importance to the form, and too little to the truth, which the form embodies. 2. A lesson of encouragement; opinions may change and interpretations differ; but the truth remains always the same. (*F. Wagstaff.*)

Ver. 32, 33. **But of that day and that hour knoweth no man.**—*The day and the hour:*—I. THE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF CONCEALING THE DAY AND HOUR WHEN THE SON OF MAN SHALL COME FROM THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHURCH AND OF ALL MANKIND. 1. Were the day and the hour of the Saviour's advent specifically and unmistakably stated, it would contradict constantly those passages scattered throughout the whole Word of God which say He shall come as a thief in the night, &c. After the day of Pentecost the apostles received information upon this subject which they did not previously possess. 2. It would be altogether morally without practical good results, and incompatible with other portions of Scripture, if God were to tell us the precise day and the hour. What would be the practical use of telling us either? 3. Were that day made known to us, it would be gratifying a very worthless curiosity. But if there be one feature in this book more striking than another it is its utter refusal to gratify the curiosity of man. 4. Suppose that this day and hour had been made known, there is no proof that it would be believed by the unconverted masses of mankind. If the unconverted and unsanctified multitude believed it, it would do incalculable mischief. II. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS MOST PROFITABLE AND MOST IMPROVING THAT WE SHOULD STUDY THE PREDICTED SIGNS; nay, our Lord condemned the men of His day, because, while they could predict wet or fine weather, from the sky at evening and at morn, they were not acquainted with the moral signs of the age in which they lived. The Scripture in every page is most explicit in giving us tokens and signs by which we are to infer either that the time is near, or that it is remote. This leads me to the great sign given here, instead of the day and the hour—the sign of Noah. 1. Notice that there is here a distinct recognition of Noah as a historic person, of the flood as a literal fact. 2. Notice here also that human nature is substantially the same in the days of Napoleon and of Queen Victoria, that it was in the days of Noah and the patriarchs before the flood. The antediluvians, or those that were in the days of Noah, when the flood came, were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. This is not stated as a sin. In the gospel, where our Lord represents the blessings that He purchased under a feast, those that were invited refused; but the ground they assigned was not any one sinful act. Where then was the sin of the antediluvians? "So shall it be when the Son of Man cometh." This is not a mere history; but also a solemn prophecy. Just as the ark was the only safety in the days of Noah, so the only safety for us this very day is Christ, the living, the glorious, the indestructible ark. Are you trusting to this ark? Are you cleaving to this Saviour? Now there is salvation for the worst and the guiltiest; but at that day, when grace shall depart like a vision, when the last fire shall cover the round globe with its piercing and its searching flames, not one cry will be heard, not one appeal for mercy will be regarded, not one sin will be forgiven. The very glory of the gospel is its simplicity: "Look and live;" "Believe and thou shalt be saved." (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Uncertainty as to the time demands*

constant watchfulness:—The fact that we cannot know beforehand the time of Christ's coming, does not relieve us of the duty of being on the watch for it. It is because we do not know the time, that we must watch for the time. If a man wants to see the meteors which flash across the sky in the nights of August and November, he must be all the more watchful because he cannot know beforehand when they are coming. The lookout on the ocean steamer's mast-head must be none the less watchful against icebergs, or headlands, or passing vessels, because be cannot know when they are to show themselves; and the denser the fog, the keener his watch must be. The time of Christ's second coming is concealed from us. The fact of that coming is foretold to us. The duty of living not only in expectancy of this event, but in prayerful watchfulness for it, is as plainly and as positively enjoined upon us, as is the requirement of any one of the ten commandments. *The solemn day approaching:*—When it comes we know not. We know simply this—it is a fact in God's government. Slowly and steadily it is approaching. It encamps every night nearer to the race—to us—to me. We have no human almanacs that can foretell its coming. That it will come seems one of the fundamental thoughts of our mind, admitted everywhere and always. The Egyptians bore decided witness, in their books of the dead, to the coming of that day. Let not that day come upon you sleeping, said Jesus. Duty is ours—that day is God's. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The uncertainty of the Day of Judgment considered and improved:*—First, our Saviour here declares the uncertainty of the time as to us and all creatures, when the general judgment shall be. And to express this the more emphatically, He tells us —1. That God only knows it. He excludes from the knowledge of it, those who were most likely to know it, if God had not absolutely reserved it to Himself. 2. That the consideration of the uncertainty of the time should make us very careful to be always prepared for it. First, a general caution, "Take ye heed." From whence I shall observe, by the way, the great goodness of God to us, and His singular care of us. God hath acquainted us with whatever is necessary to direct and excite us to our duty; but He hath purposely concealed from us those things which might tend to make us slothful and careless, negligent and remiss in it. Besides this, it is always useful to the world to be kept in awe by the continual danger and terror of an approaching judgment. And it was no inconvenience at all that the apostles and first Christians had this apprehension of the nearness of that time; for no consideration could be more forcible to keep them steadfast in their profession, and to fortify them against sufferings. 1. We should resolve without delay, to put ourselves into that state and condition, in which we may not be afraid judgment should find us. In the secure and negligent posture that most men live, even the better sort of men, if judgment should overtake them, how few could be saved! So that our first care must be to get out of this dangerous state of sin and insecurity, "to break off our sins by repentance," that we may be capable of the mercy of God, and at peace with Him, before He comes to execute judgment upon the world. 2. After this great work of repentance is over, we should be very careful how we contract any new guilt, by returning to our former sins, or by the gross neglect of any part of our duty. 3. Let us neglect no opportunity of doing good, but always be employing ourselves, either in acts of religion and piety towards God, or of righteousness and charity towards men, or in such acts as are subordinate to religion. 4. We should often review our lives and call ourselves to a strict account of our actions, that, judging ourselves, we may not be judged and condemned by the Lord. 5. Another part of our preparation for the coming of our Lord is a humble trust and confidence in the virtue of His death and passion, as the only meritorious cause of the remission of our sins, and the reward of eternal life. 6. And lastly, to awaken and maintain this vigilancy and care, we should often represent to our minds the judgment of the Great Day, which will certainly come though we know not the time of it. This is the first direction our Saviour gives us; continual vigilancy and watchfulness over ourselves in general. The second direction is more particular, and that is, prayer—"Take ye heed, watch and pray." And the practice of this duty of prayer will be of great advantage to us upon these two accounts. It is very apt to awaken and excite our care and diligence in the business of religion. Prayer, indeed, supposeth that we stand in need of the Divine help; but it implies, likewise, a resolution on our part to do what we can for ourselves; otherwise we ask in vain. 2. If we use our sincere endeavours for the effecting of what we pray for, prayer is the most effectual means to engage the Divine blessing, and assistance to second our endeavours, and to secure them from miscarriage. I proceed to the third and last

part of the text, which is the reason which our Saviour here adds to enforce our care and diligence in a matter of so great concernment, viz., the uncertainty, as to us, of the particular time when this Day of Judgment will be: "Ye know not when the time is." (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *Ye know not when the time is*:—I. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE, FROM WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED—"Ye know not when the time is." II. THE EXHORTATION TO CIRCUMSPECTION, VIGILANCE, AND PRAYER—"Take ye heed, watch and pray." But we proceed to consider what this watchfulness implies. 1. It implies spiritual life. 2. It implies a sense of danger. (*W. Bullevant.*) *Life's uncertainty improved*:—I. THE FACT OF LIFE'S UNCERTAINTY. But before I attempt to fix your thoughts on life's uncertainty, there are two other kindred facts which merit attention—the certainty of death, and the nearness of it. We know not when the time is. Death is an ambush. Hence the force of "Take ye heed, watch and pray." 1. Men full of laudable, anxious, active strife of business, have in one moment been called to their higher account, prepared or unprepared. 2. More fearful still is the subject, when we consider that not only are men called away from the midst of worldly business, but are taken in the very act of sin and rebellion against God. "The third day Noah entered into the ark, the flood came and took them all away." 3. Let it, however, be clearly understood, that no degree of morality, faith, or holiness, can wholly shield us from the stroke of sudden death. II. THE PLAIN PRACTICAL DUTY ARISING OUT OF IT—"Take ye heed," &c. A word in season. Many are heedless and unprepared to die. "Take ye heed," or you must needs miss heaven. Would we prepare to die—I. Habitually believe in Christ. 2. Habitually commune with God. 3. Habitually aim at Christian consistency. Conclusion: 1. Address those who are obviously neither watching nor praying. Are there in the church lukewarm professors? 3. You who are in the way to a blissful immortality. (*B. Carvosso.*) *Preparation for death*:—The true significance of death lies not in its physical pain, in its breaking in upon the plans of life, but in the fact that it brings men into final moral relations with God. Now let us consider, as calm and prudent men, the full effect and the true character of deferring the preparation for death until the dying hour. 1. To thus defer this preparation is to deprive life itself of one of its chief steadying elements. 2. Living without conscious preparation for death is a risk which neither prudence nor self-respect should allow. A man guards himself with a wise providence of the future. No man puts his affections as they are involved in the family to such peril. He is perpetually forethinking; working to provide against evils; making preparation to-day and this year for to-morrow and next year. 3. There is a view which will have weight with men who are just, and who are honestly seeking to guide themselves by principles of honour. It is the ignoring, the dishonouring of God's love, His will and His commands, all one's life, and then at death, for fear, or for the sake of interest, rushing into a settlement. A child is reprobate, and breaks away from home, and squanders all he can get, and becomes a wreck and a wretch, and apparently is to be disowned. He hears, at last, after years and years of dissipation, that his father is weakening and drawing near to death; and he scents the opportunity, and rushes home, and professes repentance and reformation, in order that his father may reconstruct his will, and leave him a part of his estate. What would you think of a child that should do that? What would you think of a child that should deliberately calculate upon it, and say in himself, "The old man has oftentimes, with tears in his eyes, warned me against my gambling companions; but there is time enough yet. He is rich, and I want a part of his money, and I know his heart, and I mean to come in for a share by and by. I am going to have my pleasure; I am going to eat, drink, and be merry; I am going to have my royal debauch with my companions; and when I see the old man is about pegging out I will go home and reform; because I do not mean to lose that property; I am going to enjoy myself as I please, and have that too"? What would you think of a child that should say that, and then keep his eye on his father, and calculate his chances and run scuttling home just in time to get his name put in the will right, in order that he might have the property? What name is there in any language that is adequate to express your feelings, toward such baseness as that? And yet, are there not in my hearing men that are living precisely so with respect to their Father who is in heaven? 4. There are prudential considerations of a very solemn nature which one should employ. Those who think that they shall prepare for death in the last hour of life, ought to consider some of their chances. As a matter of fact, more than half that die in

this world die without consciousness. Not alone of those that die by accident, by sudden stroke, but of those that die by disease, more than one half die under a cloud, so that they have no use of their reason. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Autumnal life:*—It is always a sad day in autumn to me, when I see the change that comes over nature. Along in August, the birds are all still, and you would think that there were not any left; but if you go out into the fields you find them feeding in the trees, and hedges, and everywhere. By and by September comes, and they begin to gather together in groups; and anybody that knows what it means knows that they are getting ready to go. And then comes the later days of October—the sad, the sweet, the melancholy, the deep days of October. And the birds are less and less. And in November, high up, you see the sky streaked with waterfowl going southward; and strange noises in the night, of these pilgrims of the sky, they shall hear whose ears are attuned to natural history. Birds in flocks, one after another, wing their way to the south. Summer is gone; and I am left behind; but they are happy. And I think I can hear them singing in all those States clear down to the Gulf. They have found where the sun is never cold. With us are frosts, but not with the bird that has migrated. Oh, mother! my heart breaks with your heart when your cradle is empty; but shall I call back the child? Nay; sooner pluck a star out of heaven than call back that child to this wintry blast. Shall I call back your young and dear and blooming friend? Nay. You are left in some bitterness for a time; but make not a man out of angel again. Let him rejoice. (*Ibid.*) *Watch and pray:*—Two duties.—I. THE ACTIVITY OF THE EYE EARTHWARD. II. THE EMOTION OF THE HEART GODWARD. Watchfulness is like the hands of the clock that point; prayer is the weight that keeps the machinery in motion. (*T. J. Judkin.*) *A believer's watchfulness like that of a soldier:*—A sentinel posted on the walls, when he discerns a hostile party advancing, does not attempt to make head against them himself, but informs his commanding officer of the enemy's approach, and leaves him to take the proper measures against the foe. So the Christian does not attempt to fight temptation in his own strength; his watchfulness lies in observing its approach, and in telling God of it by prayer. (*W. Mason.*) *Watching and praying:*—He that prays and watcheth not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed, but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and root it up; or him that takes great pains to get money, but no care to lay it up safely when he hath it. (*W. Gurnall.*) *Watch:*—"Wickedness," says Sir Philip Sidney, "is like a bottomless pit, into which it is easier for a man to prevent himself falling than, having fallen, to preserve himself from falling infinitely." *The watchfulness of prayer:*—"I often recall," says an old sailor, "my first night at sea. A storm had come up, and we had put back under a point of land which broke the wind a little, but still the sea had a rake on us, and we were in danger of drifting. I was on the anchor watch, and it was my duty to give warning in case the ship should drag her anchor. It was a long night to me. I was very anxious whether I should know if the ship really did drift. How could I tell? I found that, going forward and placing my hand on the chain, I could tell by the feeling of it whether the anchor was dragging or not; and how often that night I went forward and placed my hand on that chain! And very often since then I have wondered whether I am drifting away from God, and then I go away and pray. Sometimes during that long stormy night I would be startled by a rumbling sound, and I would put my hand on the chain, and find it was not the anchor dragging, but only the chain grating against the rocks on the bottom. The anchor was still firm. And sometimes now, in temptation and trial, I become afraid, and upon praying I find that away down deep in my heart I do love God, and my hope is in His salvation. And I want just to say a word to my fellow-Christians: Keep an anchor watch, lest before you are aware you may be upon the rocks." (*Anon.*)

Vers. 34–36. **And to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.**—*Christian watchfulness:*—I. A CERTAIN EVENT REFERRED TO. That He should go away was necessary. 1. It was impossible that His state of humiliation should be continued. 2. The work He had to do in heaven required His presence there. 3. His removal was necessary in order that the Holy Spirit might be bestowed. II. A RESPONSIBLE TRUST COMMITTED. 1. What He left in charge of His servants was His house. The church is frequently set forth under this designation. 2. Those whom He left behind were invested with the powers necessary for the transaction of affairs during His absence. 3. While peculiar authority was granted to some, none of the servants were permitted to remain idle. III. AN IMPORTANT

DUTY ENJOINED. 1. To no subject is our attention more frequently directed than that of watchfulness. 2. The consideration by which it is enforced. It is the uncertainty as to when the master of the house might return; whether at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. 3. Whatever limits may belong to other obligations, this is universal in its claims. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." (*Expository Outlines.*) *Christ's second coming:*—I. THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY. "He gave authority to His servants." The more we serve the more authority is given. For, what is authority? Not position, not office; but a certain moral power: the power of truth, the power of affections, the power of virtue over vice, the power of faith over sight. There are degrees of authority in the Church. There is authority which belongs to the Church collectively, essential for her wholesome discipline. But we have to do only with what is personal to ourselves. It is your authority to go to every single man under heaven and tell the glorious things of the gospel. It is your authority to go to the throne of God Himself. II. THE WORK. Authority is never given in the Church of Christ for any other end but work. The work is specific, "to every man his work." Each Christian should pray till he finds out the work God has assigned him in this present life. There is work active and passive in the Master's house; the childlike reception of the grace of God, to evangelise mankind. III. WATCHING. There are two ways of watching. There is a watching against a thing we fear; and or a thing we love. Watch for the second advent, and you will be vigilant against sloth and sin. Will you not keep every trespasser out of the Master's house, when you feel that that Master Himself stands almost at the door? He is worth watching for. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Watching for the Master:*—In all, therefore, you do, brethren, and in all you suffer, you are to be in the spirit of a man who, expecting a dear friend, has taken his stand at the gate, to meet him when he arrives,—a porter. Oh, it is such a pleasant thing to watch,—pleasant to go up on the high door of prophecy, and turn the telescope of inspiration down the road where He will come: pleasant, in every trouble to feel,—in a moment He may come, and cut this trouble very short: pleasant, in every fear, however deep, to think Christ's coming may be nearer than we might fear: pleasant, to feel,—when the world knocks at your door, to say, "I am keeping place for Jesus, and I cannot let you in:" pleasant, in some work to have conscience say, "I think my dear Master would like to find me here:" pleasant when all is happy, to double the happiness with the thought, "And He, too, will soon be here:" and pleasant to wake up every morning and think, "What can I do to-day to prepare the way for my Saviour." (*Ibid.*) *The Master cometh:*—I. THE HOUSE. II. THE HOUSEHOLDER. III. THE JOURNEY. IV. THE SERVANTS. V. THE CHARGE. VI. THE INDIVIDUAL WORK. VII. THE COMMAND TO THE PORTER. 1. Watch against thieves and robbers. 2. Watch for the Master. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Our absent Lord:*—The parable in Mark xiii. 34–36 cannot be discharged of its meaning by a reference to the ordinary risks of human mortality. Its theme is not man's dying, but Christ's coming. I. THE SON OF MAN IS REPRESENTED AS A HOUSEHOLDER AWAY ON A JOURNEY (ver. 34). 1. It is not fair to look upon Jesus as a mere absentee lord of the soil. For He made this world; He has suffered wonderfully to save souls; and He owns what He has purchased. 2. It must be remembered that He went away for a most gracious purpose. He would send the Comforter (John xvi. 7). He has gone to prepare a "place" for those whom He died to redeem (John xiv. 2, 3). 3. It is better to urge His coming back with eargerness of prayer. There is fitness in the passionate words of Richard Baxter: "Haste, O my Saviour, the time of Thy return: send forth Thy angels, let the last trumpet sound! Delay not, lest the living give up hope. Oh, hasten that great resurrection day when the seed Thou sowedst corruptible shall come forth incorruptible, and the graves that retain but dust shall return their glorious ones, Thy destined bride!" II. TO EVERY ONE "OUR ABSENT LORD" HAS GIVEN HIS OWN WORK TO DO (ver. 35.) 1. There is a work to be wrought on ourselves. Our bodies are to be exercised and skilled for service (Rom. xii. 1). Our minds are to be developed and embellished for God's praise. One of our Lord's parables spoken on this very occasion has actually added to our language the new word "talents," as signifying intellectual gifts (Matt. xxv. 15). Our souls are to be sanctified wholly (1 Thess. v. 23). 2. There is also a work to be wrought upon others and for others. The poor are to be succoured, the weak to be strengthened, the ignorant to be taught, the sorrowful to be comforted. 3. There is another work to be wrought for God's glory. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Our whole life is to be

consecrated to this, even down to the particulars of eating and drinking (1 Cor. x. 31). III. "OUR ABSENT LORD" IS SURELY COMING BACK AGAIN TO THIS WORLD (ver. 26). 1. He predicted His second advent (John xiv. 28). The language Jesus used in this remembered declaration is not at all figurative; it all goes together as a statement of fact. He said, literally, He would send the Comforter, and the Holy Spirit came in person on the Day of Pentecost. And just as literally did He say He would Himself return at the appointed time. 2. He asseverated the certainty and solemnity of His own promise, as if He foresaw some would deny or doubt it (ver. 31). This was endorsing the covenant engagement by a new oath; "because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself." 3. He left behind Him vivid descriptions of the momentous day on which He should arrive (vers. 24–26). In these, however, He does little more than repeat the vigorous language of the Old Testament prophet (Dan. vii. 9–14). 4. He even sent back word from heaven by an angel (Acts i. 11). It should be "this same Jesus" who should come back, and He should come "in like manner" as they had seen Him depart. IV. THE EXACT HOUR IN WHICH "OUR ABSENT LORD" WILL ARRIVE IS NOT ANNOUNCED (Matt. xxiv. 42). 1. Jesus asserted that He did not know it Himself (ver. 32). The disciples once asked Him about this (Matt. xxiv. 3). He told them that God the Father had kept this one secret in His own solemn reserve (Acts i. 6, 7). 2. But our Saviour declares that His coming might be expected at any moment, morning or midnight, evening or cock-crowing (ver. 35). It would assuredly be sudden. The figure is employed more than once in the Scriptures of "a thief in the night" (2 Pet. iii. 10). Peter in his Epistle only quotes our Lord's own language (Luke xii. 39, 40). 3. Moreover, Christ told His disciples that there would be tokens of the nearness of this great day, by which it might be recognized when it should be close at hand (vers. 28, 29). These signs would be as clearly discerned as shoots on fig-trees in the opening summer. He mentioned some of them explicitly (Luke xxi. 25–28). We may admit that "wars and rumours of wars," earthquakes, famines, falling stars, and pestilences (Matt. xxiv. 6–8), together with "great signs in heaven and earth," are alarming disclosures; but will any one doubt that such phenomena are conspicuous at least? (Luke xvii. 24). 4. So Jesus insisted that men were bound to be wise in noting these signs, and be ready (Luke xii. 54–56). V. THE GREATEST PERIL IS THAT, WHEN "OUR ABSENT LORD" COMES, MEN WILL BE TAKEN UNAWARES (ver. 36). 1. The instinctive tendency of the human heart is to procrastinate in the performance of religious work. 2. Time glides mysteriously on with no reference to daring delay. The grave, like the horseleach's daughter, cries "Give" (Prov. xxx. 15, 16), and damnation slumbereth not (2 Peter ii. 3), but men sleep clear up to the edge of divine judgment. They did in Noah's time, and in Lot's, when a less catastrophe was at hand; and so it will be when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke xviii. 26–30). 3. Christians ought to hold in memory the repeated admonitions they have received. Walter Scott wrote on his dial-plate the two Greek words which mean "the night cometh," so that he might keep eternity in mind whenever he saw the hours of time flitting by. Evidently the Apostle Paul feels that he has the right to press peculiarly pertinent and solemn appeals upon those who had enjoyed the advantage of such long instruction (1 Thess. v. 1–7). 4. There is no second chance offered after the first is lost. When Christ comes, foolish virgins will have no time to run for oil to pour into their lightless lamps. A forfeited life cannot be allowed any opportunity for retrieval. Where the tree falls, north or south, there it must lie, whether the full fruit has been ripened upon its branches or not (Eccl. xi. 3). VI. THE FINAL COUNSEL LEFT BEHIND HIM BY "OUR ABSENT LORD" IS FOR ALL TO WATCH (ver. 37). 1. Christ's coming would seem to be the highest anticipation for true believers. When He appears, saints will appear with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4). This is the "blessed hope" of the Church along the ages (Titus ii. 13). 2. It might clear an inquirer's experience to think of this coming of Jesus. Does one love to "watch" for Him? In the autobiography of Frances Ridley Havergal we are told of the years during which she sought sadly for peace at the cross. At last one of her teachers put this question to her: "Why cannot you trust yourself to your Saviour at once? Supposing that now, at this moment, Christ were to come in the clouds of heaven, and take up His redeemed, could you not trust Him? Would not His call, His promise, be enough for you? Could you not commit your soul to Him, to your Saviour, Jesus?" This lifted the cloud; she tells the story herself: "Then came a flash of hope across me, which made me feel literally breathless. I remember how my heart beat. 'I could surely,' was my response; and I left her suddenly and ran away upstairs to think it

out. I flung myself on my knees in my room, and strove to realize the sudden hope. I was very happy at last. I could commit my soul to Jesus. I did not, and need not, fear His coming. I could trust Him with my all for eternity. It was so utterly new to have any bright thoughts about religion that I could hardly believe it could be so, that I had really gained such a step. Then and there, I committed my soul to the Saviour, I do not mean to say without any trembling or fear, but I did—and earth and heaven seemed bright from that moment—I did trust the Lord Jesus." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Work for God:*—The sentence which must have seemed to Adam a curse, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," has been turned by God into a blessing. The elements of Adam's doom are the materials of human happiness. Heaven is made out of the ruins of the fall. What a world this would be without work! What a weariness! What a hot-bed of every bad passion! What a torment! I. EVERY LIVING CREATURE HAS ITS OWN PROPER WORK. It matches with each man's natural endowment and his spiritual attainment. It is what suits him: neither too little nor too much. Enough to engage, and occupy, and draw out all his powers; and yet not so much as to injure or distress them. Take pains to ascertain whether the work you are engaged in is really yours—the work God would have you to do. To settle that satisfactorily, the following conditions must be fulfilled: 1. There must be the vocation of the heart—conscience and spiritual conviction telling you, after prayer and thought, that you are called to it. 2. The vocation of circumstances—your position and means being suited, and your education and habit of mind accommodated to it. 3. The vocation of the Church—the advice and judgment of pious friends who are in a position to offer an unprejudiced opinion on the subject. If these three things unite, you may be sure that, though you are directed to it by human agencies, the work is really allotted to you by God. II. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR DOING THE WORK, NOT FOR THE RESULTS. The work is yours, but the issue is God's. Leave that to Him. Do you work with faith—for faith is confidence, and confidence is calmness, and calmness is power, and power is success, and success is God's glory. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Wakeful work:*—Unless we work, we shall not keep spiritually awake and lively: unless we are awake, we shall not work. The last thing that would please a master would be the idle curiosity which would make the servants neglect their work to stand outside the door gazing to catch a glimpse of his return. What the Master desires is wakeful work. He desires—I. WORK. 1. Work of mercy. 2. Work of uprightness. 3. Work of struggling against evil within us. 4. Work of witnessing for Christ. 5. Work of helping others in various ways. 6. Work of comforting the sad, of supporting the weak. 7. Work of reclaiming the erring. 8. Work of saving the lost. II. HE WANTS THIS TO BE DONE WAKEFULLY; in that fresh and earnest way which men take (1) when their faculties are on the alert; (2) when they are on the watch for opportunities of doing good, and against seductions to neglect it; (3) when they are wakeful enough to see a living Saviour, and feel His inspiration; (4) when they watch lest they lose the things they have wrought; (5) when they are awake to the immense needs and the awful dangers of their fellow men; (6) when they are awake to the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity—the nearness and sufficiency of the Spirit's help, and the certainty and value of the Saviour's reward. When there is this working and this watching mutually aiding each other, then the desire of the Master is fulfilled, and whenever He appears we are ready to receive Him with exceeding joy. (*R. Glover.*) *Work and watching:*—I. THE WORK OF THE SERVANTS. 1. Work is the common duty of all in Christ's house. The calm stars are in ceaseless motion, and every leaf is a world, with its busy inhabitants and the sap coursing through its veins as the life-blood through our own. It would be strange then if the Christian Church, which was intended to be the beating heart to all this world's activity, were exempted from a law so universal. Such a thing would be against our highest nature. Work is not only a duty, but a blessing. Every right deed is a step upward. Instead of praying that God would grant us less work, our request should be that he would give us a greater heart and growing strength to meet all its claims. 2. This work is varied to different individuals. In one respect there is something common in the work of all, as there is a common salvation—to believe in Christ and to grow in grace; but even here there may be a variety in the form. There is a different colour of beauty in different stones that are all of them precious. One man may be burnishing to the sparkle of the diamond, while another is deepening to the glow of the ruby; and each is equally useful and necessary. The corner-stone and the cope-stone have both their due place in the palace-house of Christ. To see how this may be, is to perceive that an

end can be put to all jealousies and heart-burnings, and may help us even now to take our position calmly and unenviously, working in our department, assured that our labour will be found to contribute to the full proportion of the whole. 3. Each individual has means for ascertaining his own work. Not a special revelation, or an irresistible impression. Still Christ does guide men into their sphere of work by the finger of His providence and by the enlightenment of His Word in the hand of His Spirit. If it be thought it would be simpler and more satisfactory to have our place directly pointed out to us, let us remember the trouble and care necessary to ascertain it are part of our training. There are these rules to guide us. 1. Our aptitudes. 2. Our opportunities. 3. The opinion of our fellow-men when fairly expressed. II. THE WATCH OF THE PORTER. The porter is that one of the servants whose station is at the door to look out for those who approach, and open to them if they have right to enter. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the body of the servants are exempted from watching, while one takes the duty for them (ver. 37). In saying the workmen are many and the watchman one, our Lord indicated that, while the mode of labour in the house may vary, the duty of watchfulness is common to all who are in it. The porter must stand at the door of every heart, while that heart pursues its work. What, then, is this watching? It is to do all our work with the thought of Christ's eye measuring it, as of a friend who is ever present to our soul, gone from us in outward form, sure to return, and meanwhile near in spirit; to subject our plans and acts to His approval, asking ourselves at every step how this would please Him, shrinking from what would cloud His face, rejoicing with great joy in all that would meet His smile. This is a more difficult task than to have our hands busy with the work of the house. But, if attended to, it will bring its proportionate benefit. 1. It will keep us wakeful. 2. It will preserve purity. 3. It will maintain the soul in calmness. 4. It will rise increasingly to the fervour of prayer—that prayer which is the strength of the soul and the life of all work. III. THE BEARING OF THESE TWO DUTIES UPON EACH OTHER. 1. Work cannot be rightly performed without watching; for then it would be (1) blind and without a purpose; (2) discouraging and tedious; (3) formal and dead. 2. Watching will not suffice without work; or it would be (1) solitary; (2) subject to many temptations, such as empty speculations, vanity, pride; (3) unready for Christ. The solitary watcher can have no works of faith nor labours of love to present, no saved souls to offer for the Redeemer's crown, and no crown of righteousness to receive from Him. He is saved, but alone, as on a board or a broken piece of the ship; not as they who have many voices of blessing around, and many welcomes before, and to whom an entrance is ministered abundantly into the kingdom of heaven. Happy is the man who can combine these two duties in perfect harmony—who has Stephen's life of labour and Stephen's vision in the end. In every soul there should be the sisters of Bethany, active effort and quiet thought, and both agreeing in mutual love and help. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *The discipline of work*:—Consider what an amount of drudgery must be performed—how much humdrum and prosaic labour goes to any work of the least value. There are so many layers of mere white lime in every shell to that inner one so beautifully tinted. Let not the shell-fish think to build his house of that alone; and pray what are its tints to him? Is it not his smooth close-fitting shirt merely, whose tints *are not* to him, being in the dark, but only when he is gone or dead, and his shell is heaved up to light, a wreck upon the beach, do they appear. With him, too, it is a song of the shirt—"Work—work—work!" And the work is not merely a policy in the gross sense, but, in the higher sense, a discipline. If it is surely the means to the highest end we know, can any work be humble or disgusting? Will it not rather be elevating, as a ladder, the means by which we are translated? (*Thoreau.*) *Christ's service delightful*:—A beautiful incident in reference to Mr. Townsend is mentioned in the life of John Campbell. "Finding him on Tuesday morning, shortly before his last illness, leaning on the balustrade of the staircase that led to the committee-room of the Tract Society, and scarcely able to breathe, I remarked, 'Mr. Townsend, is this you? Why should you come in this state of body to our meetings? You have now attended them for a long time, and you should leave the work to younger men.' The reply of Mr. Townsend was worthy of his character. Looking at his friend with a countenance brightened and elevated by the thoughts that were struggling for utterance, his words were: 'Oh! Johnny, Johnny, man, it is hard to give up working in the service of such a Master!'" (*Biblical Treasury.*)

Vers. 35, 36. **Watch ye, therefore.**—*Watchfulness, a preparation for the coming of*

Christ. I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE COMING OF THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE. By "the master of the house" here is meant Christ, as it is also in Luke xiii. 25. The world in general, and the visible Church in particular, and especially the spiritual part of it, are His house (Eph. i. 20–23; Heb. iii. 3–6). His coming is represented in Scripture in different lights and for different purposes. In this chapter of Mark, and in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the twenty-first of Luke, He is represented as coming to judge and punish the Jewish nation, His visible Church of old, or His house, for rejecting Him (Deut. xviii. 19; comp. with Acts iii. 23; Heb. xii. 15). In other places He is represented as coming to judge all mankind at the last day (vers. 24–26; 2 Peter iii. 3–12). He is said to come when He visits in a peculiar way, whether in judgment or mercy, any nation, or Church, or any particular member of it (Rev. ii. 5–16; iii. 3). He comes to each of us at death (Rev. i. 18; ii. 25; iii. 11). It is this last coming of Christ to which I would especially call your attention. For it is of the greatest importance to us, since—1. It will separate us from all below, from our occupations, enjoyments, possessions, families, relations, and friends, and even from our own bodies. 2. It will finish our state of trial, and determine our condition for ever. 3. It will bring us into the unseen and eternal world—a new, untried, unknown state. 4. It will place us in the presence of God, that we may receive His smile or frown, may enjoy the effects of His favour and friendship, and communications of bliss from Him; or feel the effects of His wrath, and find Him to be a consuming fire. 5. It will make a most astonishing change in our circumstances. 6. It often comes suddenly, and gives no warning. II. WHAT IS THAT WATCHFULNESS WHICH IS RECOMMENDED AS A PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING? 1. It implies spiritual life, in opposition to that sleep of death which is mentioned (Eph. v. 14; ii. 1). 2. It implies a lively sense of the reality and importance of spiritual and eternal things, such as persons awake have of temporal things, the seeing, feeling, tasting them, so to speak, in opposition to that insensibility about them which is implied in spiritual sleep. 3. It implies a thoughtfulness, care, and concern about them, in opposition to that thoughtlessness and unconcern about them, which is natural to us. 4. It implies a sense of our danger from our enemies, visible and invisible—from the devil, the world, persons, and things, the flesh, our own hearts; and the standing on our guard, in opposition to security of mind and foolish peace. 5. It implies activity, and the vigorous exercise of every grace and virtue, as repentance, faith, hope, love, patience, &c., in opposition to indolence and sloth. III. THE VAST IMPORTANCE OF THIS WATCHFULNESS AS A PREPARATION FOR EVERY DISPENSATION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, AND ESPECIALLY FOR DEATH. IV. HOW WE MAY BE ENABLED TO TAKE THIS ADVICE, AND TO "WATCH," AND WHAT ARE THE MEANS LEADING TO THAT END. 1. We must not presume on a long life, which is a most dangerous temptation, and an abundant source of unwatchfulness; but we must set before us, and have always in view, the shortness and uncertainty of the present life, and the certainty and nearness of death. 2. We must remember that unless we were lords of our own lives, and could appoint the time of our death, we can never be exempt from the duty of a wakeful and active attention to our spiritual and eternal interests. 3. Those whose constitutions are peculiarly feeble, or whose circumstances or employments expose them to peculiar danger, or who are arrived at old age, should consider themselves as being under special obligation to be watchful. 4. We must be particularly on our guard against our own nature, and every person and thing around us, which tends to lull us asleep, and against sensuality and worldly cares (Luke xxi. 34). 5. We must remember that thousands are found sleeping, even thousands of professors, at the coming of their Lord. We must pray much—a duty frequently inculcated in connection with watchfulness (ver. 33; Luke xxi. 36; Eph. vi. 18). (*J. Benson.*)

Ver. 37. **And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.**—*Watchfulness:*— I. IN WHAT DOES THIS WATCHFULNESS CONSIST? Consider it in reference to the coming of Christ, and our solemn appearance before Him. In this respect it implies—1. Thoughtfulness. Sinners are so intent upon buying and selling that they have neither time nor inclination to think of anything else. It would be an interruption and disturbance to them to be told of Christ's coming. Every incident of life should bring it to remembrance. When we rise in the morning, it is natural for us to think, "Perhaps before night I may be at the end of my journey." 2. But watchfulness also implies preparation. II. ON WHAT ACCOUNT THIS WATCHFULNESS IS NECESSARY. 1. Because many are called, and few are chosen. In every field there

are tares as well as wheat; in every church sinners and saints are blended together. Watch, therefore, commune with your own heart, and let your spirit make diligent search. 2. Because so many about you are slothful. 3. Because you know not the day, nor the hour, when the Son of Man cometh. Watch, therefore, while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. 4. Because blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. (*S. Lavington.*) *Watchfulness a safeguard:*—A prompt resistance of temptation, or a prompt repentance of sin as soon as committed, will commonly extinguish the flames. A few buckets of water dashed on the fire as soon as it kindled in De Koven Street would have saved Chicago from ruin in 1871. Had David exercised, at the right moment, one half of the grace which afterwards penned the fifty-first Psalm, he would have saved his own character and Uriah's life. The same rule of safety applies alike to sin and to fire; the first spark must be extinguished. When a man's whole soul is on fire, and the fabric of his character has been consumed, it is too late for prevention to use its apparatus. The ruined structure may be rebuilt by penitence and prayerful living, but many precious things have perished, never to be restored. A dear friend in St. John writes me that he shall rebuild his house, but the superb library, the pictures, and the keepsakes are gone for ever. The reformed inebriate may save the remnant of his life; but the best days of it are in ashes. Wherefore the Omniscient Master has uttered the solemn admonition, "I say unto you all, watch!" (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *Always ready:*—And the words which the German Commentator wrote over his study door in Hanover, "Always to be ready," become the motto of Christian lives. And this, because the unusual is for ever happening. The providences of storm, accident, and disease; of prosperity and loss, life and death—all or any one of them may come in a day. The contingencies of life therefore must needs be reckoned on in all our estimates. The route of our journeying was mapped out, the trunks were packed and the day of our departure fixed; but a child fell sick, or the mail that morning brought a message of death, and our plans were changed. Or, weary with long labour, and with wealth enough and well invested, we plan to spend the afternoon of life in ease and culture; but a panic comes, the bank fails, and debtors default, and unexpectedly we are pushed back again into the tread-mill of anxious toil. Or, we counted on the schedule time and a close connection, but the train was a half-hour late, and so we missed the boat and lost the holiday. (*W. H. Davis.*) *Watching in work:*—For the smith's apron, the baker's cap, the labourer's blue jeans, and the housewife's gown are all suitable material for ascension robes. And he watches best for his Lord's coming who does the duty and the service which lie next to him, with fidelity to men and love to God. Be that duty with ploughs or day-books, in the office with its briefs, or in the school-room with its classes, or busy with railroads and mines, with homes or farms, no matter, if the currents of purpose sweep heavenward and the graces of faith and hope and love are in the heart. As Israel Putnam left the plough in the furrow and mounted a field-horse when the bugle sounded for the rallying at Cambridge; as the minute-men of Middlesex left workshop and farm at Paul Revere's call to Lexington, so the Master would have men work and watch. (*Ibid.*) *Watchfulness:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY SPIRITUAL WATCHFULNESS? 1. The mind must be awake, the understanding, the rational powers. In order to this it is essential that the powers should be exercised; in other words, that the man should think. To be mentally awake there must be life, spontaneous action, and coherence in the thoughts. But this is not enough. The mind may be awake in one sense and yet dreaming in another. Some men's minds operate too fast, and some too slow. Some attempt to discover what has not been revealed of the future; some think too late. The mind must think seasonably. It must also act upon the proper objects, or it might just as well not act at all. The powers of many are in active exercise, but they are spent on trifles, on puzzles in theology. It thinks to no practical purpose. 2. The conscience as well as the intellect must be awake—the moral as well as the purely intellectual faculties. There must be perception not only of what is true, but of what is right. There must be liveliness of affection no less than of intellect. We must not only feel bound, but feel disposed to do the will of God. When the man thinks in earnest, seasonably of right objects and to practical purpose—when he feels his obligations and his failures to discharge them—when he earnestly desires, and sincerely loves, what he admits to be true and binding—then he may be said, in the highest spiritual sense, to be awake. II. BE ON YOUR GUARD. The importance of the charge committed to our care. Although essential, it is not enough to be awake. The sentry is awake; but he is more, he is upon his guard—his mind

is full of his important trust. The sentry may look for danger only in one quarter, and be overtaken by it from another direction. The danger is a complex one. He may even find the enemy within the city while he looks without. The soul may expose itself to ruin, not only by actually falling asleep, but by want of proper caution when awake—by forgetting the danger or by underrating it—by admitting its reality, but losing sight of its proximity, by looking for it from one quarter, but forgetting that it may proceed from others, by looking at a distance when the enemy is near at hand. If asked, "Who is the enemy against which spiritual vigilance is called for," I reply, "His name is Legion." III. How SHALL WE OBEY THIS DUTY? It is natural to ask, Is there not some safeguard, some tried means of spiritual safety, that will at once secure our vigilance and make it efficacious? Yes, there is such a talisman, and its name is prayer, that settled bent of the affections which makes actual devotion not a rare experience, but the normal condition of the soul. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *The nature and obligation of watchfulness*:—I. WE MUST WATCH THAT WE MAY PREVENT EVIL. 1. We must watch against sin. 2. We must guard against the world. 3. We must watch against the temptations of the devil. II. WE MUST WATCH TO DO GOOD. 1. We have to discharge all the duties we owe to God, and our fellow Christians and neighbours; to improve all our talents wisely and faithfully. 2. We must watch to do all the good that God has commanded us. 3. We must watch to do good in its proper season. 4. We must watch to do good in the appointed manner. Application: 1. How naturally prone we are to become secure and careless. 2. That without watchfulness we shall become an easy prey to our worst enemy. 3. Without this we can perform no duty that will be acceptable to God. 4. Let us join prayer to watchfulness. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Helping others to watch*:—I suppose you never heard of a man of the name of Thomas Bilby. He was the man who wrote that beautiful hymn—

> "Here we suffer grief and pain,
> Here we meet to part again;
> In heaven we part no more.
> Oh! that will be joyful,
> When we meet to part no more!"

He wrote it for me. He wrote it for the first "children's service" I ever held. That was forty-five years ago, since I held my first "children's service." I was at Chelsea. I may be wrong, but I believe that was the first "children's service" ever held in the Church of England. I had heard of "catechising" before, but I had not heard of "children's services." Mr. Bilby wrote that hymn for me, for my first "children's service." He was my infant-schoolmaster. Before then he had been a private in the Coldstream Guards, but he became a religious man, was converted while in the army. There were several religious men in the same regiment, and they were very much observed by all the other soldiers, who watched them to see if they acted in any wrong way, because they called themselves Christians. So they watched that little society, these few religious men in the army, and if ever any one of the little band should see another going to do anything wrong, get into a bad temper, use a bad word, or going to fight with another soldier, he would go and whisper to that man, "Watch!" No one else could hear it. Mr. Bilby told me that that was the rule among the Christians in the Coldstream Guards. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Found at our post*:—Oh! there are so many places where we must watch. There was a city in Italy, I daresay you know of it, where, more than a thousand years ago, the lava from Mount Vesuvius came all over the city, and covered it completely with thick lava. I have been there, and seen it. A thousand years after that happened, it was discovered, the city was excavated, and they dug out many of the things that were therein. Amongst other things that were discovered, there was a man, a soldier, a sentinel at his post. A thousand years before, that man had been killed at his post by the lava, and there he was found, a sentinel still at his post! A lesson to us. A great deal more than a thousand years after, he was found still at his post. Let us be found at our post, wherever God has placed us, when He comes; when this world is covered, as it will be, with fire, may we be found faithful at our posts! (*Ibid.*) *Danger varied and where least expected*:—Oh! the danger may come in a very different way from the way you expect. Did you ever read Æsop's Fables? I will tell you one of a doe that was blind of one eye (have you read the story?); this doe was very cunning and clever, for she knew which eye was blind, and down the path which the doe used to go she always kept her blind eye to the

sea and her good eye to the land, because it was from the land the doe thought the danger would come. So the doe always kept the blind eye to the sea and the good eye to the land. One day a poacher, who knew all about that, got a boat and went out in the boat on the sea, and from the boat he shot the poor doe; and as the poor doe was dying, she said, so the fable goes, "Unhappy watcher! poor me! My danger came from where I never expected it, and there was no danger where I did expect it!" You may be like that poor blind doe: the danger comes where you don't expect it! Do you know where to expect the danger? "Watch!" I believe a hare when it lies in the grass always tries to see out of its eyes backwards; he thinks the danger will come from behind, therefore he so fixes his eyes and puts his ears back that he cannot see what is before; he is always looking back. Your danger comes every way. Another thing I want you to watch against is wandering thoughts. (*Ibid.*) *Be watchful:*—I. OUR CONDUCT. II. OUR TEMPER. III. OUR WORDS. IV. OUR HEART. (*T. Heath.*) *No disappointment to watchers for Christ:*—Most persons know what watching is. There are few who have not learned it by experience. In nights of sickness or sleeplessness you have watched for the morning. You have watched for the coming of expected friends. If they have been long separated from you, if they have gone to a far country, how anxiously you await the day of their return! It is a work of love to make your home bright and cheerful for them, and sometimes you gather flowers that they may add their greeting to yours. But, alas! how much of this earthly watching ends in disappointment! The ship that is bringing the absent one home goes down, and the longed-for sound of the familiar step and voice is waited for in vain. Ambitious souls lay plans and watch for success. Oftener than otherwise those plans fail and come to nothing. There has been more than one mother of a Sisera, whose son has gone out into the world flushed with the expectation of victory in some field of noble strife. She has looked through the lattice of her humble retirement for the return of his chariot, and for a division of the honour gained, and kept on gazing and expecting, not knowing that he has fallen a captive to temptation, and that his soul was pierced through, nailed to the earth, and dead. . . . Most of our earthly watching is, after all, sad and fruitless. It always is, provided we look only for what this world can bring and preserve in our keeping. But blessed is he that watches for Jesus, and for His coming. That coming will be indeed a blessed morning, the bringing in of an eternal day, one through all of whose sunny hours no more sickness or pain will be felt. It will restore our absent ones to us, in a home better than any here, a mansion bright and fragrant with flowers fairer than any of earth. It will mark the victorious return of every true soldier of the Cross, and his joyous coronation. It will reveal the multiplied richness and value of every treasure given into the Lord's hand. (*E. E. Johnson, M.A.*) *The interval between Christ's going and coming:*—The first advent is the pivot on which all turns for the life below; the second advent will be the point round which all will be grouped for the life above. Faith looks back at the Cross, and finds peace. Hope looks forward to the coronation, and gathers strength. Meanwhile the Master's eye and heart are towards His people, and He gives this motto. I. THERE ARE THINGS WHICH SUGGEST WATCHFULNESS. 1. The tendency of the body to induce sleep. 2. The influence of the world to beget sloth. 3. The design of the enemy to rob us while we slumber. II. THINGS WHICH PROMOTE WATCHFULNESS. 1. Waiting. 2. Working. 3. Worshipping. III. THINGS WHICH REPAY WATCHFULNESS. 1. Many a glorious sight is missed by those who will not watch. 2. The night watches give an insight into depths of space. 3. The morning watches tell of unthought glories in the Sun of Righteousness. 4. The men who watch look out of self. IV. THINGS WHICH ENCOURAGE WATCHFULNESS. 1. Time is too precious to waste in sleep. 2. A restless conscience. 3. A longing desire. 4. A burning hope. (*J. Richardson.*) *Watch*—I. AGAINST SIN. Put on the Christian soldier's armour to preserve you from the fiery darts of the wicked. Be in earnest. You may be armed from head to foot, and yet false in your Christianity. Some time since I remember walking across the tesselated pavement of a grand hall in the mansion of one of England's noblest born. In a niche I saw, by the light which streamed through the painted glass of an oriel window, a statue. I thought at first it was a man. I walked across the pavement, and drew near to examine the figure. He had upon his head a helmet of iron; the vizor was drawn down over his face, concealing the features; he held on his arm a long shield that reached to the very ground; in his hand was grasped an iron sword, double edged; he wore on his bosom a strong breast-plate; his limbs were covered with greaves and rings; his feet were also shod with iron. I drew near, and began to examine this well-pro-

tected figure. Presently, to my surprise, I saw something protruding; it was a piece of straw. On walking round, I saw some more straw sticking out through the greaves of the armour. I soon found this was a man in armour—if you will,—but stuffed with straw. And so, there may be many armed with the spiritual panoply—ready to quote texts, apt with religious arguments, apparently respectable and sincere,—whose religion is false, hollow, and worthless. Unless you are watching against all inroads of the enemy, and pressing onward in the battle, you are none of Christ's. II. AGAINST TEMPTATION. Satan comes in many guises. Be on the look-out. Don't let him deceive you with specious arguments and seductions. III. FOR SOULS. Seek to turn others into the right way. Draw them by love and with care. Do not let an opportunity slip, or you will regret it for ever. There was one whose hand I held in mine; with whom I trod—the narrow way that leadeth unto life? No—the broad road that leadeth unto hell; and he has departed, he has been removed beyond the reach of my voice. I will tell you how it was. Bred early to a knowledge of God, I became a backslider, and I wandered with him for years in the road that leads to hell. I left this country, and wandered over the shores of Mexico, Texas, the West Indies, and through the Caribbean Seas; and then returned home, after having been a long while away. I went to where my friend lived, and asked, "Where is so and so?" The person hesitated. "Where is he? Is he here, or in another part of the country?" The person turned pale. I said, "Tell me—I must have it—where is he?" "Well," was the reply, "he is dead." "Dead!" I felt petrified. Then I demanded, "Where did he die?" The person said, "He went up to London; there he ran a course of dissipation, and then he was suddenly cut off by the hand of God." Now, do you know, I have never lost the remembrance of that. Sometimes I close my door and go on my knees in prayer, and beseech God to blot out the black mark. And sometimes, when I lie down to sleep, I see staring at me through the gloom a pale face that I know—it is the face of that damned man. Aye, methinks, if he might speak, he would curse me; he would say, "God curse you!" "Why?" "Because you might have preached to me Christ Jesus; and now I am lost." Let not this reproach be cast upon you. IV. FOR CHRIST. With affection. With patience. With perseverance. (*H. G. Guinness.*) *Watch for death*:—There is nothing more certain than death; nothing more uncertain than the time of dying. I will therefore be prepared for that at all times which may come at any time, and must come at one time or another. I shall not hasten my death by being still ready, but sweeten it. It makes me not die the sooner, but the better. (*A. Warwick.*) *Watch*:—Men hear these warnings as general discourses, and let them pass so; they apply them not; or, if they do, it is readily to some other person. But they are addressed to all, that each one may regulate himself by them: and so these Divine truths are like a well-drawn picture, which looks particularly upon every one, amongst the great multitude, that looks at it. (*Archbishop Leighton.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1-9. **And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper.**—*Working for Christ*:—The home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem across the Mount of Olives, had been the scene of some of the calmest and happiest moments of our Lord's life. We know something of the sweetness of a quiet home after work and anxiety and worry—the labourer knows it, the man of business knows it. We can therefore understand how restful to the Lord Jesus, after those angry scenes that had been gathering around Him all day in the temple, were the peaceful evenings of this week in the home at Bethany. There are two things which we should notice about that home as we follow Jesus thither. I. IT WAS A HOME OF TRUE FAMILY LOVE, or Jesus would not have sought its shelter so often as He did. What tender memories cluster round the childhood that has been spent in such a home! What a foretaste of the home beyond the grave, the haven where we would be! II. IT WAS A HOME WHERE JESUS ALWAYS WAS A WELCOME GUEST, whither He was summoned in every trouble, where He was the Companion, the Guide, and the familiar Friend. Are our homes like that? Is He felt and acknowledged to be the Master of the house? the unseen Guest at every meal? the unseen Hearer of every conversation? Is His blessing asked on every meal, on every undertaking, on every event? But now, as we stand with Jesus at Bethany, look what

one of the sisters is doing to Him as He sits at meat, either in her own house, or in one of a similar type where she is hardly less at home. "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus." Beloved, is there not something like that that we can do for Jesus in this Holy Week? Is there not something that we can bring and lay at His feet while we are watching with him through the hours of His Passion? Something that will be an earnest of our love—some secret sin which it would really cost us something to give up? And cannot we find something, too, in our family life, or in the part we have to play in it? Is there not some new departure we might make for Jesus' sake, to make our homes a little less unworthy to be His dwelling-place? (*Henry S. Miles, M.A.*) *Mary anointing Christ*:—What she is said to have done. This standard for our service is, you perceive, at once stimulating and encouraging. It is stimulating, for we are never to think that we have done enough while there is anything more we can do; and it is encouraging, for it tells us that though we can do but little, that little will be accepted, nay, considered by our gracious Master as enough. We are not to condemn ourselves, or to repine, because we can do no more. But something else must be noticed here. I. MARY DID MORE THAN SHE WAS AWARE OF DOING. It is an affecting circumstance, brethren, that wherever our Lord was, and however engaged, His death seems to have been always in His mind. It was in His mind here at a social meal, and what we should have called a happy one, with those He loved the very best on earth around Him, and with the love of some of them towards Him in the liveliest exercise. It is a cheering truth, brethren, that we can never measure the use to which a gracious Saviour may turn our poor doings. As His designs in our afflictions often lie deeper than we can penetrate, so do His designs in the services to which He prompts us. We do this, and we do that, and we mourn that it is so little, and that so little good to our fellow-men and so little honour to our God will come from it; but we know not what will come from it. That little thing is in the hand of a great, omnipotent God, and His mighty arm can bend and turn it we know not how or whither. II. We must now ask what MARY'S MOTIVES PROBABLY WERE in this extraordinary act. 1. The strongest of them perhaps was a feeling of grateful love for her blessed Lord. He had just raised her brother from the dead; had just shown a sympathy and affection for herself and Martha, which might well astonish her; had put an honour on her family she must have felt to be surpassingly great. "Thank Him," she perhaps said within herself, "I could not when Lazarus came forth. I cannot now. My tongue will not move, and if it would, words are too poor to thank Him. But what can I do? Kings and great men are sometimes anointed at their splendid banquets. My Lord is to be at Simon's feast. I will go and buy the most precious ointment Jerusalem affords, and at that feast I will anoint Him. It will be nothing to Him, but if He will suffer it, it will be much to me." Do something to show that you are thankful for blessings, though that something be but little. 2. Mary was probably influenced also by another motive—a desire to put honour on Christ. "Let others hate Him, and spurn Him," she must have said, "Oh for some opportunity of showing how I honour Him." It is an easy thing, brethren, to honour Christ when others are honouring Him, but real love delights to honour Him when none others will. III. LET US NOW COME TO THE JUDGMENT MEN PASSED ON MARY'S CONDUCT. They censured it, and strongly. Men are generally made angry by any act of love for Christ which rises above their own standard—above their own ideas of the love which is due to Him. They can generally, too, find something in the warm-hearted Christian's conduct to give a colour to their displeasure. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" It was a plausible question; it seemed a reasonable one. And observe, too, men can generally assign some good motive in themselves for the censure they pass on others. And mark, also, Christ's real disciples will sometimes join with others in censuring the zealous Christian. "There were some that had indignation." But yet again, the censures passed on the servant of Christ often have their origin in some one hypocritical, bad man. Who began this cavilling, this murmuring against Mary? We turn to St. John's Gospel, and he tells us it was Judas—Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. Trace to their source the bitter censures with which many a faithful Christian is for a time assailed, you will often find it in the secret, unthought of baseness of some low, hypocritical man. IV. The history now brings before us THE NOTICE OUR LORD TOOK OF THIS WOMAN'S CONDUCT. He, first, vindicated it. And observe how He vindicates Mary—with a wonderful gentleness towards those who had blamed her. The practical lesson is, brethren, to adore the blessed Jesus for taking us and our conduct under His protection, and while acting through His grace as He would have us, to

feel ourselves safe, and more than safe, in His hands. "He that toucheth you," He says, "toucheth the apple of My eye." But this is not all—our Saviour recompenses this grateful woman as well as vindicates her. "Wheresoever," He says, "this gospel shall be preached, throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Our Lord had said long before, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." But here He anticipates this; there is a reward for this woman on the earth, and a wide and large one. And now, turning from Mary and her conduct, let us think of ourselves and our conduct. What have we done for Christ? "We love Him because He first loved us"—there is the secret of Christian obedience, Christian self-denial, Christian devotedness. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The box of ointment:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE ACT. It was done to Christ. It was inspired by a right sentiment. If we give all that we possess to Christ still it is less than He deserves. Her regret is not that she gave so much, but so little. II. THE LESSONS. An action is precisely of the value of the motive by which it has been actuated. We must, moreover, take into account the difference of positions and mental tendencies. Good intention, which is no other thing than love, may deceive itself, without doubt, but it does not always deceive itself. In the Divine flame which the Spirit kindles the light is inseparable from the heat. He who seeks to do the will of God will know the mind of God. Even in giving to the poor it is possible to make serious mistakes. True charity does not open the heart without expanding the mind. (*Alexander Vinet, D.D.*) *A woman's memorial:*—It well exhibits, in a single illustration, the appropriateness, the motive, the measure, and the reward of Christian zeal (Mark xiv. 3-9). I. WE START OUT WITH A RECOGNITION, ON OUR PART, OF A SETTLED RULE OF ACTIVITY. All of Christ's friends are expected to do something for Him. 1. Work and sacrifice are not inconsistent with even the highest spirituality. For this is the same Mary whose other story is so familiar to us all. She was the one who used to sit at Jesus' feet (Luke x. 39) in all the serene quiet of communion with her Lord; yet now who would say that Mary at the Master's head might not be as fine a theme for the artist's pencil? Piety is practical, and practical piety is not the less picturesque and attractive because it has in such an instance become demonstrative. 2. Our Lord always needed help while He was on the earth. There were rich women among those whom He had helped, at whose generous hands He received money (Luke viii. 2, 3). And His cause needs help now. 3. It is a mere temptation of the devil to assert that one's work for Jesus Christ is vitiated by the full gladness a loving soul feels in it. Some timid and self-distrustful believers are stumbled by the fear that their sacrifices for our blessed Master are meritless because they enjoy making them. There used to be rehearsed an old legend of an aged prophetess passing through a crowd with a censer of fire in one hand and a pitcher of water in the other. Being asked why she carried so singular a burden, she replied, "This fire is to burn heaven with, and this water is to quench hell with: so that men may hereafter serve God without desire for reward or fear of retribution." Such a speech may appear becoming for a mere devotee's utterance; but there is no warrant for anything like it in the Bible. Heaven is offered for our encouragement in zeal (Rom. ii. 7). Hell is often exhibited that it might be feared (Matt. x. 28). II. Next to this, the story of this alabaster box suggests A LESSON CONCERNING THE MOTIVE WHICH UNDERLIES ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY. 1. In the case of this woman, we are told that her action grew out of her grateful affection for her Lord. Every gesture shows her tenderness; she wiped His very feet with her own hair (John xii. 3). This was what gave her offering its supreme value. 2. Herein lies the principle which has for all ages the widest application. It is not so much what we do for our Saviour, nor the way in which we do it, as it is the feeling which prompts us in the doing of anything that receives His welcome. It is the affection pervading the zeal which renders the zeal precious. 3. It may as well be expected that the kindness which proceeds from pure love will sometimes meet with misconstruction. Those who look upon zeal far beyond their own in disinterested affection, will frequently be overheard to pass uncharitable misjudgments upon it. We find (John xii. 4-6) that it was only Judas Iscariot after all, on this occasion, who took the lead in assigning wrong motives to the woman, and he did not so much care for the poor as he did for his own bag of treasure. No matter how much our humble endeavours to honour our Lord Jesus may be derided, it will be helpful to remember they are fully appreciated by Him. 4. This is the principle which uplifts and enobles even commonplace zeal When true

honest love is the motive, do we not all agree that it is slight ministrations more than great conspicuous efforts which touch the heart of one who receives them? The more unnoticed to every eye except ours, the more dear are the glances of tenderness we receive. It is the delicacy, not the bulk, of the kindness which constitutes its charm. IV. The final lesson of this story IS CONCERNING THE REWARD OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL. Higher encomium was never pronounced than that which this woman received from the Master. 1. It was Jesus that gave the approval. Set that over against the fault-finding of Judas! If we do our duty, we have a right to appeal away from anybody who carps. When Christ justifies, who is he that condemns? Some of us have read of the ancient classic orator, who, having no favour in the theatre, went into the temple and gestured before the statues of the gods; he said they better understood him. Thus may maligned believers retire from the world that misjudges them, and comfort themselves with Jesus' recognition. 2. Jesus said this woman should be remembered very widely—wherever the gospel should go. Men know what is good and fine when they see it. And they stand ready to commend it. Even Lord Byron had wit enough to see that—

> "The drying up a single tear has more
> Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore."

Some of the grandest lives in history have had only little show to make. Care burdened women, invalids on couches, ill-clad and ill-fed sons of toil, maid-servants, man-servants, apprentices and hirelings with few unoccupied hours, timid hearts, uneducated minds, sailors kept on ships, soldiers held in garrisons—these, with only a poor chance, have done such service that the world remembers them with its widest renown (Psa. cxii. 5, 6). 3. It was just this parable of Jesus which became Mary's memorial. A word sometimes lasts longer than a marble slab. We must learn to be content with the approval of God and our own consciences. Nothing will ever be forgotten that is worth a record in God's book. Those who die in the Lord will find their works follow them, and the worthy fame remains behind: "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." Only we are to recollect that love alone gives character and value to all zeal. That was a most suggestive remark of old Thomas à Kempis: "He doeth much, who loveth much; and he also doeth much, who doeth well." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The sacrifice of love:*—I. THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE. Observe—1. What Mary gave. The alabastron of precious and perfumed ointment. Rare and costly. Love does not measure its offering by a bare utility; nor by a legal claim. 2. What Mary did. Anointed with this precious ointment. Things worthy of our highest uses are honoured when used in the lowliest uses of religion. What is worthy of our head, honoured by being laid at the Master's feet. II. THE REBUKE OF COVETOUSNESS. Judas's criticism. 1. Waste! because his plan was not adopted. He thought not of the good that was done, but of what might have been done. 2. He had an excuse. The poor! He was one of those who are always "looking at home;" who do so with shut eyes; who see little, and do less. III. THE ARGUMENT OF WISDOM. 1. I shall not be here long. Jesus is not long—in this life—with any of us. Let us make much of this guest. Do what we can now. 2. You will always have the poor. These Jesus loved and cared for. This legacy was not forgotten (Acts iv. 31–37). Nor are the spiritually poor forgotten. Learn—1. To love Jesus and show it. 2. That no gift consecrated to Jesus is wasted. 3. The best gift is a broken heart, the perfume of whose penitence and faith is pleasant to the Lord. (*J. C. Gray.*) *Profusion not waste:*—I. A MOTIVE. Mary no doubt intended well. Her right intention would hardly have been questioned by the murmuring disciples themselves. Whatever may be said of her work, nothing can be said of her motive but that it was purely and altogether good. Now motive is of first importance in the estimate we form of any act whatever, small or great. Motive of some kind there must be, or the act cannot be moral; it becomes merely mechanical. The motive too must be good, or the act cannot be otherwise than bad. It need not, however, appear so, and frequently does not. Words are not necessarily the garb of truth, nor appearances the signs and pledges of corresponding realities. However good the motive may be it does not follow that the act as such will be equally good. That is, there may be something more and higher in the motive than appears in the act. This may arise from ignorance, from our not knowing how to make the act better; or it may result from the nature of the act itself, as being essentially humble and commonplace. But a deeper cause is found

in our inability to do what we would. We seem to do our very best, we put forth and strain our resources to the utmost, and yet, after all, come short, and sometimes sadly short, of our preconceived desires and hopes. There is, however, another and brighter side to this. Our work is not considered absolutely by itself. The motive that inspires it counts for something, it may be for much. II. From the motive to this act let us pass to THE ACT ITSELF, WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IMPRESSION PRODUCED BY IT ON THOSE WHO WITNESSED IT. Mary intended well, I have said: she also as certainly did well. This appears in part from what has been already said, but the fact deserves and will repay still further exposition. "She hath done what she could," is the testimony borne to her conduct by the Saviour Himself, which alone were commendation sufficient, as it implies that she had acted up to the full measure of her ability. But to this He adds: "She hath wrought a good work on Me," thus greatly enlarging and heightening the commendation, especially as the term rendered "good" means what is noble and beautiful. Her work was thus good because it was the spontaneous overflow of a profoundly grateful affection for the restoration of her brother Lazarus to life. It was thus good because it was in effect an act of complete abandonment and loving devotion of her whole self to Christ as her one and only Saviour. No doubt there was something extraordinary in the form which this declaration took; but then there was something extraordinary in the sensibility of Mary's nature. But if Judas was first and chief he was quickly followed by others; for evil is alike contagious and confederate. Complaining is easy, and also infectious, and is often practised by some as though it were a virtue. Mark, then, our Lord's reply to their common protest, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" &c. A restrictive economy, He virtually tells us, a bare and rigid utility is not at any time the distinguishing characteristic of what is purest and noblest in human conduct. Utility has its own sphere. Economy is a duty even where it is not a necessity. But there are whole regions of thought and action into which neither the one nor the other can enter, or, entering, can reign alone. There must be beauty as well as utility, there must be generosity as well as economy, there must be splendour, magnificence, profusion, seeming waste even, or human life will lose much of its charm. The like profusion is seen in the Word of God as in His works. Shall men, then, in the service of faith and piety, be so unlike God as to confine themselves within the narrow range of a definite economy, or bind themselves to the strict and positive demands of a rigorous utility? Is this what they do in regard to any other kind of service, and with reference to interests that are purely secular and material? Shall it be called waste for a vehement and self-forgetting love to pour costly perfumes on the head and feet of an adored Redeemer, and yet not waste to consume them daily in the gratification of a bodily sense? No one inspired only with what is called the "enthusiasm of humanity" will say so. Still less will any one who can profess in the words of the apostle, as giving the animating and impellent principle of his whole life, "The love of Christ constraineth me." But, in truth, utility has a much larger sphere than is usually assigned to it. That is not the only useful thing which simply helps a man to exist; nor is it, when viewed comparatively with other things, even the most useful. The same principle applies to faith and love, especially to the latter; while of this latter it may further be said, that its utility is greatest when utility is least the motive to its exercise. That is not love which looks directly to personal advantage, and knows how to regulate its fervour by prudential considerations of profit and loss. III. MARY'S RECOMPENSE. 1. Christ vindicated her conduct against the angry complaints of His disciples. 2. He did more: He accepted and commended her work as "good"—as truly and nobly beautiful. This itself would be recompense enough for her. She could, and would, desire nothing more, and nothing better. What more and better, indeed, could any one desire, for any work whatever, than the applauding "well done" of Jesus? 3. Yet more there was in her case. She received assurance of everlasting reputation and honour. Here was marvellous and unparalleled distinction, no deed of merely human creature was ever promised a renown so great. And though this renown could of itself add but little to her future felicity, yet the promise of it, as indicating what the Saviour thought of her deed, must have been to her a deep and unfailing source of most holy satisfaction and delight. Nothing of this kind is, of course, possible to us; nor need we desire it. We may, however, learn from it, or rather from both forms of Mary's recompense combined, that whatever is done for Christ shall not, even to ourselves, be in vain. 4. With gracious recompense, there was also natural result. "The house," says one evangelist, "was filled with the odour of the ointment." Mary

accomplished more than she intended, anointing not only Jesus, but all who were with Him, and even the house itself. The fact is very suggestive, giving us at the same time a lesson both of admonition and of encouragement. Continuity and diffusion mark all we do. The thought is stupendously solemn, and ought to be solemnly laid to heart. It is one to inspire us with gladdening hope, or else to fill us with terrible dismay. (*Prof. J. Stacey, D.D.*) *The broken vase:*—The affectionate Mary, in the devout prodigality of her love, gave—not a part—but the whole of the precious contents, and did not spare the vase itself, in which they were held, and which was broken in the service of Christ. She gave the whole to Christ, and to Him alone. Thus also she took care, in her reverence for Christ, that the spikenard and the vessel (things of precious value, and of frequent use in banquets and festive pleasures of this world for man's gratification and luxury) having now been used for this sacred service of anointing the body of Christ, should never be applied to any other less holy purpose. This act of Mary, providing that what had been thus consecrated to the anointing of Christ's body, should never be afterwards employed in secular uses, is exemplary to us; and the same spirit of reverence appears to have guided the Church in setting apart from all profane and common uses, by consecration, places and things for the service of Christ's mystical body, and for the entertainment of His presence; and this same reverential spirit seems also to animate her in consuming at the Lord's Table what remains of the consecrated elements in the Communion of His Body and Blood. (*Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.*) *Costly offerings acceptable to God:*—There is just one principle that runs through all the teaching of the two Testaments concerning what men do for their Maker, and that is that God does not want, and cannot otherwise than lightly esteem that which costs us nothing, and that the value of any service or sacrifice which we render for His sake, is, that whatever may be its intrinsic meanness or meagreness, it is, as from us, our very best, not given lightly or cheaply or unthinkingly, but with care and cost and crucifixion of our self-indulgence; and then again, that it is such gifts, whether they are the adornment of the temple, or the box of alabaster—that these are gifts which God equally and always delights in. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*) *Broken things useful to God:*—It is on crushed grain that man is fed; it is by bruised plants that he is restored to health. It was by broken pitchers that Gideon triumphed; it was from a wasted barrel and empty cruse that the prophet was sustained; it was on boards and broken pieces of the ship that Paul and his companions were saved. It was amid the fragments of broken humanity that the promise of the higher life was given; though not a bone of Him was broken, yet it is by the broken life of Christ that His people shall live eternally; it was by the scattering of the Jews that the Gentiles were brought in; it was by the bruised and torn bodies of the saints that the truth was so made to triumph that it became a saying, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." It is by this broken box, that throughout the wide world it is proclaimed how blessed and glorious a thing it is to do a whole thing for Christ. When the true story of all things shall be known, then will it appear how precious in God's sight, how powerful in His hands, were many broken things. Broken earthly hopes will be found to have been necessary to the bringing in of the better hope which endures for ever. Broken bodily constitutions will be found to have been needful in some cases to the attainment of that land where the body shall be weary and sore no more; broken earthly fortunes, to the winning of the wealth beyond the reach of rust and moth and thief; broken earthly honour, to the being crowned with the diadem which fadeth not away. Yes! even for what we have to accomplish here, it often needs that we should be broken up into personal helplessness ere we can accomplish anything; that the excellency of the power may be not of man but of God. It is along a channel marred, and, as we should say, of no worth, that the precious ointment flows. Therefore, when any of God's people are broken and marred, let them bethink themselves of this shattered box, and how from it there flowed forth that ointment which anointed Jesus for His burial, and how it gave materials for that story which every gospel should tell. (*P. B. Power.*) *She brake the box:*—If relics were needed for the instruction of the Church of God, we can well understand how among the choicest of them would be found the remnants of this alabaster box. This broken vessel would not only be a monument of love, but a preacher with varied eloquence; at once pathetic and practical, tender and even stern; appealing to sentiment, and yet thundering against mere sentimentality; its jagged edges preaching "fact" in this world which men are always telling us is a world of fact; and saying, "Religion is fact—fact from God to man,

and back from man to God again." It may be that, as we studied these poor fragments of the past, our minds might pass from the stern teachings of those jagged edges to the sweet scent which diffused itself therefrom; and so, impalpable and invisible as that scent, sweet-savoured thoughts might steal into the secret recesses of our being, and we might be won to more decided action for our Lord. We can understand the broken vessel being carried into the exchange, the counting-house, and the shop, and one man shrinking from it as he heard its story, and another pouring out his gold as its depth and power struck deep into his soul. We can picture it to ourselves on the table of the philosopher, as with his midnight lamp beside it, he sits contemplating it with his hands spread over his temples, and rises from his cold, unsanctified study, unable to understand why the woman did this deed, and why any one should now be called to do the like; and we can imagine it now arresting with its broken form, now beguiling with even the remembrance of its perfume, some strong intellect, which longs to know the reality of things, and bows before the majesty and substance of true love as offered and accepted here. We can understand how it would make a missionary of this one, whose deeds would be known to all, and of another for Christ's sake a lone midnight watcher of the sick, whose deeds would be known to none—from the light of love shining from this broken vessel, as the lamps shone from the broken pitchers of Gideon, we can see thousands fleeing, as the bats and owls before the morning sun; and others, opening and expanding as the flowers into bloom and scent. Were relics needed for the conversion of man from his selfishness, his half-heartedness, his ignorance of the power of love, first above all things we would carry through the world the cross of Calvary and its thorny crown, and next to them this alabaster box. (*Ibid.*)

Anointing:—Anointing was employed in the East for several purposes: first, for pleasure, it being a great luxury in that climate; and the ointments were prepared from oils with great difficulty. They represented the very best fragrance that could be compounded. They were used by a person upon himself; and it was a significant act of esteem when ointment was presented by friend to friend. Ointments were also used in the coronation and ordination of kings and priests; and so they came to signify sacredness through reverence. Ointments were further used in the burial of the dead, and so came to signify the sorrow of love. But in every case, whether for gifts, or for pleasure, or for sacred uses of consecration or burial, it was not the intrinsic value of the ointment, but the thought which went with it, that gave it significance. It represented deep heart feeling, loyalty; deep religious consecration; sorrow and hope. These various feelings, which have but very little expression awarded to them, choose symbols; and these symbols almost lose their original meaning, and take this second attributive meaning. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *An alabaster box of ointment—Mary's gift*:—In climates where the skin gets feverish with dust, the use of oil in anointing the person is still a common practice. It is so in India; it was so in ancient Greece and Rome. It keeps the skin cool and soothes it, and is held to be healthful. In warmer climes the senses are more delicate, and the smells often more strong and disagreeable, and sweet odours are therefore greatly in demand. In Egypt to-day, the guests would be perfumed by being fumigated with a fragrant incense; and as spices are still used to give to the breath, the skin, the garments, an agreeable odour, so was it then. In any house the Saviour would have had His head anointed with oil. It was like the washing of the feet, a refreshment. In India these anointings with fragrant oils and perfumes are largely practised after bathing, and especially at feasts and marriages, so that the act of Mary was not something embarrassing and peculiar, but only the very highest form of a service which was expected and welcome. But, instead of the anointing with oil, which would have cost less probably than the widow's mite, she has provided a rich anointing oil. Judas estimated its value at three hundred pence; Pliny says it sold generally for three hundred pence a pound of twelve ounces. It was something of the same kind as attar of roses; made chiefly by gathering the essential oil from the leaves of an Indian plant, the spikenard, described by Dioscorides, 1,800 years ago, as growing in the Himalayas, and still found there, and used to-day in the preparation of costly perfumes. Except in drops, it was, of course, only used by kings and by the richest classes; was costly enough to be made a royal present. Three hundred pence would be worth as much in those days as £60 would be in England to-day. Mary must have been a woman of property to be able to bring such a holy anointing oil; unless, as is equally probable, this amount was the total of her lowly savings, and she with her royal gift, like the widow with her lowly offering, gives all

she had. If there be none other to anoint Him, she will not let His sacred head lack what honour she can bring. And if some reject Him, she will make it clear that to do Him the least and most transient honour is worth, in her view, the sacrifice of all she has. And so, with wondrous lavishness of generous love, she buys and brings to the feast the costly unguent. It is enclosed in an alabaster vase or phial, such as some which may be seen in the British Museum to-day, thousands of years old, and not unlike the alabaster vases that are still made in vast numbers and sold in toy-shops and fairs for a few pence; the softness of the stone permitting it to be then, as now, easily turned in a lathe. (*R. Glover.*) There is no word for "box" in the original; and there is no reason to suppose that the vessel, in which the perfume was contained, would be of the nature or shape of a box. Doubtless alabaster boxes would be in use among ladies to hold their jewels, cosmetics, perfumes, &c.; but it would, most probably, be in some kind of minute bottles that the volatile scents themselves would be kept. The expression in the original is simply, "having an alabaster of ointment." Pliny expressly says that perfumes are best preserved in alabasters. The vessel, because made of alabaster, was called an alabaster, just as, with ourselves, a particular garment, because made of waterproof-stuff, is called a waterproof. And a small glass-vessel for drinking out of is called, generically, a glass. Herodotus uses the identical expression employed by the Evangelist. He says that the Icthyophagi were sent by Cambyses to the Ethiopians, "bearing, as gifts, a purple cloak, a golden necklace, an alabaster of perfume, and a cask of palm-wine." (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *Wasted aroma:*— Just as soon as these people saw the ointment spilling on the head of Christ, they said: "Why this waste? Why, that ointment might have been sold and given to the poor!" Ye hypocrites! What did they care about the poor? I do not believe that one of them that made the complaint ever gave a farthing to the poor. I think Judas was most indignant, and he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. There is nothing that makes a stingy man so cross as to see generosity in others. If this woman of the text had brought in an old worn-out box, with some stale perfume, and given that to Christ, they could have endured it; but to have her bring in a vessel on which had been expended the adroitness of skilled artizans, and containing perfume that had usually been reserved for palatial and queenly use, they could not stand it. And so it is often the case in communities and in churches that those are the most unpopular men who give the most. Judas cannot bear to see the alabaster box broken at the feet of Christ. There is a man who gives a thousand dollars to the missionary cause. Men cry out: "What a waste! What's the use of sending out New Testaments and missionaries, and spending your money in that way? Why don't you send ploughs, and corn threshers, and locomotives, and telegraphs?" But is it a waste? Ask the nations that have been saved; have not religious blessings always preceded financial blessings? Show me a community where the gospel of Christ triumphs, and I will show you a community prospered in a worldly sense. Is it a waste to comfort the distressed, to instruct the ignorant, to baulk immorality, to capture for God the innumerable hosts of men who with quick feet were tramping the way to hell! If a man buys railroad stock, it may decline. If a man invests in a bank, the cashier may abscond. If a man goes into partnership, his associate may sink the store. Alas, for the man who has nothing better than "greenbacks" and government securities! God ever and anon blows up the money safe, and with a hurricane of marine disaster dismasts the merchantmen, and from the blackened heavens He hurls into the Exchange the hissing thunderbolts of His wrath. People cry up this investment and cry down the other; but I tell you there is no safe investment save that which is made in the bank of which God holds the keys. The interest in that is always being paid, and there are eternal dividends. God will change that gold into crowns that shall never lose their lustre, and into sceptres that shall for ever wave over a land where the poorest inhabitant is richer than all the wealth of earth tossed up into one glittering coin! So, if I stand this morning before men who are now of small means, but who once were greatly prospered, and who in the days of their prosperity were benevolent, let me ask you to sit down and count up your investments. All the loaves of bread you ever gave to the hungry, they are yours yet; all the shoes you ever gave to the barefooted, they are yours yet; all the dollars you ever gave to churches and schools and colleges, they are yours yet. Bank clerks sometimes make mistakes about deposits; but God keeps an unfailing record of all Christian deposits; and, though on the great judgment, there may be a "run" upon that bank, ten thousand times ten thousand men will get back all they ever gave to Christ; get all

back, heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. A young Christian woman starts to instruct the freedmen of the South, with a spelling-book in one hand and a Bible in the other. She goes aboard a steamer for Savannah. Through days, and months, and years she toils among the freedmen of the South; and one day there comes up a poisonous breath from the swamp, and a fever smites her brow, and far away from home, watched tearfully by those whom she has come to save, she drops into an early grave. "Oh, what a waste!—waste of beauty, waste of talent, waste of affection, waste of everything," cries the world. "Why, she might have been the joy of her father's house; she might have been the pride of the drawing-room." But, in the day when rewards are given for earnest Christian work, her inheritance will make insignificant all the treasure of Crœsus. Not wasted, her gentle words; not wasted, her home sickness; not wasted, her heart-aches; not wasted, her tears of loneliness; not wasted, the pangs of her last hour; not wasted, the sweat on her dying pillow. The freedman thought it was the breath of the magnolia in the thicket; the planter thought it was the sweetness of the acacia coming up from the hedge. No! no! it was the fragance of an alabaster box poured on the head of Christ. One day our world will burn up. So great have been its abominations and disorders that one would think that when the flames touched it a horrible stench would roll into the skies; the coal mines consuming, the impurities of great cities burning, you might think that a lost spirit from the pit would stagger back at the sickening odour. But no. I suppose on that day a cloud of incense will roll into the skies, all the wilderness of tropical flowers on fire, the mountains of frankincense, the white sheet of the water-lilies, the million wafts of heliotrope, the trellises of honeysuckle, the walls of "morning glory." The earth shall be a burning censer, held up before the throne of God with all the odours of the hemispheres. But on that day a sweeter gale shall waft into the skies. It will come up from ages past, from altars of devotion, and hovels of poverty, and beds of pain, and stakes of martyrdom, and from all the places where good men and women have suffered for God and died for the truth. It will be the fragrance of ten thousand boxes of alabaster, which, through the long reach of the ages, were poured on the head of Christ. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Blinding influence of prejudice*:—A man said to Mr. Dawson, "I like your sermons very much, but the after-meetings I despise. When the prayer-meeting begins I always go up into the gallery and look down, and I am disgusted." "Well," replied Mr. Dawson, "the reason is, you go on the top of your neighbour's house, and look down his chimney to examine his fire, and of course you get only smoke in your eyes!" *The anointing at Bethany*:—I. THIS PROPHECY BY CHRIST HAS BEEN FULFILLED. 1. Unlikely as it must have seemed that the simple act of devotion here named should be known in all the world, it has literally come to pass. It is told in all the languages of men, till there is scarcely a patch of coral in the wide sea large enough for a man to stand upon where this incident is not known. It should increase our confidence in all our Lord's promises. It is a witness that the rest will be found true as their time comes. 2. Wherever this story has been told, it has received the commendation of those who have heard it. The Lord's judgment has been confirmed: not that of those who "had indignation within themselves," and considered the ointment wasted. II. WHY WAS THIS WOMAN ABLE TO DO SO PRAISEWORTHY AN ACT? How did she know so much better than the others that Christ was to die, and that this was an appropriate act in view of His death? 1. She had paid attention to His words. She was a good hearer. Her ear was single, and her whole mind was full of truth. 2. Her act was the result of her character and feeling, not of her reasoning. She gave to Him, because she was Mary and He was Christ. It was the impulse of love. (*Alex. McKenzie, D.D.*) *The offering of devotion*:—The time will come when to do a thing for Christ and to have it accepted by Him will be work and accomplishment enough. If He is pleased, we shall not care to look beyond for recompense. If the spikenard is pleasant to Him, we shall not ask that the house be filled with its fragrance. But the fragrance will fill the house. The poor are best cared for where Christ is the best served. Virtue is strongest where piety is purest. Let Him be satisfied and the world is blessed. Let us break at His feet the alabaster which holds our life, that the spikenard may anoint Him. Go out and stand before men and open the box of stone. Then men will be drawn to you and to your devotion. Soon kings will swing the golden censer, and nations will cast incense on the glowing coals, and the perfume will make the air sweet: while many voices from earth and from heaven blend in the song of adoration unto Him that loved us. (*Ibid.*) *The anointing at Bethany*:—In this narrative of

Mary's good work and the indignation of the apostles, we have an example of all those views and all those judgments which have their foundation in the favourite principle of utilitarianism, and which is so often falsely applied to the wounding of pious hearts, and to the hindrance of that justifiable worship in the Church of Christ, which seeks to express worthily the sentiment of reverence and of love, and which is in itself productive of the highest blessing. I. (1) In Mary we have set before us an image of ardent love; (2) in Judas an example of great hypocrisy; (3) in the rest of the apostles an instance of the ease with which even good men are often scandalized when God's purpose happens to differ from their own preconceptions. II. (1) In the acceptance of Mary's offering of the ointment, we have the mercy of God displayed in receiving and hallowing man's gift when bestowed on Him; (2) in the rejection of Judas, who impenitently hardened himself at the sight of Mary's devotion, an instance is given us of the righteous judgment of the Almighty against the sinner. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The true principle of Christian expenditure*:—It is commonly argued that whatever may have been the appropriateness of that earlier devotion which built and beautified the temple, it is superannuated, inappropriate, and even (as some tell us) unwarranted now. Those costly and almost barbaric splendours, it is said, were appropriate to a race in its infancy, and to a religion in the germ. But the temple and the ritual of Judaism have flowered into the sanctuary and the service of the Church of Christ. Not to Mount Gerizim nor Jerusalem do men need to journey to worship the Father, says the Founder of that Church Himself. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." If one would show his devotion to Him, says this same Teacher, "sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." It is not to adorn temples and garnish holy places that Christianity is called nowadays, but to rear hospitals, and shelter orphans, and feed the hungry. It is a diviner thing to send bread to some starving household, or to minister in some plague-smitten Memphis or New Orleans, to some fevered sufferer, than to build all the altars and adorn all the sanctuaries that ever were reared. No! it is not—not one whit diviner—noble and Christ-like as such service surely is. Let us come to a distinct understanding here as to an issue concerning which, in the popular mind, there is much confusion and much more misapprehension. If it be asked, Is there not an order and sequence in which things equally excellent may wisely and rightly be done, the answer is plain enough. If anybody is starving or houseless or orphaned, the first thing to do is to feed and shelter and succour them. And so long as such work is undone, we may wisely postpone other work, equally meritorious and honourable. But it should be clearly understood that if in some ages a disproportionate amount of time and money and attention have been given to the æsthetics of religion, in others the same disproportion has characterized that which has been given to what may justly be called the sentimentalism of religion. An enormous amount of indiscriminate almsgiving both in our own and other generations has bred only shiftlessness, indolence, unthrift, and even downright vice. God forbid that we should hastily close our hand or our heart against any needier brother! But God most of all forbid that we thrust him down into a condition of chronic pauperism by the wanton and selfish facility with which we buy our privilege of being comfortably let alone by him with an alms or a dole. Better a thousand times that our gifts should enrich a cathedral already thrice adorned, and clothe its walls already hung with groaning profusion of enrichment, for then, at least, some one coming after us may be prompted to see and own that, whatever fault of taste or congruity may offend him, there has not been building and beautifying without cost and sacrifice. . . . Those wonderful men of an earlier generation toiled singly and supremely to give to God their best, and to spend their art and toil where, often if not ordinarily, it could be seen and owned and adequately appreciated by no other eye than His. This, I maintain, is alone the one sufficient motive for cost, and beauty, and even lavish outlay, in the building and adornment of the House of God. We may well rejoice and be thankful when any Christian disciple strives anywhere to do anything that tells out to God and men, whether in wood, or stone, or gold, or precious stones, that such an one would fain consecrate to Him the best and costliest that human hands can bring. When any poor penuriousness cries out upon such an outlay, "To what purpose is this waste?" the pitiful objection is silenced by that answer of the Master's to her who broke over His feet the alabaster box of ointment very precious, "Verily, I say unto you," &c. And why was it to be told? for the spreading of her fame? No, but for the inculcation of her example. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*)

Contrast between Mary and Judas:—"The Messiah, although going to death, let me lavish my all on Him," was Mary's thought; "Going to death, and therefore not the Messiah, let me make what I can out of Him," was the thought of Judas. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Costly gifts acceptable to Christ:*—There is a great principle involved in this woman's offering, or rather in our Lord's acceptance of it, which is this, that we may give that which is costly to adorn and beautify the sanctuary of God and His worship. God Himself enjoined on the Jews that they should make a tabernacle of worship of such materials as gold, and purple, and fine linen, and precious stones; and the man after God's own heart collected a vast treasure of gold and costly materials to build and beautify a temple which was to be exceeding magnifical. But since then a new dispensation has been given, which had its foundations in the deepest humiliation—in the manger of Bethlehem—in the journeyings of a poor, homeless man, with the simple peasants His companions—ending in the cross and in the sepulchre. Is there place in such a kingdom for generous men and women to lavish precious things on His sanctuaries and the accompaniments of His worship? Now this incident at the end of the Lord's life, taken together with that at its beginning, when God-directed men offered to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, teaches us that there is. Just as this woman was led by a Divine instinct to lavish upon His Person what was costly and fragrant, so the Church has, by the same Divine instinct, been led to pour at His feet the richest treasures of the nations she has subdued to His faith. The Church has done what she could. At least her faithful sons and daughters have. At first, in her days of persecution, she could worship only in catacombs, and in her days of poverty she could only offer what was rude; but when she subdued her persecutors and emerged from her poverty, then also she did what she could. The grandest efforts of architectural skill have been raised to the honour of Christ, the greater part built in the form of the cross on which He hung to redeem us. The noblest paintings are of His acts and sufferings; and the most elevating strains of music are accompaniments of His worship. It is too true that many have taken part in these offices who have not, like Mary, sat at His feet, and chosen the good part; but what we are now concerned with is, whether this incident warrants those who have first given themselves to Him to offer in and for His worship what has cost labour and treasure and skill. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. **The poor with you always.**—*The condition of the poor may be bettered:*—Covetous men have put our Lord's words, "Ye have the poor with you always," beside the Old Testament sentence, "The poor shall never cease out of the land," in order to quiet the trouble of their own consciences when forced to think of the little they are daily doing for the poor; and then tell themselves, and too often tell others, that aspiration, self-denial, and liberality are, after all, mere spasmodic, ineffectual palliatives of a disease which is inveterate and hopeless, and that, the existence of poverty being an unalterable decree, there can be no true neglect in doing nothing in their power, if there can be no full success in doing all. To some other people this combination of texts supplies a convenient discouragement to throw on all suggestions for elevating the condition of the poor, and alleviating the pressure of their poverty; for it enables them practically to conclude thus: "To do this thing would be, more or less, to fly in the face of the Almighty: To alter the conditions He has so clearly laid down would be, in fact, to contradict His will." Of course this error also admits of an easy reply, too logical by far, however, for men who would offer the argument. It is this. God may have willed, and has willed, that absolute equality of goods shall be, in this world, an impossibility; that the terms rich and poor, being relative terms, shall always have persons to whom they may be applied, though a man who is rich as compared with a peasant may be poor as compared with a prince. But God has never revealed as His will that those conditions shall never be interchangeable; on the contrary, His word tells us that such interchange must be sought (James i. 9), and the history of the world, from day to day, shows us, as part of its natural course, a continual rising of some, and sinking of others, in the social scale. Then there is another class of objections to deal with. It is urged by those who really sympathize in good will for the physical and moral raising of the poor, and feel that the bettering of poor men's condition would be an admirable thing if only it were possible, but that its antecedent impossibility frustrates all efforts towards so desirable an end. There are very many such—people who feel Christian love to fellow-men fill them with longing to promote their temporal, and through it their eternal good; people who,

themselves blessed with ease and affluence in worldly things, feel themselves in some sort trusted by God to benefit their poorer fellows; who know the pity and the wrong of merely flinging money, in whatever sums, into the grasping hand of the loudest clamourer; who strive with all their might in seeking, and fail so often bitterly in finding, the true deserving poor; who go themselves amidst the haunts of squalor, the homes of misery, the very centres of disease, trying to make true Christian mercy the dispenser of their money, and to consecrate even filthy lucre to the holy ministry of Christian love. How many these are, of Christian men and Christian women, God only knows who only can reward; but yet how disappointing is their work! They see from day to day so little fruit; they meet from day to day so much resistance; what wonder if, while conscience urges them to persist in their work, despondency should often overwhelm them, and make the toil, which only hope can lighten, a crushing burden when hope is fled? Is it not too sadly true that when the self-indulgent love to cry, "the raising of the poor is resistance to God," the self-sacrificing often have to answer, "the raising of the poor is hopeless for man!" The one class lets them lie, and cries, "their poverty is destiny;" the other class labours even while it cries, "our labour is in vain!" And both have only quoted half the texts —the one side to excuse neglect, the other to explain despondency; while the whole text can force duty on the slothful and give courage to the zealous. For our Lord, indeed, spoke the truth of His day, of our day, and of all days, when He said, "Ye have the poor with you always;" but He said something more which we should lay to heart, "When ye will, ye can do them good." These glorious words settle all questions at once as to the title of man to interfere with the condition of the poor, and as to the alleged hopelessness of such interference. The thing may be done, and the thing may be done with success. To alter the condition of the poor is allowable; to alter it for the better is possible. "Ye can do them good!" (*W. L. Blackley, M.A.*) *Christians caring for the poor*:—When the deacon, St. Lawrence, was asked, in the Decian persecution, to show the prefect the most precious treasures of the Church at Rome, he showed him the sick, the lame, the blind. "It is incredible," said Lucian, the pagan jeerer and sceptic, "to see the ardour with which those Christians help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brothers." "These Galileans," said Julian the apostate, "nourish not only their own poor, but ours as well." In the year 252 a plague raged in Carthage. The heathen threw out their dead and sick upon the streets, and ran away from them for fear of contagion, and cursed the Christians. St. Cyprian, on the contrary, assembled his congregation, told them to love those who cursed them; and the rich working with their money, the poor with their hands, never rested till the dead were buried, the sick cared for, and the city saved from destruction. (*Archdeacon F. W. Farrar.*) *Care of the poor*:—Thomas Willet, one of the old Puritan divines, was a man of remarkable benevolence. He spent the income of his two benefices in comforting and entertaining the parish poor, often inviting them to the hospitalities of his house. When asked why he did so, his reply was, "Lest Joseph and Mary should want room in the inn, or Jesus Himself should say at last, 'I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in.'"

Ver. 8. **She hath done what she could.**—*Do what you can*:—I. That the Lord Jesus likes His people to be DOING CHRISTIANS. She "did something." She did "what she could." Hence the praises bestowed upon her. The great Head of the Church likes "doing" Christians. Christians who show their Christianity in their lives. True religion is not made up of general notions and abstract opinions—of certain views, and doctrines, feelings, and sentiments. Useful as these things are, they are not everything. The wheels of the machine must move. The clock must go as well as have a handsome case and face. It matters little what a man thinks, feels, and wishes in religion, if he never gets further than that. What does he do? How does he live? 1. "Doing" is the only satisfactory proof that a man is a living member of the Lord. 2. "Doing" is the only satisfactory proof that your Christianity is a real work of the spirit. Talking and profession are cheap and easy things. But "doing" requires trouble and self-denial. 3. "Doing" is the only evidence that will avail a man in the day of judgment. (Matt. xxv. 31, &c.) II. That ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS CAN DO SOMETHING, and that all should do what they can. Now I know well the devil labours to make true Christians do nothing. Doing Christians are the devil's greatest enemies. 1. Satan will tell some that they are

too young to do anything. Believe him not: that is a lie. Yet a little while and the enemy will say, "you are too old, and it is too late." 2. Satan will tell others that they stand alone too much to do any good. Martin Luther, Mahomet, Napoleon—all are cases in point. They all rose from the ranks. They stood alone at first. They owed nothing to position or patronage. 3. Satan will tell others that they have no power to do anything. He will say, "you have no gifts, no talents, no influence. 4. But Satan will tell some that they have no opportunities for doing anything—no door open on any side. 5. Do you ask me what you can do? I reply, there is something for every true Christian in England to do. Have you not the power of doing good by your life? you may work wonders by steady consistency and patient continuance in well-doing. (*Bishop J. C. Ryle.*) *Work and joy*:—A young girl, in one of her pensive moods, wrote thus in her journal: "If I dared I would ask God why am I placed in this world? and what have I to do? My days are idly spent, and I do not even regret their swift passing away. If I might but do some good to myself or another, if only for the short space of a moment each day!" A few days later her views were wider and brighter, and she wrote again: "Why, nothing is easier! I have but to give a cup of cold water to one of Christ's little ones." Paths of service are sure to open before willing feet. When the Spirit of God puts a benevolent impulse in the soul the providence of God will open a channel for its outflowing. Thousands of God's afflicted children would be inexpressibly touched if Christian young women would sing to them of His love and the "home beyond the tide." (*Ibid.*) *Good works the fruit of faith and love*:—I. THE INCIDENT HERE RECORDED COMPRISED THE CONDUCT OF A CERTAIN WOMAN ON A PARTICULAR OCCASION, TOGETHER WITH THE TREATMENT WHICH SHE RECEIVED; first, from some of the persons present, and secondly, from Jesus Himself. Those present, not having the same affection and veneration for Jesus which the woman had, found fault with her conduct. But what treatment did she receive from Jesus? "And Jesus said," &c. Here we see in the first place, how our Saviour defended the woman, and reproved and exposed those who had blamed her. Let us notice also in the second place, that Jesus not only defended the woman, but even praised and commended her. II. TO DRAW FROM THIS INCIDENT SOME INSTRUCTIVE INFERENCES. 1. We may hence infer that those works which Jesus Christ accounts to be "good" are such as spring from faith in, and love to Him. 2. Such good works, such acts of love and faith, will not always, nor even in general, obtain the favour and applause of the world. To the world the good works of the Christian are seldom either intelligible or gratifying. Propose, for instance, to worldly persons to join with you in supporting some charity at a distance; they will tell you how it is abused and perverted, and that there are poor at home to whom we are required to attend. Thus selfishness and avarice plead their cause, and lead men to evade their plainest duties. 3. We may infer from the passage before us that those "good works," those fruits of faith and love, which the world misunderstands, misrepresents, and censures, are yet graciously noticed, and favourably accepted by Jesus Christ. My brethren, what encouraging and consolatory reflections are these to all such as are endeavouring to serve the Lord Christ, and to be fruitful in good works! Regard not the sneers and reproaches of ungodly persons. Behave to them with meekness and kindness. Overcome their evil with good. (*Edward Cooper.*) *The motive and measure of Christian duty*:—I. THE MOTIVE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY. Love is that motive—the very principle which fills the mind of Deity. It was love which brought the Saviour down, and led Him through all the scenes of His earthly sufferings and the cross. Christ has loved you; therefore do what you may, for His sake. No higher motive than this can be urged. II. THE AMOUNT OF SERVICE REQUIRED. The amount of ability is the measure of duty. What we can do, we ought to do—cheerfully and honestly. Use the balance of the sanctuary to make sure that thou art not defrauding thy God. (*S. Robins.*) *Christ accepts the humblest gifts*:—Christ asks no impossibilities. That woman brought an alabaster box. What was it to Jesus? Why, He owns all the fragrance of earth and heaven; but He took it. He was satisfied with it. If it had been a wooden box He would have been just as well satisfied had it been the best one she could bring. I hear some one say: "If I only had this, that, or the other thing, I would do so much for God." In the last day, it may be found that a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple gets as rich a reward as the founding of a kingdom; and that the sewing girl's needle may be as honourable in God's sight as a king's sceptre; and that the grandest eulogium that was ever uttered about any one was: "She hath done what she could." There she sits at the head of the Sabbath-school class, and

she says: "I wish I understood the Scriptures in Greek and Hebrew. I wish I had more facility for instruction. I wish I could get the attention of my class. I wish I could bring them all to Christ. Do not worry. Christ does not want you to know the Scripture in Greek and Hebrew. Do as well as you can, and from the throne the proclamation will flame forth: "Crown that princess. She hath done what she could." There is a man toiling for Christ. He does not get on much. He is discouraged when he hears Paul thunder and Edward Payson pray. He says: "I wonder if I will ever join the song of heaven." He wonders if it would not look odd for him to stand amid the apostles who preached and the martyrs who flamed. Greater will be his wonder on the day when he shall find out that many who were first in the Church on earth are last in the Church of heaven; and when he sees the procession winding up among the thrones of the sorrowing ones who never again shall weep, and the weary ones who never again shall get tired, and the poor who never again shall beg, and Christ, regardless of all antecedents, will upon the heads of His disciples place a crown made from the gold of the eternal hills, set in with pearl from the celestial sea, inscribed with the words: "He hath done what he could." (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Doing something for Christ:*—A man in America, who depended for support entirely on his own exertions, subscribed five dollars annually in support of the Bombay schools. His friends inquired, "why he gave so much, and how he could afford it?" He replied: "I have been for some time wishing to do something for Christ's cause, but I cannot preach, neither can I pray in public, to any one's edification, nor can I talk to people; but I have hands, and I can work." *She hath done what she could.—Acceptance of the heart:*—In many aspects this is one of the most encouraging expressions of our Lord. It was uttered in defence of a woman who ventured to approach Him under the unceremonious impulse of affection, destitute, so far as we know, of any recommendation from family circumstance or social distinction, but urged solely by an irresistible longing to do something, however humble or irregular, in behalf of this Divine friend, who has gained the unutterable, enthusiastic devotion of her soul. I. THIS ANSWER OF OUR LORD'S PLAINLY AND POWERFULLY ASSERTS THE SUPERIOR WORTH OF THE HEART'S FEELING OVER ANY OUTWARD ACTS. The very form of the expression implies that, in one sense, she had done but little. Yet that little was enough. It was a test of her sincerity. It said distinctly that she was in earnest. It demonstrated the deep and tender attachment of her soul. One penny's worth, if it is only the utmost that self-denial can do, is as good for that as ten thousand shekels. The whole spiritual meaning of gifts consists in the disposition of the giver. II. THESE WORDS BESTOW A BLESSING ON THE FEELING OF PERSONAL AFFECTION TOWARDS CHRIST. Have you ever had that mingled sense of gratitude and love towards a person which made you long, above all things, to find out some way of serving him, and made it a positive pain to be denied that privilege? Did Christianity not provide an outlet for this feeling, it would fail to secure a practical hold on human sympathies. III. THESE WORDS AFFIRM, FOR TRUE GOODNESS, A COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF PLACE. Acceptance with God is as possible in small fortunes, or limited reputations, as in influential and powerful circles. No one, therefore, is excused from doing "what he can," nor is there one to whom the whole infinite wealth of Christ's favour is not offered. IV. ABILITY IS THE MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY. No soul is tasked beyond its power. God's commandment never passes the line of a possible obedience, and so never goes over from justice to tyranny. What we fail to render in actual work (through our human frailty), He mercifully permits us through Christ to make up in those penitent and self-renouncing affections which gain forgiveness and open the way of reconciliation. Still, let us solemnly ask ourselves, even after making allowance for this, Have I done what I could? Has my service to the Master reached the full measure of the powers and gifts, the capacities of affection and the opportunities of well-doing, with which my Master has entrusted me? V. TAKE THESE THREE THOUGHTS AS THE PRACTICAL SUBSTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. 1. This saying of Jesus is dangerously perverted and shamefully abused, if we take it as excusing us from the utmost effort in well-doing, and a laborious progress in Christ's service. We must summon into the Master's service every power, every energy, every affection, every hour of life. No laxities, and no apologies. Nothing less than entire consecration is demanded of us. 2. In order to serve Christ acceptably, we have not to revolutionize our lot, nor to seek other conditions than those Providence supplies. The place is nothing; the heart is all. 3. There is no service thoroughly right which does not directly acknowledge and honour the Saviour. The heart's offering to Him is the beginning of all righteousness. (*Bishop F. D. Huntington.*) *Various ways*

of serving Christ:—The Father has appointed many ways in which we may walk toward His face, and run on His errands. Work is the way for strength; lying still is the way for infirmity,—if only there are trust and prayer in both. There is some instruction in a picture I have read of, which represents the lives of twin-brothers diverging from the cradle. One, by study, becomes a learned and skilful physician, reaching great riches and honours by ministering to the sick. The other has no talent for books, and no memory, and so no science; he becomes a poor, strolling musician, but spends his days in consoling, by his lute, sufferings that are beyond all medicine. The brothers are shown meeting at the close of their career. The vagrant is sick and worn out, and the brother prescribes for him out of his learning, and gathers ingenious compounds for his relief; but, meantime, he to whom God gave another gift, touches his instrument for the solace of the great man's shattered nerves, and heals his benefactor's disordered spirit. (*Ibid.*) *Characteristics of fervent love to Christ*:—1. Willing service. 2. Costly sacrifices. (*Wm. Marsh.*) *What a woman may do*:—An American paper tells the story of a woman who, because tired of a life mainly spent in eating and dressing, resolved to devote herself and her money to a nobler purpose. At the close of the war, she went to a sandy island off the Atlantic coast, where about two hundred persons were living in poverty and ignorance, and there she established her home, with the intention of benefiting the inhabitants. She began by teaching, by example, how to cultivate the land lucratively. Then she established a school for the children, and afterwards a church. Now the island is a thriving region, with an industrious and moral population, the change being the work of one woman. *All may be useful*:—Many true saints are unable to render much service to the cause of God. See, then, the gardeners going down to the pond, and dipping in their watering-pots to carry the refreshing liquid to the flowers. A child comes into the garden and wishes to help, and yonder is a little watering-pot for him. Note well the little water-pot, though it does not hold so much, yet carries the same water to the plants; and it does not make any difference to the flowers which receive that water, whether it came out of the big pot or the little pot, so long as it is the same water, and they get it. You who are as little children in God's Church, you who do not know much, but try to tell to others what little you do know; if it be the same gospel truth, and be blessed by the same Spirit, it will not matter to the souls who are blessed by you, whether they were converted or comforted by a man of one or ten talents. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Usefulness of common actions*:—It is the bubbling stream that flows gently, the little rivulet which flows along day and night by the farmhouse, that is useful, rather than the swollen flood or warring cataract. Niagara excites our wonder; and we stand amazed at the powerful greatness of God there, as He pours in from the hollow of His hand. But one Niagara is enough for the continent of the world, while the same world requires thousand and tens of thousands of silver fountains and gently flowing rivulets, that water every farm and meadow, and every garden, and shall flow on every day and night with their gentle quiet beauty. So with the acts of our lives. It is not by great deeds, like those of the martyrs, that good is to be done, but by the daily and quiet virtues of life. (*A. Barnes.*) *She hath done what she could.—All may win this encomium*:—This encomium is just as sufficient and adequate for the ablest as the most infirm; it is enough for such as Elizabeth Fry, Hannah More, and Madame Adorna, and no more than enough for the unlettered woman carried out from an obscure lane last week, having died in the joy of her Lord, and her name never seen in printed letters, perhaps, till it was enrolled in the record of the dead. When I read a description of Kaiserswerth, near Düsseldorf, on the Rhine—of that vast establishment of Christian mercy, with its hospital, insane asylum, Magdalen retreat, charity schools, and institutions for training the most scientific nurses and accomplished teachers, graduating superintendents for the humane houses of both Europe and America, and a few miles away another building for the rest and refreshment of those that have been worn down by the fatigues of these voluntary labours of love,—when I see how, throughout, charity has been systematized by skill, and benevolence perfected by perseverance, and then behold the benefits flowing forth to be extended and multiplied, in ever enlarging proportions, over the whole sick and suffering and groaning earth,—I am as much ashamed and humbled before this devoted Pastor Fleidner, whose active spirit and benevolent genius have called up all this busy and organized kingdom of Good-Samaritanism about him to glorify the age, as I suppose my sisters are before the beautiful and accomplished baroness who has laid down youth, rank, and wealth as an offering to sorrow and disease; or

before the high-born, gifted, and admired English girl (Florence Nightingale) who came to Kaiserswerth as a pupil, and then reproduced the same wonders of consolation and healing for sick and destitute governesses,—not amidst the rural quiet and sweet verdure of her own paternal home in Hampshire, but in a dismal street in London. Yet we ought all to remember that these, too, only did what they could; that, if we do that, God's honours are impartial; that if we do not that, then ours is indeed the shame of the shortcoming. (*Bishop F. D. Huntington.*) *What we can do we are bound to do*:—This language of the Saviour most naturally associates itself with the closing up of life's great account. Of how many among us, when that trial-hour comes, with all its retrospections and searching examinations, can those glorious words be spoken? We cannot recall nor judge the dead. They are in the hands of the All-Just. But we can speak to one another as yet living. How many of us are so striving righteously, and watching soberly, and praying earnestly, that this shall be the just and consoling eulogy—They have done what they could? The busy man of affairs, the successful one, the disappointed and losing one, the young adventurer, the older and long-trusted, and finally unfortunate one,—those that have prospered by others' industry, and those that have been ruined by others' crimes,—has each one of them done what he could? The wife or mother, whose very name is sacred, because the sacred office of forming character is her perpetual duty, the lonely woman that has only her own heart to discipline, the young girl that has so few cares for herself that God requires many of her for the less-favoured,—has each done what she could? The bereaved parent, the desolate widow suddenly summoned to take up the dreary and dreadful burden of solitary suffering,—has each done what she could? is each one doing what she can? Christ draws near to us and repeats the question. He turns and puts it, with twofold solemnity and sadness, to those that leave Him and pass away. To all that sit at His feet and follow in His steps in the spirit of her who poured the fragrant offering on His head, He is ready to speak the same benediction with His infinite love,—hiding in it the sure promise of life everlasting. I said we cannot adjudge the deservings of the departed. But we can guard ourselves against those hallucinations of mortal glory, and all those artificial illusions, which are so apt to cheat our souls, and obscure the plain truth. There goes to his august repose, enveloped in imperial pomps, the ruler of the world's mightiest, vastest empire. Fifty-seven millions of human souls, embracing nine different races of men, with a million soldiers, drew their daily breath subject to his direct and despotic will; but not all of so many millions could add one single breath to his prostrate lungs. Eight millions of square miles of territory were yesterday ruled by his word; now he needs not eight feet, out of it all. The guns of massive fortresses on the huge ramparts that guard widely divided waters made a continent tremble in their volleying answers to his edicts, and the haughtiest noblemen of the world bent at his smile or frown. Common cabinets and kings were perplexed and afraid at the cunning of his brain, as boys are of their master, and the armies of the strongest governments, after his own, felt the globe to be a more conquerable and practicable domain the moment they knew he was dead. But he is dead. And neither the millions of acres nor men, the fortresses nor the fears, the armies nor the brain, shall make it a whit easier, but harder rather, for his single soul—when it goes alone, disrobed of crown and purple, into the presence of the King of kings, whose right it is to reign—to answer that simple question, Hast thou done for Me—ah! for Me—what thou couldst? Canst thou stand with the lowly and powerless woman who crept with the box of ointment to her Redeemer's feet, and who shall have the story of that act of love told for a memorial of her wherever the everlasting gospel is preached, when the history of Cossack and Czar shall be dim as that of princes before the flood, and on to the end of time? But here, close by us, falls asleep a meek, patient girl,—a faithful sister, an obedient daughter, a mild and friendly counsellor of a few children that she knew, ruler of none on earth but her own patient spirit, and thereby made greater than he that taketh a city, or prevents its being taken. She, too, dies, and no anxious hemispheres dispute about the report, nor do kingdoms mourn, nor cowardly assemblies clap their hands, when the report is confirmed. And in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, our only question is, which of these two shall be found nearest to Him who sitteth on the one throne, and shall wear the crown which is a crown of life. (*Ibid.*) *She hath done what she could.—A whole city visited by one woman*:—An intelligent, industrious, and kind-hearted woman in Russia became a Christian. Her labours were transformed into Christian labours, and were followed up with an ardour and perseverance seldom exceeded. In her visits to the poor, she

carried books and tracts as well as food and raiment; and when she found persons able to read, which was frequently the case, she made it a point to read to them, and to explain what they could not understand. Her prompt assistance was, in a great measure, instrumental in a zealous agent becoming extensively engaged in the circulation of the Scriptures. She gave him two of the first Finnish Bibles that ever passed through his hands; and when there was a great demand for the sacred volume in that language, she actually sold her watch, in order to furnish one hundred Bibles to the poor at reduced prices. She took, as her sphere for visiting, the whole city of St. Petersburg, perambulating it alone, and succeeded beyond all expectations. In the course of a few months she sold more than 1,500 Bibles and Testaments; and in this blessed work she persevered, while hundreds derived advantage from her visits. *A little boy's effort*:—"Children, I want each of you to bring a new scholar to the school with you next Sunday," said the superintendent of a Sunday school to his scholars one day. "I can't get any new scholars," said several little children to themselves. "I'll try what I can do," was the whispered response of a few others. One of the latter class went home to his father, and said, "Father, will you go to the Sunday-school with me?" "I can't read, my son," replied the father, with a look of shame. "Our teachers will teach you, dear father," answered the boy, with respect and feeling in his tones. "Well, I'll go," said the father. He went, learned to read, sought and found the Saviour, and at length became a missionary. Years passed on, and that man had established four hundred Sunday-schools, into which thirty-five thousand children were gathered! Thus you see what trying did. That boy's efforts were like a tiny rill, which soon swells into a brook, and at length becomes a river. His efforts, by God's grace, saved his father; and his father, being saved, led thirty-five thousand children to the Sunday-school.

Ver. 9. **For a memorial of her.**—*Works done for Christ remembered and recommended*:—The doing of works has been over-valued in one part of the Church's history, *i.e.*, works as separate from the motives which led to them; and, as you know, for a long season language was held as if there was a merit in works, and as if they could make an atonement for sin, and wipe out a man's past misdeeds, and as if, if upon a death-bed he made great sacrifices to Christ's church, that wiped out years of lust, covetousness, and cruelty. And so, by a revulsion of feeling, which always must beset the Church, it has come to pass, that amongst us men have been afraid of speaking of the great privilege, and of the great duty, of doing works of love for Christ's body, the Church; and there has come amongst us a mawkish, miserable sort of notion, that we are to cultivate inward feelings, affections, and the like, and that this is all of religion, and the whole of the reality of it, at which we are to aim. But this is not the whole of the truth of the thing; this is a very poor and miserable counterfeit of Christianity. Wherever Christianity truly takes hold of the deep of any man's heart, it will show itself, not only in guiding his feeling, but in guiding his actions, in leading him to a generous, devoted, and loyal-hearted service; it will make him bring his "alabaster box," and break it, and never count its price, and never reckon nicely whether he could lay out his money to better profit elsewhere; it will stop all such objections as—"Had it not better been sold and given to the poor?" for there is a munificence about love, and there is a grandeur in the giving of a loyal heart, which Christ loves to see, and which He will surely reward. In two ways this is set before us in the text. 1. In the readiness of our blessed Master to receive the offering; the way in which He at once stepped in between the woman and her reproof, the way in which He put down the objection, whether it was urged in hypocrisy, or whether in the darkness of a half-faith, that she had better have sold it and given it to the poor; the ready way in which He stepped in and at once acknowledged "She hath done what she could," "she hath done it against My burial." The woman, perhaps, knew not that Christ was near His end. And so it is, that love comes at the hidden truth of things, before the things themselves have been revealed. The man who is acting from love to Christ is a sort of prophet; he foreacts upon that which is yet hidden in the counsels of God. 2. By the remarkable promise added. See what enduring honour was this which Christ put upon this deed; see how far it goes beyond any worldly honour which we reckon as highest in order. Those who labour for God will reap an abiding honour, which is to be got in no path of earthly service. This little thing which seemed to err in the doing, this thing which seemed to be done so easily, so naturally, which cost this woman no thought beforehand, but which was just the impulse of a loving heart—this has lived on and been spoken of, though all the Roman empire has passed

away. The great gulf of forgetfulness has swallowed it up, but the Lord our God endureth for ever; and even the miserable works of man, when done for God, are gifted with endurance too. It is wove, as it were, into the web of God's greatness, and so it lasts on, and the blessing and the memory of it lives on in this world of change, long after the great world of things which surround it has sunk down beneath the distant horizon, and this comes up like some mighty mountain which was swallowed up by those that stood near it and seemed greater than it, but now in the far distance it stands out alone in the light of heaven and tells us that it is unlike all the rest. And so it has been often with things done for God, and for Christ, and for His Church. I. ENCOURAGEMENT. The remembrance of this woman is a pledge that God will never forget His people. Worthless though their work is; mixed as it is in the motives from which it springs, even in the very best men; stained, therefore, as it is with sin; yet, for Christ's sake, it is accepted, and, being accepted, it shall be rewarded. Here, then, is a great motive to exertion in God's service. Gain largely this passing opportunity of time with the seeds of eternity. Put out your lives, and all you have, at interest, where God will pay again that which you lent Him. Make ventures for Him. Cast into the dark deep of His providence that which He will give you again with interest. II. DUTY. The power of doing this comes from your being a Christian; therefore the necessity of your doing it is bound up in the fact of your being a Christian. You are not living as a Christian if you are not doing it. The power of working for God is the fruit of your redemption. It is because Christ has redeemed us that we can serve God with an acceptable sacrifice; that creation has received us back again into the place which sin had lost for us; that all things can be full of God to us; that we can in fact serve the Lord, knowing whom we serve, and sure of being accepted; that everything we have has become a talent—our station in life, our daily walk, our conduct in our family and in the world around us, that these are tasks set us by God, just as much allotted to us because we are Christians as the tasks of angels are allotted to them; so that it does not matter where or what I am in life; whether my life is mean as men judge, or great as men judge, it matters nothing; it is the aim of my life which makes the whole difference. (*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*) *Work not for success, but for God*:—You are not to labour for visible success. This is one of the great reasons why those who had begun to work for God are seen to faint. They think to gather, when they should sow. They mean to do some great good, and they set about it heartily; it all turns to disappointment; and, as they were working for success, they sit down and work no longer. Remember, brethren, you are working not for success, but for God. You are to work in the dark. It is the very condition of life. In heaven we shall work in the light—shall see the work of God; but not here. In this life we must work in the dark; we must give to the unthankful; we must give, because Christ is represented in the poor and miserable around us, and because this is the only way we have of breaking our "box of spikenard" upon His body. And if we labour in love, there is a secret law of love bringing us to the result. The saints of God have found this. They have done something in love, because "the love of Christ constrained them" to do it; and, it may be in the next generation, or even in the generation after, it has begun to work mightily. They have founded some little institution with a liberal hand, and that little institution has swelled and grown into a mighty fortress, in which the truth of Christ has been stored for a whole generation; they have opened a door in the desert, and they knew not that multitudes, who should travel that way, would thank God for the refreshment thus afforded to them. (*Ibid.*) *A very pleasant way of getting ourselves remembered*:—Human aggrandizement gives no permanent satisfaction. I had an aged friend who went into the White House when General Jackson was President of the United States, four days before President Jackson left the White House, and the President said to him, "I am bothered almost to death. People strive for this White House as though it were some grand thing to get, but I tell you it is a perfect hell!" There was nothing in the elevation the world had given him that rendered him satisfaction, or could keep off the annoyances and vexations of life. A man writes a book. He thinks it will circulate for a long while. Before long it goes into the archives of the city library, to be disturbed once a year, and that when the janitor cleans the house. A man builds a splendid house, and thinks he will get fame from it. A few years pass along, and it goes down under the auctioneer's hammer at the executors' sale, and a stranger buys it. The pyramids were constructed for the honour of the men who ordered them built. Who built them? Don't know! For whom were they built? Don't know! Their whole history is an obscuration and a

mystery. There were men in Thebes, and Tyre, and Babylon who strove for great eminence, but they were forgotten; while the woman of the text, who lovingly accosted Jesus, has her memorial in all the ages. Ah! men and women of God, I have found out the secret; that which we do for ourselves is forgotten—that which we do for Christ is immortal. They who are kind to the sick, they who instruct the ignorant, they who comfort the troubled, shall not be forgotten. There have been more brilliant women than Florence Nightingale, but all the world sings her praise. There have been men of more brain than missionary Carey—their names are forgotten, while his is famous on the records of the Christian Church. There may have been women with vases more costly than that which is brought into the house of Simon the leper, but their names have been forgotten, while I stand before you to-night, reading the beautiful story of this Bethany worshipper. In the gallery of heaven are the portraits of Christ's faithful servants, and the monuments may crumble, and earth may burn, and the stars may fall, and time may perish; but God's faithful ones shall be talked of among the thrones, and from the earthly seed they sowed there shall be reaped a harvest of everlasting joy. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Christ deserves the best of everything:*—That woman could have got a vase that would not have cost half so much as those made of alabaster. She might have brought perfume that would have cost only fifty pence; this cost three hundred. As far as I can understand, her whole fortune was in it. She might have been more economical; but no, she gets the very best box and puts in it the very best perfume, and pours it all out on the head of her Redeemer. My brothers and sisters in Christ, the trouble is that we bring to Christ too cheap a box. If we have one of alabaster and one of earthenware, we keep the first for ourselves and give the other to Christ. We owe to Jesus the best of our time, the best of our talents, the best of everything. If there is anybody on earth you love better than Jesus, you wrong Him. Who has ever been so loving and pure and generous? Which one of your friends offered to pay all your debts, and carry all your burdens, and suffer all your pains? Which one of them offered to go into the grave to make you victor? Tell me who he is and where he lives, that I may go and worship him also. No, no; you know there has never been but one Jesus, and that if He got His dues, we would bring to Him all the gems of the mountains, and all the pearls of the sea, and all the flowers of the field, and all the fruits of the tropics, and all the crowns of dominions, and all the boxes of alabaster. If you have any brilliancy of wit, bring it; any clearness of judgment, any largeness of heart, any attractiveness of position, bring them. Away with the cheap bottles of stale perfume when you may fill the banqueting-hall of Christ with exquisite aroma. Paul had made great speeches before, but he made his best speech for Christ. John had warmth of affection in other directions, but he had his greatest warmth of affection for Christ. Jesus deserves the best word we ever uttered, the gladdest song we ever sang, the most loving letter we ever wrote, the healthiest day we ever lived, the strongest heart-throb we ever felt. (*Ibid.*) *Give the children to Jesus:*—Is there a child in your household especially bright and beautiful? Take it right up to Jesus. Hold it in baptism before Him; kneel beside it in prayer; take it right up to where Jesus is. Oh, do you not know, father and mother, that the best thing that could happen to that child would be to have Jesus put His hands on it? If some day Jesus should come to the household, and take one away to come back never, never, do not resist Him. His heart is warmer, His arm stronger than yours. The cradle for a child is not so safe a place as the arms of Jesus. If Christ should come into your household where you have your very best treasures, and should select from all the caskets an alabaster box, do not repulse Him. It has seemed as if Jesus Christ took the best; from many of your households the best one is gone. You knew that she was too good for this world; she was the gentlest in her ways, the deepest in her affections; and, when at last the sickness came, you had no faith in medicines. You knew that Jesus was coming over the door-sill. You knew that the hour of parting had come, and when, through the rich grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you surrendered that treasure, you said: "Lord Jesus, take it—it is the best we have—take it. Thou art worthy." The others in the household may have been of grosser mould. She was of alabaster. The other day a man was taking me from the depôt to a village. He was very rough and coarse, and very blasphemous; but after awhile he mellowed down as he began to talk of his little son whom he had lost. "Oh, sir," he said, "that boy was different from the rest of us. He never used any bad language; no, sir. I never heard him use a bad word in my life. He used to say his prayers, and we laughed at him; but he would keep on saying his prayers, and I often thought, 'I

can't keep that child;' and I said to my wife: 'Mother, we can't keep that child.' But, sir, the day he was drowned, and they brought him in and laid him down on the carpet, so white and so beautiful, my heart broke, sir. I knew we couldn't keep him." Yes, yes, that is Christ's way; He takes this alabaster box. (*Ibid.*) *A thank-offering for Jesus:*—Now, my friends, this woman made her offering to Christ; what offering have you to make to Jesus? She brought an alabaster box, and she brought ointment. Some of you have been sick. In the hours of loneliness and suffering you said: "Lord Jesus, let me get well this time, and I will be consecrated to Thee." The medicines did their work; the doctor was successful; you are well; you are here to-night. What offering have you to make to the Lord Jesus who cured you? Some of you have been out to Greenwood, not as those who go to look at the monuments and criticise the epitaphs, but in the procession that came out of the gate with one less than when you went in. And yet you have been comforted. The gravedigger's spade seemed to turn up the flowers of that good land where God shall wipe away the tears from your eyes. For that Jesus who so comforted you, and so pitied you, what offering have you to make? Some of you have passed without any special trouble. To-day, at noon, when you gathered around the table, if you had called the familiar names, they would have all answered. Plenty at the table, plenty in the wardrobe. To that Jesus who has clothed and fed you all your life long, to that Jesus who covered Himself with the glooms of death that He might purchase your emancipation, what offering of the soul have you to make? The woman of the text brought the perfumes of nard. You say: "The flowers of the field are all dead now, and we can't bring them." I know it. The flowers on the platform are only those that are plucked from the grim hand of death; they are the children of the hothouse. The flowers of the field are all dead. We saw them blooming in the valleys and mountains; they ran up to the very lips of the cave; they garlanded the neck of the hills like a May queen. They set their banquet of golden cups for the bee, and dripped in drops of honeysuckle for the humming-bird. They dashed their anthers against the white hand of the sick child, and came to the nostrils of the dying like spice gales from heaven. They shook in the agitation of the bride, and at the burial hour sang the silver chime of a resurrection. Beautiful flowers! Bright flowers! Sweet flowers! But they are all dead now. I saw their scattered petals on the foam of the wild brook, and I pulled aside the hedge, and saw the place where their corpses lay. We cannot bring the flowers. What shall we bring? Oh, from our heart's affections, to-night let us bring the sweet-smelling savour of a Christian sacrifice. Let us bring it to Christ, and as we have no other vase in which to carry it, let this glorious Sabbath hour be the alabaster box. Rawlins White, an old martyr, was very decrepid; and for years he had been bowed almost double, and could hardly walk; but he was condemned to death, and, on his way to the stake, we are told, the bonds of his body seemed to break, and he roused himself up as straight and exuberant as an athlete, and walked into the fire singing victory over the flames. Ah, it was the joy of dying for Jesus that straightened his body, and roused his soul! If we suffer with Him on earth we shall be glorified with Him in heaven. Choose His service; it is a blessed service. Let no man or woman go out of this house to-night unblest. Jesus spreads out both arms of His mercy. He does not ask where you came from, or what have been your sins, or what have been your wanderings: but He says, with a pathos and tenderness that ought to break you down: "Come unto Me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who will accept the offer of His mercy? (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 9–11. **And Judas Iscariot.**—*Mary and Judas:*—As these verses, and especially the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, place in juxtaposition the grandest act of Mary and the vilest deed of the son of Iscariot, let us take this opportunity of contrasting the one with the other, that the brightness of the one character may allure us into the path which she trod, and that the baseness of the other may determine us with all speed to shun all sin, that we may not be destroyed by its plagues. I. We here have Mary's love for her Lord arriving at its loftier elevation, pouring its costly treasure on those feet at which she was wont to sit with so much reverence, and learn lessons whose value is beyond rubies. It was not at first that she wrought this deed of munificence, the fame of which shall be coeval with the duration of the world which now is, but after continuing to receive and to profit by the instructions and works of her Lord for some time; the gracious impression on her mind and heart toward her Lord, once in its infancy, is full-fledged and full-grown; now the little leaven has leavened the whole lump. II. Now let us

glance at him who was called to be on earth one of the twelve, and called in heaven to sit on an apostolic throne; but who became covetous, and, in consequence, stole from the poor, and sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. He was not all this at once, even as Mary did not break her alabaster box the first time she saw Jesus, but the last, immediately before His death and burial. Judas Iscariot erred by allowing a creaturely thing, even mammon, to have an undue place first in his thoughts and then in his heart. Jesus was the object of Mary's regard, her thoughts were ever running after Him, until her heart was filled and ruled by His love, so that she would consider it a little thing to be allowed to pour a fortune down at His feet. She was spiritually-minded, and in that she found rest to her soul; Judas was carnally-minded, and he fearfully proved that to be so is death. III. These opposites serve to show that a continued course of virtue or sin will lead to extraordinary acts of goodness or crime when opportunity or temptation arises. While the love of Christ leads to constant acts of beneficence for Christ, and extraordinary acts on great occasions, as with Mary, so, on the other hand, the disciple who allows himself to indulge at first in lesser acts of delinquency, waxes gradually worse and worse, becomes so habituated to wander from the straight line, that he is prepared to commit under strong temptation the greatest enormity, to do that of which at one time he would have cried with horror, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Nip sin in the bud; cease from it at once, for you little know to what height of crime and depth of shame it may conduct; seek, by God's help, to eject from the heart the little leaven of perverseness ere the whole heart and life be corrupted and misguided thereby; the beginning of sin is as the letting out of water, there is the trickling stream at first, the overwhelming flood afterwards. IV. We have the Lord's commendation of the one and condemnation of the other. How contrary his fate on earth to that of the woman of Bethany! Thus, the one who forgot self and thought only of her Lord, and gloried that she might become poor if He might but be honoured, the fragrance of her name fills the whole world with a sweet perfume, even as the ointment filled the house with a grateful odour; while the other, who, yielding to temptation, did not care that His Lord should be destroyed if he might be enriched and aggrandized, his fate is to stand forth among men as most destitute and desolate, cursed of God and man. And where are they now—the Christ-loving one and the money-loving one—brought into contact for a moment under this roof? The distance between them, the moral distance, has been widening ever since, and will evermore and evermore; the one has been soaring always nearer to the throne of infinite love and truth, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, increasing in likeness and devotedness to her Lord; the other, cut off from all sources of restoring life, and only exposed to what is evil, is always plunging into a lower depth of corruption, wandering ever to greater distances from his Father's house, his Shepherd's fold; it had been good for that man if he had never been born. A few lessons suggested by this subject: 1. We have a terrible lesson read to us here against the sin of covetousness. It is not necessary to have large sums of money entrusted to us to be covetous. No one can sin exactly as he did by selling again his Saviour for money, but professors, if not watchful, may allow their supreme love to wander from Christ, and to concentrate itself on earthly treasure, be it equal in value to five pounds or fifty thousand; the sin is not in the quantity of wealth which is preferred to the Saviour, but in giving to wealth or anything else our highest love instead of to Jesus. Those who do this are as guilty of soul-destroying idolatry as ever Judas was. Take heed and beware of covetousness; all the more need to beware thereof because it comes to us in such specious forms, and assumes such deceptive titles, as economy, carefulness, prudence, honesty, provision for the future, provision against old age; it is a sin which among men is treated with respect, and not held in abhorrence, as are sins of murder, adultery, and theft; and yet it has been the millstone which has sunk many besides Judas among the abysses of the bottomless pit; it is idolatry, says the Word of God; and we know that no idolator hath place in the kingdom of heaven. 2. The only safeguard against this and every other evil besetment is to imbibe the spirit and track the steps of Mary. Her heart was full of Christ. Let Him have your heart, that He may wash it from all sin in His blood, and fill it with His perfect love. Regard Him as your one thing needful, the only one absolutely essential to your well-being. Having given Him your heart, and fastened its strongest love on Him, all boxes and bags containing treasure will be forthcoming at His demand; and in life, in death, in eternity, like Mary, you will be infinitely removed from Judas and all who are like-minded. Well, my fellow-sinners, do you

choose with Judas or with Mary? Not with Judas, you say. You would not, if you could, betray the Holy One and the Just. But his original offence, the root of the great betrayal sin, consisted in allowing something in preference to Christ to engage his thoughts and affections, even money, until he became wholly absorbed thereby; there was the seat of the mischief. As long, then, as anything has your heart, be it money, be it a fellow-creature, be it a sensual indulgence, a carnal gratification, be it anything else, you do choose with Judas and not with Mary. You give your heart, like the apostate, to some creaturely thing or other, and as long as you do your soul is in danger of eternal ruin; that one sin of yours, unless it be abandoned, will destroy you. Oh, choose with the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and give the whole heart to Jesus. (*T. Nightingale.*) *Remembering the poor but not Christ:*—On a cold winter evening, I made my first call on a rich merchant in New York. As I left his door, and the piercing gale swept in, I said, "What an awful night for the poor!" He went back, and bringing to me a roll of bank-bills, he said, "Please hand these, for me, to the poorest people you know." After a few days, I wrote to him the grateful thanks of the poor whom his bounty had relieved, and added: "How is it that a man so kind to his fellow creatures has always been so unkind to his Saviour as to refuse Him his heart?" That sentence touched him to the core. He sent for me to come and talk with him, and speedily gave himself to Christ. He has been a most useful Christian ever since. (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *Helping the poor:*—On one occasion only did I hear Jenny Lind express her joy in her talent and self-consciousness. It was during her last residence in Copenhagen. Almost every evening she appeared either in the opera or at concerts; every hour was in requisition. She heard of a society, the object of which was to assist unfortunate children, and to take them out of the hands of their parents, by whom they were misused and compelled either to beg or steal. "Let me," said she, "give a night's performance for the benefit of these poor children; but we will have double prices." Such a performance was given, and returned large proceeds. When she was informed of this, and that by this means a number of poor children would be benefitted for several years, her countenance beamed, and the tears filled her eyes. "Is it not beautiful," said she, "that I can sing so?" Through her I first became sensible of the holiness there is in art; through her I learned that one must forget one's self in the service of the Supreme." (*Hans Christian Andersen.*) *The treachery of Judas:*—Judas and Mary are at the two poles of human possibility. Perhaps in their earlier years both seemed equally promising. But now how vast the interval! Little by little Mary has risen by following God's light, and little by little Judas has fallen by following Satan's temptation. 1. Many begin well who perish awfully. 2. Self is the destruction of safety and sanctity alike. 3. Greed leads to much inward backsliding, and to much open apostasy. 4. There is meanness and cowardice in all evil. Evil lays plots and practises deceit, ashamed and afraid to act in the open. 5. The goodness of good men makes bad men worse when it fails to wake repentance in them. 6. The world thinks as Judas thought, that the lack of money is the root of all evil; but God says what Judas forgot, that the *love* of money is so. 7. To get one-third of the sum Mary had spent on ointment, Judas sides with the foes of Jesus, and becomes a traitor to his Saviour. 8. They who plot against the Saviour plot against themselves. It was Judas, not Christ, who was destroyed. 9. Beware of half-conversion and the blending of worldliness and discipleship, for such mixtures end badly. The thorns springing up, choke fatally the grace that seemed strong and healthy. (*R. Glover.*) *Policy of Judas:*—I do not think that Judas meant to betray Jesus to death. He sold Him for about £3 16s. He meant, no doubt, to force His hand—to compel Him to declare Himself and bring on His kingdom at once. Things, he thought, ought now to come to a crisis; there could be no doubt that the great Miracle-Worker would win if He could only be pushed into action, and if just a little money could also be made it would be smart, especially as it would come out of the enemy's pocket. That was Judas all over. His character is very interesting, and I think much misunderstood. The direct lesson to be learnt is generally the danger of living on a low moral plane. It is like a low state of the body—it is not exactly disease, but it is the condition favourable to all kinds of disease. Dulness to fine feeling, religion, truth, leads to self-deception—which leads to blindness of the worst kind, and then on to crime. Nothing is safe but a high Ideal, and it cannot be too high. Aim at the best always, and keep honour bright. Don't tamper with truth—don't trifle with affection—and, above all, don't be continually set on getting money at all risks and at any sacrifice. We may all look at

Judas and learn that. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The sin of covetousness*:—Learn from this the greatness and danger of the sin of covetousness, the cause and root from which spring many other sins (1 Tim. vi. 10.). A mother sin, having many cursed daughters like itself. A stock upon which one may graft any sin almost. Hence come fraud, injustice, and all kinds of oppression both open and secret; cruelty and unmerciful dealing; lying, swearing, murder, &c. 1. It withdraws the heart from God and religion, hindering our love to God, and delight in His service; quenching our zeal for His glory; causing men to set their hearts upon worldly wealth and gain, which so takes them up that they cannot be free to love God, and to delight in His service as they ought to do (Matt. vi. 24; Luke xiv.). 2. It chokes the seed of God's Word in the hearts of those who hear it, so that it cannot bring forth fruit in them (Matt. xiii. 22; Ezek. xxxiii. 31). 3. Grievous judgments are threatened in Scripture against this sin (Isa. v. 8; Hab. ii. 9; James v. 1; Luke vi. 24). 4. It is a sin very hard to be repented of. When other sins leave a man, *e.g.*, in old age, this only clings faster to him. He that will follow Christ, and be a true Christian, must forsake all things in this world (at least in heart) to follow Him. But how difficult is this for the covetous man to do. Besides, such have many pretences and excuses for their sin: as, that hard times may come; and, "He that provides not for his own," &c., which is one main cause why it is so hard for such to repent. (*George Petter.*) *Covetousness not confined to the rich*;—The poor may think they are free from this sin, and in no danger of falling into it. But (1) look, does not the love of money or riches possess thy soul? If so, then, though thou be poor, yet thou mayest be in danger of this sin; yea, thou mayest be deeply tainted with it—if thy heart be in love with worldly wealth; if thou eagerly desire to be rich, and esteem wealth too highly, thinking only those who have it happy. (2) If discontented with thy present estate, it is a sign thou art covetous. (*Ibid.*) *Remedies against covetousness*:—1. Remember, that we are in Scripture plainly forbidden to desire and seek after worldly wealth (Prov. xxiii. 4; Matt. vi.). 2. Consider the nature of all worldly wealth and riches. It is but this world's goods (as the Apostle calls it), which serves only for maintenance of this present momentary life, and is in itself most vain and transitory; being all but perishing substance. Gold itself is but "gold that perisheth" (1 Pet. i. 7; 1 Tim. vi. 17; Prov. xxiii. 5; Luke xii. 20). 3. Consider how vain and unprofitable to us all worldly wealth is, even while we enjoy it: not being able of itself to help or do us good (Luke xii. 15). The richest men do not live longest. All the wealth in the world cannot prolong a man's life one hour. It cannot give us ease in pain; health in sickness; but most unable it is to help or deliver us in the day of God's wrath. Think of these things, to restrain and keep us from the love and inordinate desire of this world's goods. One main cause of covetousness is a false persuasion in men's hearts touching some great excellency in riches, that they will make one happy; but it is not so; rather the contrary. 4. Consider the account to be given hereafter to God, of all wealth here enjoyed; how we have used it, well or ill: for we are not absolute owners of that we have, but stewards only, entrusted by God with earthly substance to use it to His glory and the good of others. Think of this well, and it will be a means to curb the inordinate love and desire of worldly wealth. 5. Labour for faith in God's providence; to depend on His Fatherly care for things of this life. This will cut off covetous desires, which are fruits of infidelity and distrust of God's Providence (Matt. vi. 30, 32; Rom. viii. 32; Psa. lv. 22). 6. Labour for contentedness with present condition. This is true riches (Heb. xiii. 5; Phil. iv. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 8). 7. Labour to make God our portion and treasure. Let thy heart go chiefly to Him, and be chiefly set on Him: thy love, joy, delight. Then thou art rich enough. In Him thou hast all things. (*Ibid.*) *The Church injured*:—I. THAT A TOO INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN A PROFESSING CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD IS INJURIOUS TO THE CHURCH. II. THAT THE HYPOCRITE IS MORE INJURIOUS TO THE CHURCH THAN A NON-PROFESSOR. 1. The world depends upon him for an opportunity. To the chief priests all plans and proposals failed, until Judas's came. 2. Hypocrites are the leaders of the enemies after abandoning Christ. Examples: Judas, Alexander the coppersmith, &c. 3. They have a knowledge of the failures of Christian brethren. A fortress attacked—an enemy disguised enters—has intelligence of the weakness of the fortification—joins the army outside—leads the assault to the weakest place. Zion trusts in the Lord. 4. They are too near to be seen. Gold and copper cannot be distinguished when held so closely as to touch the eye. III. THAT A FEEBLE MORAL CHARACTER IS INJURIOUS TO THE CHURCH. IV. THAT THE WORLD'S JOY AND THE CHURCH'S GRIEF MAY OFTEN BE

ATTRIBUTED TO THE SAME CAUSE. "And when they heard it they were glad;" and "they were exceeding sorrowful." The same cause — how different the effects! Dismembering, abandonment of God, &c., produce similar effects. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (*William Nicholson.*) *Modern apostasies:*—The Rev. W. Archer Butler remarks: "The apostasies of the table, the fireside, and the market may be as bad as those of Judas, Julian, or Demas." And is it not so? If, for some petty advantage—some poor worldly enjoyment—our religious duties are neglected, do we not thereby appear to acknowledge that Christ is of less esteem to us? If, for example, we forsake our public or private devotions to attend social parties and engagements, fearing lest we may be otherwise censured for not uniting in them, is not this one mode of slighting Christ for the world? Or, if we allow the pursuits of money-getting or private pleasure to absorb our lives, or leave us but the narrowest margin for the service of Jesus and the promotion of His kingdom, is not this also, in no imaginary sense, "selling Him for silver?" Then what will the end be if this sin shall remain unrepented of and persisted in. *Traitors despised by their employers:*—When Graveston, who betrayed the Spaniards at Bergen-op-Zoom to Queen Elizabeth, came to England to give her Majesty an account of his success, and to claim the reward, the queen gave him a thousand crowns, but said to him at the same time, "Get you home, that I may know where to send when I want a thorough-faced villain." *Money that profits not:*—Three men who were travelling together found a treasure and divided it. Then they continued on their journey discussing of the use that they would make of their riches. Having eaten all the food which they had taken with them, they concluded to go away into the city to purchase some, and charged the youngest with this errand, so he set out on his journey. While on the way he said to himself: "How rich I am! but I should be richer, did I only have all of the treasure. Those two men have robbed me of my riches. Shall I not be able to revenge them? That could be easily done, for I should have only to poison the food which I am commissioned to purchase. On my return I will tell them that I have dined in town. My companions will partake of the food without suspicion, and die, then I shall have all the riches, while I have now only a third." During this time his two companions said to each other: "We have no need that this young man associate with us; we have been obliged to divide our riches with him; his portion would increase ours, and we should be truly rich. He is coming back, we have good daggers, let us use them." The youth returned with the poisoned food; his fellow travellers assassinated him, then partook of the food direct, and the treasure belonged to no one.

Ver. 12. When they killed the Passover.—*The Passover, a typical observance*:—No other festival was so full of typical meaning, or pointed so clearly to "good things to come" (Heb. x. 1). I. It was a FEAST OF REDEMPTION, foreshadowing a future and greater redemption (Gal. iv. 4, 5). II. The victim, A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH and without spot, was a striking type of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29; 1 Cor. v. 7; 1 Peter i. 19). III. SLAIN, not by the priest, but by the head of the Paschal company, the blood shed and sprinkled on the altar, roasted whole without the breaking of a bone, it symbolized Him who was put to death by the people (Acts ii. 23), whose blood during a Paschal festival was shed on the altar of His cross, whose side the soldier pierced, but break not His legs (John xix. 32–36). IV. EATEN AT THE SACRIFICIAL MEAL (peculiar to the peace-offering) with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (the symbol of purity), it pointed to that one oblation of Himself once offered, whereby Christ has made us at peace with God (Eph. ii. 14, 15), in which whosoever truly believes must walk in repentance and sincerity and truth (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). V. IT WAS AT A PASCHAL SUPPER THAT ITS ANTITYPE, THE CHRISTIAN EUCHARIST, was instituted by our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 17). (*G. F. Maclear, D.D.*) *The Passover*:—The Passover, commemorating the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, was the annual birthday of the Hebrew nation. Its celebration was marked with a popular joy and impressiveness suited to its character. The time of its observance was the fourteenth of the month Abib, called Nisan after the Babylonish captivity. It corresponded to that part of our year included between the middle of March and the middle of April. It is the fairest part of the year in Palestine. Fresh verdure covers the fields, and innumerable flowers of brightest tint and sweet perfume bedeck the ground. The fields of barley are beginning to ripen, and are almost ready for the sickle. To crown all, the moon, the Paschal moon, is then at the

full, and nightly floods with splendour the landscape. As early as the first of the month, Jerusalem showed signs of the approaching feast. Worshippers from all parts of Palestine and other countries began to arrive, in increasing numbers, down to the very day of the Passover. They came in companies of various sizes, in family groups, in neighbourhood groups, in bands of tens, twenties, and hundreds. The city was filled to overflowing, and thousands encamped in tents in the environs. Josephus says that more than two-and-a-half millions of people gathered at Jerusalem in the time of Nero to attend the Passover. Universal hospitality was shown. Wherever a guest-chamber could be found, it was thrown open. The only recompense allowed or taken was that the occupant of the apartment might leave behind for their host the skin of the Paschal lamb and the earthen vessel used at the meal. (*A. H. Currier.*) *Significance of the Passover*:—I. CONSIDERING THE EVENTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING ITS ORIGINAL INSTITUTION (Ex. xii.), we may say, in general, that it signified deliverance through the lamb. The angel of death entered not where its blood was sprinkled. It declared that the corruption incurred in Egypt was expiated. II. But the meaning of the Passover was not exhausted in the idea of atonement. For it consisted not only in the slaying of the lamb and the offering of his blood, but in THE JOYFUL EATING OF IT. The wine at the feast was a symbol of its blood. The quaffing of this as a cup of refreshment, and the feeding upon the savoury flesh, expressively indicated that it was the privilege of God's reconciled people not only to be saved from death by the lamb, but to receive from it conscious satisfaction, joy, and strength. They felt the benefit of His surrendered life in all their renewed and quickened powers. III. LEAVEN, AS PRODUCING FERMENTATION, WAS A SYMBOL TO THE JEWS OF CORRUPTION. It represented the influence of idolatrous Egypt, which they were utterly to put away. Unleavened bread, therefore, was an emblem of purity. It signified that they who ate it had put away sin. IV. THE BITTER HERBS ARE EMBLEMATICAL OF THE TRIALS AND DISCIPLINE WHICH FORM AN ESSENTIAL AND WHOLESOME PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. Such trials are shadows made by the light. They are inseparable accompaniments of the gospel in its work of subduing the world to submission to Christ. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 13, 15. **Go ye into the city.**—*The finding the guest-chamber*:—We might expect that Christ, knowing to how great effort the faith of His followers was about to be called, would, in His compassionate earnestness for their welfare, keep their faith in exercise up to the moment of the dreaded separation. He would find or make occasions for trying and testing the principles which were soon to be brought to so stern a proof. Did He do this? And how did He do it? We regard the circumstances which are now under review, those connected with the finding the guest-chamber in which the last supper might be eaten, as an evidence and illustration of Christ's exercising the faith of His disciples. Was it not exercising the faith of Peter and John—for these, the more distinguished of the disciples, were employed on the errand—to send them into the city with such strange and desultory directions? There were so many chances, if the word may be used, against the guest-chamber being found through the circuitous method prescribed by our Lord, that we could not have wondered had Peter and John showed reluctance to obey His command. And we do not doubt that what are called the chances were purposely multiplied by Christ to make the finding the room seem more improbable, and therefore to give faith the greater exercise. Again, there would have been risk enough of mistake or repulse in accosting the man with the pitcher: but this man was only to be followed; and he might stop at many houses before he reached the right. But Christ would not be more explicit, because, in proportion as He had been more explicit, there would have been less exercise for faith. And if you imagine that, after all, it was no great demand on the faith of Peter and John that they should go on so vague an errand—for that much did not hinge on their finding the right place, and they had but to return if anything went wrong—we are altogether at issue with you. There was something that looked degrading and ignoble in the errand, which required more courage and fortitude than to undertake some signal enterprise. And the apparent meanness of an employment will often try faith more than its apparent difficulty; the exposure to ridicule and contempt will require greater moral nerve than the exposure to danger and death. We believe that it is very frequently ordered that faith should be disciplined and nurtured for its hardest endurances, and its highest achievements, through exposure to petty inconveniences, collisions with mere rudeness, the obloquy of the proud, the sneer of the supercilious, and the incivility of the ignorant. Nowhere is faith

so well disciplined as in humble occupations; it grows great through little tasks, and may be more exercised by being left to the menial business of a servant than by being summoned to the lofty standing of a leader. And we do earnestly desire of you to bear this in mind; for men, who are not appointed to great achievements and endurances, are very apt to feel as though there were not enough in the trials and duties of a lowly station for the nurture and exercise of high Christian graces. Whereas, if it were by merely following a man bearing a pitcher of water that apostles were trained for the worst onsets of evil, there may be no such school for the producing strong faith as that in which the lessons are of the most everyday kind. But there is more than this to be said in regard of the complicated way in which Christ directed His disciples to the guest-chamber where He had determined to eat the last supper. He was not only exercising the faith of the disciples by sending them on an errand which seemed unnecessarily intricate, and to involve great exposure to insult and repulse—He was giving strong evidence of His thorough acquaintance with everything that was to happen, and of His power over the minds whether of strangers or of friends. You must consider it as a prophecy on the part of Christ that the man would be met bearing a pitcher of water. It was a prophecy which seemed to take delight in putting difficulties in the way of its own precise accomplishment. It would not have been accomplished by the mere finding the house—it would have been defeated had the house been found through any other means than the meeting the man, or had the man been discovered through any other sign than the pitcher of water; yea, and it would have been defeated, defeated in the details, which were given, as it might have seemed, with such unnecessary and perilous minuteness, if the master of the house had made the least objection, or if it had not been an upper room which he showed the disciples; or if that room had not been large; or if it had not been furnished and prepared. And whatever tended to prove to the disciples their Master's thorough acquaintance with every future contingency, ought to have tended to the preparing them for the approaching days of disaster and separation. Besides, it was beautifully adapted to the circumstances of the disciples that Christ showed that His foreknowledge extended to trifles. These disciples were likely to imagine that, being poor and mean persons, they should be overlooked by Christ when separated from them, and, perhaps, exalted to glory. But that His eye was threading the crowded thoroughfares of the city, that it was noting a servant with a pitcher of water, observing accurately when this servant left his master's house, when he reached the well, and when he would be at a particular spot on his way back—this was not merely foreknowledge; this was foreknowledge applying itself to the insignificant and unknown. Then, again, observe that whatever power was here put forth by Christ was put forth without His being in contact with the party on whom it was exerted. Christ acted, that is, upon parties who were at a distance from Him, thus giving incontrovertible proof that His visible presence was not necessary in order to the exercise of His power. What a comfort should this have been to the disciples. It is easy to imagine how, when His death was near at hand, Christ might have wrought miracles and uttered prophecies more august in their character. He might have darkened the air with portents and prodigies, but there would not have been in these gorgeous or appalling dislpays the sort of evidence which was needed by disquieted and dispirited men. But to ourselves, who are looking for the guest-chamber, not as the place where the Paschal lamb may be eaten, but as that where Christ is to give of His own body and blood, the pitcher of water may well serve as a memento that it is baptism which admits us into Christian privileges; that they who find a place at the supper of the Lord must have met the man with the water, and have followed that man—must have been presented to the minister of the Church, and have received from Him the initiatory sacrament, and then have submitted meekly to the guidance of the Church, till introduced to those deeper recesses of the sanctuary where Christ spreads His rich banquet for such as call upon His name. Thus may there have been, in the directions for finding the guest-chamber, a standing intimation of the process through which should be sought an entrance to that upper room, where Christ and His members shall finally sit down, that they may eat together at the marriage-supper. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Providential meetings:*—There are no chance meetings in this world. They all are providential. They are in God's plan. On many of them great possibilities hinge. You enter a railroad car, and take your seat among strangers. A proffered courtesy brings you into conversation with a fellow-traveller. An acquaintance is the result. Years of helpful Christian

co-work follow in the train of that first meeting. You visit a place of winter resort for health-seekers. At the dinner-table you meet a man unknown to you until then. An entire change in the aim and conduct of his life is one consequence of that meeting; and his labours for good may be far more effective than yours in your whole life-time. You look in upon a celebrated preparatory school, where two hundred young men are at their studies. One face impresses you. Your meeting with him affects your course and his for all time, and involves the interests of a multitude. Your meeting of another young man in a Sunday-school where you are present only for that one session has more influence over his life than all other agencies combined—and scarcely less over yours. You may even meet on the street one whom you wished not to see, one whom at that moment you were seeking to avoid; and as a result more lives than one are affected in all their human course, and in their highest spiritual interests. All these illustrations are real incidents; and there are thousands like them. It behooves us to consider well our duty in every meeting with another. We can fail to improve our opportunity and lose a blessing. We can fill our place just then, and have reason to rejoice eternally that we did so. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do—when next I meet one whom thou hast planned for me to see? (*Sunday-School Times*). *The Master's question:*—"The Master saith!" Has the charm of the Master's name vanished in these latter days? Are we, men and women of the nineteenth century, children of a modern life and civilization which is ever extending itself with feverish restlessness and painful throes of new birth, are we grown familiar with strange voices, with forces unknown in that ancient world, and those ancient days spent under the blue Syrian sky; are we become superior to the claims, the force, the beauty, and the authority of a great personal life? Have we relegated Jesus of Nazareth merely to a place, however great, in the development of history? Is He merely the product of social forces and political and historical traditions? "The Master saith!" Being dead, doth He yet speak; yet so as through the faint vibrations of memory—of memory which grows weaker as the ages roll behind us into the eternity of the past; or is it a living voice still which I hear—a voice which no results of time can shake with the tremulousness of age? Do not our own hearts—we who have become disciples, we who, constrained by a force which we could not resist, have exclaimed, "Master, Thou art the Christ who hast conquered me, Thou art the Christ who hast died for me"—do not our own hearts passionately exclaim, "He liveth still to make intercession for us, and to rule us with the supremacy of perfect love"? Will ye also admit the Master within? Will ye hear Him? Will ye let Him talk with you? This night, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bring the word to you also: "The Master saith!" The voices of all His disciples are but weak echoes of the mightier and abiding voice which is His. "The Master saith!" But where? Hath His voice a local habitation and a name? Doth He reach me through the channel of my senses, or how doth He touch my living spirit? It is here that "the Master saith!"—even now. These poor temples of ours, they are for the most part but shapeless structures of stone and lime, yet they are clothed with the spiritual and unfading beauty of a Divine guest-chamber; a voice which is not my voice overpowers my struggling will, subdues by gentle and beautiful processes my efforts to make my own will my law and arbiter of duty, and speaks through me. And most of all is it of infinite moment to know that there is one called "Master," and who does speak. This is what I need to know and feel. In Jesus of Nazereth life and duty are reconciled. In Him I recognize the Master whom I need. To Him, in whom gentleness was so perfectly blended with strength, I come, craving to touch but the hem of His garment, contented in that I have seen my Lord. "The Master saith!" If His voice is the voice of an authority, sublimely enforced through self-denial, patience, gentleness, suffering, and death, why should I crave more? Shall I not say, It is enough; He calleth me, and I must answer? He bids me arise, and I must arise. For me the highest virtue is obedience, for it is the Master who saith. (*J. Vickery.*)

Vers. 18–21. **And as they sat and did eat.**—*The company makes the feast:*—The ingredients of this meal were few and simple, but the presence of Christ made it more than royal. It is not what men have to eat, but the company that makes a meal delightful. Agassiz, when a young man travelling in Germany, visited Oken, the eminent zoologist. "After I had delivered to him my letter of introduction," he says, "Oken asked me to dine with him. The dinner consisted only of potatoes boiled and roasted, but it was the best dinner I ever ate, for there was Oken. The

mind of the man seemed to enter into what we ate socially together, and I devoured his intellect while eating his potatoes." So the presence of Christ as the realized embodiment of the Passover, and His Divine discourse, made that Paschal meal the most memorable ever eaten. It is a feast, moreover, whose solemn delight is a perpetual heritage of the Christian Church. Christ made it so by erecting upon it the sacrament of His supper, the equivalent in the new kingdom of God to the Passover in the old, and making its recurring celebration, there enjoined, the means of preserving the memory of all that then transpired. (*A. H. Currier.*) *The bad among the good:*—1. In the holiest society on earth, the unholy may have a place. 2. The highest goodness may fail to win to the obedience of faith. 3. There may be moral wrong without present consciousness. 4. The knowledge and appointment of God do not hinder the freedom and responsibility of man. (*J. H. Godwin.*) *The treachery of Judas foretold:*—I. A FEARFUL ANNOUNCEMENT. Christ had already more than once predicted that He would be betrayed; but now He adds to the intimation the terrible news that it would be by one of themselves. A little of the horror of thick darkness which His words spread over them still pervades our hearts. The fact is more than anything else, suggestive of all that is dark and pitiful in human nature. It shows—1. How measureless may be the evil a man may reach by simply giving way to wrong. 2. No privileges, no light, no opportunity, can bless a man without his own co-operation. 3. Privileges, if unimproved, injure the soul. 4. Without self-surrender to God, every other religious quality and tendency is insufficient to save the soul. Judas only lacked this one thing. 5. As the existence of a pure soul is itself a proof and a prediction of heaven, so such a soul seems to prove and predict a hell. II. CHRIST'S REASONS FOR MAKING THIS FEARFUL ANNOUNCEMENT. 1. Perhaps to cure the pride of the disciples. The announcement that one of them will betray will help to abate their vehemence in seeking to know "who shall be greatest." 2. To give Judas a glimpse of the perdition before him, and thus awake repentance. 3. To intimate to him that, though the Saviour might die by his craft, it was with His own knowledge and consent. (*R. Glover.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **Shall betray Me.**—*The betrayal:*—What think you, my brethren, if a similar declaration were made in regard to ourselves? Should we sorrowfully ask, "Lord, is it I?" Should we not be more likely to ask, "Lord, is it this man?" Lord, is it that man?" Would not Peter be more ready to say, "Is it John?" and John, "Is it Peter?" than either, "Is it I?" It is a good sign when we are less suspicious of others than of ourselves, more mistrustful of ourselves than of others in regard of the commission of sin; as indeed we ought always to be, for we have better opportunities of knowing our own proneness to evil, our own weakness, our own deceitfulness, than we can have of that of others; and therefore we have far more cause to ask, "Is it I?"—the question showing that we dare not answer for ourselves,—than, "Lord, is it my neighbour?"—the question indicating that we think others capable of worse things than ourselves. Peter was safe when asking, "Lord, is it I?" but in sore danger when he exclaimed, "Although all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will not I." I. Suppose Judas to have been aware, as he might have been, both from ancient prophecy, and from the express declarations of our Lord Himself, that Jesus, if He were indeed the Christ, must be delivered to His enemies, and ignominiously put to death—might he not, then, very probably say to himself, "After all, I shall only be helping to accomplish what has been determined by God, and what is indispensable to the work which Messiah has undertaken?" I do not know any train of thought which is more likely to have presented itself to the mind of Judas than this. "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him." But this determination, this certainty, left undiminished the guiltiness of the parties who put Christ to death. They obeyed nothing but the suggestions of their own wilful hearts; they were actuated by nothing but their desperate malice and hatred of Jesus, when they accomplished prophecies and fulfilled Divine decrees. Therefore was it no excuse for them that they were only bringing to pass what had long before been ordained. The whole burden of the crime rested upon the crucifiers, however true it was that Christ must be crucified. It did not make Judas turn traitor that God foreknew his treason, and determined to render it subservient to His own almighty ends. God, indeed, knew that Judas would betray his Master, but God's knowing it did not conduce to his doing it. It was certain, but the foreknown wickedness of the man causes the certainty, and not the fore-ordained performance of the deed. Oh! the utter vanity of the thought that God ever places us under a necessity of sinning, or that because our sins may

turn to His glory they will not issue in our shame. II. And now let us glance at another delusion to which it is likely that Judas gave indulgence. This is the delusion as to the consequences, the punishment of sin, being exaggerated or over-stated. It may be that Judas could hardly persuade himself that a being so beneficent as Christ would ever wholly lay aside the graciousness of His nature, and avenge a wrong done by surrendering the doer to intense and interminable anguish. But, in all the range of Scripture, there is not, perhaps, a passage which sets itself so decisively against this delusion as the latter clause of our Saviour's address in the text—"It had been good for that man if he had not been born." There is nothing in the Bible which gives me so strong an idea of the utter moral hardness in which a man is left who is forsaken by the Spirit of God, as the fact that Judas's question, "Lord, is it I?" followed immediately on Christ's saying, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed;" and that his going forth to fill his accursed compact with the priests was on the instant of his having been told that Christ knew him for the traitor. I pause on the word "then," and I am tempted to ask, could it, oh! could it have been "then?" Yes, "then" it was that, with the words, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," —words vocal of an eternity of unimagined woe—then it was that, with these words rung out to him as the knell of his own doomed spirit, Judas proceeded to address Christ with a taunting and insolent inquiry, and then went out to accomplish the traitorous purpose which had called forth the tremendous denunciation. With what earnestness should we join in that prayer in the Liturgy, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us!" (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Judas and the disciples:*—There will be many that were gallant professors in this world wanting among the saved in the day of Christ's coming; yea, many whose damnation was never dreamed of. Which of the twelve ever thought that Judas would have proved a devil? Nay, when Christ suggested that one among them was naught, they each were more afraid of themselves than of him. (*Bunyan.*) *Judas as he appeared to the other apostles:*—You will observe that the character of Judas was openly an admirable one. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter; he was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake Thee, yet will not I." He asks no place on the right hand of the throne, his ambition is of another sort. He does not ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas. He receives truth as it is taught him, and when others are offended and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to Him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy; they said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by littles, and covered his defalcations so well by financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Judas unsuspected to the last:*—A secret sin works insidiously, but with wondrous quiet power. Its hidden ravages are awful, and the outward revelation of their result and existence may be contemporaneous. Until that revelation was made, probably no one ever suspected the presence in the man of anything but a few venial faults which were as mere excrescences on a robust character, though these growths were something rude. Oftentimes a large fungus will start from a tree, and in some mysterious manner will sap the life-power on the spot on which it grows. They were like that fungus. When the fungus falls in the autumn, it leaves scarcely a trace of its presence, the tree being apparently as healthy as before the advent of the parasite. But the whole character of the wood has been changed by the strange power of the fungus, being soft and cork-like to the touch. Perhaps the parasite may fall in the autumn, and the tree may show no symptoms of decay; but at the first tempest it may have to encounter, the trunk snaps off at the spot where the fungus has been, and the extent of the injury is at once disclosed. As long as any portion of that tree retains life, it will continue to throw out these destructive fungi; and even when a mere stump is left in the ground, the fungi will push themselves out in profusion. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*) *The treason of Judas foreshown by Christ:*—I. The first is, THE FACT SPECIFIED. "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." Do any ask, as those of old did, "Who is this Son of man?" This Son of man is none other than the very person, of whom the apostle spake as possessing in Himself "the great mystery of godliness;" He is "God manifest in

the flesh." There is, first, the heinous character of the traitor that betrayed Him; secondly, the importance of hunting out and exposing the imitators of his black deed in the present day—and, God helping me, I mean to be faithful here; and then, in the third place, the sufferings of Him who was betrayed and crucified. Let me invite you to pray over these three things. 1. The heinousness of the traitor. He had made a glaring profession. He had attached himself to the disciples of Christ; he had become a member of the purest Church that ever was formed upon earth—the immediate twelve around our Lord. He was looked up to, a leading man. I beseech you, weigh this solemn fact—for a solemn one it is—that neither profession, nor diligent exertion, nor high standing among professors, so as to be beyond even suspicion, will stand in the stead of vital godliness. And there may be Judases even now, and I believe there are not a few, that are as much unsuspected as Judas Iscariot was. So artful was his deception, that none of the disciples suspected him. Nay more; the first feature of his character that is developed, the first view we have of him in his real character, is, that he was the last to suspect himself. All the others had said, "Lord, is it I?"—and last of all, Judas drawls it out, "Master, is it I?" Yet after all the standing he gained, after all the miracles he observed, after all the attachment he professed, this wretch, for thirty pieces of silver, is content to betray his Lord. Ah! only put a money bait in the way of the Judases, and you soon find them out; that will find them out, if nothing else will. Of course, His enemies are glad to have Him seized; but who would believe it possible, especially among those who have such a high opinion of the dignity of human nature, that this wretch, after eating and drinking with Christ, after following Him all His ministry through, can go and betray Him with a kiss? can say, in the very act of betraying Him, "Hail, Master?"—carrying on his devilism to the last. 2. But I want a word of interrogation with regard to imitators of Judas in the present day. Have you thrown "the bag" away? Have you done with carnal objects and pursuits? Do you scorn the idea of marketing about Christ, and selling Him—bartering Him? Are you really and honestly concerned about the truth of Christ, the interests of His cause, the purity of His gospel, the sacredness of His ordinances? Oh! try, try these matters. I would not for the world have a single masked character about me, of the Judas-like breed. 3. Let me now invite your attention for a moment to the other point—the sufferings of this betrayed and murdered Lord. "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." Is not this enough to make a man hate sin? If you do not hate sin in its very nature, you have never been to Calvary, and you have never had fellowship with a precious Christ. Wherever the blood of atonement is applied, it produces hatred of sin: oh that you and I may live upon Calvary, until every sin shall be mortified, subdued, and kept under, and Christ reign supreme! II. I pass on to the second feature in our subject: THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS FACT BY THE SUFFERER HIMSELF. III. I pass on to the third particular of our subject—THE RESULT. "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified;" but the matter did not end there. "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified;" and then the powers of darkness have done their worst. "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified;" and even death shall lose its sting, hell shall lose its terrors for all Mine elect, Jehovah shall get the glory of His own name, and I shall go through the valley of the shadow of death to My exaltation. To be brief. I will just name three things as the result anticipated; for you know it is said, that "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross." And what was it? The redeemed to be emancipated; Christ to be exalted; and heaven to be opened and peopled. These are the results; and I said, when I gave you the plan of my sermon, that He should not be disappointed in any of them; nor shall He. (*J. Irons, D.D.*) *Treachery to Christ*:—Wrongs and indignities may be offered to Christ still, in sundry ways. 1. In His person. By vilifying Him, as do Turks, Jews, and heathen. Also, when any deny or oppose His Nature—either the Godhead or the Manhood, as do heretics. Also, when any profane the blood of Christ, by remaining unrepentant, or turning apostate. 2. In His office, as Mediator; putting any person or thing in His place. 3. In His names or titles; using them profanely. 4. In His saints and faithful members; wronging or abusing them. 5. In His messengers and ministers (Luke x. 16). 6. In His holy ordinances; the Word, sacraments, &c. (1 Cor. xi. 27). By this we may examine whether the love to Christ which we profess is true and sincere. Does this child love his father, or that servant his master, who can hear him abused and reproached? (*George Petter.*) *Latent possibilities of evil*:—There is latent evil lurking in all our

hearts, of which we are not aware ourselves. We do not know how many devils of selfishness, sense, and falsehood are hiding themselves in the mysterious depths of our souls. If we do not learn this through that noble Christian humility which "still suspects and still reveres itself," we must learn it through the bitter experience of failure and open sin. How many examples there are to prove the existence of this latent evil! We have seen a young man go from the pure home of his childhood, from the holy influences of a Christian community. As an infant his brow had been touched with the water of baptism amid the prayers of the Church; as a child his feet had been taught the way to the house of God; in his home his parents had prayed for him that he might be an honest and useful man, whether he was to be poor or rich, learned or ignorant. He leaves his home and comes to the city to engage in business. He trusts in his own heart, in his own upright purpose, in his own virtuous habits. But there is latent evil in his heart, there is a secret selfishness, which is ready to break out under the influences which will now surround him. He becomes a lover of pleasure; he attends balls and theatres; he rides out with gay companions: he acquires a taste for play, wine, and excitement. He determines to make money that he may indulge these new tastes, and he devotes all his energies to this pursuit. In a year or two, how far has he gone from the innocent hopes and tastes of his childhood? His serene brow is furrowed with worldly lines; his pure eye clouded with licentious indulgence. The latent evil that was in him has come out under the test of these new circumstances. . . . The moral of it all is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." But how can we keep our heart? We can keep our hands, by an effort, from wrong actions, and force them to do right ones. We can keep our lips from saying unkind or hasty words, though that is sometimes hard enough. But how keep our heart? How make ourselves a right spirit, a good temper? That seems simply impossible. How direct those tendencies which are hidden even from ourselves? Here, it seems to me, is the place and need of religion. If it be true that our soul lies open inwardly to God, and that we rest on Him, then is it not possible, is it not probable, that if we put our heart into His hands He will guide it? And the experience of universal man, in all ages, all countries, all religions, teaches this value of prayer. It is taught by Socrates and Seneca, no less than by Jesus Christ. Here is the place of religion: this is its need. We do not need to pray to God for what we can do ourselves. But what we cannot do for ourselves is to guide and keep and direct this hidden man of the heart. We have a right to come boldly to God for this; asking His spirit, and expecting to receive it. This is a promise we can trust in, that God will give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*) *The question that went round the table:*—I. LOOK AT THE QUESTION, "Lord, is it I?" II. LOOK AT THIS QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE REMARK THAT CALLED IT FORTH. What did Judas sell Christ for? The old German story reports that the astrologer Faustus sold his soul to the evil one for twenty-four years of earthly happiness. What was the bargain in this case? The auctioneer had tempting lists to show; what was it that tempted Judas? He sold his Lord for thirty somethings. What things? Thirty years of right over all the earth, with all the trees of the forests, all the fowls of the mountains, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? For thirty armies? Or thirty fleets? Thirty stars? Thirty centuries of power, to reign majestically on hell's burning throne? No, for thirty shillings! III. LOOK AT THE QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE SIMPLE UNSUSPECTING BROTHERLINESS IT BEVEALED IN THOSE TO WHOM IT WAS SPOKEN. When Christ's declaration was made, "One of you shall betray Me," it would not have been wonderful, judging by a common standard, if such words as these had passed through various minds—"It is Judas; I always thought him the black sheep of the fold; I never liked his grasp of that bag; I never liked the mystery of that missing cash; I never liked the look of him; I never liked his fussy whisper." No such thoughts were in open or secret circulation. The disciples already exemplified the principle, and carried in their hearts the Divine music of the language, "Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." With lips that were tremulous, and cheeks that were blanched, each one said, not, "Lord, is it he?" but, "Lord, is it I?" IV. LOOK AT THIS QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE FEAR FOR HIMSELF, SHOWN BY EVERY ONE WHO ASKED IT. A preacher in a certain village church once gave easy lessons in Christian ethics through a scheme of illustration taken from the letters of the alphabet. Rebuking his hearers for their readiness to

speak evil of their neighbours, he said that, regarding each letter of the alphabet as the initial letter of a name, they had something to say against all the letters, with one exception. His homily was to this effect. "You say, A lies, B steals, C swears, D drinks, F brags, G goes into a passion, H gets into debt. The letter I is the only one of which you have nothing to say." No rustics can require such elementary education more than do some keen leaders of society. Pitiless detectors of sin in others, begin at home. Think first of that which is represented by the letter I. It is a necessary word, for you can never get beyond it, never do without it, while you live, or when you die. It is a deep word, for who can sound the sea of its deep significance? It is an important word, for of all words which can lighten us with their flash, or startle us with their blow, there is no more important word to us than this. Who is there? "I." Who are you? Conjure up this mystery—this "you," symbolized by the letter "I." Face it, speak to it, challenge it, and know if all is right with it. If indeed you can say, "*I* am a Christian"; "*I* believe, help, Lord, mine unbelief;" "*I* live, yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me;" still you feel that two natures for the present war within you, and have need to offer Augustine's prayer, "Lord, deliver me from the wicked man, myself." When the wind is rising, and the waves are treacherous, it is good for each man to look to his own ship, to his own ropes, to his own sails; not first to stand and speculate on the seaworthiness of other ships. V. LOOK AT THIS QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOVE THAT WORKED IN THE HEART OF THE QUESTIONER. Not one of them ever knew before how much he loved his Lord, but this shock brought the love out. VI. LOOK AT THIS QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANSWER TO IT. "Thou hast said." You can read what is on the open page, Jesus can look through the lids of the book, and read off the sheet—in print. You can see the whited sepulchre; He can see the skeleton within. You can see the fair appearance, He can see the wolf under the borrowed fleece. You can see the body, He can see the soul. Now the secret had come to light, as one day all secrets will. VII. LOOK AT THIS QUESTION IN OTHER POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS. "One of you will go out of this place a lost spirit." "Lord, is it I?" "One of you, having refused the Divine love before, will refuse it again!" "Lord, is it I?" "One of you will go out with a harder heart than when he came in." "Lord, is it I?" "One of you, a waverer now, will be a waverer still." "Lord, is it I?" "One of you, now almost persuaded to be a Christian, will still remain only almost persuaded." "Lord, is it I?" "One of you, already a true disciple, will refuse, as you have refused before, to confess your faith!" "Lord, is it I?" Let us think, on the other hand, of certain happy possibilities in the fair use of these words. There will come a time, beyond what we now call time, when, in the rapture of immortality, and in the language of heaven, you will say, "Have I in reality come through death? Am I on the other side? Can it be that I am glorified at last? This, so wonderful beyond language to express, so bright beyond the most enchanted fancy to picture, what is it? Is it solid? Or is it a glory of dreamland? I used to sin, I used to be slow, I used to be weary, I used to have dim eyes, and dull ears! Now I see! Now I love! Now I can fly like the light! Lord, is it I?" (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *The history of Judas:*— Of Judas this fearful sentence is uttered by the Lord. I. BUT BEFORE ENTERING INTO THE PARTICULARS OF HIS HISTORY, A FEW GENERAL REMARKS ARE PERTINENT. 1. There is no evidence that Judas Iscariot was a man of bad countenance. Most men are much influenced by looks, and many think they can tell a man's character by the physiognomy. This may often be true, but there are many exceptions. 2. There is no evidence that, up to his betrayal of his Lord, his conduct was the subject of censure, complaint, jealousy, or of the slightest suspicion. His sins were all concealed from the eyes of mortals. He was a thief, but that was known only to Omniscience. 3. There is no evidence that, during his continuance with Christ, he regarded himself as a hypocrite. Doubtless he thought himself honest. 4. Let it not be supposed that Judas ought not to have known his character. He shut his eyes to the truth respecting himself. The aggravations of the sin of betraying Christ were many and great. The traitor was eminent in place, in gifts, in office, in profession; a guide to others, and one whose example was likely to influence many. II. THE LESSONS TAUGHT US BY THE LIFE AND END OF JUDAS ARE SUCH AS THESE—1. Though wicked men do not so intend, yet in all cases they shall certainly glorify God by all their misdeeds (Psa. lxxvi. 10). The wickedness of Judas was by God over-ruled to bring about the most important event in man's salvation. The wicked now hate God, but they cannot defeat Him. 2. Nor shall God's unfailing purpose to bring good out of evil abate aught of the guilt of those who

work iniquity (Acts ii. 23; iv. 27, 28). 3. From the history of Judas we also learn that when a man is once fairly started in a career of wickedness, it is impossible to tell where he may stop. In the next world surprise awaits all the impenitent. 4. All men should especially beware of covetousness (1 Tim. vi. 10). 5. Did men but know how bitter would be the end of transgression, they would at least pause before they plunge into all evil. Oh! that men would hear the warning words of Richard Baxter, "Use sin as it will use you: spare it not, for it will not spare you; it is your murderer and the murderer of the world. Use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used." 6. How small a temptation to sin will at last prevail over a vicious mind. For less than twenty dollars Judas sold his Lord and Master. Those temptations commonly esteemed great are not the most sure to prevail. 7. Nothing prepares a man for destruction faster than hypocrisy or formality in actions of a religious nature. The three years which Judas spent in the family of our Lord probably exceeded all the rest of his life in ripening him for destruction. We should never forget that official character is one thing, and moral character another thing. All official characters may be sustained without any real grace in the heart. 8. The history of Judas shows us how man will cling to false hopes. There is no evidence that during years of hypocrisy he ever seriously doubted his own piety. 9. If men thus self-confident forsake their profession, and openly apostatize, we need not be surprised. 10. Thus, too, we have a full refutation of the objection made to a connection with the visible church because there are wicked men in her communion. The apostles certainly knew that among them was one bad man; but they did not therefore renounce their portion among Christ's professed friends. 11. How difficult it is to bring home truth to the deceitful heart of man. Hypocrites are slow to improve close, discriminating preaching. They desire not to look into their real characters. 12. The case of Judas discloses the uselessness of that sorrow of the world which worketh death, hath no hope in it, and drives the soul to madness. It is not desperation, but penitence, that God requires. Regrets without hatred of sin are useless, both on earth and in hell. (*W. S. Plumer, D.D.*) *Terrible result of the secret working of sin:*—There once sailed from the city of New Orleans a large and noble steamer, laden with cotton, and having a great number of passengers on board. While they were taking in the cargo, a portion of it became slightly moistened by a shower of rain that fell. This circumstance, however, was not noticed; the cotton was stowed away in the hold, and the hatches fastened down. During the first part of the voyage all went well; but, far out towards the middle of the Atlantic ocean, all on board were one day alarmed by the fearful cry of "Fire!" and in a few moments the noble ship was completely enveloped in flames. The damp and closely-packed cotton had become heated; it smouldered away, and got into a more dangerous state every day, until at last it burst out into a broad sheet of flame, and nothing could be done to stop it. The passengers and crew were compelled to take to the boats; but some were suffocated and consumed in the fire, and many more were drowned in the sea. Now, the heated cotton, smouldering in the hull of that vessel, is like sin in the heart of a man. All the while it is working away according to its own nature, but no one perceives it or knows anything about it. The man himself may wear a smiling face; he may in appearance be making the voyage of life smoothly; he may seem to be happy. His family and friends may see nothing wrong about him; he may see nothing wrong about himself. But the evil spirit within may be growing stronger and stronger, and spreading wider and wider, until, in an unexpected moment, it breaks out into some awful deed of wickedness, which in former days would have made him start back with horror. Beware, then, of this fatal cheat. "Take heed," as the apostle says in another place, "lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." It may smile bewitchingly before your eyes; it may promise the most grateful sweetness to your taste. But, oh! put no trust in it; at the last it will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. (*Edgar Woods.*)

VERS. 22–24. Jesus took bread.—*The symbols of Christ's body:*—I. LET US GLANCE AT THE GOSPEL FEAST, AS EXHIBITED TO OUR VIEW IN OUR PERIODICAL APPROACH TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD. What is it that we are to feast upon? What is it of which Jehovah Jesus says—"This is My Body, and this is My Blood"? It is His own Person—the glorious, perfect, complete God-Man. It is His redemption work, accomplished and perfected by Himself, which constitutes the gospel-feast. 1. The redemption which constitutes good for our souls is perfect. Christ has not

done His work by halves. He has not left His work in an unfinished state. 2. Moreover, the redemption that is in Jesus Christ is personal; and if it be not so, there is no eating of it. If you come to a meal, to make it personal, you must participate; you must receive for yourself. 3. Moreover, it is a permanent redemption. II. LET ME PASS ON TO NOTICE THE ORDAINED GUESTS. He took and brake it, and gave to them—His disciples. I do not believe that Judas was there at that moment, though some people do. I shall not stop to argue that point, however. There are two things, and only two things, essential to a welcome guest. The first is, vital godliness, as an essential qualification; and the second is, the imputed righteousness of Christ as the essential robe. III. LET ME NOW PRESS ON TO SPEAK OF THE ORTHODOX VIANDS THAT WE EXPECT TO FEAST UPON, OF WHICH MY PRECIOUS LORD SAYS—"Take, eat, this is My Body, and this is My Blood." The sacrificed Lamb is the great feast itself. This was ordered under the Levitical dispensation every morning and evening—a lamb to be sacrificed and presented to the Lord—the lamb of the Passover; and the same sacred emblem, pointing to the precious Christ of God, is declared to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and just such persons as I have been describing were welcome to partake of it. This feasting on the Lamb, the atoning Blood, the perfect satisfaction, and the sacred acceptance thereof, is announced by God Himself as a thing with which He is well pleased; and the soul that is under the teaching and the operation of the Holy Ghost can find nothing to feast upon short of It. If I go to some places I have nothing but a dinner of poisonous herbs: I mean the beauties of rhetoric, the eloquence of the creature, heathenish morality, and nothing to profit the precious soul that is born from above. The believer is able to do what the Israelites were commanded to do: he is able to eat a whole lamb; he is able to partake of a whole Christ. So we may well say again, "having Christ, I possess all things." Do not talk to me of feeding upon frames and feelings, and groping amongst "ifs" and "buts," and "peradventures," and probabilities, and contingencies, and conditions and uncertainties—they are enough to make all the people of God like Pharaoh's lean kine, if they do not absolutely starve them to death. IV. LET ME NOW LEAD ON YOUR ATTENTION TO THE MASTER'S WORDS—"This is My body;" and "This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many." Mark, I beseech you, that this sacred gospel feast is intended to nourish not the fleshly, but the spiritual existence. (*Joseph Irons, M.A.*) *The communion service*:—It is hardly necessary to remark, that almost every transaction of human life has its appropriate ceremony, its established order and process. In our most familiar intercourse we have our known forms of salutation. The system is natural in its origin, and beneficial in its effects. In religion above all other subjects, established forms are valuable. They fix attention on the duties which we assemble to perform. They give its due solemnity to the most interesting of all human concerns. They impress more deeply the sentiments of piety on the heart. They support uniformity and sympathy in the public worship of God. Would it not then be unwise and ungrateful if we did not commemorate by some appropriate ceremony the most important transaction of the gospel, the sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ. Such has been prescribed by Him who had the undoubted right to prescribe it, the Author of that religion, which it is intended to support. The fitness and propriety of a commemoration appointed by such authority will not be called in question. I. THE MEMORY OF THE MOST INTERESTING EVENTS IS APT TO FADE FROM THE MIND, UNLESS OCCASIONALLY REVIVED BY REFLECTION ON THEIR RESPECTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES, OR BY SOME SUITABLE AND REGULAR COMMEMORATION. Even the sentiments of friendship require to be kept alive by tokens of regard. The disciples had seen the miracles of Christ. From the minds of those who had not seen them, at the distance of almost two thousand years, the genuine religion of the gospel might have been lost, had it not been cherished by the ordinances of the Church. II. BEFORE THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD, THE NATIVES OF EVERY HEATHEN NATION HAD THEIR RESPECTIVE OFFERINGS TO THEIR GODS. They knew not from what authority their sacrifices were derived. They did but imperfectly understand the meaning of the ceremonies of their own worship. Their expectations were limited almost to temporal advantage. When we partake the sacrament we unite in an act of worship, of which we know the authority, intention, and benefit. III. THE SACRIFICES OF THE HEATHENS, AND THE FESTIVALS THAT FOLLOWED THEM, WERE USUALLY ATTENDED WITH CRUELTY TO INOFFENSIVE ANIMALS, DISGRACED BY IMMORAL PRACTICES, AND PERFORMED AT

RUINOUS EXPENSE. The sacrifices of the Jews were designed to typify one efficacious sacrifice of the Redeemer of the world. Our sacrament is not the sacrifice itself. It is only the festival after it; commemorating the sacrifice, and urging our claims to the benefits, which it was intended to convey. By the prudent regulations of our Church no indecent excess can disgrace this act of our worship. The exhortations to repentance, faith, and charity are Scriptural. IV. The last recommendation of our ceremonies at the sacrament is THE FITNESS AND PROPRIETY OF THE SUBSTANCES EMPLOYED ON THAT SOLEMN OCCASION. From the wisdom and goodness of Him who prescribed them this was to be expected. Instead of the slaughter of animals, select and perfect, but within the reach of the poor;—instead of incense and spices which are only found in a few favoured regions of the earth, and which when found are more costly than appropriate, our Saviour has directed us to employ the simple elements of bread and wine; produced in every country; which may be obtained without delay or difficulty. These elements are fit emblems of the benefits to be derived from the solemnity; nay, "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ." (*W. Barrow, LL.D.*) *The Lord's supper:*—I. THE BREAD. This signifies our need of spiritual food from Christ. We have a spiritual life within, as real as the physical life, and needing just as much a constant supply of nourishment. When General Grant took the Federal army at Chattanooga it was feeble and dispirited because it was almost destitute. The food of the army was hauled with difficulty over mountain roads and the supply was totally insufficient. His first movement, on assuming command—and it was that which eventually led to victory,—was to repair the railroads and open up communication, so that the army soon had everything it needed. There is a like necessity in the spiritual life of Christ's army. We are worth very little in the service of Christ, except as we are spiritually nourished. The soul is easily starved by lack of appropriate food. And our spiritual nourishment must come from Christ. II. THE BREAD WAS BLESSED BY CHRIST. The significance of this act was that God the Father was recognized as having a part in the work of the Son. III. THE BREAD IS BROKEN BY CHRIST. Why is this? Here is a reminder of the sufferings of Christ. "This," said Christ, "is My Body which is broken for you" The broken bread is designed to bring to our minds His sacrificial work. And it is worthy of remark that our Lord broke the bread Himself. He did not delegate this to another. So did Christ voluntarily surrender Himself to death. "Therefore," He affirms in one place, "doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." There is a peculiar value in the sacrifice of Christ, in the fact that He was not forced to it. All He did and suffered was voluntary. It was because He loved us. It was in the infinite tenderness of His heart that He became our Saviour. IV. THE BREAD WAS DISTRIBUTED TO THE DISCIPLES BY CHRIST. Here is suggested our complete dependence on Christ for salvation. V. THE SECOND PART OF THIS SYMBOL. The use of the cup, as well as the bread, gives the idea of *completeness*. The two necessities for life are food and drink. When both are given there is fulness in the provision. The spiritual food symbolized in the supper covers all the needs of the soul. He who has Christ has what causes want to cease. 2. The doubling of the symbol also serves for emphasis. Thus Elisha, Hannah, and Job received double portions, that is, an unusual amount. 3. There is also climax. The giving of the cup presents not only the old thought suggested in the giving of the bread, but something more, which is even more important. VI. THE CUP. The cup is symbolic of the Blood of Christ; and the blood of life. The juice of the grape, as it is violently pressed from the grape and procured by the grape's destruction, fittingly represents the Blood of Christ poured out for us. VII. EATING THE BREAD AND DRINKING THE CUP. Our Saviour's directions to His disciples regarding the Supper were very simple. They were, "Take, eat." "Drink ye all of it." And the one hint our Saviour gave as to the meaning of this reception of the Supper was in His words: "This do in remembrance of Me." To this the apostle added the inspired comment: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come." From this language several things are plain. We are taught that our eating the bread and drinking the cup is a confession of Christ, a pledge to serve our Lord, and an act of fellowship as Christians. But it is, above all, a reception of Christ by faith. Our very act of taking the bread symbolizes the way in which we are to be benefited by Christ. We can not have Christ except as we open our hearts to Him. We are to

give Him loving welcome. We are to rejoice in Him and accept Him, just as we do the food for the body, in the assurance that He will build us up in life and health. We must cherish the thought of Christ with the same loyalty with which we cherish earthly friendships. We remember earthly friends when they are out of our sight, recognizing their interests and rights, keeping ourselves in proper attitude towards them, and allowing no one else and nothing else to come between them and us in such way as to make us forgetful of them or indifferent towards them. The mother of Professor Louis Agassiz lived in Switzerland. In her beautiful old age Professor Silliman and wife called upon her and were charmed with her character. The morning they were leaving Switzerland she met them, and giving them a bunch of pansies said, with a beautiful play upon words, speaking of course in the French language: "Tell my son that my thoughts (*mes pensées*) are all for him, they are all for him." Now this is the way we should feel towards Christ. If we give Him all our heart, all our thoughts, we are communing with Him, we are receiving Him to ourselves, as He desires. As the elements of the Supper are taken into our system, so do we receive Christ into our souls. (*Addison P. Foster.*) *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*:—Because the sacraments of the gospel are only two in number, it has sometimes been thought that they must be ordinances of minor importance. No mistake can be greater, or more calculated to depreciate the value of these divinely-appointed ordinances, which, from their very fewness, as well as from having received Christ's explicit command, should receive the Christian's stricterest gard. The passage before us leads to inquiries respecting the meaning and design of this great sacrament. I. THE RELATIONS IN WHICH CHRIST HERE PRESENTS HIMSELF TO HIS DISCIPLES. 1. Propitiation. The object of the Lord's Supper is not to commemorate Jesus as a Teacher, though in this He was unlike any other; nor to perpetuate the memory of His example, although His was the only perfect one ever afforded. It is, to keep constantly in mind that He who was the one illustrious Teacher, and the only perfect Exemplar, employing these together with His incarnate Deity, to add efficacy to the offering, yielded up His life a sacrifice for sinners. 2. The whole benefit of His death is available to those for whom He died. All He did is placed to our credit. II. THE RELATIONS WHICH CHRISTIANS BY RECEIVING THIS SACRAMENT ASSUME TOWARDS CHRIST. 1. They confess their need of Christ. At the Holy Table supply and demand meet. Christ proffering and the disciple needing forgiveness, and all the attendant blessings purchased by His blood. 2. They confess their personal faith in Christ. At the Lord's Table disciples individually appropriate Christ's work to themselves. By receiving Christ they gain inward strengthening. 3. They consecrate themselves to Christ. Eating at His Table, they proclaim themselves His friends, and consent to His claims as their Saviour and Lord. Christ there enters into covenant with them, and they with Him. III. THE RELATIONS INTO WHICH BY THIS SACRAMENT CHRISTIANS ARE BROUGHT TOWARD EACH OTHER. 1. Brotherhood. The bond which unites disciples to the Master links them to each other. 2. Love. Ill-will is banished by the very desire to sit with Christ at this feast, and in its warm and sacred atmosphere animosities can no more exist than an iceberg in the gulf stream. (*P. B. Davis.*) *Holy Communion*:—Picture the scene: our Lord's last night on earth—He fully aware of it—the Paschal supper, commemorative (through fifteen centuries) of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt—our Lord surrounded by twelve persons, one of whom He knew to be His betrayer, and who went out from this meal to execute his purpose—our Lord full of thoughts, not for Himself, but for them, and in this instance leaving them something to do for Him when He was gone. Holy Communion is—I. THE COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND OF ALL CONTAINED AND IMPLIED IN THAT DEATH (1 Cor. xi. 26). In that act of worship we express our faith in (1) the fact, (2) the intention, (3) the efficacy of the death (as the completion of the earthly life, and as the prelude to the resurrection life) of Christ, very God and very man. II. A TOKEN OF THE MANNER IN WHICH ALONE OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE IS MAINTAINED. The bread and wine are not merely gazed upon, but eaten and drunk; and that in church, as a religious act. This would be, not merely unprofitable, but irreverent also, if there were not a deep meaning in it. The key is John vi., which expresses in words the same truth the sacrament expresses in act. If we are to have life through Christ, it must be, not merely by hearing of Him, or contemplating Him as an external object, but by receiving Him into heart and soul as by a process of spiritual digestion. III. THE CHIEF OPPORTUNITY OF SO EXERCISING AND MAINTAINING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (1 Cor. x. 16; Matt. xxvi. 26-28). Application: 1. Form a high estimate of this ordinance. It is what

we make it; great or small, according as we seek and expect much or little from it. 2. But let your high estimate be a spiritual estimate. Reverence, not superstition. "Feed on Him, in thy heart, by faith." 3. Realize Christ's presence. 4. Make due preparation. 5. Beware of delay in becoming a communicant. 6. Beware of coming once or twice and then ceasing. 7. Beware of becoming familiar with the sign and not with the thing signified. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Importance of the Holy Communion*:—When we consider the acts of Christ on this eventful night, we are led to see how vast is the importance given to the Holy Communion. He puts it in juxtaposition with the Paschal supper. As an Israelite ceased to be of Israel—became an alien and outcast from the House of God, forfeited the grace of God and his inheritance in God—if he did not keep the Passover and partake of the Lamb; so He would have us learn that, in like manner, unless Christians partake of the Lamb of God in His New Institution, they are not members of Him, they cut themselves off as dead branches from a vine, they lose His grace, they are no more members of His Kingdom. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The Holy Communion a support to the weak*:—It is just because you are a sinner that you need the help which God gives through the Eucharist. You know your own weakness; you tell me you are afraid of the sin of yielding to temptation after having communicated. Yes; but is it not almost certain that if you do not communicate you will yield? while, if you will only come in simple faith and trust, looking for God's blessing, it is through the Holy Sacrament that God will give the grace and strength which will enable you to resist the temptation and come off victor in the fight. There was a labouring man some time since in one of our northern towns, who, owing to some mistake, had been misinformed as to the hour of service. He came when the Celebration of the Holy Communion was just over, and when they came out of Church they found him waiting sadly outside. The clergyman explained how the mistake had arisen, and expressed his sorrow for it. "Never mind, master," said the man; but the poor fellow could not help adding, "only I did so build upon it." He knew his own weakness, and his need of Divine grace and supernatural assistance; and so he was coming, not as if there was any virtue in the bare act of coming, not as if the Sacrament itself could save him, but because he had grasped the great truth that it is through the Sacrament that God imparts grace, and strength, and life to us His children, unworthy as we are of the least of His benefits. (*Prebendary Gibson, M.A.*) *Value of the Holy Communion*:—In times of persecution men would risk their lives to get their Communions. A hundred years ago, during the French Revolution, when religion was abolished by the French Parliament, when Sunday was done away with, the clergy were hunted into the thickets like beasts of prey, and none might conduct or attend a service on pain of death, did people go without this means of grace? No! From time to time a messenger hurried with a mysterious watchword from house to house; "the black swamp," he would mutter, and pass on without greeting or farewell. But the persons addressed understood him. Shortly after midnight, men and women, dressed in dark clothes, would meet silently by the black swamp below the village, and there, by the light of a carefully-guarded lantern, one of the homeless priests would give the Body and Blood of the Lord to the faithful of the neighbourhood. They all knew that at any moment, before the alarm could be given, the soldiers might be upon them, and a volley of grape-shot might stretch them bleeding and dying on the ground. What matter? man might kill their body, but Jesus had said that He would raise them up at the last day. (*M. A. Lewis.*) *The new testament.—Testament or Covenant*:—The word is thirteen times translated "testament" in the A. V., and twenty times "covenant." Its Hebrew equivalent properly means "covenant." But its classical import is "latter will" or "testament." Neither of the translations does full justice to the unique transaction referred to. Indeed no human word could. And to have used a Divine word would simply have been to speak an unintelligibility. The reference is to that arrangement or disposition of things, in virtue of which mercy, and the possibility of true and everlasting bliss, are extended to the sinful human race. It was a glorious device, culminating in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. 1. It was a covenant, inasmuch as there is, inherent in it, an element of reciprocity. God, on His part, does something. He does much. But the blessing involved in what He does is suspended, so far as men's enjoyment of it is concerned, on acquiescence on their part, or cordial acceptance, or faith. 2. It is also of the nature of a testamentary deed. For there is involved in it a disposition or disposal of the effects or goods which constitute the property of God; in virtue of which disposition it is that men, who acquiesce or believe,

become His "heirs." The deed is a real testament, for it is duly and solemnly attested and testified. 3. And it is also really a last will, for it is a final expression of the will and wish of God. (*J. Morison, D.D.*) *The sacraments as symbols*:—The Magna Charta of British history is not a more forcible witness to our national love of liberty, and our need of it as a condition of progress, than are these institutions to the universal needs of redeemed men. Ordinances that have persisted through innumerable and violent changes, and re-asserted themselves in the face of gigantic efforts to suppress them, offer the strongest presumption that they are founded on true reason and spiritual necessity: and though they may have only a secondary and never a primary place, yet they are likely to be requisite still for the expression and nourishment of this life of the soul. Man is not all reason and will. He is still ensphered with sense, and dowered with imagination, and the whole of him cannot be fed, developed, and perfected without the beneficent ministry of symbol. Carlyle, no fanatic ritualist, says, with as much truth as beauty, "Would'st thou plant for eternity, then plant into the deep, infinite faculties of man, his fantasy and heart; would'st thou plant for year and day, then plant into his shallow, superficial faculties, his self-love and arithmetical understanding;" and again, speaking in "Sartor Resartus" of "Symbols," he writes: 'Of kin to the so incalculable influences of concealment, and connected with still greater things, is the wondrous agency of symbols. In a symbol there is concealment and yet revelation; here, therefore, by silence and by speech acting together, comes a double significance. And if both the speech be itself high, and the silence fit and noble, how expressive will their union be! Thus in many a painted device, or simple seal-emblem, the commonest truth stands out to us proclaimed with quite new emphasis." (*Dr. John Clifford.*) *The communion service saved*:—"A poor widow sent me a dollar and thirty-three cents, in silver change, saying that it was all she found in her dead husband's pocket-book, and she wanted to give it to God. I told this to the children and their parents in the Church of the Ascension, in Chicago, and they soon found a way to use this widow's mite 'for God.' They said: 'We will make a communion service of it.' So they added to it their gold rings and pieces of jewelry, and pocket-pieces of silver, and a lady gave her dead boy's silver cup, and so they kept on adding pieces of silver and gold till we had enough; and then the artist made us a very beautiful chalice and paten all of silver and gold. Now I must tell you what came of it, and that shall be my second story. When that dreadful fire which destroyed our churches and homes in Chicago was seen approaching our little church, a little girl, seven years old, came with her father to see what they could save. It was four o'clock in the morning, and there was no light except what came from the fire. But little Louisa Enderli found the Communion Service and saved it. She was soon lost from her father, and for four weary miles she made her way among the crowd of people who were hurrying away from the burning district. The wind blew the burning sand and cinders in her eyes, and almost blinded them; but she defended them as best she could with one hand, and clung to her precious treasure with the other, refusing to give it up till she had it in a place of safety. For three days she was lost from her father, she having been sheltered and cared for by a kind German family. When her father at last found her, she threw her arms about his neck, saying, 'O, papa, I saved the Communion! I saved the Communion!' But even then she could not give it up till she had placed it safely in the rector's hand. I think that was an act of Christian heroism worthy of the martyrs who died for their Lord's sake in the older days." (*Rev. Charles P. Dorset, rector of the Church of the Ascension, Chicago, Illinois.*) *The blood of Christ*:—"The only thing I want," said a dying bishop of our church, Bishop Hamilton, "is to place my whole confidence more and more perfectly in the precious blood!" (*The Fireside Parish Almanack.*) *Bloodshedding as an expression of love*:—A certain Asiatic queen, departing this life, left behind her three accomplished sons, all arrived to years of maturity. The young princes were at strife as to who should pay the highest respect to their royal mother's memory. To give scope for their generous contentions they agreed to meet at the place of interment, and there present the most honourable gift they knew how to devise, or were able to procure. The eldest came, and exhibited a sumptuous monument, consisting of the richest materials, and ornamented with the most exquisite workmanship. The second ransacked all the beauties of the blooming creation, and offered a garland of such admirable colours and delightful odours as had never been seen before. The youngest appeared, without any pompous preparations, having only a crystal basin in one hand, and a silver bodkin in the other. As

soon as he approached he threw open his breast, pierced a vein which lay opposite to his heart, received the blood in the transparent vase, and, with an air of affectionate reverence, placed it on the tomb. The spectators, struck with the sight, gave a shout of general applause, and immediately gave preference to this oblation. If it was reckoned such a singular expression of love to expend a few of those precious drops for the honour of a parent, O how matchless! how ineffable was the love of Jesus in pouring out all his vital blood for the salvation of his enemies! (*Student's Handbook of Scripture Doctrines.*) *The heavenly Passover*:—I. THE REALITY AND CHARACTER OF THE LIFE BEYOND DEATH. Christ speaks of it as "the kingdom of God." This is not the idea of mere existence, but of being in the highest form of organization. The Father-King will pervade all life with His own spirit. The law will be the Father's rule, which is love. II. THE SPECIAL FORM OF LIFE IN THE FATHER'S KINGDOM HERE ANTICIPATED. "I will drink it with you new." This implies—1. Close and intimate association between the Redeemer and the redeemed. 2. The mutual presence and intercourse of the redeemed. 3. Their sacred employment. The Saviour says He will drink, and they shall drink, the wine of the Pascal feast new in the Father's kingdom. He had just said: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." The heavenly festival is a memorial celebration of redeeming love. To the redeemed it will be a cup of grateful love, and of grateful retrospection. (*The Preacher's Monthly.*)

Ver. 26. **And when they had sung an hymn.**—*The best harmony*:—Jesus sung an hymn, and when before was heard music so pleasing to God, so grand and beautiful to listening angels? We know not what harmonies from the power of sound the Creator produces for the ceaseless joy of His intelligent creatures who fill the vast amplitudes of the sky. We know not what sublime, and to us, inconceivable realities are expressed by those descriptions given by that apostle who leant on Jesus's bosom, and heard with prophetic ear the voice as of many waters, as of a great thunder, and the voices of harpers harping with their harps; but sure am I that there was a harmony and a glory in this hymn they never heard before. For the beauty of its harmony was moral; it was harmony from the inner spirit of man; it was harmony between man and Christ; it was the melody of meekness, of obedience, of peace and joy; it was like the music of law and order from those glittering stars of night beneath which they sung—such a harmony as the character of Christ for ever sounds in the ears of God. (*N. Macleod, D.D.*) *Value of forms of prayer and praise*:—One of the commonest objections to the constant use of stated forms of common prayer is, that at times they must inevitably jar upon our feelings, compelling us, for example, to take words of joy and praise on our lips when our hearts are full of grief, or to utter penitent confessions of sin and imploring cries for mercy when our hearts are dancing with mirth and joy. But if we mark the conduct of our Lord and His disciples, we cannot say that even this objection is final or fatal. He and they were about to part. He was on His way to the agony of Gethsemane and the shame of the cross. Their hearts, despite His comforting words, were heavy with foreboding and grief. Yet they sang the Hallel, used the common form of praise, before they went out,—He to die for the sins of the world, and they to lose all hope in Him as the Saviour of Israel. No Divine command, nothing but the custom of the Feast, enjoined this form upon them; yet they do not cast it aside. And this "hymn" was no dirge, no slow and measured cadence, no plaintive lament, but a joyous song of exultation. . . . Must not these tones of irrepressible hope, of joyous and exultant trust, have jarred on the hearts of men who were passing into a great darkness in which all the lights of life and hope and joy were to be eclipsed? If our Lord could look through the darkness and see the joy set before Him, the disciples could not. Yet they too joined in this joyous hymn before they went out into the darkest night the world has ever known. With their example before us, we cannot fairly argue that settled forms of worship are to be condemned simply because they jar on the reigning emotion of the moment. We must rather infer that, in His wisdom, God will not leave us to be the prey of any unbalanced emotion; that, when our hearts are most fearful, He calls on us to put our trust in Him; that when they are saddest He reminds us that, if we have made Him our chief good, our chief good is still with us, whatever we may have lost, and that we may still rejoice in Him, though all other joy has departed from us. And when He bids us trust in Him in every night of loss and fear, and even to be glad in Him however sorrowful our souls may be,—O how comforting and welcome the command

should be! for it is nothing less than an assurance that He sees the gain which is to spring from our loss; it is nothing short of a pledge that He will turn our sorrow into joy. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Place of forms in religion:*—Religion is a thing of principles, not of forms; spirit, not letter. It is a life, a life which reveals itself in various ways under all the changes of time, a life which consecrates every faculty we possess to the service of God and man. It uses forms, but is not dependent on them. It may modify them in a thousand different ways, to suit them to the wants, emotions, aspirations of the soul. There was a most true and sincere religious life, for example, among the Hebrews, and under the laws of Moses. Worship then took the form of offerings and sacrifices, fasts and feasts. All these, in so far as they were Hebrew, and were specially adapted to Hebrew life, have passed away; but the religious life has not passed with them. It has clothed itself in simpler and more universal forms. Our worship expresses itself in prayers, hymns, sacraments, and above all in the purity and charity which bids us visit the poor and needy in their affliction, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. In due time, these forms may be modified or pass away. But the life which works and speaks through them will not pass away. It will simply rise into higher and nobler forms of expression. No man, therefore, can live and grow simply by adhering to forms of worship and service, let him be as faithful and devoted to them as he will. They may feed and nourish life, but they cannot impart it. They will change and pass, but the life of the soul need not therefore suffer loss. If that life has once been quickened in us through faith and love, it will and must live on, for it is an eternal life, and continue to manifest itself in modes that will change and rise to meet its new necessities and conditions. Religion accepts us as we are, that it may raise us above what we are; it employs and consecrates all our faculties, that our faculties may be refined, invigorated, enlarged in scope. If we can speak, it bids us speak. If we can sing, it bids us sing. If we can labour and endure, it bids us labour and endure. If we can only stand and wait, it teaches us that they also serve who only stand and wait. Whatever we can do, it bids us do heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, and yet do for men, that it may be unto the Lord. If we really have this life, it will reveal itself in us as it did in Him who is our life—in a love too profound and sincere to be repelled by any diversities of outward form; in a spirit of praise too pure and joyous to be quenched by any of the changes and sorrows of time; and in an earnest consecration of our every capacity and power to the service of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and for all. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Singing in heaven:*—For one I would not rid myself of the hope that we shall sometimes—perhaps on great anniversaries commemorative of earthly histories—literally sing, in heaven, the very psalms and hymns which are so often the "gate of heaven" to us here. It would be sadder parting with this world than we hope it will be when our time comes, if we must forget these ancient lyrics, or find our tongues dumb when we would utter them. How can we live without them? Are they not a part of our very being? Take them away, with all the experiences of which they are the symbol, and what would there be left of us to carry into heaven? (*Prof. Austin Phelps.*) *The Jewish Psalms:*—The Jewish Psalms, in which is expressed the very spirit of the national life, have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom, since Christendom was born. It is a sentence from the Jewish Psalm-book, which we have written over the portico of the chief temple of the world's industry and commerce, the London Exchange. These psalms have rolled through the din of every great European battle-field, they have pealed through the scream of the storm in every ocean highway of the earth. Drake's sailors sang them when they clove the virgin waves of the Pacific; Frobisher's, when they dashed against the barriers of the Arctic ice and night. They floated over the waters on that day of days, when England held her Protestant freedom against Pope and Spaniard, and won the naval supremacy of the world. They crossed the ocean with the *Mayflower* pilgrims; they were sung around Cromwell's camp fires, and his Ironsides charged to their music; while they have filled the peaceful homes of England and of Christendom with the voice of supplication and the breath of praise. In palace halls, by happy hearths, in squalid rooms, in pauper wards, in prison cells, in crowded sanctuaries, in lovely wildernesses, everywhere these Jews have uttered our moan of contrition and our song of triumph, our tearful complaints and our wrestling, conquering prayer. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *The love of singing sanctioned by Jesus:*—At a gathering of children one Christmas Day

a gentleman present related the following very interesting incident: A little girl, only three years of age, was very curious to know why Christmas evergreens were so much used, and what they were intended to signify. So Mr. L— told her the story of the Babe of Bethlehem, the child whose name was Jesus. The little questioner was just beginning to give voice to the music that was in her heart; and after Mr. L— concluded the narrative, she looked up in his face and asked, "Did Jesus sing?" Who had ever thought of that? The text is almost conclusive proof that our Lord did sing; it is, at any rate, quite conclusive proof that He sanctioned the use of song on the part of His disciples. *Singing in prospect of death:*—Jerome, of Prague, bound naked to the stake, continued to sing hymns with a deep untrembling voice. (*A. W. Atwood.*) *Soothing influence of hymn-singing:*—I remember a remarkable instance which occurred in my father's lecture-room during one of those sweet scenes which preceded the separation of the Presbyterian Church into the old and new schools. At that time controversy ran high, and there were fire and zeal and wrath mingled with discussion; and whoever sat in the chair, the devil presided. On the occasion to which I refer an old Scotchman, six feet high, much bent with age, with blue eyes, large features, very pale and white all over his face, and bald-headed, walked up and down the back part of the room, and as the dispute grew furious he (and only he could have done it) would stop and call out, "Mr. Moderator, let us sing 'Salvation';" and some one would strike up and sing the tune, and the men who were in angry debate were cut short; but one by one they joined in, and before they had sung the hymn through they were all calm and quiet. When they resumed the controversy, it was in a much lower key. So this good old man walked up and down, and threw a hymn into the quarrel every few minutes, and kept the religious antagonists from absolute explosion and fighting. It is the nature of hymns to quell irascible feeling. I do not think that a man who was mad could sing six verses through without regaining his temper before he got to the end. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The power of a hymn:*—On one of the days that President Garfield lay dying at the seaside, he was a little better, and was permitted to sit by the window, while Mrs. Garfield was in the adjoining room. Love, hope, and gratitude filled her heart, and she sang the beautiful hymn, commencing, "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!" As the soft and plaintive notes floated into the sick-chamber, the President turned his eyes up to Dr. Bliss and asked, "Is that Crete?" "Yes," replied the Doctor; "it is Mrs. Garfield." "Quick, open the door a little," anxiously responded the sick man. Dr. Bliss opened the door, and after listening a few moments, Mr. Garfield exclaimed, as the large tears coursed down his sunken cheeks, "Glorious, Bliss, isn't it?" *The power of a hymn:*—A little boy came to one of our city missionaries, and holding out a dirty and well-worn bit of printed paper, said, "Please, sir, father sent me to get a clean paper like this." Taking it from his hand, the missionary unfolded it, and found it was a paper containing the beautiful hymn beginning, "Just as I am." The missionary looked down with interest into the face earnestly upturned to him, and asked the little boy where he got it, and why he wanted a clean one. "We found it, sir," said he, "in sister's pocket after she died; she used to sing it all the time when she was sick, and loved it so much that father wanted to get a clean one to put in a frame to hang it up. Won't you give us a clean one, sir?"

Ver. 27. **I will smite the shepherd.**—*Why Christ is called a Shepherd:*—1. As descending from ancient patriarchs who were shepherds. They were types of Him. 2. He knows His sheep, and marks them for His own (John x. 3, 14). God sets His seal on them (2 Tim. ii. 19). 3. He feeds their souls and bodies in green pastures (Psa. xxiii.) and drives them to the sweet streams and waters of comfort, by the paths of grace and righteousness. 4. He defends them from the wolf and enemies; they being timorous, simple, weak, shiftless creatures, unable to fly, resist, or save themselves. 5. He nourishes the young and tender lambs. 6. He seeks them when they go astray, and rejoices to find them. 7. He brings them to the fold. (1) The fold of grace. (2) The fold of glory. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Comfort in Christ, our Shepherd:*—In that Christ is our Shepherd, we may comfort ourselves in—1. His love. More love is included in the title "Shepherd," than if He should call Himself our father, brother, kinsman. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, which every father or brother will not do. 2. His care. The sheep need care for nothing but the Shepherd's presence (Psa. xxiii. 1). (*Ibid.*) *Christ smitten, an example to us:*—In that Christ was smitten with the sword, let

us learn patience in affliction of every kind. 1. He suffered for no necessity or desert, but by voluntary humility, whereas we deserve fiery trials. 2. He suffered not for His own cause, but ours; and shall not we for His? 3. He despised the shame; and why should not we? 4. The end of His cross was the exaltation at God's right hand; and we expect the same. (*Ibid.*) *Comfort because God is the smiter:*—Though Christ was smitten, it was not by chance, fortune, or altogether by malice of wicked men; but all by the counsel and decree of God. If thou art smitten, comfort thyself. 1. It is God's hand. 2. God intends by this means to bring about some good purpose in thee. 3. God not only sends thy trouble, but also regulates and checks it. (*Ibid.*) *The scattering:*—Why were the disciples thus scattered? 1. Their own weakness and carnal fear made them fly to save themselves. They had not counted the cost of their profession. Nor had they yet received the Holy Spirit, which afterwards kept them strong and stedfast. 2. God in His wisdom would have Christ deserted, because He was to be known to tread "the winepress of God's wrath alone." 3. Thus it behoved the Scripture to be fulfilled, in regard of Christ Himself, who voluntarily undertaking the grievous burden of our sin, must be forsaken by all for the time. 4. To teach us, that all our safety depends on our relation to the chief Shepherd. Without Christ we lie dispersed, ungathered, and forlorn. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 28. **I will go before you into Galilee.**—*Voices from Galilee:*—It is quite certain that, in the manhood of Christ, there was, in a very large degree, the truest poetry of the heart. His sympathies with nature—His love of the beautiful everywhere—His tenderness to childhood and to weakness—the delicacy of His action—the play of His fancy—all show that vivid imagination, and fervent glow, and quiet sensibility, and creative habit, and deep perception which, I speak it humanly, always make life a poem. Can we wonder that to such a mind as His, that country, so endeared, so sanctified,—lovely in nature, but lovelier still in all its sacred recollections—should have such an attraction that He could scarcely consent even to go to heaven without another look at its beauty, and a last taste of its sweetness! And did my Saviour—did He—even thus? Then for ever He has consecrated the pious memories of early years, and the yearnings of our manhood after the sacredness of the past! II. But, as far as we may presume to judge, this was not the only feeling which led the risen Jesus back to Galilee. We know, indeed, from St. Peter's words to Cornelius, that when "God raised up Jesus, the third day, He showed Him openly indeed, but not to all the people, only to chosen witnesses, chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." Indeed we know that "He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once," and this manifestation was most probably on that mountain in Galilee, where He had made such a special appointment for the re-union. We may well believe—and it is in complete accordance with the whole mind of Christ—that He went down to Galilee for this very object—to gather, and assure, and comfort, and strengthen those to whom His miracles and teaching had been already blessed in that part of Palestine. And it was only like our dear Master, and consistent with all His faithful love, that He should thus pause, before He went on further—to reassure and bless His own in distant places. III. And of this, more and more, be quite sure, that Christ will always come back to His own work in the soul which He has once made His own. And this blessed lesson again I read in that loving journey to Galilee. Whom Christ calls, to them He returns. No time dims, no changes reach, no distance appals, that love! IV. I see, too, in the visit to Galilee, a probation and discipline to His own more immediate followers. They were to have the joy of His presence, but they must make an effort. They must show their constancy and their faith by an act of toil and trust. They must go—at His word—all the way to meet Him in Galilee. "He went before them." He always goes before His people. And sometimes precedence looks like desertion. Obey and believe, and the recompense will be a full and mantling cup. "Go where I send you;"—this is His constant language—"Go where I send you; I shall be there." V. One, and perhaps the greatest, cause why He passed those "forty days" on earth—after He had finished His great work—was to show and prove His identity; to demonstrate that the Risen was the Crucified; that nothing was changed of His love and being. He was the same! the same Man! the same Brother! the same Saviour! the same God! And there were the very wounds to bear their evidence! This visit to Galilee was singularly fitted to evidence the oneness. He goes the very same journey which He had taken often before, to the same places,

where He had spent the greater part of His life, and where the witnesses to the identity would be the greatest in number, and the most competent to attest. He seeks the same lake, which He had made the centre of His previous ministry. He stands with His disciples—on the very shore where He had spoken to them and called them. The voice, the accent, the manner, the spirit are the same. They recognize it in a moment. He eats food, where He had so often eaten it before. And how much we owe to that identity, I need not say. The Man of Weakness is the God of Power. The Crucified is the Intercessor. Sure proof that the ransom is accepted, and the whole debt is paid by Christ! Positive evidence that we have now a God in sympathy. And one more voice I hear from Galilee. The risen Christ walked the whole land—from Dan to Beersheba: He revealed His authority: He showed His power: He made all His own! An earnest of that day when He shall come and "reign in Mount Sion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously;" and "His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives;" and then "there shall be one Lord, and His name One," and "all Israel shall be saved." (*James Vaughan, M.A.*) *Consoling promises:*—Such a promise as was never heard of before—that a dead man shall rise within a few days, and promise to do so. Note the consolations with which our Lord sustains His disciples. 1. That there shall be a certain end of this evil ready to swallow them up. 2. That there shall be a short end after a few days; three or four. 3. That there shall be a happy end. For (1) Christ should rise again from the dead with power and glory. (2) Whereas they have run away from Him, He will come to them again. (3) Though they have left their Shepherd, yet He will become their Shepherd again, and guide them as a shepherd goes before his sheep. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *The promised meeting in Galilee:*—Why in Galilee? 1. That our Lord and His disciples may more surely enjoy one another without fear of the Jews; and that He may instruct them in the things concerning the kingdom of heaven. 2. Because Christ had more disciples and favourites in Galilee to whom He would familiarly offer Himself, and manifest His resurrection, than in Judea. 3. His disciples belonged to Galilee, and He would bring them to the place where He found them. 4. They must follow their calling till Christ came, and for the time before they can get into Galilee, He will be there before them, waiting for them (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 29. **Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.**—*Peter's aim was a threefold one;* it consisted in—1. His vehement contradiction of the words of Christ. 2. His preferring himself to and putting himself above the rest of the apostles. 3. His self-confidence and boastfulness of his own strength. The remedy against temptation is such a knowledge of our own natural weakness, as may lead us to distrust ourselves, to rely on God, and to seek His protection in all things. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Peter's rash zeal:*—Peter's action in this instance was at the same time commendable for some things and faulty for others. I. COMMENDABLE IN THE FOLLOWING PARTICULARS. 1. His purpose and resolution of mind, not to take offence at Christ, which purpose and resolution he professes sincerely and from his heart, speaking as he really thought. 2. It is also commendable in him, that he was so zealous and forward above the other disciples to show his love to Christ II. YET HE WAS AT FAULT IN BEING SO CONFIDENT. 1. In that he directly contradicts the express words of Christ, whereby He had plainly told him and the rest, that they should all be offended at Him. 2. In presuming rashly and confidently upon his own strength or ability to hold out constantly, and to stick close to the Saviour in the time of trouble and danger now at hand. 3. In arrogantly preferring himself to his fellow-disciples, affirming that though all should be offended, yet he would not. (*George Petter.*) *Enthusiasm:*—Enthusiasm is the glow of the soul; it is the lever by which men are raised above their average level and enterprise, and become capable of a goodness and benevolence which, but for it, would be quite impossible. There is not too much enthusiasm of any sort or for any object, in a world like ours, and Christians had better not join in sneering at a force, which, in its purest form, founded and reared the Church of Jesus Christ. True, enthusiasm often loses its way, spends itself on mistaken causes, on imperfect systems, on worthless ideals, but that is no reason for saying that all enthusiasm is bad. Mistaken enthusiasm, like Peter's, will in time be rudely tested by experience; and meanwhile those who have any reason to hope that their enthusiasm is not mistaken, can afford to be generous and hopeful about others. He that is not against us is, unconsciously perhaps, on our side. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Peter's rashness:—Here we have an instance (as many elsewhere) of Peter's temerity and rashness, not well considering his weakness, and what spirit he was of. He betrays great infirmity, arrogating much more than was in him. 1. He directly contradicts his Lord, who said, "All ye;" Peter says, "No, not all"—he will not; not this night—no, never. 2. He believes not the oracle of the prophet Zechariah (xiii. 7), but would shift it off with pomp of words, as not concerning him; he was not one of the sheep that should be scattered, though the Pastor was smitten. 3. He presumes too much upon his own strength, and of that which is out of his own power, never mentioning or including the help and strength of God, by whom alone he could stand. He neither considers his own frailty, which will overthrow him, nor yet the power of God, which can sustain and uphold him. 4. He sets himself too much above other men; as if all men were weak in comparison with Peter, and Peter the champion. 5. He is bold, hardy, and vainly confident in a thing yet to come, in which he has never tried his strength. Knowing his present affection, he will take no notice of his future peril; nay, he disclaims and almost scorns the danger, little thinking how close it is to him. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Self-deception*:—Louis XV., in his disgusting depravity, exposed himself to the smallpox, then the dread of all society. Though flattered for a time into the belief that there was no danger, he was at length undeceived; but, owing to the prevalence of court intrigue, the information was only conveyed to him at the latest possible moment. He caused his guilty companions to be sent away, telling them that he would recall them should he recover from his disorder. Just before dismissing one of the most degraded among them, he said: "I would fain die as a believer, and not as an infidel. I have been a great sinner, doubtless; but I have ever observed Lent with a most scrupulous exactitude; I have caused more than a hundred thousand masses to be said for the repose of unhappy souls; I have respected the clergy, and punished the authors of all impious works; so that I flatter myself I have not been a very bad Christian." *Extreme self-dependence*:—There is a famous speech recorded of an old Norseman thoroughly characteristic of the Teuton. "I believe neither in idols nor demons," said he; "I put my sole trust in my own strength of body and soul." (*S. Smiles.*) *Danger of presumption*:—A scientific gentleman, deputed by the Government, was, not many years ago, examining the scene of a fatal explosion. He was accompanied by the underviewer of the colliery, and as they were inspecting the edges of a goaf (a region of foul air), it was observed that the "Davy" lamps which they carried were afire. "I suppose," said the inspector, that there is a good deal of fire-damp hereabouts. "Thousands and thousands of cubic feet all through the goaf," coolly replied his companion. "Why," exclaimed the official, "do you mean to say that there is nothing but that shred of wire-gauze between us and eternity?" "Nothing at all," replied the underviewer, very composedly. "There's nothing here where we stand but that gauze wire to keep the whole mine from being blown into the air." The precipitate retreat of the Government official was instantaneous. And thus it should be with the sinner: his retreat from the ways of sin—those "goafs" of poisonous air—should be instantaneous. Sir Humphrey Davy's lamp was never designed as a substitute for caution if accidentally or unknowingly carried into foul air, whereas many do so knowingly and habitually.

Ver. 30. **Thou shalt deny Me thrice.**—*Danger of self-ignorance*:—"The *Dougal*, an old line of battle ship, which has been lying in Portsmouth Harbour since her return from a cruise on the China station, in 1871, has been recently docked for the purpose of alterations, so as to fit her for taking the place of the *Vernon*, torpedo and depôt ship. During an examination of her interior, one of the workmen came across a live shell in a disused corner of the ship. The projectile must have lain where it was found for over fourteen years." This was a startling discovery; but had no examination of the interior been required, the missile would not even now have been found. How forcibly the story illustrates the need we have for careful and frequent search into our own hearts! Possibly the projectile had been placed in the "disused corner of the ship" by an enemy; or, on the other hand, it may have been concealed ready to hurl at the foe. Anyhow, it was a dangerous thing to have stowed away, for at any moment it might have exploded, and destroyed the vessel. Self-examination is ever beneficial, and often leads to the startling discovery of some most dangerous evil that lay long concealed in the disused corners of the heart. That we may be fitted to take our right place in God's service, and go forth to our work with His approval, let a thorough examination be made, and

let all evil be removed. (*Robert Spurgeon.*) *Good resolutions soon forgotten:*—Note how suddenly even a good man is turned from good resolutions, if but a little left to himself, or if he remit but a little of his own watchfulness. In a few hours this confident disciple, who scorned to think of denying his Master, denies and forswears Him too. 1. We stand by grace, which, if not every moment renewed, we must needs fall; as in the case of a man supported by a crutch—remove the crutch, and he falls down; or set a staff upright, withdraw the hand, and you need not push it down, it goes of itself. 2. The suddenness of the temptation, which comes like lightning, and our proneness to be kindled with it. 3. The freedom of the Spirit, who comes and goes at His own pleasure. (1) This should keep us humble, no matter how holy a state we get into. The sun may at any time suddenly disappear under a cloud. (2) Let us watch our graces well, and forecast temptation. (3) Let us depend on the Spirit of God to perfect and accomplish His own good motions, and leave us not to ourselves, who can quickly quench them. 4. No wonder if the righteousness of hypocrites be as the morning dew (Hosea vi. 4). (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*)

Ver. 31. I will not deny Thee in any wise.—*Peter's denial of Christ:*—I. We may learn from this transaction NOT TO BE TOO FORWARD IN OUR PROFESSIONS, or too confident in our own strength, lest confidence should at last increase the guilt and shame of failure; and in the event of non-performance, our professions be turned to our reproach. The chief of the apostles mistook the firmness of his own spirit. In the day of peace it is easy to form good resolutions, and to be confident that we shall perform them. To resolve in private and act in public are very different things, requiring very different degrees of firmness, both in exerting the powers of the understanding and in regulating the affections of the heart. Rash resolutions are foolish, and rash vows cannot be innocent. Yet our weakness is itself the decisive proof that vows and resolutions ought to be made. But let them be made as reason and duty require—deliberately not ostentatiously; not so much to be heard as to be kept; not so much to man as to God. II. TO HOPE THE BEST, AND TO DEPEND THE MOST UPON THOSE WHOSE TEMPERS ARE NOT SO WARM AND FORWARD, BUT MILD, AND COOL, AND FIRM. In St. John we find no forward professions, no hasty declarations of invincible spirit. He was firm and faithful, but meek and unoffending. His zeal united gentleness. Zeal should be with moderation. The passions must not rule the conduct. The feelings of a good man are ruled by his religion. "Every thought should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Without such guidance feeling is bold, forward, and capricious, liable to error, and will involve us in sin; but conviction and principle are steady and permanent; truth and right are for ever the same. III. THAT IF WE BE SURPRISED INTO ANY FAILURE IN OUR DUTY WE MAY BE FORGIVEN UPON REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION. But this great privilege must not be allowed to relax our care, or encourage our presumption. St. Peter delayed his repentance only till he knew his fault. Hand-in-hand with conviction came contrition. (*W. Barrow, LL.D.*) *Peter and the rest:*—The text shows St. Peter exercising the supreme influence. I. HERE IS PETER'S UNDOUBTED SUPREMACY. History circles around great names. Men are not all original. The apostles could not do without Peter. II. THIS SUPREMACY WAS INTELLECTUAL, MORAL, SPIRITUAL; NOT ECONOMICAL, LEGAL, OR MERELY OFFICIAL. His supremacy rose out of qualification. There are no spiritual leaderships which can be irrespective of character. A true man must always influence others powerfully. III. THE VALUE OF SUCH CHARACTERS AS THAT OF PETER IN THE CHURCH. Each age needs men who can call onward and upward because they are beyond and above. IV. HERE IS NOBLE PURPOSE AND NOBLE FEELING COMING SHORT IN ACTION. The sequel is, "they all forsook Him and fled." Not even the grandest human inspirations have staying virtues in them. These must be sought from the Holy Spirit. (*The Preacher's Monthly.*) *Presumption:*—I stand on a mountain in Colorado six thousand feet high. There is a man standing beneath me who says: "I see a peculiar shelving to this rock," and he bends towards it. I say: "Stop, you will fall." He says: "No danger; I have a steady head and foot, and see a peculiar piece of moss." I say: "Stand back"; but he says: "I am not afraid"; and he bends farther and farther, and after a while his head whirls and his feet slip—and the eagles know not that it is the macerated flesh of a man they are picking at, but it is. So I have seen men come to the very verge of New York life, and they look away down in it. They say: "Don't be cowardly. Let us go down." They look farther and farther. I warn them to stand back; but Satan comes behind them,

and while they are swinging over the verge, pushes them off. People say they were naturally bad. They were not! They were only engaged in exploration. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Fatal presumption:*—The present Eddystone Lighthouse stands very firmly, but that was not the character of the first structure that stood on that dangerous point. There was an eccentric man by the name of Henry Winstanly, who built a very fantastic lighthouse at that point in 1696, and when it was nearly done he felt so confident that it was strong, that he expressed the wish that he might be in it in the roughest hurricane that ever blew in the face of heaven. And he got his wish. One November night, in 1703, he and his workmen were in that light-house when there came down the most raging tempest that has ever been known in that region. On the following morning the people came down to see about the lighthouse. Not a vestige of the wall, not a vestige of the men. Only two twisted iron bolts, showing where the lighthouse had stood. So there are men building up their fantastic hopes, and plans, and enterprises, and expectations, thinking they will stand for ever, saying: "We don't want any of the defences of the gospel. We can stand for ourselves. We are not afraid. We take all the risks and we defy everything;" and suddenly the Lord blows upon them and they are gone. Only two things left—a grave and a lost soul. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Accumulated sin:*—Peter, instead of being humbled and made self-distrustful by our Lord's warning, as he ought to have been, only heaps up more sin against himself by persisting in contradicting the Lord. Let us take note from this that the child of God, through strength of his corruption, may fall often into the same sin, notwithstanding good means against it. 1. It is a very hard thing to lead people out of themselves. Almost nothing but experience of former falls brings them to see their folly. 2. Till their mind is changed their action will be the same. 3. Weakness of grace causes even the best to fall over and over again into the same sins. 4. The same reason remains still which may move the Lord to leave His children to themselves; to try, excite, humble them, work more serious sorrow, make them more watchful, &c. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Repetition strengthens:*—Every repetition of sin makes sin the stronger; for as the body, the more it is nourished and fed, the stronger it grows, so with sin in the soul; every new act is an addition of strength till it comes to a habit. Pluck up a twig, then, before it grows up into a plant. Dash out the brains of every sin in infancy. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 32–36. **Which was named Gethsemane.**—*The conflict in Gethsemane:*—I. THE PLACE OF THE CONFLICT CALLS FOR A BRIEF NOTICE. II. THE STORY OF THE CONFLICT. Its intensity is the first fact in the story that strikes us. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." This conflict wrung from the Saviour a great cry. What was it? "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We have a glimpse of the conflict carried on by Christ for us, single-handed. III. THE SLEEP OF THE DISCIPLES WHILST THIS CONFLICT WAS GOING ON. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *Gethsemane:*—I. Gethsemane suggests to reverent faith our blessed Redeemer's longing for human sympathy. II. It reminds us of the sacredness of human sorrow and Divine communion. III. It reveals the overwhelming fulness of the Redeemer's sorrow. IV. It reminds us of the will of Christ yielded to the will of the Father. V. It has lessons and influences for our own hearts. (*The Preacher's Monthly.*) *Jesus in Gethsemane:*—I. WOE'S BITTEREST CUP SHOULD BE TAKEN WHEN IT IS THE MEANS OF HIGHEST USEFULNESS. Wasted suffering is the climax of suffering. Affliction's furnace-heat loses its keenest pangs for those who can see the form of One like unto the Son of Man walking with them by example, and know that they are ministering to the world's true joy and life, in some degree, as He did. II. FROM OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE WE LEARN THE HELPFULNESS IN SORROW OF RELIANCE UPON HUMAN AND DIVINE COMPANIONSHIP COMBINED. But to do both in proper proportion is not easy. Some hide from both earth and heaven as much as possible. Others lean wholly upon human supports; others, yet, turn to God in a seclusion to which the tenderest offices of friends are unwelcome. Our Lord's divinity often appears plainest in his symmetrical union of traits, mainly remarkable because of their combination. He was at once the humblest and boldest of men; the farthest from sin and the most compassionate towards the returning prodigal; the meekest and the most commanding. So, in the garden agony, he leaned upon human and Divine supports; the one as indispensable as the other. Whatever the situation, we are not to act the recluse. Life's circles need us and we need them. Neither are we to forget the Father in heaven. Storms and trial

only increase His ready sympathy and succour. III. OUR LORD'S CRUCIAL OBEDIENCE IN THE GARDEN AGONY REFLECTS THE MAJESTY OF THE HUMAN WILL AND ITS POSSIBLE MASTERY OF EVERY TRIAL IN PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL. However superhuman Jesus' suffering, He was thoroughly human in it. He had all our faculties, and used them as we may use ours. It is no small encouragement that the typical Man gives us an example of perfect obedience, at a cost unknown before or since. In the mutual relations of the human and Divine wills all merit is achieved and all character constructed. Learned authors dwell with deserved interest upon the world's "decisive battles," the pivots of destiny. The soul's future for time and eternity turns upon contests in which the will is in chief command. Intellect and sensibilities participate, but they are always subordinate. It were helpful to bear this in mind under every exposure. Let the inquiry be quick and constant, What saith the will? Is that steady and unflinching? IV. JESUS' SOUL COULD HAVE BEEN "SORROWFUL EVEN UNTO DEATH" ONLY AS HIS SUFFERINGS WERE VICARIOUS. He was always sublimely heroic. Why such agony now? It was something far deadlier than death. It was the burden and mystery of the world's sin. The Lamb of God was slain for us in soul agony rather than by physical pain. His soul formed the soul of His sufferings. V. GETHSEMANE'S DARKNESS PAINTS SIN'S GUILT AND RUIN IN FAITHFUL AND ENDURING COLOUR. It is easy to think lightly of sin. Having never known guilt, Christ met the same hidings of the Divine countenance as do the guilty. This was man's disobedience in its relation with God's law and judgment. VI. GETHSEMANE THROWS PORTENTOUS LIGHT UPON THE WOE OF LOST SOULS. He suffered exceptionally, but He was also a typical sufferer; every soul has possibilities beyond our imagination; and terrible the doom when these possibilities are fulfilled in the direction to which Gethsemane points. VII. OUR LESSON GIVES TERRIBLE EMPHASIS TO THE FACT AND SERIOUSNESS OF IMPOSSIBILITIES WITH GOD. Our time tends strongly towards lax notions of the Divine character and law and of the conditions of salvation. The will and fancy erect their own standards. Religion and obedience are to be settled according to individual notions, a subjective affair. Our Lord's agonized words, "If it be possible," establish the rigidity and absoluteness of governmental and spiritual conditions. God's will and plans are objective realities; they have definite and all-important direction and demands. Man should not think of being a law unto himself either in conduct or belief; least of all should he sit in judgment upon the revealed Word, fancying that any amount or kind of inner light is a true and sufficient test of its legitimacy and authority. But, how futile all attempts at fathoming Gethsemane's lessons. (*H. L. B. Speare.*) *Christ in Gethsemane:*—I. GETHSEMANE SAW CHRIST'S AGONY ON ACCOUNT OF SIN. II. GETHSEMANE WAS A WITNESS OF CHRIST'S DEVOTION IN THE HOUR OF DISTRESS. III. GETHSEMANE WAS A WITNESS OF CHRIST'S RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD. IV. GETHSEMANE WAS A WITNESS OF CHRIST'S SYMPATHY WITH, AND AFFECTION FOR, HIS TRIED FOLLOWERS. (*J. H. Hitchens.*) *The prayer in Gethsemane:*—I. Let us notice, in the outset, THE SUDDEN EXPERIENCE WHICH LED TO THIS ACT OF SUPPLICATION. He began to be "sore amazed and to be very heavy." Evidently something new had come to Him; either a disclosure of fresh trial, or a violence of unusual pain under it. Here it is affecting to find in our Divine Lord so much of recognized and simple human nature. He desired to be alone, but He planned to have somebody He loved and trusted within call. His grief was too burdensome for utter abandonment. Hence came the demand for sympathy He made, and the persistence in reserve he retained, both of which are so welcome and instructive. For here emphatically, as perhaps nowhere else, we are "with Him in the garden." Oh, how passionately craving of help, and yet how majesterially rejectful of impertinent condolence, are some of these moments we have in our mourning, when our souls retire upon their reserves, and will open their deepest recesses only to God! Our secret is unshared, our struggle is unrevealed to men. Yet we love those who love us just as much as ever. It is helpful to find that even our Lord Jesus had some feelings of which He could not tell John. He "went away" (Matt. xxvi. 44). II. Let us, in the second place, inquire concerning THE EXACT MEANING OF THIS SINGULAR SUPPLICATION. In those three intense prayers was the Saviour simply afraid of death? Was that what our version makes the Apostle Paul say He "feared"? Was He just pleading there under the olives for permission to put off the human form now, renounce the "likeness of men" (Phil. ii. 7, 8), which He had taken upon Him, slip back into heaven inconspicuously by some sort of translation which would remove Him from the power of Pilate, so that when Judas had done his errand "quickly," and had

arrived with the soldiers, Jesus would be mysteriously missing, and the the traitor would find nothing but three harmless comrades there asleep on the grass? That is to say, are we ready to admit that our Lord and Master seriously proposed to go back to His Divine Father's bosom at this juncture, leaving the prophecies unfulfilled, the redemption unfinished, the very honour of Jehovah sullied with a failure? Does it offer any help in dealing with such a conjecture to insist that this was only a moment of weakness in His "human nature?" Would this make any difference as a matter of fact for Satan to discover that he had only been contending with another Adam, after all? Would the lost angels any the less exult over the happy news of a celestial defeat because they learned that the "seed of the woman" had not succeeded in bruising the serpent's head by reason of His own alarm at the last? Oh, no: surely no! Jesus had said, when in the far-back counsels of eternity the covenant of redemption was made, "Lo, I come: I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Psa. xl. 7, 8). He could have had no purpose now, we may be evermore certain, of withdrawing the proffer of Himself to suffer for men. There can be no doubt that the "cup" which our Lord desired might "pass from" His lips, and yet was willing to drink if there could be no release from it, was the judicial wrath of God discharged upon Him as a culprit vicariously before the law, receiving the awful curse due to human sin. We reject all notion of mere physical illness or exhaustion as well as all conjecture of mere sentimental loneliness under the abandonment of friends. In that supreme moment when He found that He, sinless in every particular and degree, must be considered guilty, and so that His heavenly Father's face and favour must at least for a while be withdrawn from Him, He was, in despite of all His courageous preparation, surprised and almost frightened to discover how much His own soul was beginning to shudder and recoil from coming into contact with sin of any sort, even though it was only imputed. Evidently it seemed to His infinitely pure nature horrible to be put in a position, however false, such as that His adorable Father would be compelled to draw the mantle over His face. This shocked Him unutterably. He shrank back in consternation when He saw He must become loathsome in the sight of heaven because of the "abominable thing" God hated (Jer. xliv. 4). Hence, we conceive the prayer covered only that. That which appears at first a startling surrender of redemption as a whole, is nothing more than a petition to be relieved from what He hoped might be deemed no necessary part of the curse He was bearing for others. He longed, as He entered unusual darkness, just to receive the usual light. It was as if He had said to His heavenly Father: "The pain I understood, the curse I came for. Shame, obloquy, death, I care nothing for them. I only recoil from being loaded so with foreign sin that I cannot be looked upon with any allowance. I am in alarm when I think of the prince of this world coming and finding something in me, when hitherto he had nothing. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, when I think of the taunt that the Lord I trusted no longer delights in Me; this is like laughing God to scorn. Is there no permitted discrimination between a real sinner, and a substitute only counted such before the law in this one particular? All things are possible with Thee; make it possible now for Thee to see Thy Son, and yet not seem to see the imputed guilt He bears! Yet even this will I endure, if so it must be in order that I may fulfil all righteousness; Thy will, not Mine, be done!" III. Again, let us observe carefully THE EXTRAORDINARY RANGE WHICH THIS PRAYER IN THE GARDEN TOOK. It is not worth while even to appear to be playing upon an accidental collocation of words in the sacred narrative; but why should it be asserted that any inspired words are accidental? The whole history of Immanuel's sufferings that awful night contains no incident more strikingly suggestive than the record of the distance He kept between Himself and His disciples. It is the act as well as the language which is significant. Mark says, "He went forward a little." Luke says, "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast." Matthew says, "He went a little farther." So now we know that this one petition of our Lord was the final, secret, supreme whisper of His innermost heart. The range of such a prayer was over His whole nature. It exhausted His entire being. It covered the humanity it represented. In it for Himself and for us "He went a little farther" than ever He had in His supplication gone before. One august monarch rules over this fallen world, and holds all human hearts under His sway. His name is Pain. His image and superscription is upon every coin that passes current in this mortal life. He claims fealty from the entire race of man. And, sooner or later, once, twice, or a hundred times, as the king chooses, and not as the subject wills, each soul has to put on its

black garment, go sedately and sufferingly on its sad journey to pay its loyal tribute, precisely as Joseph and Mary were compelled to go up to Bethlehem to be taxed. When this tyrant Pain summons us to come and discharge his dues, it is the quickest of human instincts which prompts us to seek solitude. That seems to be the universal rule (Zech. xii. 12–14). But now we discover from this symbolic picture that, whenever any Christian goes away from other disciples deeper into the solitudes of his own Gethsemane, he almost at once draws nearer to the Saviour he needs. For our Lord just now "went forward a little." There He is, on ahead of us all in experience! It is simply and wonderfully true of Jesus always, no matter how severe is the suffering into which for their discipline He leads His chosen, He Himself has taken His position in advance of them. No human lot was ever so forlorn, so grief-burdened, so desolate, as was that of the Great Life given to redeem it. No path ever reached so distantly into the region of heart-trying agony as that it might not still see that peerless Christ of God "about a stone's cast" beyond it, kneeling in some deeper shadows of His own. No believer ever went so far into his lonely Gethsemane but that he found his Master had gone "a little farther."

"Christ did not send, but came Himself, to save;
The ransom price He did not lend, but gave;
Christ died, the Shepherd for the sheep,—
We only fall asleep."

IV. Finally, let us inquire after THE SUPREME RESULTS OF THIS SUPPLICATION OF OUR LORD. 1. Consider the High Priest of our profession (Heb. xii. 2–4). What good would it do to pray, if Christ's prayer was unsuccessful? 2. But was it answered? Certainly (Heb. v. 7–9). The cup remained (John xviii. 11), but he got acquiescence (Matt. xxvi. 42), and strength (Luke xxii. 43). 3. Have we been "with Him in the garden"? Then we have found a similar "cup" (Mark x. 38, 39). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Companionship in sorrow*:—It is a delightful thing to be with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration, where heavenly visitants are seen, and a heavenly voice is heard. It would seem good to be always there. But they who would follow Jesus through this earthly life, must be with Him also out on the stormy sea in the gloomy night; and again they must come with Him into the valley of the shadow of death. There are bright, glad days to the Christian believer, when faith and hope and love are strong. But there are days also of trial and sorrow, when it seems as if faith must fail, and hope must die, and love itself must cease. It is one thing for a young couple to stand together in light and joy, surrounded by friends, at their marriage reception, or to share each other's pleasure on their wedding-tour. It is quite another thing for a married pair to watch together through the weary night over a sick and suffering child, and to close the eyes of their darling in its death sleep, in the gray of the gloomy morning. Yet the clouds are as sure as the sunlight on the path of every chosen disciple of Jesus who follows his Master unswervingly; and he who never comes with Jesus to a place named Gethsemane has chosen for himself another path than that wherein the Saviour leads the way. (*H. Clay Trumbull*). *Christ, our sin-bearer*:—I. WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OUR LORD WAS IN, HE STOOD THERE AS THE GREAT SIN-BEARER. Here, beloved, we see what the burden was which our Lord bore: it was our sins. II. BUT NOW OBSERVE, SECONDLY, THE GREAT WEIGHT OF THIS BURDEN. Who can declare it? (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The sufferings of the good*:—My life has been to me a mystery of love. I know that God's education of each man is in perfect righteousness. I know that the best on earth have been the greatest sufferers, because they were the best, and like gold could stand the fire and be purified by it. I know this, and a great deal more, and yet the mercy of God to me is such a mystery that I have been tempted to think I was utterly unworthy of suffering. God have mercy on my thoughts! I may be unable to stand suffering. I do not know. But I lay myself at Thy feet, and say, 'Not that I am prepared, but that Thou art good and wise, and wilt prepare me.'" (*Norman Macleod.*) *Resignation*:—Of all the smaller English missions, the Livingstone-Congo stands conspicuous for its overflowing of zeal and life and promise; and of all its agents, young M'Call was the brightest; but he was struck down in mid-work. His last words were recorded by a stranger who visited him. Let each one of us lay them to our hearts. "Lord, I gave myself, body, mind, and soul, to Thee. I consecrated my whole life and being to Thy service; and now, if it please Thee to take myself, instead of the work which I would do for Thee, what is that to me? Thy will be done." (*R. N. Cust.*)

Christ's sorrow and desertion:—It is beyond our power to ascertain the precise amount of suffering sustained by our Lord; for a mystery necessarily encircles the person of Jesus, in which two natures are combined. This mystery may ever prevent our knowing how His humanity was sustained by His divinity. Still, undoubtedly, the general representation of Scripture would lead to the conclusion, that though He was absolute God, with every power and prerogative of Deity, yet was Christ, as man, left to the same conflicts, and dependent on the same assistances as any of His followers. He differed, indeed, immeasurably, in that He was conceived without the taint of original sin, and therefore was free from our evil propensities: He lived the life of faith which He worked out for Himself, and He lived it to gain for us a place in His Father's kingdom. Although He was actually to meet affliction like a man, He was left without any external support from above. This is very remarkably shown by His agony in the garden, when an angel was sent to strengthen Him. Wonderful that a Divine person should have craved assistance, and that He did not draw on His own inexhaustible resources! But, it was as a man that He grappled with the powers of darkness—as a man who could receive no celestial aid. And, if this be a true interpretation of the mode in which our Lord met persecution and death, we must be right, in contrasting Him with martyrs, when we assert an immeasurable difference between His sufferings, and those of men who have died nobly for the truth: from Him the light of the Father's countenance was withdrawn, whilst unto them it was conspicuously displayed. This may explain why Christ was confounded and overwhelmed, where others had been serene and undaunted. Still, the question arises,—Why was Christ thus deserted of the Father? Why were those comforts and supports withheld from Him which have been frequently vouchsafed to His followers? No doubt it is a surprising as well as a piteous spectacle that of our Lord shrinking from the anguish of what should befal Him, whilst others have faced death, in its most frightful forms, with unruffled composure. You never can account for this, except by acknowledging that our Lord was no ordinary man, meeting death as a mere witness for truth, but that he was actually a sin-offering, bearing the weight of the world's iniquities. His agony—His doleful cries—His sweating, as it were, great drops of blood; these are not to be explained on the supposition of His being merely an innocent man, hunted down by fierce and unrelenting enemies. Had He been only this, why should He be apparently so excelled in confidence and composure by a long line of martyrs and confessors? Christ was more than this. Though He had done no sin, yet was He in the place of the sinful, bearing the weight of Divine indignation, and made to feel the terrors of Divine wrath. Innocent, He was treated as guilty! He had made Himself the substitute of the guilty—hence His anguish and terror. Bear in mind, that the sufferer who exhibits, as you might think, so much less of composure and firmness than has been evinced by many when called on to die for truth—bear in mind, that this sufferer has had a world's iniquity laid on His shoulders; that God is now dealing with Him as the representative of apostate man, and exacting from Him the penalties due to unnumbered transgressions; and you will cease to wonder though you may still almost shudder at words, so expressive of agony—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christ's agony of soul*:—It is on the sufferings of the soul that we would fix your attention; for these, we doubt not, were the mighty endurances of the Redeemer—these pursued Him to His very last moments, until He paid the last fragment of our debts. You will perceive that it was in the soul rather than in the body that our blessed Saviour made atonement for transgression. He had put Himself in the place of the criminal, so far as it was possible for an innocent man to assume the position of the guilty; and standing in the place of the criminal, with guilt imputed to Him, He had to bear the punishment that misdeeds had incurred. You must be aware that anguish of the soul rather than of the body is the everlasting portion of sinners; and though, of course, we cannot think that our Lord endured precisely what sinners had deserved, for he could have known nothing of the stings and bodes of conscience beneath which they must eternally writhe, yet forasmuch as He was exhausting their curse—a curse which was to drive ruin into their soul as well as rack the body with unspeakable pain—we might well expect that the soul's anguish of a surety or substitute would be felt even more than the bodily: and that external affliction, however vast and accumulated, would be comparatively less in its rigour or accompaniments, than His internal anguish, which is not to be measured or imagined. This expectation is certainly quite borne out by the statements of Scripture, if carefully considered.

Indeed it is very observable that when our Lord is set before us as exhibiting signs of anguish and distress there was no bodily suffering whatever—none but what was caused mentally. I refer, as you must be aware, to the scene in the garden, as immediately connected with our text, when the Redeemer manifested the most intense grief and horror, His sweat being as it were great drops of blood—a scene which the most callous can scarcely encounter: in this case there was no nail, no spear. Ay, though there was the prospect of the cross, there was hardly fear. It was the thought of dying as a malefactor, which so overcame the Redeemer, that He needed strength by an angel from heaven. That it was that wrung out the thrilling exclamation: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." It is far beyond us to tell you what were the spiritual endurances which so distressed and bore down the Redeemer. There is a veil over the anguish of the incarnate God which no mortal hand may attempt to remove. I can only suppose that holy as He was—incapable of sinning in thought or deed—He had a piercing and overwhelming sense of the criminality of sin—of the dishonour which it attached to the world—of the ruin which it was bringing on man: He must have felt as no other being could, the mighty fearfulness of sin—linked alike with God and with man—the brethren of sinners, and the being sinned against. Who can doubt that, as He bore our transgressions in our nature, He must have been wounded as with a two-edged sword—the one edge lacerating Him as He was jealous of divine glory, and the other as He longed for human happiness? Though we cannot explain what passed in the soul of the Redeemer, we would impress on you the truth, that it was in the soul rather than in the body that those dire pangs were endured which exhausted the curse denounced against sin. Let not any think that mere bodily anguish went as an equivalent for the miseries and the tortures which must have been eternally exacted from every human being. It would take away much of the terribleness of the future doom of the impenitent, to represent those sufferings as only, or chiefly, bodily. Men will argue the nature of the doom, not the nature of the suffering capacity in its stead. And, certainly, a hell without mental agony, would be a paradise in comparison with what we believe to be the pandemonium, where the soul is the rack, and conscience the executioner. Go not away from Calvary, with thoughts of nothing but suffering a death by being nailed to a cross and left to expire after long torture! Go away, rather thinking of the horror which had taken hold of the soul of the forsaken sufferer; and as you carry with you a remembrance of the doleful spectacle, and smite your breasts at the thought of His piteous cry—a cry more startling than the crash of the earthquake that announced His death—lay ye to heart His unimaginable endurances which extort the cry: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (*Ibid.*) *Blessings through Christ's soul-agony*:—It is this death—this travail of the soul, which from the beginning to the end of a Christian life is effecting or producing that holier creature which is finally to be presented without spot or wrinkle, meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is in the pangs of the soul, that he feels the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost, realized in the birth of the Christian character, who in any age of the world recovers the defaced image of his God. I think it gives a preciousness to every means of grace, thus to consider them as brought into being by the agonies of the Redeemer. It would go far, were this borne in mind, to defend it against the resistance or neglect, if it were impressed on you that there is not a single blessing of which you are conscious, that did not spring from this sorrow—this sorrow unto death of the Redeemer's soul. Could you possibly make light, as perhaps you now do, of those warnings and secret admonitions which come you know not whence, prompting you to forsake certain sins and give heed to certain duties, if you were impressed that it was through the very soul of the Redeemer being "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," that there was obtained for you the privilege of access to God by prayer, or the having offers made to you of pardon and reconciliation? Do you think you could kneel down irreverently or formally, or that you could treat the ordinance of preaching as a mere human institution, in regard to which, it mattered little whether you were in earnest or not? The memory that Christ's soul travailed in agony to procure for you those blessings—which, because they are abundant, you may be tempted to underrate—would necessarily impart a preciousness to the whole. You could not be indifferent to the bitter cry; you could not look languidly on the scene as you saw the cross. This is a fact; it was only by sorrow—sorrow unto death of the Redeemer's soul—that any of the ordinary means of grace—those means that you are daily enjoying, have been procured. Will you think little of those means? Will you neglect them? Will you trifle with them? Will you not

rather feel that what cost so much to buy, it must be fatal to despise? Neither, as we said, is it the worth only of the means of grace that you may learn from the mighty sorrow by which they were purchased; it is also your own worth, the worth of your own soul. When we would speak of the soul and endeavour to impress men with a sense of its value, we may strive to set forth the nature of its properties, its powers, its capacities, its destinies, but we can make very little way; we show little more than our ignorance, for search how we will the soul is a mystery; it is like Deity, of which it is the spark; it hides itself by its own light; and eludes by dazzling the inquirer. You will remember, that our Lord emphatically asked: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is implied in the question, that if the whole world were offered in barter—the world, with all its honours and its riches—he would be the veriest of fools who would consent to the exchange, and would be a loser to an extent beyond thought, in taking creation and surrendering his soul. Then I hear you say, "This is all a theory!" It may be so. "The world in one scale, is but a particle of dust to the soul in the other! We should like to see an actual exchange: this might assure us of the untold worth that you wish to demonstrate." And, my brethren, you shall see a human soul put on one side and the equivalent on the other. You shall see an exchange! Not the exchange—the foul exchange which is daily, ay, hourly! made—the exchange of the soul for a bauble, for a shadow; an exchange, which even those who make it would shrink from if they thought on what they were doing—would shrink from with horror, if they would know how far they are losers and not gainers by the bargain. The exchange we have to exhibit is a fair exchange. What is given for the soul is what the soul is worth. Come with us, and strive to gaze on the glories of the invisible God—He who has grieved in the soul, "for He emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation," that the soul might be saved! Come with us to the stable of Bethlehem! Come with us to Calvary! The amazing accumulation of which you are spectator—the fearful sorrow, on which you hardly dare to look—the agony of Him who had done no sin—the agony of Him who was the Lord of glory—the death of Him who was the Prince of Light—this was given for the soul; by this accumulation was redemption effected. Is there not here an exchange—an exchange actually made, with which we might prove it impossible to overrate the value of the soul? If you read the form of the question—"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" you will see it implies that it is not within the empire of wealth to purchase the soul. But cannot this assume the form of another question—What would God give in exchange for the soul? Here we have an answer, not of supposition, but of fact: we tell you what God has given—He has given Himself. (*Ibid.*) *Complete resignation:*—A minister, being asked by a friend, during his last illness, whether he thought himself dying, answered: "Really, friend, I care not whether I am or not. If I die, I shall be with God; and, if I live, God will be with me." *Instance of resignation:*—During the siege of Barcelona, in 1705, Captain Carleton witnessed the following affecting incident, which he relates in his memoirs: "I saw an old officer, having his only son with him, a fine young man about twenty years of age, going into their tent to dine. Whilst they were at dinner a shot took off the head of the son. The father immediately rose, and first looking down upon his headless child, and then lifting up his eyes to heaven, whilst the tears ran down his cheeks, only said, 'Thy will be done!"

Ver. 38. **The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.**—1. I think, will some say, that my sin is a sin of infirmity because it is but small. But if you look into 1 Sam. xv. you may read that Saul's sin, for which the Lord rejected him, was of no great outward bulk; for he spared the fatlings that he might sacrifice thereby. A great many small sins may make as great a bulk as one gross sin; yea, possibly there may be much sinfulness and evil in committing of a small sin; for as amongst men, it is the greatest incivility to break with another for a small matter; so with God, to break with God for a small thing; and much skill may be seen in a small work; a little watch, &c. So your skill in sinning may be seen in a small sin; his sin is never small that thinks it small. 2. But I think my sin is a sin of infirmity because I am tempted to it, and because I am drawn on by others. But, I pray, was not Adam tempted unto the eating of the forbidden fruit by Eve? And was not Eve tempted by Satan? And will you call that a sin of infirmity that condemned all the world as Adam's sin did? 3. But I think my sin is a sin of infirmity because I do strive against it. And, I pray, did not Pilate strive against the crucifying of Christ? Possibly therefore a man may

strive against his sin, and yet the sin be no sin of infirmity. 4. But my sin is a sin of infirmity because I am troubled after it. And was not Esau troubled after he had sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage; did he not seek it with tears? I do strive against it, and though I am troubled after it, yet it may be no sin of infirmity. But as some are mistaken on the left hand, thinking that their sins are sins of infirmity, when indeed they are not: so others on the right hand are mistaken, and think that their sins are not sins of infirmity, but of a worse nature, when indeed they are: and that upon these accounts: 1. Oh, saith one, I fear my sin is no sin of infirmity, for I sin knowingly, and with deliberation; I sin against my knowledge, and against my conscience, and therefore my sin can be no sin of infirmity. But for answer hereunto, you must know, it is one thing for a man to sin knowingly, and another thing for a man to sin out of knowledge, or against his knowledge. A man sins ignorantly when ignorance is the companion of his sin only: a man sins out of ignorance, when ignorance is the only cause of his sin, and not the companion only. 2. Oh, but I fear that my sin is no sin of infirmity, because I fall into it again and again, and do lie in it. But do ye know what it is to lie in sin? There is much mistake about lying in sin. Now if you do thus keep and lie in your sin, why do you so complain? this your complaining argues that there is some purging out, and therefore you do not lie in sin. 3. Oh, but I fear my sin cannot be a sin of infirmity, because I fall into it after I have been admonished of the evil of it. To that I say no more, but desire you to consider the instance that is here before you. The disciples slept, our Lord and Saviour Christ comes and wakens them; yea, and He chides them too: "What (saith He) cannot ye watch with Me one hour! watch and pray;" and yet they slept again: and He comes and wakens them again, and admonisheth them again, and yet they slept again. Possibly, therefore, a man may fall into the same sin again and again, yea, even after admonition, and yet it may be a sin of infirmity. Yet how many poor souls are there, that are mistaken here on the right hand, and do think that their sins are no sins of infirmity, when indeed they are. But if there be such mistakes, how shall we then know whether our sins be sins of infirmity? 1. Negatively, That is no sin of infirmity, which is a gross, foul, scandalous sin, committed with deliberation and consultation. 2. If the sin be a ringleader unto other foul sins, it is no sin of infirmity. The ringleading sin is the most heinous sin. And you see how it is amongst men; if there be a rebellion or insurrection, they take the ringleader and hang up him, for say they, This is the great transgressor, for he is the ringleader. So amongst sins, the great sin is the ringleader; and therefore if your sin be a ringleader unto other foul sins, it is not a sin of infirmity. 3. A sin of presumption is not a sin of infirmity. Sins of presumption and sins of infirmity are set in opposition one to the other in Numb. xv. and Psalm xix. And when a man doth therefore sin the rather because God is merciful, or because the sin is but a sin of infirmity, or because he hopes to repent afterward, or because his sin may and can stand with grace; this is a sin of presumption, and is no sin of infirmity: sins of presumption are no sins of infirmity. 4. Again, If the sin be a reigning sin, then it is no sin of infirmity, for when sin reigns, grace doth not; therefore saith the apostle (Rom. vi.), "Let not sin have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace;" and when sin reigns it is in its full strength. But how shall we know, then, affirmatively, whether our sin be a sin of infirmity? 1. Thus: If it do merely proceed from want of age in Christianity, then it is, without doubt, a sin of infirmity. Babes are weak and full of weaknesses. 2. If it be no other sin than what is incident unto all the saints, then it is a sin of infirmity; for that sin which is committed by all the saints, is no reigning sin, but a sin mortified. 3. If it be such a sin as you cannot avoid, which breaks in upon you before you are aware, even before you can call in for help from your reason and consideration, and which the general bent and frame of your heart and soul is against, then it is a sin of infirmity, for then it doth arise from want of strength to resist, and not from will to commit. This was the case of Paul (Rom. vii.) when evil was present with him, being against the general bent and frame of his soul; for saith he, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, and yet the thing that I would not do, that do I." 4. An infirmity will hardly acknowledge itself to be a sin of infirmity; but the person in whom it is, fears lest it should be worse. If your sin do arise chiefly from some outward cause, it is a sin of infirmity; for then it is not so much from will to commit, as from want of strength to resist. The sin which the apostle speaks of (Gal. vi. 1) is a sin of infirmity, and the man that commits it is said to be overtaken. Now when a man is upon his journey travelling

and is overtaken by another person, his inward inclination and disposition was not to meet the other: so when a man is overtaken by sin, it argues that his sin doth proceed from some outward cause; and when it doth proceed from some outward cause, then he is truly said to be overtaken with it. 5. Infirmity loves admonition: I mean, the person that sins out of infirmity, loves to be admonished, takes admonition kindly, and doth bless God for it. 6. An infirmity discovers good, though it be in itself evil; it is an ill sin, but a good sign. The thistle is an ill weed, yet it discovers a fat and a good soil; smoke is ill, but it discovers fire. 7. Sins of infirmities are servants and drawers of water unto your graces; though in themselves evil, yet through the overruling hand of God's grace, they will make you more gracious another way. Ye know how it is with a young tradesman, who hath but a small stock; he keeps his shop diligently, and will not spend as others do. If you ask him the reason, saying, Such and such men are of your trade, and they will spend their shilling with us, and their time with us; why will you not do as they? He answers presently, True, they do so, and they may do so, their estate will bear it; but as for me, my stock is small, very little, therefore I may not do as they do, but I must be diligent, and a good husband; I am but a young beginner, and have little skill in the trade, therefore it behoves me to be diligent. His very weakness is the cause of his diligence. So here, the more infirmities that a gracious soul labours under, the more diligent he will be; and if you ask him, Why do you take so much pains in following the means, and the like? he answers, Alas, I am a poor weak creature: such and such an one there is that hath an excellent memory, all that ever he reads or hears is his own; but my memory is naught, my head and heart is naught, and therefore by the grace of God I will take the more pains in following after Christ. Thus his very infirmity is a provocation unto all his diligence. 8. Infirmity doth constantly keep a man's heart low, down, and humble. If one have an infirmity in his speech, he will not be so forward to speak as others are; but being conscious of his own infirmity, he is always low, and afraid to speak. So spiritually. But suppose that my sin be no other than a sin of infirmity, what then? The third particular answers you. Then, your sin being but an infirmity, Christ will never leave you for it, nor cast you off for it; but if you sleep, He will waken you; and if you sleep again, He will waken you again. Oh, what sweet grace is this. Is there no evil then in this sin of infirmity? Yes, much, very much: for though it be a drawer of water to your grace, yet it is a Gibeonite, a native, a Canaanite, that will upon all occasions be ready to betray you, and to open the door unto greater thieves, and will always be a thorn and goad in your sides; and though it do not put out your light, yet it is a thief in your candle, which may smear out much of your comfort, and blemish your duty. Ye know how it is with a good writing pen; if there be a small hair in it, though the hair be never so little a thing, yet if it be not pulled out, it will blot and blemish the whole writing sometimes. So may the sin of infirmity do; your whole duty may be blotted and blemished by this small hair, and although God can and doth make use of your infirmities for to keep your graces, yet they are but your lees and dregs, whereas your graces should be all refined. Oh, what an evil thing therefore is it, for a man to be unrefined. And although Christ will not cast you off for a sin of infirmity, yet you may provoke Him thereby to chide you, and to be angry with you. The unbelief of the disciples was but their infirmity, yet Christ did upbraid them because of their unbelief. Thirdly, Though there be much evil in this sin, Christ will not cast you off for it. For it is an honour to a man to pass by infirmities, saith Solomon; much more is it for the honour of Christ to pass by the infirmities of His people. The saints and people of God are in covenant with God by Jesus Christ, and that covenant is a conjugal covenant (Hosea ii.). But what husband will put away his wife for her infirmities? That covenant is a paternal covenant, and what father will thrust his child out of doors for his infirmities? A child, though deformed, is more pleasing to the father, because the child is his own, than another beautiful child that is not his own. If a master should turn away his servant for every failing and weakness, who would serve him? Now, saith Luther, what man will cut off his nose because there is filth in it? yea, though the nose be the sink of the brain, yet because it is a member a man will not cut it off. And will Christ cut off one of His members, because there is filth in him, or some weakness and infirmity in him? What father will knock his child on the head, because a wart grows on his forehead? These infirmities in the saints and people of God, are their warts, which grow in the face of their conversation: the blessed martyrs themselves had these warts: Hierom of Prague had a great wart upon him,

Cranmer another, Jewel another; yea, if we look into that little book of Chronicles, I mean Heb. xi., what saint is there mentioned upon record, but had one wart or another? Had not Abraham his wart, in saying, that Sarah was his sister? Had not Sarah hers in laughing? Had not Jacob, Isaac, and Joseph theirs? Moses, Rahab, Samson, Jephthah, and David theirs? Luther had his, and our reformers theirs; yet God owned, used, and honoured them. Surely therefore, though there be much evil in a sin of infirmity, especially if a man fall into it again and again; yet Christ will not leave a man, or cast him off for it. If these things be true, then what necessity is upon us, and what great cause have we to examine ourselves, and to consider seriously, what sort of sins those sins are, which we labour under. But it seems that all the sins of the godly are not sins of infirmity, and God will not cast off a godly man for any sin: what advantage, therefore, hath this sin of infirmity above other sins; or what disadvantage do the other sins of the godly labour under, which this sin of infirmity doth not? 1. Much, very much: for though my sin be great; yet if it be a sin of infirmity, it shall not hinder the present acceptance of my duty. 2. Although my sin be great, yet if it be but an infirmity, it shall not hinder the sense of my justification. 3. Though my sin be great, yet if it be but an infirmity, there is a pardon that lies in course for it; and though it be good to repent of every sin, with a distinct, and particular repentance, yet it is not necessary that there should be a particular repentance for every sin of infirmity. 4. Though a man's sin be great, yet if it be but an infirmity, it shall never bring a scourge upon his family. And though my sin be great, yet if it be but a sin of infirmity, it shall never spoil my gifts, nor make them unprofitable: if a man have great gifts, praying, exercising gifts, and his life be scandalous, what saith the world? But suppose that upon due search and examination, I find that my sin is no other than a sin of infirmity, which will not cast me off, although through my weakness, I do fall into it again and again, what then? Then several duties follow, and accordingly you are to take up these, and the like gracious resolutions. 1. If my sin be a sin of infirmity, and no other, then through grace will I observe what God's design is, in suffering and leaving such infirmities in me, and will labour what I can and may, to promote and advance that design. 2. If my sin be but a sin of infirmity, and God will not cast me off for it, then through the grace of God, will I never believe these false reports of Christ, and those misrepresentations of Him which Satan would put upon Him, whereby he would persuade me and others, that our Lord Christ is a hard master. 3. If the Lord Christ will not cast me off for my sins of infirmity, then, through the grace of God, I will not question my spiritual estate and condition for every sin; I will grieve for every sin of infirmity because it is a sin, but I will not question my condition, because it is but a sin of infirmity. 4. Then will not I cast off myself and others for the sins of infirmities. Shall Christ's eye be good and shall my eye be bad? 5. Then will not I cast off the things of Christ because of any infirmity that may adhere to them, or the dispensation of them. When Christ took our nature on Him, His deity was veiled under our humanity, His excellency under our infirmity. So now, His grace and His dispensations are veiled under the infirmity of our administrations: as for example: preaching is an ordinance of Christ, yet the sermon may be so delivered, with so much weakness of the speaker, that the ordinance of Christ may be veiled under much infirmity. 6. And if the Lord will not cast me off for my infirmities, then, through grace, I will never be discouraged from the performance of any duty. I will pray as I can and hear as I can, and though I be not able to pray as I would, I will pray as I am able; and though I am not able to examine mine own heart as I would, yet I will do what I am able, for the Lord will not cast me off for infirmities, and therefore I will not cast off my duties because of them. 7. And, lastly, if the Lord Jesus Christ will not cast me off for mine infirmities, then will I never sin because the sin is but a sin of infirmity. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *Watch and Pray*:—Two points specially claim our attention here. I. THE COMMAND GIVEN—"Watch and pray." 1. Watch. The word is very simple. A physician watches a sick man. A porter watches a building. A sentinel watches on a city's wall. (1) To watch implies not to be taken up with other things. (2) To watch implies to expect the enemy's approach. (3) Watching also includes an examination of the points of attack. The physician will observe what course the disease is taking, what organs it is likely to touch. Thus he watches. 2. Pray. (1) This seems to refer to a habit of prayer. Not a wild cry in danger or sorrow. (2) Special prayer with reference to temptation is also implied. Prayer to be delivered from the presence of temptation, prayer for victory in temptation. II. THE SUITABILITY OF THE

COMMAND TO THOSE EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION. 1. The two parts together form the safeguard. Watching supplies materials for prayer. Prayer makes watching effectual. To pray only is presumption. To watch only is to depend on self. 2. The command also suits us because of the enemy's subtlety. We need to discover his wiles by watching. We pray for wisdom to discern his specious assaults. 3. And because of our own weakness. (Compare vers. 29, 31, with 67, 68.) 4. It is also suitable in consequence of our Lord's appointment. The battle is His. He appoints its laws. And He has said, "Watch and pray." The command speaks thus to true disciples. What does it say to those who are careless and unbelieving? (*W. S. Bruce, M.A.*) *Prayer all comprehensive:*—Prayer is not only request made to God, but converse had with Him. It is the expression of desire to Him so as to supply it—of purpose so as to steady it—of hope so as to brighten it. It is the bringing of one's heart into the sunshine, so that like a plant, its inward life may thrive for an outward development. It is the plea of one's better self against one's weaker self. It utters despondency so that it may attain confidence. It is the expression and the exercise of love for all that is good and true. It is a wrestle with evil in the presence of Supreme Goodness. It is the ascent of the soul above time into the freedom of eternity. (*Christian World Pulpit.*) *The need for watchfulness:*—It seems as though there were no word so far reaching as the word "watch." Vigilance is the price of everything good and great in earth or heaven. It was for his faithful vigilance that the memory of the Pompeian sentinel is embalmed in poetry and recorded in history. Nothing but unceasing watchfulness can keep the heart in harmony with God's heart. It was a stormy, boisterous night. The dark clouds hung over us, and the windcame with tenfold fury. The sea rolled in mountains, and the proud ship seemed but a toy amid those tremendous billows. Far up on the mast, on the look out, the sailor was heard to cry, "An iceberg on the starboard-bow." "An iceberg on the larboard-bow!" The deck-officer called to the helmsman, "Port the helm steadily!" and the sailors at the wheel heard and obeyed. The officers were aroused, for there was danger on board to three hundred precious souls. The captain spent a sleepless night, pacing the deck or cabin. Gigantic icebergs were coming against the vessel, and eternal vigilance was the price of our safety in that northern sea. And so it is all through human life. (*Anon.*) *Watchfulness:*—Watching is never pleasant work; no soldier really likes it. Men prefer even the excitement and danger of the battle-field to the long weeks of patient vigilance, which nevertheless may do quite as much as a victorious battle to decide the issues of a campaign. Now it is just so in the spiritual war. The forces of civilization rendered our soldiers more than a match for all the barbarous courage of their swarthy foes, provided only by constant vigilance they were in a position to use those forces; and even so the omnipotence of God renders the true Christian more than a match for all the forces of hell, provided only he too is sufficiently vigilant to detect the approach of the foe, and sufficiently wise to confront him with the courage of faith when his approach is detected; but if he walks carelessly, or fails to exercise proper vigilance, the battle will be lost almost before the danger is realized, and Faith will forfeit her victory just because she was not ready to put forth all the supernatural powers that she may command. It is, alas! not an uncommon thing to meet with Christian souls that seem to know something of the life of faith, and yet, to their great surprise, find themselves overcome when they least expect it. We observe sometimes a certain tone of petulance in these admissions of failure, as if in their heart of hearts some sort of implication were cast upon the faithfulness of God, although they would shrink from expressing this in so many words. Now, clearly the cause of all such failures must lie with us, and it will be our wisdom to endeavour to discover it; while it is the worst of folly to charge God with unfaithfulness. What are we placed in this world for? Obviously that we may be trained and developed for our future position by exposure to the forces of evil. Were we so sheltered from evil as that there should be no need for constant watchfulness, we should lose the moral benefit which a habit of constant watchfulness induces. We know that it is a law of nature, that faculties which are never employed perish from disuse; and, on the other hand, faculties which are fully and frequently employed acquire a wonderful capacity. Is not this equally true in the spiritual world? We are being trained probably for high and holy service by-and-by, in which we shall need all those faculties that are now being quickened and trained by our contact with danger, and our exposure to apparently hostile conditions of existence. We are to be trained, by learning quickness of perception of danger here, to exercise quickness of perception in ministry and willing service yonder. Besides,

Watchfulness continually provides opportunities for faith, and tends to draw us the closer, and keep us the closer, to Him by whom alone we stand. Were we to be so saved from evil by a single act, as that we should have no further need of Watchfulness, should we not lose much that now makes us feel our dependence on Him who is our constant safety? Have we not to thank God for the very dangers that constrain us to keep so near Him if we are to be safe at all? Let us point out what Watchfulness is not before we go on to consider what it is. And I. WATCHFULNESS IS SOMETHING QUITE DISTINCT FROM NERVOUS TIMIDITY AND MORBID APPREHENSIVENESS—the condition of a man who sees an enemy in every bush, and is tortured by a thousand alarms and all the misgivings of unbelief. David did not show himself watchful, but faithless, when he exclaimed, "I shall now one day perish by the hands of Saul;" and we do not show ourselves watchful when we go on our way trembling, depressed with all sorts of forebodings of disaster. Let me offer a homely illustration of what I mean. I was amused the other day at hearing a soldier's account of a terrible fright that he had during the time of the Fenian scare a few years ago. It fell to his lot one dark night to act as sentinel in the precincts of an important arsenal, which it was commonly supposed might be the scene of a great explosion any night. The fortress was surrounded by a common, and was therefore easy to be approached by evil-disposed persons. The night, as I have said, was as dark as a night could be, and he was all alone, and full of apprehensions of danger. He stood still for a moment fancying he heard something moving near him, and then stepped backwards for a few paces, when he suddenly felt himself come into violent contact with something, which he incontinently concluded must be a crouching Fenian. "I was never so frightened," he said, "before or since in my life, and to tell you the truth, I fell sprawling on my back. Imagine my feelings when I found that the thing that had terrified me beyond all description was only a harmless sheep that had fallen asleep a little too near my beat." Now, dear friends, I think that this soldier's ridiculous, but very excusable, panic may serve to illustrate the experience of many timid, apprehensive Christians. They live in a state of chronic panic, always expecting to be assailed by some hostile influence, which they shall prove wholly incompetent to resist. If they foresee the approach of any circumstances that are likely to put their religion to a test, they at once make up their mind that *fiasco* and overthrow are inevitable; and when they are suddenly confronted by what seems an adverse influence, or promises to be a severe temptation, they are ready to give all up in despair. They forget that our Lord has taught us to take no anxious thought for the morrow, and has assured us that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. II. NOR AGAIN DOES WATCHFULNESS CONSIST IN MORBID INTROSPECTIVENESS, OR IN A DISPOSITION TO CHARGE OURSELVES WITH ALL SORTS OF IMAGINED FORMS OF EVIL. To their morbid sensibility everything has depravity in it; good and generous actions only spring from self-seeking; every natural affection is inordinate; every commonplace gratification a loving of pleasure rather than God. It is surely possible, believe me, dear Christian friends, to emulate the exploits of a Don Quixote in our religious life, and to run a tilt at any number of spiritual windmills, but this is not watchfulness. A clerical brother of mine, alarmed from his slumbers by a policeman who reported his church open, imagined that he had captured a burglar by the hair of his head in the tower of his church, when he had only laid violent hands in the darkness upon the church mop! It is quite possible to convert a mop into a burglar in our own spiritual experiences. Just once more let me ask you to bear in mind that Watchfulness does not consist in, and is not identical with, a severe affectation of solemnity, and a pious aversion to anything like natural mirth or cheerful hilarity. I have before my eyes at this moment the recollection of a dear and honoured brother, who, when something amusing had been related at his table, suddenly drew himself up when he was just beginning to join in the hearty laugh, and observed to me with much seriousness, "I am always afraid of losing communion by giving way to levity." I confess I admired the good man's conscientiousness, which I am sure was perfectly sincere, but I could not help thinking that he was confusing between sombreness and sobriety. III. But having pointed out certain forms or habits of conduct which are not be mistaken for Watchfulness, though they often are, LET US PROCEED TO INQUIRE WHAT WATCHFULNESS IS; we have seen what it is not. And here it may be well to notice that two distinct words, or perhaps I should say sets of words, in the Greek, are translated in our version by the one word—watch. The one set of terms indicates the necessity of guarding against sleep, and the other the necessity of guarding against any form of moral intoxication and insobriety. Both these ideas are presented to

us together in a single passage in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they who sleep sleep in the night: and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Here the two dangers arising—the one from sleep, and the other from drunkenness—are brought before us at once; and the two words, which are each of them usually translated by the English word—watch, are employed to guard us against these dangers. "Let us watch and be sober." These dangers seem to be in some respects the opposites of each other—the one springs from heaviness and dullness of disposition, and the other from undue excitability. The one is the special danger incidental to monotonous routine and a dead level of quiet regularity, the other is the danger incidental to a life full of stir and bustle—a life where cares and pleasures, successes and failures, important enterprises and stunning disappointments, bringing with them alternating experiences of elation or depression, are only too apt to prove all-engrossing, and to exclude the vivid sense of eternal realities. The one danger will naturally specially threaten the man of phlegmatic temperament and equable disposition, the other will more readily assault the man whose nervous system is highly strung, whether he be of sanguine or melancholic habit. In the present passage the call to watch is coupled with the exhortation to pray, and similarly St. Peter warns us "to be sober and watch unto prayer." This suggests to us that Watchfulness needs first of all to be exercised in the maintenance of our proper relations with God. If only these be preserved inviolate, everything else is sure to go well with us; but where anything like coldness settles down upon our relations with God, backsliding has already commenced, and unless it be checked we lie at the mercy of our foe. Oh, Christian soul, guard with jealous care against the first beginnings of listlessness and coldness and unreality in thine intercourse with God! Not less, perhaps even more, do we need to watch in the other sense which, as I have pointed out, the word bears in New Testament Scripture. Let us not only keep awake, but let us be sober. We need to remember that we are in an enemy's land, and that unless we are constantly breathing the atmosphere of heaven, the atmosphere of earth, which is all that we have left, soon becomes poisonous, and must produce a sort of moral intoxication. How often have I seen a Christian man completely forget himself under the influence of social excitement! But I hasten to say, Do not let us fall into the mistake of supposing that it is only the light-hearted and the pleasure-loving that need to be warned against the danger of becoming intoxicated by worldly influences. The cares and even the occupations of life may have just as deleterious an effect upon us in this respect as the pleasures. Many a man of business is just as much intoxicated with the daily excitements arising from the fluctuations of the market or of the Stock Exchange, and just as much blinded to higher things by the absorbing interests connected with money-making or money-losing as the votary of pleasure can be at the racecourse or in the ball-room. Yet again, Watchfulness is to be shown not only in maintaining our relations with God, in resisting any disposition to be drowsy, and in guarding against the intoxicating influence of worldly excitement; it is also to be shown in detecting the first approach of temptation, or the first uprisings of an unholy desire. The careful general feels his enemy by his scouts, and thus is prepared to deal with him when the attack takes place. Even so temptation may often be resisted with ease when its first approach is discerned; but it acquires sometimes an almost irresistible power, if it be allowed to draw too near. But I spoke a few moments ago of the importance of watching, not only against the beginning of temptation without, but also against any disposition to make terms with temptation within. Here, I am persuaded, lies, in most instances, the secret cause of failure. Balaam was inwardly hankering after the house full of silver and gold at the very moment when he affected to despise it. But there is a danger on the other side, against which we have to guard with equal watchfulness. And it is the danger of incipient self-complacency. (*W. H. Aitken.*) *Advantage of knowing one's weak point*:—It is the interest of every man not to hide from himself his ailment. What would you think of a man who was sick, and attempted to make himself believe that it was his foot that was ailing, when it was his heart? Suppose a man should come to his physician and have him examine the wrong eye, and pay for the physician's prescription, founded on the belief that his eye was slightly but not much damaged, and should go away, saying, "I am a great deal happier than I was," although the doctor had not looked at the diseased eye at all? If a man should have a cancer, or a deadly sore, on one arm, and should refuse to let the physician see that, but should show him the well arm, he would imitate what men do who use all deceits and delusions to hide their moral sores and weak-

nesses and faults, as far as possible, from themselves, from all persons, and then congratulate themselves that they are not in danger. Watchfulness requires that a man should be honest, and should know where he is, and where his danger is. Let others set their watch where they need it, and you set yours where you need it. Each man's watchfulness should be according to his temperament and constitution. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Watching—a military figure:*—Undoubtedly this is a military figure; although watching may be a domestic figure, ordinarily it is military. A tower, a castle, a fort, is not content with simply the strength of its walls, and its various defences. Sentinels are placed all round about it, and they walk both night and day, and look out on every side to descry any approaching danger, that the soldiers within may put themselves at once in a condition to receive attack. Still more are a moving army watchful, whether upon the march or in the camp. They throw out advanced guards. The picket line is established by night and by day. Men are set apart to watch on purpose that no enemy may take them unawares; that they may constantly be prepared for whatever incursion the chances of war may bring upon them. It is here taken for granted that we are making a campaign through life. The assumption all the way through is, that we are upon an enemy's ground, and that we are surrounded, or liable to be surrounded, with adversaries who will rush in upon us, and take us captive at unawares. We are commanded, therefore, to do as soldiers do, whether in fort or in camp—to be always vigilant, always prepared. (*Ibid.*) *Each to guard against his own temptations:*—Your excess of disposition, your strength of passion, and your temptableness are not the same as your neighbour's. Therefore it is quite foolish for you to watch as your neighbour watches. Every man must set his watch according to his own disposition, and know his own disposition better than anybody else knows it. If a fort is situated so that the weakest side is on the east, the commander, if he is wise, will set his watch there. He says, "I believe that if I defend this point, nothing can do me any harm," and sets his watch there. But suppose the commander of a fort, whose weak place was on the west side, should put his force all on the other side! If he would defend his fort successfully, he should put his soldiers where it is weak. Here is a man who watches against pride; but your temptation is on the side of vanity. It will not do for you to watch against pride, because pride is not your besetting sin. There is many a man who flatters himself, that because his neighbour has corrected his faults by gaining a victory over pride, all he himself needs to do is to gain a victory over pride. He has no difficulty in that, because he is not tempted in his pride. It is very easy to watch against an enemy that does not exist. It is very easy to gain a victory where there is no adversary. (*Ibid.*) *Watch against times of temptation:*—Every man should know what are the circumstances, the times, and the seasons in which he is liable to sin. To make this matter entirely practical, there are a great many who neglect to watch until the proper time and seasons for watching have passed away. Suppose your fault is of the tongue? Suppose your temper takes that as a means of giving itself air and explosion? With one man it is when he rises in the morning, and before breakfast he is peculiarly nervous and susceptible. It is then that he is irritable. It is then that things do not look right. And it is then that his tongue, as it were, snaps, and throws off sparks of fire. With another man it is at evening, when he is jaded, and wearied with the care and labour of the day. He has emptied himself of nervous excitement, and left only excitability. And then is the time when he is liable to break down in various ways. Men must set their watch at the time when the enemy is accustomed to come. Indians usually make their attack at three or four o'clock in the morning, when men sleep soundest; and that is the time to watch against Indians. There is no use of doing it at ten o'clock in the morning. They do not come then. If it be when you are sick that you are most subject to malign passions, then that is the time when you must set your watch. Or, if it be when you are well that the tide of blood swells too feverishly in you, then that is the time when you must set your watch. If, at one time of the day more than another, experience has shown that you are liable to be tempted, then in that part of the day you must be on your guard. Everybody has his hours, his times and seasons, and his circumstances; and every man should learn them for himself; and every man should set his watch then and there. And frequently, by watching at the right time, you can easily carry yourself over all the rest of the day. (*Ibid.*) *The danger of dallying with temptation:*—There is such a thing as dallying with temptation. Many a maiden will insensibly, and step by step, allow herself to be led to things that, if not wrong, are yet so near it that they lie in its very twilight;

and she is all the time excusing to herself such permissions and such dalliance, saying, "I do not intend to do wrong; I shall in due time recover myself." There is many a man who takes the serpent into his hand, because it is lithe, and graceful, and burnished, and beautiful, and plays with that which in some unguarded moment will strike him with its poison fangs; and it is poor excuse, when this dalliance has led him to the very edge of temptation, and has struck the fatal poison into him, for him to say, "I did not mean to." The mischief is done. The damnation is to come. And it is poor comfort to say, "I did not mean to." Pass by it; come not near it; keep far from it, and then you will be safe. But it is not safe for innocent, or inexperienced, or unconscious, or inconsiderate virtue, to go, by dalliance, near to things that carry in them the very venom of Satan. What should you think of a man who, coming down to New York, should say, "I have had quite an experience this morning. I have been up to one of the shambles where they were butchering; and I saw them knock down oxen, and saw them cut their throats, and saw the blood flow in streams from the great gashes. I spent a whole half-day there, looking at men killing, and killing, and killing." What would you say of a man who said, "I have been crawling through the sewers under the street; for I want to know what is at the bottom of things in this city?" What kind of curiosity would that be? What would you think of a man who went where he could see the offal of hospitals and dissecting rooms, and went wallowing in rottenness and disease, because he wanted to increase his knowledge of things in general? And yet, here are men who take things more feculent, more fetid, more foul, more damnable and dangerous—the diseases, the ulcers, the sores, and the filth of the appetites and the passions; and they will go wading and looking at things that a man should shut his eyes on if they were providentially thrown before him. Why, there are some things that it is a sin to look at twice. And yet there are men who hunt them up! Then again, there are men who live so near to cheating that, though they do not mean to cheat, circumstances cannot bend them without pushing them over. There are many men who are like an apple-tree in my garden, whose trunk and roots, and two-thirds of the branches, are in the garden, and one-third of whose branches are outside of the garden wall. And there are many men whose trunk and roots are on the side of honesty and uprightness, but who are living so near the garden wall that they throw their boughs clear over into the highway where iniquities tramp, and are free. It is never safe for a man to run so near to the line of right and wrong, that if he should lose a wheel he would go over. It is like travelling on a mountain road near a precipice. You should keep so far from the precipice, that if your waggon breaks down there is room enough between you and the precipice. Otherwise, you cannot be safe. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 39. **And prayed, and spake the same words.**—*Perseverance in prayer:*—We may learn from this what we are to do in time of distress and affliction; we are not only to go to God by prayer for help, comfort, and deliverance; but we are to go to Him again and again: yea, often to call upon Him, and seek to Him in our distress, to be instant and importunate with Him; and so to continue as long as the affliction presses us. I. PRAYER IS A DUTY AND SERVICE WHICH WE OWE TO GOD, AND WHICH WE OUGHT CONSTANTLY TO PERFORM IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS WILL COMMANDING IT, though otherwise we should reap no benefit by it to ourselves, nor even obtain the things we ask. And here the very doing of our duty in uprightness of heart must comfort us (2 Cor. i. 12). II. Although God does not at once grant our petitions, YET HE TAKES NOTICE OF OUR PRAYERS, AND IS WELL PLEASED WITH THEM. III. THERE ARE JUST CAUSES WHY GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS HEAR OUR PRAYERS AT FIRST OR SPEEDILY; but delays, sometimes for long. 1. To exercise and try our faith, hope, patience, and obedience in waiting upon Him. 2. To make us more fervent in prayer. 3. That the things we have asked, being for a time delayed, may be the more prized by us when we get them. IV. THE REASON WHY GOD DOES NOT HEAR US AT FIRST, or so soon as we desire, may be and often is in ourselves, viz., IN THE FAULTINESS OF OUR PRAYERS. Either we ask such things as God does not see fit for us to obtain, and then it is a mercy in Him to deny them to us; or else we ask not in due manner, we pray not in faith, or not with such feeling and fervour as we ought; or else we are living in some sin unrepented of, which hinders the fruit of our prayer (James iv. 2, 3; v. 16; Psalm lxvi. 18). V. Though God has promised to hear our prayers, and to grant our petitions, so far as is good for us, and is according to His will; YET HE WILL NOT HAVE US LIMIT HIM A TIME in which to do so; nor is it fit for us so to do, but we are to wait His leisure, convinced that by so doing we shall

lose nothing (Isaiah xxviii. 16; Psalm xl. i. VI. GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS IN DIVERS WAYS. 1. By giving us the things we ask. Hannah, a child; Solomon, wisdom, &c. 2. By giving us something as good, or better for us than that we ask; *e.g.* patience in time of trouble, and strength to bear it (2 Cor. xii. 7–10). 3. By giving us inward comfort, by and in our prayers, and after them (Psalm xxxv. 13. 4. By accepting our prayers as a service pleasing to Him. Now although God often delays to hear us the first way, yet He always hears us one of these ways, and that as soon as we pray to Him, if we pray in due manner, and as we ought; which being so, must encourage us to persevere, and hold out in prayer, when we do not immediately obtain those petitions which we ask of God. (*George Petter.*) *Lawfulness of set forms of prayer*:—Hence we may gather, that it is lawful for us to use a set form of prayer: not only to ask the same petitions of God in effect and substance of matter at sundry times, but also in the same form of words, or well near the same: yea, that this may be done even in private prayer alone by ourselves, for such was this prayer now made by our Saviour. And if in private prayer alone by ourselves (where usually more liberty may be taken to vary the form of words in our prayers), then much more when we pray with others, especially in public, it must needs be lawful to use a set form of words, and to ask the same petitions in the same words. Our Saviour taught His disciples a set form of prayer, which is that we call the Lord's Prayer, appointing both them and us to use it in the very same form of words in which it is framed (Luke xi. 2). . . . And what are sundry of David's Psalms, but set forms of prayer, used by the Church in those times? . . . The Church of God has always used set forms of prayer in public and solemn meetings, nor was the lawfulness of this practice ever questioned till of late times by Anabaptists, Brownists, and such like. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 40. **He found them asleep.**—*Power of sleep*:—The most violent passion and excitement cannot keep even powerful minds from sleep; Alexander the Great slept on the field of Arbela, and Napoleon upon that of Austerlitz. Even stripes and torture cannot keep off sleep, as criminals have been known to give way to it on the rack. Noises, which at first serve to drive it away, soon become indispensable to its existence; thus a stage-coach, stopping to change horses, wakes all the passengers. The proprietor of an iron forge, who slept close to the din of hammers, forges, and blast furnaces, would wake if there was any interruption to them during the night, and a sick miller, who had his mill stopped on that account, passed sleepless nights until the mill resumed its usual noise. Homer, in his Iliad, elegantly represents sleep as overcoming all men, and even the gods, except Jupiter alone. (*Christian Journal.*)

Ver. 41. **Sleep on now and take your rest.**—*The night scene in Gethsemane*:—1. The first thought suggested by this text is that the Son of Man may even now be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Men are apt to imagine that had they lived in the time of Christ they would not thus and thus have treated Him. But they who despise Him unseen would have spurned Him to His face. The enemies of Christ's Church are the enemies of Christ. Even in our own day Christ may be betrayed. He may be betrayed by His own disciples. The disposition to surrender Him to enemies may still exist; a disposition to secure the favour of the world at His expense. In this sense, for example, it may well be said that the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners when the truth respecting Him is given up to errorists, or cavillers, or infidels; when His divinity is called in question; when His eternal Sonship is degraded or denied; when the sinless perfection of His human nature is tainted by the breath of dubious speculation; when His atonement is disfigured or perverted; when the value of His cross and bloody passion is depreciated; when His place in the system of free grace is taken from Him and bestowed on something else. To mention one other example; Christ is betrayed into the hands of sinners when His gospel is perverted; His example dishonoured; and Himself represented as the Minister of sin. O Christian! have you ever thought that every inconsistent and unworthy act of yours is one step towards betraying Him whom you profess to love? 2. Another thought which I suggest is, that when the cause of Christ is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, His disciples are to watch unto prayer, lest they enter into temptation. 3. Another thought, and that a melancholy one, is, that when Christ's disciples are thus left to watch, whilst He is interceding with the Father, they too often fall asleep. Some, in the touching language of the gospel, may be "sleeping for sorrow." But oh!

how many others sleep for sloth and spiritual indifference. It is no time to sleep. The Church, Christ's weeping bride, and the dying souls of men are at your pillow, shrieking in your ears, like the shipmaster in the ears of Jonah, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise; call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." 4. But, alas! this warning voice is often heard in vain. Amidst a world lying in wickedness, amidst the untold miseries produced by sin, amidst the fierce attacks of open enemies on the Son of Man, His friends, His chosen friends, sleep on. And that sleep would prove to be the sleep of death, if we had not an High Priest who can be touched with the sense of our infirmities, and when He sees us thus asleep, comes near and arouses us. There may be some before me now, who, though sincere believers, have been overcome by sleep. Your senses and your intellects may be awake, your conscience has its fitful starts and intervals of wakefulness when scared out of its slumbers by terrific dreams. But your affections are asleep. You hear the gospel, but it is like the drowsy lull of distant waters, making sleep more sound; you see its light, but with your eyelids closed, and so subdued is its splendour that it only soothes the sense and deepens its repose. If this is your experience, I appeal to you, and ask you whether, even in this dreamy state, you have not felt the gentle hand of Christ at times upon you. Has not your house been visited by sickness? But it is not only in personal afflictions that the Saviour rouses you. Have you not felt His hand in public trials? Have you not felt it in the trials of the Church? Have you had no signal mercies since you fell asleep? Besides the voice of personal afflictions, and of public trials, and of private mercies, there is a voice in public mercies too. But when our Lord had for the third time fallen prostrate and arisen, when He came a third time to His friends, and found them sleeping, He no longer expostulated; He no longer asked whether they could not watch with Him one hour. There is something far more awful in this mild but significant permission to sleep on, than in all the invectives or reproofs He could have uttered. "Sleep on henceforth, and take your rest." That this may not prove to be indeed the case, we must arise and call upon our God; we must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. But, oh! remember, that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. When the presumptuous Simon was at last aroused, and saw his Master's danger, he thought to atone by violence for past neglect. And many a modern Simon does the same. When once aroused they draw the sword of fiery fanaticism. But is there no danger from an opposite direction? Is it any consolation that the sword is in its scabbard, if the bearers of the sword are fast asleep instead of watching? (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*)

Vers. 42, 43, 45, 46. **He that betrayeth Me is at hand.**—*The betrayer:*—I. WE SEE IN HIM WHAT RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES AND ADVANTAGES IT IS POSSIBLE TO ENJOY, AND YET BE DESTITUTE OF VITAL PIETY. How impressively does the fatal example of Judas admonish the hearers of the gospel, the members of Christian churches, and especially the junior members of Christian families. Value your privileges, but do not rest in them. Improve them, profit by them; but do not confide in them. Say not, "We have Abraham to our father;" "the temple of the Lord are we." II. WE SEE IN JUDAS WHAT MELANCHOLY CONSEQUENCES THE INDULGENCE OF ONE SINFUL PROPENSITY MAY INVOLVE. Most men have some easily besetting sin; some propensity which is more powerful, some passion which more readily than others overcomes them. Let the young, especially, endeavour to ascertain what that is, each in his own case. The besetting sin of Judas was avarice. Notwithstanding his association with that purest, loveliest one, whose peerless elevation of character and disinterested benevolence appeared in all He said and did, Judas caught no portion of his magnanimity; there was in him none of the nobleness of mind which distinguished His master. His was always a mean, sordid, grovelling spirit. He was one of those grubs with whom you sometimes meet in society, who will do anything, bear anything, sacrifice anything for money; who have no idea of worth but wealth; who reverence none but those who bear the bag; whose reverence increases as the purse distends; if, indeed, they do not envy still more than they reverence even these. You may know them by their gait. There is always something low, shuffling, tortuous, sinister in their looks, and in their movements. They have generally one hand in the pocket, fingering about their silver or their copper gods. Their eyes are almost always cast on the ground, as Milton saw that Mammon, the meanest of all the devils, had his eye fixed on the golden pavement of the nether world. But though his besetting sin was avarice, Judas does not seem to have been aware of it, or he did not watch against it; and, as it often happens, he was placed

in a situation which tended to draw it out, and to strengthen it. He was the treasurer of the little society with which he was connected. He kept the bag, and had the management of their pecuniary matters. His hand was often in that money bag; his eye was almost constantly upon it; and his heart was always with it. The melancholy effect of this was, that avarice soon grew into thievishness; the temptations presented by his office, though in themselves exceedingly trifling, were too powerful for his avaricious propensities to resist. What an idea of the character of Judas, this transaction gives us!—Of his meanness, his low, sordid avarice! This is seen in the paltry sum which he agreed to take as a sufficient recompense for so foul a deed. For a few pieces of silver he would deliberately clothe himself with everlasting shame.—Of his hardness of heart. This is seen in the time during which he maintained his resolution. This fearful deed was not done in the hurry of a moment, it was a deliberate act, it was Wednesday when he made the agreement with the chief priests; it was Friday morning before it was carried into execution. During that time he repeatedly saw his Lord. How could he meet His eye? He was present at the last supper; and when Jesus said, "One of you shall betray Me," he inquired, as well as the rest, "Is it I?" His callousness appears also in the manner in which he betrayed the Redeemer—with the very token of affection; and he did it in the presence of his brethren. Lord, what is man? Such were some of the melancholy consequences of indulging, instead of watching against and subduing, his easily besetting sin. To derive from his example the instruction it is calculated to yield, we must endeavour to enter into his views and feelings; to understand how he felt and how he reasoned. A remark or two may assist us here. It is evident we observe, in the first place, that he had not the slightest apprehension of the serious consequences of his treachery. It was not his wish to inflict any pain on the Redeemer, or to do Him any injury; and nothing was farther from his thoughts than that he was delivering Him up to death. He was not a cruel monster who thirsted for human blood, and laughed at human woe. He belonged not to the savages of the French revolution, nor to the ferocious men of our own country, whose deliberate murders attained for them considerable notoriety some few years since. He was a poor despicability, who loved money above all things, and cared not to what meanness he submitted in order to secure it; but he had no sympathy with deeds of cruelty and blood. It would appear that he was as fully persuaded of the Messiahship of Jesus as any of the apostles; but in exact proportion to the strength of this conviction would be his confidence that Jesus could not suffer; as in common with the rest of his nation, he believed that the Christ would continue for ever. It is also possible that, in making the offer to deliver his Master into the hands of the chief priests and rulers, he may have been influenced in some measure by resentment. While at supper in the house of Simon the leper, a pious woman anointed our Lord with very precious ointment. This conduct was censured by Judas and his brethren as an act of useless prodigality, but was vindicated and commended by our Lord as an act of piety which should receive honourable mention wherever the gospel was known. This incident may have greatly displeased Judas; for he appears to have gone directly from the house of Simon to the palace of the high priest; and it is not impossible that, in taking this step, avarice was quickened by resentment. But, as we have repeatedly intimated, the prevailing motive was love of money. By the habitual indulgence of his avariciousness, he had become the blind slave of that sordid passion. All generosity of sentiment, all nobility of mind, all sense of integrity and honour, had become extinct. In our own day persons have been known to perpetrate, with their own hands, the most atrocious murders under the sole influence of cupidity. It was not that their victims had done anything to offend them; it was not that they regarded them with any feelings of hostility; and yet they watched them carefully for successive days, drew them into their meshes, and then deliberately, and without the slightest compunction, murdered them. Like Judas, they did it for what they could get by it; and, in some instances, the wages of their iniquity were not greater than his. It is, we believe, an undeniable fact, that certain persons, well known to those who require their services, and to others connected with them, may be hired at any time, in the metropolis of England, for half-a-crown, deliberately to perjure themselves. It is not that they have any interest in the case, or that they have any wish to injure one party, or to benefit another; like Judas, they do it simply for what they can get by it. These illustrations, it must be confessed, are taken from the very dregs of society—the lowest depths of social degradation. But if we look to higher regions, we shall find

illustrations in abundance, and of a character scarcely less affecting. It is, we believe, a fact, that there are persons employed in Christian England in casting idols for the Indian market. Christian people make these gods and ship them out to India for sale. There they work amongst the teeming millions of that vast continent, deceiving, degrading, destroying the souls of men. It is not that these idol-makers have any faith in the gods which they make; it is not that they have any interest in the prevalence of idolatry, or any wish that it should continue to curse the world; as in the case of Judas, their only object is what they can get by it. Take, for instance, the case when a question of vital interest is agitated, the constituency of the country is appealed to, the happiness of millions is involved in the issue, and how do many of our electors act? Some do not concern themselves in the least about the merits of the question; but make it known that their suffrages are in the market, and that the highest bidder may secure them. Others have their opinions, but lures are presented, promises are made if they will vote in opposition to their convictions; and they do it. They thus sacrifice what they believe to be the truth, and the best interests of their country, at the shrine of mammon. It is not that they hate their fellow men: it is not that they wish to injure their country; but they act as Judas did; he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, and they sell their country for what they can get for it Very much of this spirit is found amongst professedly religious people. Many are influenced in their selection of the place of worship they attend, or the church they join, chiefly by the prospect of gain which it holds out to them. If there be in a congregation one or two wealthy and benevolent families, you are almost sure to find many there; some because it is respectable, and others because there is something to be got by it. We once heard a Christian pastor relate the following:—N. S. and his wife were members of the church at ——; they avowed great attachment to the church, and great affection for the pastor, from whose ministry they professed to derive much good. They removed on account of business to some distance, where they had the advantage of attending a very faithful ministry, and of associating with a united flock. But that church was not like their own; it was not home to them, and the preaching was not like that of their minister. Often did they come a considerable distance, and at no small inconvenience, to enjoy the privilege of a Sabbath-day amongst their own friends. After some time they were brought back again to their old neighbourhood; and now everything was so delightful—Sabbaths, week-day services, intercourse with friends—it was all so good. A few months passed away, and it was observed that N. S. and his wife had lost much of the ardour of their zeal, and had grown slack in their attendance. Their pastor called on them one day to inquire of their welfare. N. S. seemed low, and had very little to say; he did remark, however, that he had received very little encouragement from his own friends and fellow members in the way of business, but that Mr. L. T. (a leading man in another community) had been very kind to him, that his bill for the last quarter amounted to the sum of £—. A word to the wise is enough. The minister remarked when he left the house, "The bait has taken; N. S. will soon find some pretext for leaving us, and will go over to the ——." And so it was. Oh, Judas, thou art not dead; thy spirit lives, and works amongst us in ten thousand ways. "Every man looketh for his gain from his quarter." III. THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS IS STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTIVE TO US, AS IT SHOWS HOW DEEPLY MEN MAY SORROW FOR SIN, AND YET BE DESTITUTE OF GENUINE CONTRITION. We remark further that the repentance of Judas led him to make every reparation in his power. His sorrow was sincere, inward, deep; and he did not keep it to himself. Judas not only confessed his sin, but he also honoured, publicly honoured Him who suffered through his treachery; "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." And this is not all; Judas not only honoured the Redeemer who suffered through his treachery, but he also threw back the wages of iniquity: "He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed." The price of innocent blood he could hold no longer. This indicates a great change in his views and feelings. His repentance, therefore, seems not only to come exceedingly near to that which is spiritual and saving, but absolutely to include its great elements. (*J. J. Davies.*) *The possibilities of a human life illustrated by the downfall of the traitor*:—The career of Judas is simply —I. AN EXAMPLE OF THE MEANING OF TEMPTATION. Man is under no iron law which compels him to sin. He does as he does, not because he *has* to, but because he *wills* to. The stress of habit may become desperate, but it is the sinner's own act that has brought him into such a state. So it was with Judas. Intelligently, deliberately had he leaned the whole weight of his obdurate heart against

that door of mercy which the Saviour would have opened to him. In the very face of his destiny, with its notes of doom sounding louder and louder, like the peals of distant bells as one approaches the town, he went straight on to his deed. In selfishness and avarice he has cherished base suggestions, till they fastened their ruinous hold upon him. A pilferer, grown to be a thief, soon became a monster, balancing an innocent life against thirty denarii. II. THE SOCIETY OF THE WORTHY DOES NOT INSURE LIKENESS TO THEM. The lion will crave blood wherever he is, and the buzzard be scenting carrion in every breeze. There is no salvation in friendships. There may be restraints, there is no certainty. III. TREACHERY ALWAYS FAILS TO MAKE GOOD ITS PLEDGES. Falseness never pays. Judas was promptly given his price; but with it a burden, whose nature he little divined at the first. So long as he must carry this, his treasure was cankered. He thought by giving it back to find relief; but none was there. He could not imagine he should soon be seeking to hang himself, rather than prolong the moments that he might enjoy abundance. Whatever our infidelity, whether financial or social or religious, we must reap as we have sown. Condemnation is certain. There is only One whose voice can silence it. Confession of Him means everything. Betrayal of Him involves the loss of all hope and well-being. Repentance may not be possible for such. Repentance would have sent the guilty out by himself to weep bitterly; but remorse could find no stopping-place short of the halter. (*De Witt S. Clark.*) *The traitor:*—1. Observe here Christ's meekness. He requires us to submit to the blows of our enemies. He submitted even to their kiss. How gracious the self-control that could allow such a liberty! 2. Apostasy should be very earnestly guarded against. When we fall, we fall not merely to the level we left, but to one much lower. 3. The very manner in which Christ was betrayed commends Him and condemns Judas. For is not the kiss itself an acknowledgment that love and homage were the things to which the Saviour was entitled? And if his act admits Christ's worth, how self-condemned he stands for practising treason against One whose right is love. 4. The cause of Christ is frequently betrayed still, with a kiss. Deadly attacks on it often contain complimentary acknowledgments of its worth. Sometimes the wicked life can adopt a bearing of punctilious respectfulness to everything religious. (*R. Glover.*) *Foes within the fold the most dangerous:*—Natural, domestic, and home-bred enemies, are of all other the most hurtful and dangerous enemies of Christ and of His Church. I say, of Christ and of His Church, because there is the same reason of both; for such as are enemies of Christ, are also enemies of His Church, and so on the contrary. Judas was the worst and most dangerous enemy of all those that came to apprehend our Saviour; he did more than all the rest toward the effecting of this wicked plot against Christ; he was a guide to them all, and the very ringleader in this enterprize. He had opportunity and means to do that against our Saviour, which all the rest without him could not have done; that is, to entrap and betray Him. He knew the place where our Saviour used to resort, and at what time usually; he knew where and when to find Jesus, viz., in the garden at Gethsemane (John xviii. 2). Besides, he being so well acquainted with Him, was better able than all the rest of the company to discern our Saviour, and to descry Him from all others in the dark. And, lastly, he by reason of his familiarity with Christ, might have access to Him to salute Him with a kiss (as the manner of those times was), and to betray Him. So that by all this it appears that Judas, being one of our Saviour's own disciples, was in that respect the most dangerous enemy to our Saviour of all those who came to take Him. And as it was with Christ the Head of the Church, so is it with the Church itself, and all true members of it. Their worst and most dangerous enemies are commonly intestine and home-bred enemies, which lie hid amongst them, and are near them in outward society, and join in outward profession with them. These are usually worse than open and professed enemies, who are out of the Church. In the times of the Old Testament, the false prophets and counterfeit priests, and other close hypocrites which arose and sprang up in the Church itself, did more harm in it than the open and professed enemies of God's people. So in the time of the New Testament, the false apostles, heretical teachers, and false brethren, did more hurt the Church than cruel tyrants and open persecutors of the Church. As Luther used to say, "Tyrants are bad, heretics worse, but false brethren worst of all." As they are commonly most malicious, so they have most opportunity to do hurt. And as it is in the Church of Christ in general, so also in Christian families (which are, or ought to be, as little churches), commonly a man's worst and most dangerous enemies are those of his own house, if it so fall out that these turn against him. (*George*

Petter.) *The Judas-spirit still rife* :—We may see in Judas a true pattern and lively image of hypocritical, false, and counterfeit Christians, who make a show of love to Christ, and of honouring Him, when in reality they are enemies and despisers of Him. These salute Christ by calling Him, "Master, Master," and by kissing Him; and yet betray Him, at one and the same time, as Judas did. Many such dissembling and hypocritical Christians there are, and always have been, in the Church. 1. Such as make outward show of holiness and religion in their conduct before men, and yet live in secret sins unrepented of. These by their outward show of holiness seem to kiss and embrace Christ, but by their unreformed lives betray Him (Matt. xxiii. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 5). 2. Such as profess Christ and the gospel of Christ, and yet live profanely, wickedly, loosely, or scandalously, to the dishonour of Christ's name, and the disgrace of the gospel which they profess, causing it to be evil spoken of (Luke vi. 46; Rom. ii. 24). 3. Such as pretend love to religion, and yet are secret enemies to it at heart, seeking to undermine it. 4. Such as make show of love to good Christians, but oppose them underhand and seek to bring them into trouble and disgrace (Gal. ii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 26). Let us take heed we be not in the number of these false-hearted Christians; and to this end we have need diligently to examine ourselves, touching the truth and sincerity of our love to Christ and His members, and whether our hearts be sincere and upright in the profession of Christ's name and truth. Also, whether our life and practice be answerable to the profession we make; for, otherwise, we are no better than Judas, kissing Christ and yet betraying Him. We speak much against Judas, and many cry out against him for his treachery in betraying Christ with a kiss; but take heed we be not like unto him, and as bad as he, or worse in some respect. (*Ibid.*) *The betrayal*:—I. THE PERSON. Judas: praise. One of the chosen twelve. Our Lord must have foreseen this when He called him. The call of Judas facilitated fulfilment of Scripture. Called "the traitor" (Luke vi. 16); "son of perdition (John xvii. 12). Avaricious; dishonest in choice of means for securing what he may have deemed a lawful end. II. THE MOTIVE. Various motives have been imputed. 1. Sense of duty in bringing Jesus to justice. But consider Acts iv. 15, 23; v. 27–40; where the high priests, &c., are silent when they might have repeated the charges of Judas. Especially note Matt. xxvii. 4. 2. Resentment (comp. Matt. xxvi. 8–17; John xii. 4, 5). But two days elapsed before the deed was executed. Resentment would have subsided. 3. Avarice (Matt. xxvi. 15). But had this been the chief motive, he would surely have bargained for a larger sum, and not have sold his Master for less than £4, as he did, nor would he afterwards have returned it. 4. Ambition (consider John vii. 31; Matt. xvi. 16, xix. 28), by some thought to be the true motive. To him Jesus was King. He would force Jesus to declare Himself. If Jesus were made a king, what might not he (Judas) become? He knew the power of Jesus, and thought that, at the worst, Jesus would escape from danger (Luke vi. 30; John viii. 59, x. 39), hence Matt. xxvi. 48 was ironical. He believed the Messiah would never die (John xii. 34). Contrast the ambition of Judas with the lesson of humility he had heard. 5. Demoniacal possession (John xiii. 27). III. THE TIME. Significant—the Feast of Passover. Type and anti-type. Multitudes at Jerusalem. Witnesses of these things (Acts ii. 5–36). Many had beheld His miracles and heard of His fame in other parts. Night—a fit time for a dark deed (John iii. 19). IV. THE MANNER—a kiss. Perhaps Judas was sincere, after all, and meant this as a friendly act to force Jesus into an avowal of His kingship. If so, then one may be wrong though sincere, and mere sincerity will not save (Prov. xvi. 25). V. THE EFFECT. 1. To Judas. 2. To Jesus. 3. To ourselves. Learn—1. God maketh the wrath of man to praise Him. 2. Official standing, a power for evil in the hands of the unprincipled and ignorant. 3. Shows of friendship may be tricks of treason (Prov. xxvii. 6). 4. Seek to be not only sincere, but right. 5. The fulfilment of Scripture, a proof of the Messiahship of Christ. 6. If He be the only and true Saviour, have we accepted Him? (*J. Comper Gray.*) *Our Lord's apprehension*:—I. THE TIME OF CHRIST'S APPREHENSION. "While He yet spake." The Saviour was preparing Himself by fasting and prayer. He was exhorting and strengthening His disciples against the scandal of the cross. Now He was determined to be taken. Note here the incomprehensible providence of God, in that all the powers of the world could not apprehend Him till this time. II. THE PERSON APPREHENDING. 1. His name. A good name; signifying blessing or praise. Yet what a wretch was he! what a discredit to his name! 2. His office. One of twelve. A disciple turned traitor. (1) Christ had admitted him not to His presence only, but to His near fellowship and society. (2) Not to that only,

but to apostleship. (3) He had made him steward of His house and treasurer of His family; for He entrusted him with the bag. (4) He had conferred on him high gifts of knowledge and power to work miracles. What ingratitude, then, was his! 3. His attendants. (1) A great company of soldiers. (2) To these were joined captains of the temple, and some of the chief priests and elders. (3) There were gathered to him also a great many of the priests' and elders' servants. 4. The originators of the attack. The scribes and Pharisees. III. THE MANNER OF THE APPREHENSION. A kiss. 1. Pre-arranged. 2. Executed. What treachery! The salutation of friendship debased to such a purpose! (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *The mystery of the call of Judas to the apostleship*:—With reference to the call of Judas to the apostleship, we look upon it as only one of the innumerable mysteries in God's moral government, which no system of philosophy can solve at all, and which even Christianity solves but in part, reserving the final answer for a higher expansion of our faculties in another world. It involves the whole problem of the relation of God to the origin of sin, and the relation of His foreknowledge and fore-ordination to the free agency of man. The question why Christ called and received Judas into the circle of His chosen twelve, has received three answers, none of which, however, can be called satisfactory. 1. The view held by Augustine and others, namely, that Christ elected him an apostle not, indeed, for the very purpose that he might become a traitor, but that, through his treason, as an incidental condition or necessary means, the Scriptures might be fulfilled, and the redemption of the world be accomplished. This view, as Dr. Schaff observes, although it contains an element of truth, seems, after all, to involve our Lord in some kind of responsibility for the darkest crime ever committed. 2. The Rationalistic view, which is incompatible with our Lord's Divine foresight, that Jesus foresaw the financial and administrative abilities of Judas, which might have become of great use to the Apostolic Church, but not his thievish and treacherous tendencies, which developed themselves afterwards, and He elected him solely for the former. We cannot see how this view can be held by any one who believes in our Lord's divinity. 3. The view held by Meyer and many others, namely, that Jesus knew the whole original character of Judas from the beginning, before it was properly developed, and elected him in the hope that the good qualities and tendencies would, under the influence of His teaching, ultimately acquire the mastery over the bad. But this implies that our Lord was mistaken in His expectation, and is therefore inconsistent with His perfect knowledge of the human heart. Alford despairs of solving the difficulty. Two things are clear from this sad subject: 1. The absolute necessity of a change of heart; without this, privileges, however great, may be abused to one's destruction: and 2. The danger of covetousness, or love of the world. This seems to have been the cause of Judas's ruin. For the rest, we must leave it to the light of a higher state of existence. (*Christian Age.*) *Incidents of the arrest*:—I. THE ARRIVAL ON THE SCENE OF JUDAS AND HIS COMPANIONS. While Judas believed that Jesus was shortly to appear in great glory as the predicted King of the Jews, he followed Him loyally. "Hephestion," said a certain great personage of history, "loves me as Alexander, but Craterus loves me as king." So we may venture to say Judas did once upon a time love Jesus, not, indeed, as Jesus, but as king. "He was the father of all the Judases," remarks a Puritan, "who follow Him, not for love, but for loaves; not for inward excellencies, but for outward advantages; not to be made good, but to be made great." II. THE PANIC. How are we to explain it? Was it the power of the human eye, like that by which the lion-tamer quells the lion? This has been suggested by a modern critic. Was it magic? This was said by an ancient reviler. Was it all in the mere fancy of the simple folk who told the tale? This notion has found much popular favour. For my own part, believing, as I do, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, this phenomenon does not strike me as unlikely or unexpected. Put out your hand, man, and arrest the locomotive when it comes thundering into the station, making the ground tremble; arrest the shot as it bursts blazing from the lip of the cannon; arrest the lightning as it stabs the cloud before it strikes the tree; arrest a ray of light, catch it and turn it out of its course; arrest the tidal wave, as King Canute essayed to do; arrest the force now travelling underground, and which, as the scientific prophet tells us, is next year to burst out in many earthquakes! If you really could succeed in these arrests, and turn back these natural powers, could you arrest their Lord Himself? III. THE CAPTURE. IV. A BLOW STRUCK FOR JESUS—"And behold one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high-priest's and smote off his ear." V. THE APPEARANCE OF A YOUNG MAN

IN A LINEN CLOTH NEXT CLAIMS CONSIDERATION. VI. THE GREAT FORSAKING—"Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." You pardon a politician when he forsakes a cause that he once thought perfect, because he has now found out its glaring imperfections: you pardon a theorist when he forsakes a theory that he once thought perfect, because he has now found out its fallacies; you pardon a merchant when he forsakes a concern that he once thought perfect, because he has now found out that it is hollow: you pardon one man when he forsakes another as his own confidential friend, though once, thinking him perfect, he had been ready to do anything or bear anything for him, with no incentive but a wish, and no reward but a smile; if now he has found him out to be a person not safe, not true, not to be trusted. But he who forsakes Christ forsakes perfection. We can challenge any man to say that he thought Him perfect once, but that he has now found stains on that snow, spots in that sun. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*)

Ver. 50. **And they all forsook Him and fled.**—*The deserters:*—We may take three views of the desertion of our Lord on this occasion; that event may be considered with reference to the deserters, to the deserted, and to ourselves. I. The desertion of our Lord may be considered with reference to THE APOSTLES. In this view it affords an affecting instance of the inconstancy of man. The desertion of our Lord by the apostles affords also a proof of the melancholy consequences of the adoption of false notions. Men are sometimes found, it is true, both better and worse than their respective creeds; but it is undeniable that, whatever sentiment we really embrace, whatever we truly believe, is sure to influence our spirit and conduct. The apostles, in common with the Jews generally, had fully adopted the notion of a personal reign of the Messiah, of a temporal and worldly kingdom. Hence, ambition, of a kind (in their circumstances) the most absurd and unnatural, took full possession of their minds. They expected to be the chief ministers and counsellors of state of the largest, and, in every respect, the greatest empire in the world, an empire which was destined to absorb all others, and to become universal. Think of such a notion as this, for a few illiterate fishermen of one of the obscurest provinces of the civilized world! I do not say that it would have been otherwise—that they would steadfastly have adhered to their Lord, and have gone with Him to prison and to death, if they had been entirely quit of their false notions, and had had right views of the spiritual nature of His kingdom; for temptation, danger, fear, may overcome the strongest convictions; but it is easy to perceive that their false notions contributed to render them an easy prey to the enemy, while more correct views would have tended to prepare their minds for the trial, and to fortify them against it. We may learn from this how important it is that we should take heed what we believe. Let us prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. II. The desertion of Christ by the apostles may be considered with reference to our LORD Himself; and here it may be viewed in two aspects: as an aggravation of His sufferings, and as a proof of His love. 1. As an aggravation of His sufferings. It should not be forgotten that our Lord was made in all points like unto His brethren. He had all the affections, passions, feelings, of human nature just as we have; the great difference being that, in us they are constantly liable to perversion and abuse, while in Him their exercise was always healthful and legitimate. In the language of prophecy, also, He complains of the desertion of His friends: "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." "Of the people there was none with Me." As "bone of our bone," as subject to all the sympathies of our common humanity, He felt it deeply, and on many accounts, when Judas came, heading a band of ruffians, and betrayed Him with the very token of affection. He felt it deeply when Peter denied Him in His very presence with oaths and curses. He felt it deeply when "they all forsook Him and fled." 2. This melancholy event may be considered further as a proof of the greatness of the Saviour's love. He met with everything calculated not only to test His love, to prove its sincerity and its strength; but also to chill, and to extinguish it. But as it was self-moved, it was self-sustained. Many waters could not quench it. All the ingratitude of man could not destroy it; all the powers of darkness could not damp its ardour. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Perhaps the unfaithfulness of the apostles was permitted, that Jesus might taste of every ingredient of bitterness which is mingled in man's cup of woe; that, being tempted in all points like unto His brethren, He might be able to sympathize with, and to succour them in their temptations. It may have been permitted also, in order to show that there was nothing to deserve His favour in the objects of

His love. Say not that your sins are too great to be forgiven, or your heart too depraved to be renewed. Only trust Him: His grace is sufficient for you. And let this encourage the unhappy backslider, notwithstanding his frequent desertion of his Lord, to return to Him. Jesus did not disown the apostles, though they deserted Him in His distress; but after His resurrection He sent to them, by the faithful women, messages of tenderness and love: "Go," said He to Mary Magdalene, "go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; to My God, and your God." And to the other women, "Go, tell My brethren that I go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." III. We proceed to consider this melancholy event with reference to OURSELVES. We may learn not a little from it. We may use it as a mirror in which to see ourselves. Some may see in it, perhaps, the likeness of their own conduct to their fellow-men. When you thought they did well for themselves, then you blessed them. When you knew they did not need you, you followed them, and were at their service. When all praised them, you also joined in the laudation. But circumstances changed with them; and you changed too. The time came when you might really have served them, but then you withdrew yourself. Others may see in the desertion of the apostles, the likeness of their own conduct to the Saviour. Oh! how many desert Him in His poor, calumniated, persecuted brethren? How many desert Him in His injured, oppressed interest! Many will befriend and applaud a mission, a religious institution, a Christian church, a ministry, while it receives general commendation and support; but let the great frown upon it, let the foul breath of calumny pass over it and dim its lustre, let the bleak winds of adversity blow upon it, and blast it; and where are they then? They are scattered, and gone every one to his own. We may learn from this event to solace ourselves under some of the severest trials which can befall us in the present world. Surely there are few things more bitter than this—to be deserted, when we most need their assistance, by those on whose friendly offices we are entitled to rely. But we may learn from this event not to wonder at it; it is no strange thing. We must not wonder, then, if when we are most deeply interested in any great undertaking, if when our labours and sacrifices for the good of our fellow-creatures are most abundant, or when our afflictions and sufferings are most severe, that is to say, if when we most need the sympathy and support of our friends, we should be left most entirely to ourselves. Let us solace ourselves in God. "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Let us live more in communion with Him. Let us look less to creatures, and more to the Creator. Let us depend less on outward things, and more on God. Finally, let us learn to anticipate the hour in which our most faithful friends must leave us. Oh! to have the great and good Shepherd with us then! "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (*J. J. Davies.*)

Vers. 51, 52. **And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.**—*Haste in religion:*—It strikes me that this "certain young man" was none other than Mark himself. He was probably asleep; and, aroused by a great clamour, he asked what it was about. The information was speedily given—"The guards have come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth." Moved by sudden impulse, not thinking of what he was doing, he rises from his bed, rushes down, pursues the troopers, dashes into the midst of their ranks, as though he alone would attempt the rescue, when all the disciples had fled. The moment they lay hold upon him his heroic spasm is over; his enthusiasm evaporates; he runs away, leaves the cloth that was loosely wrapped about his body behind, and makes his escape. There have been many who acted like Mark since then. First, however, you will say, "Why suppose it to be Mark?" I grant you it is merely a supposition, but yet it is supported by the strongest chain of probabilities. It was common among the evangelists to relate transactions in which they themselves took part without mentioning their own names. Whoever it was, the only person likely to know it was the man himself. I cannot think that any one else would have been likely to tell it to Mark. Again, we know that such a transaction as this was quite in keeping with Mark's common character: the evangel of Mark is the most impulsive of all the evangels. He is a man who does everything straightway; full of impulse, dash, fire, flash; the thing must be done, and done forthwith. Once more: the known life of John Mark tends to make it very probable that he would do such a thing as is referred to in the text. As soon as ever Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary enterprise they were attended by Mark. As long as they were sailing across the blue waters, and as long as they were in the island

of Cyprus, Mark stuck to them. Nay, while they travelled along the coast of Asia Minor, we find they had John Mark to be their minister; but the moment they went up into the inland countries, among the robbers and the mountain streams—as soon as ever the road began to be a little too rough, John Mark left them. His missionary zeal had oozed out. For these reasons, the supposition that it was John Mark appears to me not to be utterly baseless. I. HERE IS HASTY FOLLOWING. John Mark does not wait to robe himself, but just as he is, he dashes out for the defence of his Lord. Without a moment's thought, taking no sort of consideration, down he goes into the cold night air to try and deliver his Master. Fervent zeal waited not for chary prudence. There was something good and something bad in this, something to admire as well as something to censure. Beloved, it is a good and right thing for us to follow Christ, and to follow Him at once; and it is a brave thing to follow Him when His other disciples forsake Him and flee. Would that all professors of religion had the intrepidity of Mark! The most of men are too slow; fast enough in the world, but, ah! how slow in the things of God! Of all people that dilly-dally in this world, I think professed servants of God are the most drowsy and faddling. How slothful are the ungodly, too, in Divine things; tell them they are sick, they hasten to a surgeon; tell them that their title-deeds are about to be attacked, and they will defend them with legal power; but tell them, in God's name, that their soul is in danger, and they think it matters so little, and is of so small import, that they will wait on, and wait on, and wait on, and doubtless continue to wait on till they find themselves lost for ever. The warnings of the gospel all bid you shun procrastination. I do beseech you fly to Jesus, and fly to Jesus now, though even it should be in the hurry of John Mark. I change my note. There is a haste that we most reprove. The precipitate running of Mark suggests an admonition that should put you on your guard. I am afraid some people make a hasty profession through the persuasion of friends. Nor are there a mere few who get their religion through excitement. This furnishes another example of injudicious haste. Many profess Christ and think to follow Him without counting the cost. They had never sought God's strength; they had never been emptied of their own works and their own conceits; consequently, in their best estate they were vanity; they were like the snail that melts as it crawls, and not like the snowflake upon the Alps, which gathers strength in its descent, till it becomes a ponderous avalanche. God make you not meteors or shooting stars, but stars fixed in their places. I want you to resemble, not the *ignis fatuus* of the morass, but the steady beacon of the rock. There is a phosphorescence that creeps over the summer sea, but who is ever lighted by it to the port of peace? And there is a phosphorescence which comes over some men's minds. Very bright it seems, but it is of no value; it brings no man to heaven. II. It remains for me to notice THE HASTY RUNNING AWAY. Some who run well at first have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up, and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease, and do not get into the road again. There are two kinds of desertion which we denounce as hasty running away; the one temporary, the other final. Think what a fool Mark made of himself. Here he comes; here is your hero. What wonders he is going to do! Here is a Samson for you. Perhaps he will slay his thousand men. But, no; he runs away before he strikes a single blow. He has not even courage enough to be taken prisoner. How everybody in the crowd must have laughed at the venturesome coward—at the dastardly bravo! Therefore abstain from these inconsistencies for your own character's sake. Besides, how much damage you do the Church! And think what must be the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read of "the groans of Spira"? That was a book circulated about the time of the Reformation—a book so terrible that even a man of iron could scarcely read it. Spira knew the gospel, but yet went back to the Church of Rome. His conscience woke on his dying bed, and his cries and shrieks were too terrible to be endured by his nurses; and as to his language, it was despair written out at full length in capital letters. My eminent predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Keach, published a like narrative of the death of John Child, who became a minister of the gospel, but afterwards went back to the Church from which he seceded, and died in the most frightful despair. May God deliver you from the death-bed of any man who has lived a professed Christian, and dies an apostate from the faith! But what must be the apostate's doom when his naked soul goes before God? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 53. **And they led Jesus away to the High Priest.**—*Christ before the priests:*—I. GIVE ATTENTION TO THE TWO HIGH PRIESTS WITH WHOM THE TRIAL OF JESUS BEGAN

II. THE MIDNIGHT COUNCIL OF TRIERS. For blind men to be fair critics of Turner, for bats to be fair critics of sunshine, for worms to be fair critics of the open air, would be more conceivable than the possibility of men like these being fair judges of Jesus! How could such sinners understand the Holy One of God? Besides their unfairness from natural unfitness, there was unfairness from the fact that they were desperate conspirators, plotting against His life. III. How He was tried. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*).

Ver. 54. **And Peter followed Him afar off.**—*Following afar off*:—A young man, it is told, was for several months in a backsliding state, which manifested itself in the usual way,—of conformity to a fashionable and unholy course of life, and a neglect of the ordinances and institutions of the house of God. During this time he called on a deacon of the church, who was a watchmaker, and asked him to repair his watch. "What is the difficulty with your watch?" said he. "It has lost time lately," said the young man. The deacon looked at him with a steady and significant eye, and said, "Haven't you lost time lately?" These few words brought the backslider to repentance, to the church, and to duty. *Peter's fall: its lessons*:—I. WHO FOLLOWED HIM AFAR OFF? "Peter." 1. Then seniority and leadership in the church are no guarantee against falling into sin. In the order of choice, Peter was the oldest of the apostles. He was also their recognized leader. Peter is the last man that should have "followed afar off," both because of seniority and leadership, and the blighting influence that would naturally and inevitably result from his conduct. The power of leadership involves tremendous responsibility. 2. Then a man may backslide while blessed with the most faithful and efficient gospel teaching. Peter's experience shows that a man may sin shamefully while blessed with the most perfect gospel teaching. 3. Then a man may backslide while blessed with the most affectionate pastoral care. Jesus foresaw his dangers; told him of the enemy's purpose; warned him of this very fall, and in the true pastoral spirit bore him to God in prayer: "I have prayed for thee." Surely no man was ever blessed with such pastoral solicitude and fidelity, and yet, in spite of it all, Peter fell. 4. Then high professions of loyalty and love are not always to be relied upon. Peter's assurances partook somewhat of the nature of boasting. Great natures never burden you with vows and assurances. They are the product and sign of a weak, unreliable character. Peter soon found out, however, that it is one thing to make vows in the heavenly atmosphere of the upper room, but quite another thing to pay those vows amid the provocation of Gethsemane, and the excitement of the judgment hall. I have heard of a little boat that carried such an immense whistle that it took all the steam to blow it; so, whenever it whistled it stopped running. Too many in our churches are like that little boat; the whistle of their profession is too big for their supply of steam. It takes all their energy to blow it, to tell of their attainments, and what wonders they are going to do. (*T. Kelly*). *Following Christ afar off*:—I. LET US INQUIRE, IN THE OUTSET, CONCERNING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ACTION OF SIMON. 1. The facts are very simple. When Christ retrieved the folly which this impetuous disciple had committed, and healed the ear of Malchus, it does not appear that the magnaminity of the Master had any effect in mitigating the malignity of the mob. Simon's stroke with his unusual weapon, instead of checking those belligerent people bearing swords and staves, came very near exasperating them. He simply put himself and his friends to flight, and then the crowd had it all their own way. It is a mournful record to read: "They all forsook Him and fled." But now, after this sudden and useless panic, it appears that at least two of our Lord's followers rallied their courage a little. They turned upon their flying footsteps, and started after the melancholy train. These were Peter and John. And the whole force of the dramatic incident we are studying is disclosed in the contrast of their behaviour. John ran with a will. As in the race afterwards for Christ's sepulchre he easily distanced Peter (John xx. 4), so now he arrived first in the palace. Moreover, he soon showed how brave he was, and how much in earnest to retrieve his temporary defection he was, by urging his way directly through all obstacles into the very apartment where Jesus had been taken for trial; he "went in with Jesus, but Peter stood at the door without" (John xviii. 15, 16). 2. The meaning of all this is what makes it so important. One has no need of being deceived ever as to the exact commencement of any defection from Christ. Backsliding is earliest in the "heart," then it shows itself in one's "ways" (Prov. xiv. 14). Absalom was a rebel while as yet he made no overt attack on his father's throne. The younger son was a prodigal before he started for the far country.

Peter was a renegade and a poltroon from the earliest instant in which, listless and halting, he had begun to follow Jesus only "afar off." For an analysis of his experience would have disclosed three bad elements. 1. There was petulance in it. Simon's self-love was wounded when Jesus administered the somewhat extensive rebuke he had received (Matt. xxvi. 52–54). He felt himself aggrieved. His defection began with sullenness. We cannot doubt that his countenance fell; he wore an injured expression. 2. There was distrust in his experience. We have seen that there was some reason for all the disciples to apprehend violence, instantaneous and passionate. Peter was fully responsible for that. The immediate result of his rashness was danger rather than deliverance. But could not Jesus be relied upon for rescue? Was not John fully protected afterwards? 3. There was unbelief in his experience. This disciple evidently had become ashamed of his adhesion to Jesus as the Messiah. An omnipotent Son of God was in his estimation for the moment letting things go too far, when He suffered Himself to be apprehended by a rabble and maltreated in this way without a word. Perhaps Simon lost confidence in His cause. If the words of Matthew are to be taken literally (xxvi. 58), this disciple did not follow Jesus, even afar off, so much from affection as from curiosity; he went into the palace not to see Jesus, but to "see the end." II. Let us go a step farther NOW, AND INQUIRE CONCERNING THE RESULTS OF THIS BEHAVIOUR OF PETER. 1. It took him away from Christ's personal presence. There was always to this disciple a peculiar exhilaration and help in the companionship of his Divine Lord. Under the shining of His countenance he constantly grows humble, gentle, and affectionate. Just as Mercury, that feeblest of all the planets in our solar system, seems most brilliant when likeliest to disappear, because nearest the sun, so Simon actually appears at his best when he is the most outshone; and the moment he wanders, he wanes. Duty is to most of us what this personal leadership was to the disciples. If we follow our religious duties close up, they will bring us near Jesus. 2. Again, this behaviour separated Peter from the sympathy of Jesus' adherents. In union there is strength. Those disciples ought not to have allowed themselves to be scattered during the trials of that passover night. For together they would have helped each other very much. Now we do not know what became of any of them except John. If Peter had been sitting by John's side he certainly would have been safer. He was easily influenced, and the beloved disciple soon recovered his courage and loyalty. Whenever professed Christians are seen to be falling away from each other by following the Master afar off, there is reason for alarm in reference to their spiritual interests. Only sin is solitary, and only guilt loves to live alone. Hence there is vast wisdom in the ancient counsel that believers should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is (Heb. x. 25). 3. Moreover, this behaviour threw Peter hopelessly into the companionship of his enemies. Peter fell into bad company the instant he fell out of good. III. IT IS TIME FOR US TO INQUIRE CONCERNING THE REAL CAUSE OF SIMON PETER'S DEFECTION THAT NIGHT. 1. It would not be enough to ascribe it just to a sudden fright of alarm. 2. It was because his piety, at that period of his history, was fashioned more by feeling than by principle. Peter's spirituality blew in a gusty sort of way because his theological groundwork was faulty. We remember more than one occasion when he deliberately interfered with our Lord's communication of the doctrine of the atonement. As a master, a teacher, a leader, he loved Jesus personally; there he rested. Jesus away, he failed. Soft gales do not always waft to the heaven; they the rather often aid in an unperceived drift towards the open sea. Simon loved to have all things beautiful and serene. He was the man who grew ecstatic on the mount of transfiguration, and proposed that Jesus should stay there. His sensibilities were so shocked at the thought of the Saviour's maltreatment, that he protested against the official act of sealing the covenant of redemption with blood. The words were characteristic: "This shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. xvi. 22). Now let it be remembered that for nobody is there any hope of standing firm under stress of opposition, if his piety has been nurtured only in tender hours of emotional enjoyment. Spiritual impulses will be dangerously irregular and intermittent unless they have the help of steady purpose underneath. Carpenters never cut ships' knees from tropical palms. The grand doctrines of the cross must be wrought into the very fibre of one's soul, as the granite soil and the winter tempests of the mountains are wrought into the gnarls of the oak which the shipwright loves. That is to say, Christian character is reared out of a determinate wrestle with sin. IV. Finally, LET US INQUIRE CONCERNING THE ADMONITION WHICH IS SUGGESTED BY THIS BEHAVIOUR OF PETER. 1. How can this sin be repeated in our

time? We follow Jesus afar off when we refuse to defend the doctrines of redemption before unbelievers who scoff at a blood atonement—when we allow the rules and institutions of the Christian Church to be derided or belittled in our hearing—when we neglect the ordinances of God's house and refuse the fixed practice of family devotion—when we strain Christian liberty to see how much of indulgence in worldliness an unattacked church-membership will bear. There is no difficulty whatever in modern experience in the way of repeating Peter's wrong. 2. It is a better question to ask, How can this sin of following Christ afar off be avoided in our time? John, and not Peter, is our pattern. The way to escape the taunts of maid-servants in the hall is to go right up the steps into the presence of Jesus. It touches us to the heart to read the words which show how well Simon understood all his cowardice and folly long years afterwards (1 Pet. v. 6–10). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 55. **All the council sought for witness against Jesus.**—*The Council:*—Jesus before the Jewish Council:—The world, in its best moods, exalts justice; and, in its worst moods, defeats it. Everything depends on the mood for the time being. Multitudes on the first day of Holy Week strewed the way with their clothes for their king to ride over; it was their mood. Only five days later a mob, bearing lanterns and torches, sought Him as if He were a thief, and led Him a prisoner over that same highway. The mood had changed. Mob law prevailed. I. THE TRIBUNAL. No gathering of star-chamber was ever more lawless. 1. The law decreed that no court should sit before sunrise; this trial followed immediately upon the midnight arrest—while Jerusalem was asleep. 2. The law required that any one accused should have an advocate; here the Nazarene stood alone, with none to question in His behalf. 3. The law demanded that witnesses should be summoned for every prisoner; here no one was called to testify. 4. The judge of that court was Caiaphas, who had already declared the necessity of the death of Jesus, in order that the factions of the people might be harmonized. 5. Like a travesty reads the record: "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death." Their aim was to establish guilt, not to find justice. 6. It was the law that no sentences of death should be passed upon the same day as the trial; yet, in spite of their subterfuge, declaring the sentence of death just after sunrise, it was on the same day, since the Jewish day began at evening. II. THE INDICTMENT. Full of flaws. Hopelessly confused. Even the testimony of bribed witnesses was too inconsistent to be of any use. The only seeming ground for a charge was a distortion of a saying in His earlier ministry concerning the destruction of the temple which He called His body, but which they declared was the pride of Jerusalem; but even this was no crime, as even His judges knew. Their case had failed. Their miserable charges were not sustained. III. THE PRISONER. The one sinless Person among men. No enemy has ever found a flaw in His pure character. No charge, even of haste or imprudence, has ever been preferred. By His greatness and goodness, He throws all other human attainments into obscurity. 1. The best character is no protection against human hatred. The higher the character the more isolated it stands. The treatment accorded the Master will be meted out to His disciples. Persecution for righteousness' sake is a natural outcome of being righteous. 2. The best character does not always command friendship in the time of trial. It is not an infallible mark of piety to be always surrounded with friends. IV. THE SENTENCE. Death, that cry of assassins; death, cold and cruel, blanching in a moment the ruddiest face; death, the breaking down of human life; death, the guardian of the cross; this was the word they hissed out—"He is guilty of death." To beckon such a death the laws of Moses and of the Romans were torn to shreds; mockery clothed itself in ermine; Pilate washed his guilty hands; and priests and rabble shouted themselves hoarse. (*David O. Mears.*) *The Sanhedrin:*—The Council of the Jews, commonly called the Sanhedrin, was composed of seventy-one persons. It consisted of three Courts or Houses,—the Sopherim, or Teachers of the Law, the College of the High Priest, and the house of the Elders. The president, or head of the Council, bore the title of Nasi, and was not necessarily the High Priest. In Numbers xi. 16, we read that God commanded Moses to call together seventy of the Elders of Israel, and to put his spirit upon them. The Council was composed in like manner of seventy, to represent these Elders, chosen and ordained by Moses, and the seventy-first, the president, represented Moses; but as the Council was summoned by Moses, and not by Aaron, the High Priest was not necessarily the head of it. This president, or Nasi, was also called the

Prince of Israel, and must be of the house of David, and the office became for many generations an inheritance of the family of Hillel, which descended from David. The First, or Upper House, was the House of the Lawyers, and it had originally supreme control of life and death. But when the Romans conquered Palestine, and converted Judea into a Roman Province, then this power was taken from them, and all those cases which had been tried by the Court of the Lawyers were heard by the Roman Prætor. This House accordingly was practically dissolved; it had nothing to do, the sceptre was taken from it, and its lawgiver was divested of all power. The Second House was that of the Chief Priests; at the head of it sat the High Priest, and it was made up of the heads of the twenty-four priestly families and of the heads of the departments connected with the ministry in the Temple. The members all bore the title of "Chief Priests" (ἀρχιερεῖς). They decided in all spiritual matters, as to faith and heresy. This House remained in full activity after the practical abrogation of the First, and thus the High Priest became the virtual head of the Jewish Council. The Third House was that of the Elders, and was made up of representatives of the great Jewish families and of Rabbis of note. They went by the name of the "Elders," and continued to sit along with the Second House. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 61, 62. **But He held His peace.**—*Eloquent silence:*—There is a silence which is often more eloquent than speech, means more than any words, and speaks ten times more powerfully to the heart. Such, for example, is the silence when the heart is too full for utterance, and the organs of speech are choked by the whelming tide of emotion. The sight of a great man so shaken, and quivering with feeling, that the tongue can give no voice to what the heart feels, is of all human rhetoric the most potent. Such, also, is the silence of a wise man challenged to speak by those whom he feels unworthy of his words. The man who can stand and listen to the language of stolid ignorance, venomous bigotry, and personal insult, addressed to him in an offensive spirit, and offers no reply, exerts a far greater power upon the minds of his assailants, than he could by words however forceful. His silence reflects a moral majesty, before which the heart of his assailants will scarcely fail to cower. Such was the silence which Christ now maintained in this hall. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 62–65. **And ye shall see the Son of Man.**—*The value of Christ's oath before Pilate:*—I propose to inquire what the value of this oath is; what value we ought to attach to it as evidence that Jesus was the Messiah; and I suppose that this is to be determined on the same basis and grounds on which we determine the value of evidence in other cases. How is that? 1. By those extraneous circumstances which are corroborative or otherwise, of that which is testified to. (1) Jesus was the only being who ever appeared on this earth corresponding to the types of the ritualistic part of the Old Testament. (2) He was the only being who ever appeared, in whom the prophecies would be fulfilled in their double aspect. A King, a Conqueror, a Deliverer, a Great One; and yet suffering, despised, and rejected of men, &c. The Jews looked only at one aspect of these prophecies; and the half-truth misled them. (3) Our Lord's teaching was infinitely loftier than can be accounted for on any other supposition. (4) His miracles all pointed to Him as a Saviour; all of them beneficent, and all of them such, in their various characteristics, as to indicate His power over the forces of nature, over the spiritual world, and over the dead. All these things conspire to sustain the testimony which Jesus bore to Himself as the Christ, before the High Priest under oath. 2. The value of an oath may be affected by the circumstances in which it is given. (1) There was nothing, absolutely nothing, external to Himself, that could have originated in Christ the idea that He was the Messiah. i. His home, an obscure and distant place. ii. His want of education. iii. His poverty. iv. His want of authority. How came He, then, with the idea that He was greater than Solomon, that He was Lord of the Sabbath; that He was the Light of the world; that He was the Deliverer that was to come—how came He by it? That a single individual, in these circumstances, should have had that idea, seems to me to indicate that He had a right to it. (2) Moreover, you will observe, when He took this oath, He stood wholly alone. What courage, then, must have been needed to maintain, in the face of death, that He was the Messiah. 3. The value of an oath, or of testimony given in such circumstances, is determined by the competency of the witness. Was the witness of sound mind, and had he the

means of knowing that to which He testified? Need I ask this question regarding Jesus? Was He beside Himself? Was He carried away by fanaticism? Was there anything to awaken such fanaticism in that solitary man standing thus wholly alone, forsaken by His friends, with absolutely nothing to sustain Him in the very face of death but His own consciousness of the great fact that He was the Messiah? Nothing! 4. The moral character of the witness. And here again, need I say anything in regard to the moral character of Jesus? No sin was ever imputed to Him; He claimed to be without sin; in the Lord's Prayer He taught others to confess sin, but He never confessed sin Himself. The Bible claims this for Him: "Who was," says Peter, "without sin"—absolutely. And was such a person as that, with such a character as that, one who would stand before the highest tribunal of His nation and, when adjured by the living God, perjure Himself? Taking these things together, it seems to me that no oath was ever uttered under circumstances to give it greater validity and greater significance, and that no oath can be thus uttered—never! (*Mark Hopkins, D.D.*) *Rejection of evidence concerning Christ*:—How was our Lord's testimony received? You will notice, here, the position which the High Priest assumed, and it is a position which very many men assume in regard to the evidence of Christianity. He asked the question, "Art thou the Christ?" Was he prepared to accept evidence? Let us see. Suppose our Lord had said "No"? Then He would have been an impostor, and would have been led off self-condemned. But now, when He said "I am," was there the least tendency in the mind of the High Priest to accept the testimony? No; but instead of that, he condemned Him for blasphemy! It was as Christ had said in regard to that generation: "We have piped," &c. Whatever He might do, and whatever He might say, there was that determined position of opposition against Him, which precluded any evidence from having an effect. And that is the case with many men to-day: there is this position of opposition which precludes any fair consideration of evidence; and the oath of Christ to His Messiahship, which stands to-day such an oath as would convince any man of anything except that, does not weigh with them. (*Ibid.*) *Danger of being attracted by the world's ways*:—He who becomes a friend to the world's ways becomes an enemy to Christ's. When you begin to love them, you begin to dislike religion. When you begin to worship money you cease to worship God. When you begin to love the house of pleasure you begin to dislike the house of prayer. When you begin to love bad books you begin to lose your relish for the Bible. When you seek irreligious associates you draw off steadily from intercourse with the people of God. When the greedy lust of the world has eaten out a Christian conscience—when it has deadened the spiritual sense—when it has dry-rotted the whole heart—when it has banished Christ and possessed the soul's affection—then the man is ready to desert! Nay, he has deserted! What is any man worth to the Church, or to God, when his heart is the property of Satan? He may linger within the camp and even wear the uniform of a church member. But when the bugle calls to action he is not in the ranks! When a march of reform is ordered or a strife for God's law is waged, he is "missing." (*Cuyler.*)

Ver. 66. **And as Peter was beneath in the palace.**—*The High Priest's palace*:—The palace of the High Priest was in all probability built much in the Roman style. There was what was called the *vestibulum*, an entrance adorned with pillars; in this was the *ostium*, or entrance hall, closed with doors. On one side lived the porter. This hall gave admission to the *atrium*, called in a Greek house the *aulé*, a square or oblong apartment, open in the middle to the sky, with, in Roman houses, a small water-tank in the middle, and beside it the image of the tutelary god and a small altar on which incense was burnt. At the further end of this great hall was a large and handsome room, opening to it by steps, called the *tablinum*. It was the grand reception-room, and was richly adorned. In the *tablinum*, which was sometimes square, sometimes semi-circular, the court was held in the house of Caiaphas. Without, below the marble steps in the *atrium*, were the servants of the house. There was no image of a god there, but there was a brazier in the place of the altar of incense. That there was an *impluvium* or tank is likely enough; as so much importance was ascribed to washings, and water had been conveyed throughout Jerusalem by means of subterranean canals and aqueducts. Out of the *tablinum* sometimes a door opened into a small bedroom, which was without a window. It was in this little room that the false witnesses were kept concealed till summoned to appear. They were perfectly in the dark,

and could not be seen, whereas Christ was visible distinctly because of the torches held, as Jewish law required, before Him to make His face clearly distinguishable. In the *tablinum* were also seats or benches, of marble, of alabaster, or costly woods. On these benches sat the council. Whilst the trial was going on in the *tablinum*, another trial was going on in the *atrium*, a step or two below the *tablinum*. The Master was tried in the upper court, and found guilty, though innocent. The disciple was tried in the lower court, and found guilty by his own conscience, or rather, let me say, by that Master who was receiving sentence a few steps above him. Both were irradiated by the red light of fire in the midst of the prevailing darkness. Probably the only lights then burning were the fire of charcoal in the brazier on the edge of the water-tank, and the torches held aloft by the serjeants of the guard before Jesus. Very generally, the *tablinum* opened into a garden behind, so that those in the *atrium* or hall looked through it into the garden, which was surrounded by a colonnade. When this was the case, the seats were between the steps from the *atrium* and the garden door, and the little bedroom door was opposite the seats. Now, perhaps, you can picture the scene. In the foreground are the servants and soldiers moving about the hall, women bringing bundles of thorn, or shovels of charcoal to the fire in the brazier. Beyond, raised like a low stage of a theatre, is the *tablinum*, with the judges seated on the right. On the left, peering out of the dark door, are the evil faces of the hired spies and witnesses. A little forward, on a small raised platform, is Christ, with bound hands, and on either side stands an officer holding a flaring torch. Behind, like the scene in a theatre, is the garden, with the setting moon casting long shadows from the black cypresses over the gravel, and high aloft in the sky twinkles one star. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 67. **Peter warming himself.**—*Peter at the fire*:—1. Peter had one reason for being there—to see what would be the issue of Christ's apprehension, and to while away the time: but God had another end in view. Had Peter favoured the revealed will of God, he had not been there with no business but to sit down and warm himself. But by the secret will and providence of God, Peter must be here, not only to accomplish the word of Christ, but for another special purpose. For the good of the Church, he is made an eye-witness of all Christ's sufferings in the house of the High Priest. Never did any evil befall any of God's servants, but by God's overruling power was turned to some good to themselves and others. 2. Peter was cold, and it was not unlawful to warm himself; but better he had been cold and comfortless alone in the darkness of the night, than to have sat within warming himself in such company. Peter was now colder by the warm fire, than he was without in the cold air; his heart grew cold, and his faith and zeal. 1. Let us resolve that that is a cold and comfortless place (though the fire be never so great) where Christ is bound, where Christ cannot be professed, where Christ is scorned, and the disciples of Christ are set upon as Peter was here. 2. Let us labour, how cold soever the weather be without, to keep the heart warm in grace; it had been better for Peter to have sat cold without and warm within, than for outward warmth to freeze and starve inwardly. The season is generally cold—heat of zeal counted madness, godliness disguised, &c.; let us labour in this general coldness to keep our heat. 3. When thou sittest at a warm fire, beware of temptation. Peter, when he followed Christ, suffering cold and want, was strong and zealous; but now he comes to the warm fire, he is quite overthrown. The warm fire of prosperity and outward peace has overthrown many, who in their wants and trouble stood fast in grace. If thou hast not prosperity and wealth, console thyself with the thought that thou art free from the snare which has caused others to fall. And if thou art in affliction, be not too much cast down; for in this estate thou art more secure than in its opposite. Prosperity is not always a sign of God's favour, but only when it provokes to humility and duty. Too much rankness hurts the corn, and too much fruit breaks the trees. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor*). *Weak tempters can foil stout men*:—Peter's tempter is a woman, a silly maid, a very weak party. 1. To show him his frailty. Peter thought no man could cast him down, when lo! a woman does. 2. To humble his pride. How easily God overthrows the pride of man! He need not come in His own person; He need not bring a champion or man of war against him; a mere woman shall be tempter too strong for as presumptuous a professor as Peter. The Lord, who resists all sinners, is said often to "resist the proud," *i.e.*, after a special and severe manner, because they seek to draw God's glory upon themselves. Pharaoh.

Jezebel. Herod. Historians write of a city in France that was depopulated and wasted, and the inhabitants driven away, by frogs. It is reported also, that a town in Thessalonica was rooted up and overthrown by moles. And we read of Pope Adrian being choked with a fly. Thus the Lord plays, as it were, with His enemies, scorning to come Himself into the field against them, but sending the meanest of His creatures to cast them down. Let this humble us under the mighty hand of God; presume of nothing in ourselves, be proud of nothing, lest we know by woeful experience that a thing of nothing is strong enough to overthrow us. If our pride shall resist God, God's weakness shall resist us, and we shall know to our cost that the weakness of God is stronger than man. Never was pride of heart unrevenged with falls, sin, and shame. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 68, 72. **But he denied.**—*The foulness of Peter's sin*:—1. He denies flatly and peremptorily. 2. He gives a double denial; implying more resolution. And both his denials are distinct and manifest lies. 3. He denies Christ before a multitude. (1) Bad enough to have denied Christ before one witness. How much worse before so many? (2) He who denies Christ before any man, shall be denied by Him before the Father. What a great sin to deny Him before all men! (3) In so great a company were a number of wicked men, and now Peter exposes the name of Christ to all their scorn and opprobrium. He animates and hardens them, and takes part with them in the rejection of Christ. (4) There were also some weak ones and well-wishes to Christ. Peter's action weakens and scandalizes these, and perhaps prevents some of them coming forward in defence of the Lord. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *It is hard to confess Christ in danger*:—1. Because of Satan's malice. He will do all in his power to keep men from confessing Christ openly, and to make them deny Him. 2. The strength of our natural corruption makes it difficult to resist Satan's attacks. 3. Weakness of faith and graces. (1) Think it not an easy thing to confess Christ in trial, nor a thing to be performed by our own power; but pray for the "Spirit of strength." (2) Pray for wisdom when and how to confess. (3) Pray for faith. (*Ibid.*) *The porch of sin*:—Many step out of the midst of sin, but hang about the porch. They would not be outrageous sinners, but retain a snatch or taste; not open adulterers, but adulterous eyes, thoughts, and speeches; not noted drunkards, but company-keepers and bibbers; not blasphemous swearers by wounds and bloods, but by faith, troth, God, &c. All this is to remain in the porch of sin. (*Ibid.*) *Difficult to quit bad company*:—In that Peter sticks in the porch, and comes back among those whom he had forsaken, learn how difficult it is for a man who has been long used to bad company and courses, to be brought to leave it altogether. He will either look back, or else tarry in the porch. Sin and sinners are like bird-lime. The more Peter strives to get out, the more he finds himself limed and entangled. (*Ibid.*) *Why God did not prevent Peter's fall*:—1. He would give us and the whole Church an example of infirmity and weakness, by the fall of such a man. 2. The strongest must learn fear and watchfulness, and while they stand take heed lest they fall, lest the enemy suddenly overcome them as he did Peter. 3. To crush men's presumption, and teach them to attribute more to the word of Christ than their own strength. Had Peter done this, he had not so shamefully fallen. 4. To take away all excuse for men in after ages setting up Peter as an idol. (*Ibid.*) *To avoid sin, avoid occasions*:—He that would avoid sin must carefully avoid occasions, which are the stronger because of our own natural inclination to evil. He that would not be burnt must not touch fire, or go upon the coals. Beware of evil company. Consider thine own weakness, and the power of evil to seduce. (*Ibid.*) *To avoid sin, keep close to God's Word*:—He that would avoid occasion of sin, must hold himself to God's commandment, and within the limits of his own calling. If Peter had done this, he had not fallen so foully. Christ having expressed His will and pleasure, he should not have so much as deliberated upon it, much less resolved against it. But he forgets the word and commandment of Christ, and so falls into sin. (*Ibid.*) *How we are to show love to a friend*:—Here is a notable rule to be observed in friendships. Examine the love thou showest to thy friend, by the love of God. 1. Take heed thy love be subordinate to the love of God; so that, if thou canst not please both, thou please not thy friend at the cost of God's displeasure (Matt. x. 37). Peter should first have loved Christ as his Lord, and then as his friend. Had he so done, he would have kept His word. 2. Love the Word better than thy friend. Peter should have stuck to Christ's road, instead of His person. 3. See thy love to thy friend be not preposterous, that thy affection de-

stroy him not. The subtlety of Satan creeps into our friendships and fellowships, so that by our improvidence, instead of helping, we hurt them more than their enemies could do. We must pray for wisdom and judgment, that neither willingly nor unawares we either council or lead them into any sin, or uphold any sin in them, or hinder in them any good. (*Ibid.*) *The corrupting influence of bad company*:—See how soon even God's children are corrupted with wicked company. Even Peter, a great and forward disciple of Christ, full of zeal and courage, who will pray, profess, and immediately before draw the sword in Christ's quarrel, now can deny Him among persecutors. Great is the force of wicked company to pervert even a godly mind. 1. There is a proneness in godly men to be withdrawn by evil company. As the body is infected by pestilential air, so the mind by the contagion of bad company. 2. There is a bewitching force in evil company to draw even a good mind beyond his own purpose and resolution. (*Ibid.*) *Reasons for avoiding evil company*:—1. There cannot be true fellowship with God and His enemies too. 2. Every man's company tells what he is. Ravens flock together by companies; and so do doves. A good man will not willingly stand in the way of sinners. 3. The practice of wicked men should make good men shun their company; for wherein are their sports and delights, but in things which displease God and grieve His Spirit, and the spirits of all who love God and His glory? What can a good man see in such company, but must either infect him, or at least offend him in almost everything? (*Ibid.*) *Godly company the best*:—It seems very sweet to sit warm among wicked men, to eat and drink and be jovial with them; but there is a bitter sauce for such meats. On the contrary, in company of godly men thou art under the shadow of God's mercy for their sakes. God loves His children and their friends. For Lot's sake His family was saved. (*Ibid.*) *The fall of Peter*:—A great study in human nature is here presented. I. THE ORIGIN OF PETER'S FALL. Do not overlook—1. The quarrel in Peter's heart with Christ's methods. Christ's plan was to conquer by suffering; Peter's to conquer by resisting. This inward divergence produced the outward separation. Beware of quarrelling with God's dealings, or methods, or demands; the most common of all sources of backsliding. 2. Peter's pride helped his fall. II. THE PROCESS OF PETER'S FALL. 1. Following Christ "afar off" (Luke xxii. 54)—half-heartedly, not close, not to testify to the Sanhedrin for Him, but simply to "see the end" (Matt. xxvi. 58). Close to Christ in the path of duty you are kept warm; sluggish and distant, the heart chills and grows feeble. 2. He entered into temptation. 3. A subtle snare is laid for him. If the three challenges had taken place in a reversed order, probably Peter would not have fallen by them. Had the men come first, his manhood might have risen to meet the challenge. But a housemaid does not put him on his mettle. Thrown off his guard, he tells his first lie, and it has afterwards to be backed up by more falsehoods and deadlier denials, putting a gulf between himself and Christ which, but for Christ's grace, would have been eternal. III. THE COMMONNESS OF SIMILAR TRANSGRESSION. Not a question of who is guilty, but who is guiltless of this fault. All hiding of the face from Christ, all secrecy of fear, which leads people to assume we have nothing to do with Christ, all leaving Him unowned and undefended, is a sin identical in nature with Peter's. Each should ask, "Lord, is it I?" (*R. Glover.*) *St. Peter's fall*:—Let us take warning from this—1. Not to rely on our own strength for steadfastness in the moment of trial, but to trust only in Divine grace. 2. Not to suppose our own power of resistance to temptation is greater than that of others. Rather, when we see another sin, let us in him see our own selves, and pray God for him as we would for ourselves. When we see another steadfast in the faith, let us pray that he may preserve that gift which he has unto the end. 3. To heed every warning that is mercifully given us. When the cock crew for the first time, it seems wonderful that St. Peter was not reminded of Christ's prediction, nor restrained from subsequent denials. But sin deafens the heart to every voice, and blinds the eye to all signs. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Fall and restoration*:—There are MSS., you know, called *palimpsests*, *i.e.*, written upon twice. The original inscription upon them, which was fair, and full of Divine wisdom, has been defaced, and in its place may now be seen letters and words and sentences in contrast to what was described before. So with the characters of men—even good men. Over their better nature you may see scratched in ugly scrawls very obvious imperfections and frailties. But, thank God, often do we witness, after the process of defacement, a process of restoration. Divine grace, through discipline of various descriptions, rubs out the evil and brings back the good, and causes the soul at last to reveal

again most distinctly what had only been dimmed and not destroyed; even as there has been discovered a method by which such ancient writings can be made to exhibit once more what seemed—but only seemed—for ever spoiled. (*Dr. Stoughton.*) *Danger of one false step*:—We see in Peter's fall the danger of a first false step. As he entered the house he denied his discipleship to the portress; he did wrong that good might come. He loved his Master; he sought to be with or near Him; he desired to see the end. What was the harm of merely a white lie to gain this great advantage? But the white lie led to black denial, and to a false oath. When he had assured Jesus that, though all might deny Him, yet would not he, Peter had supposed the case of his being brought up for trial before the Sanhedrin. And it is possible that he would have stood firm under such a trial, but this temptation came on him from an unexpected quarter, and when he was unprepared to meet it; that is why he fell. He would have confessed his discipleship before the High Priest, but he denied it to the young woman who kept the gate. From this we learn that we must be always prepared to meet temptation, and that the most treacherous and dangerous of temptations come upon us suddenly, without giving us time to prepare, and in a way unexpected. Peter's heart was sound from first to last; he never wavered in his love. His spirit was willing, but the flesh was very weak. This makes the difference between venial and wilful sin. Wilful sin is committed by deliberate consent of the will to what is evil. The fall of Peter was not wilful. Venial sin is the fault of infirmity, the fall through weakness against the purpose of the heart. Such was the fall of Peter. We see in his repentance the harmfulness of venial sin. We are apt to make light of sin if it be not wilful. This sin of Peter's was not wilful, yet his heart was broken and contrite for it. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *Discrepancies in the narratives of the Evangelists may be harmonized*:—It is well known that there are varieties of detail in the four records of St. Peter's threefold denial. The discrepancies have been spoken of as irreconcilable, and attempts to shake the credibility and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture have been based upon this supposition. Careful examination will show that "the incidents given by the different Evangelists are completely in harmony with the belief that there were three denials, *i.e.*, three acts of denial, of which the several writers have taken such features as seemed to be most significant for their purpose." The multiplicity of charges may well be illustrated out of our own experience. We have witnessed, no doubt, a scene in which a crowd of people in a state of excitement are setting upon an individual whom they believe to have done something of which they disapprove. No sooner has one begun to accuse him of it than another comes up and adds to the charge, another insists upon it with gestures of violence, another can prove it if they will only let him speak, and then perhaps several cry out at once. The bewildered man tries to exculpate himself from the Babel of charges. He says anything and everything in the excitement of the moment, and at last, when matters become desperate, loses all control over his words. This is almost exactly what happened in the last "act of denial" in the courtyard of the High Priest's palace. St. Peter was driven to bay by a multitude of excited assailants, and perhaps hardly knowing, certainly not realizing, what he said, he appealed to heaven, and called down Divine vengeance upon his head if his denial were untrue. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Peter denies his Lord*:—I. The circumstances under which this great guilty act was performed ARE EXCEEDINGLY DRAMATIC. The story shifts its phases like pictures in a play. I. The scene is laid in the quadrangle of the High Priest's house in Jerusalem, whither the miscellaneous mob of people had hurried Jesus after His apprehension in the garden of Gethsemane. It will be necessary for those who desire to understand this narrative to form for themselves a conception of Peter's precise whereabouts during such a grand crisis of his history. Eastern dwellings of the better sort appear to have been built around a four-sided court—an interior space like a private yard enclosed—frequently paved with flat flagging-stone, and open to the sky overhead. Into this area a passage from the street led by an arched opening through one side of the house. Heavy folding-doors guarded the entrance, leaving a smaller wicket-gate near by for the convenience of visitors who came familiarly or one at a time. Usually this was kept by a porter. Such, in all likelihood, was the general fashion of Caiaphas' palace. Simon Peter was inside of the wicket standing there in the court-yard. 2. The company into the midst of which before this John, the beloved disciple, had found his way, and which he does not appear to have paused even to notice as he hurried through, was made up of servants and soldiers. Belated and bewildered by their unwonted excitements on the night of our Saviour's trial, they

had kindled a "fire of coals" out in the area. The hour of this arraignment was unusual, the air was chilly, and the confusion was full of discomfort. The entire group appears irritable and maliciously disposed. The girls are coarse, the military men boisterous and brutal, the Levites insolently triumphant, as they see their victim now in what they deem the right hands, and the waiters abusive and impudent. Everything shows picturesquely there among the flitting dresses and uniforms. The flame makes all the quadrangle dance with uncouth shadows, and the faces of the men and maidens are ruddy under the red glow of the coals. Ill-tempered and testy with the raw air of the midnight, they jostle each other and join roughly in gibes about the discomfiture and capture of this Nazarene prophet at last. 3. Enter Simon Peter now, the chief actor in this awful tragedy of the denial. Into the midst of the throng comes a burly figure, a quick-stepping individual, evidently trying to do that peculiar thing which almost everybody, one time or another in his life, has tried to do, and nobody at any time has ever succeeded in accomplishing, namely, to look unconscious and unconcerned when absorbently anxious, and to seem unnoticed and unembarrassed when he knows the rest are all staring at him. That new-comer is our well-known friend Simon, the son of Jonas; and he is now endeavouring to act at perfect ease, although he is certain that he is and ought to be an object of suspicion from the beginning. "He sat with the servants (Mark xiv. 54), and warmed himself at the fire." Picture him now, away from all his friends, among the sullen enemies of his Lord. There is some evidence that this disciple imagined he might pass himself off for one of the crowd who went out to apprehend Jesus, if only he mingled unabashed with the chilly company around the coals. So he pressed nearer, and this was exactly what hastened his exposure. 4. Now commences the dialogue of the drama. A girl kept the outer door; this reminds us of the office of the damsel named Rhoda (Acts xii. 13), whom we meet in another part of Peter's history farther on. II. We must arrest our study of the melancholy story here, for it is high time that we should seek for THE PRACTICAL LESSONS TAUGHT IN THIS TRANSGRESSION OF PETER. 1. We see, for one thing, how commonplace is even the most notable of human sins. This denial of his Lord will always be quoted as the characteristic wickedness of Simon Peter. It stands out in history as one of the vast crimes of the world and the race. To deny Christ is so simple a thing that we can fall into it, and hardly know it at the time. This sin is not singular nor unusual. Christ's cause is on trial now as really as was Christ Himself in the High Priest's palace. We stand in jeopardy every hour. Satan's ingenious policy is to come suddenly upon us with the surprise of a question with ridicule in it. So small a matter as omitting family prayer because a stranger is in our dwelling, as putting on a ribald air when one twits us with being serious, may have in it all the meaning and the meanness of Peter's sin. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 2. Again: we see the immeasurable peril of just one act of wrong-doing. Indeed, one act never seems to remain alone. This first denial led to two more of the same sort; then to lying, then to profanity. It is as supreme a folly to talk of a little sin as it would be to talk of a small decalogue that forbids it, or a diminutive God that hates it, or a shallow hell that will punish it. Sin is registered according to heavenly measurements of holiness and majesty. 3. We see, likewise, a ready explanation of the mysterious falls into sin sometimes noticed in the lives of really good men. No one doubts that Simon Peter was a regenerate Christian man: how happens it that he crashes down into wickedness so suddenly? The answer to this question must be found in the disclosures of this disciple's previous history. He had for a long time been preparing for this disaster. One of the brightest of our modern writers has given us a simile somewhat like this. If a careless reader lets fall a drop of ink in among the leaves of a book he is just closing, it will strike through the paper both ways. When he opens the volume again, he can begin with the earliest faint appearance of the stain, and measure by its increase his progress towards the great black point of defacement. Open it now anywhere, and he will detect some traces of the coming spot. He can turn back to it; he can turn forward from it. So of this great base act of the Apostle Peter, which we call emphatically the denial. It is a stain in the middle of his life. Most of us have a profound admiration and a tender love for this old Bethsaida fisherman, even if we do deny he was ever set up for the first pope. But hitherto, as we have been studying his biography, we might often have seemed to see the denial coming. Along the way hints of it appear. One who reads the Gospels for the first time would be likely to remark, "Here is a man who will be in

awful shame and trouble some day, for he thinks he stands safely; he is going to fall." This might be true of most self-confident Christians who lapse into sin; the wickedness has been growing upon them longer than they thought. "Men fall," so once said Guizot, "on the side towards which they lean." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Peter's denial of Jesus*:—We speak of a sudden death; when the doctor had long been warning the man who has just died that he might die at any moment. We speak of a sudden bankruptcy; which, however, the commercial prophets had long secretly foretold. We speak of the sudden fall of a tree in a tempest; when, under a fair bark and a leafy shade, it had long been only a thing of powder. We speak of the sudden fall of a soul; when in that soul the causation of that fall had long been working out of sight. I. THINK OF THIS DEED IN CONNECTION WITH A CERTAIN WEAKNESS IN WHICH IT BEGAN. That sin began, not in a sin, but in a weakness. The strength of a rope is to be measured, not according to what it is in its strongest, but in its weakest point. The strength of a ship is to be estimated, not according to her strongest, but her weakest part; let but the strain come on that, let that be broken, no matter how strong in any other part she may be, the mighty ship, being conquered there, will go down. So it is with the strength of a soul. Peter had many strong points, but one weak one; and that one, undetected by himself, was at the beginning of this disaster. It was the weakness of excessive constitutional impulsiveness. Impulse is beautiful and good; but impulse is only like steam in the works of a factory, or wind in the sails of a yacht. Impulse is a good servant of the soul, but a bad master. Impulse may act with as much emotional force in a wrong direction as in a right. Even when its direction is right, if left to itself, it is not safe. But for this weakness, a soul might often be saved just in time from the special kind of danger to which other weaknesses specially lead. There is a man who feels it a pain to contradict, and a pleasure to acquiesce; and when in the company of errorists, this weakness is his danger. There is a man whose weakness is an agonizing consciousness of ridicule. There is a man, a favourite with us all, whose simplicity we love, at whose heroics we smile, but whose weakness is that he is apt to think too highly of himself. Did any man with all these foibles but take the steadfast poise of principles, did he but take time, he might be saved from the action of them all. II. THINK OF THIS ACT OF PETER IN CONNECTION WITH HIS ENTRANCE INTO THE TEMPTATION TO COMMIT SUCH AN ACT. "Enter not into temptation," said the Master; and within a few minutes from the time of that order the servant entered into it. He loved Christ far too deeply to deny Him; he had never denied Him yet, and was not likely to do so now. Ah! he had never yet been tried. You, perhaps, are a man of splendid morality, but you hardly know how much your integrity depends upon circumstances; you have never yet had it tried. There may be no accident before a train starts from the station; but let there be an undetected flaw only in one axle, and, when the locomotive is spinning along the line at the rate of forty miles an hour, there may be a great crash of property and life. Peter thought himself an iron man; but there was a flaw in his iron, though he knew it not until he had entered into a trial for which he was not fitted; then the iron broke! III. THINK OF PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THE ACCOUNT OF ITS THREE OCCASIONS. God pity that youth who has just uttered his first lie! If eventually saved from the evil it has already set working, God alone can save him. No liar can alter the law of the lie, and that law is, that the first lie has a generative power, that one lie compels another, that one lie requires another to back it, that one lie spreads and ramifies into endless evolutions. IV. THINK OF PETER'S DENIAL IN CONNECTION WITH THE TREATMENT THAT CHRIST WAS RECEIVING AT THE TIME. A seer tells us that he once saw heaven, and had a glimpse of the treatment Jesus receives there. This is his report: "I saw also the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Now turn to this place on earth, and see how the Holy One is treated there. Do you not now see how the pictured memory of this episode came into the phrase of John the Divine, "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ"? V. THINK OF PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S ACT OF RESTORING LOVE. Simultaneously, the startled man turned to look at his Master, and his Master turned to look at him. We are awed before the calm sovereignty of that look, no less than by its lovingkindness. "He spoke with His eye," says Erasmus. We may not imagine what the look was like, but we know what effect it had upon the disciple. The outgoing power of the Lord that went with it struck his heart, as once the prophet's rod struck the rock, and made the waters flow. It touched, and set flowing, frozen memories. With only self to

lean upon, lower and lower would have been the inevitable fall; but just in time the Lord lifted him by a look! Some structures can only be saved by being ruined. They have in them such slack work and such bad materials, that it is of no use to patch them, or to shore them up; the only thing to be done is to pull them down altogether and build them again. Some lives can only be saved by a desperate operation. Some souls can be saved only through being for an instant hung, as by a hair, over the pit of the lost. A certain man was seen for many years rich, prosperous, influential in the State; that very man was afterwards seen, down on his hands and knees, in the livery of degradation, scrubbing the floor of a convict prison. In his days of worldly honour he had made profession of the Christian faith, and not without sincerity; but egotism was suffered to master him. He fell. In the shock of that fall, in the recoil that comes of despair, he was "saved as by fire." (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *Peter's denial*:—I. PETER NEVER MEANT TO DENY HIS LORD. He believed now, as clearly as he did that day at Cæsarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ," &c. He was honest in saying, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." He proved that soon after by drawing his sword in defence of Christ. Any believer may have a like assurance. There is the peril. If there should come to a Sabbath congregation a voice from heaven, declaring that some one there would one day turn out a thief, how impossible it would seem! Every one would think there must be a mistake; the message has come to the wrong church, or, at least, it does not mean me. Of course not. Satan says to us all, "Think of your faith, your virtue, your blood, your position." And when he has beguiled us into such self-complacency, he begins his manœuvres, not asking us at first to do anything dishonest, but commencing on the border-line between his kingdom and the Lord's, knowing if we yield to him in things that are doubtful, we will soon yield to him in things that are sure. A leading member of a city church, caught in a shameful crime, wrote his friends: "I am astonished at the blindness and wickedness of my course." II. PETER WENT VOLUNTARILY INTO THE WAY OF TEMPTATION. Peter thought very likely that he was safe in such company, because nobody would know him. A Christian had better not stay at the fire with the ungodly. Satan did not come to him as a "roaring lion," but in a mere whisper. Who could draw a sword at a young girl? If he had contemplated her question, he might have had ready an answer that would have been truthful without giving offence. Often the science of truth-telling is to look out for emergencies; to have ready an answer that shall be polite and true. But that is essentially the science of all virtue. It is the trials which take us by surprise that measure our strength; it is at these crises that destiny is made. And such unlooked-for assaults are sure to come to a Christian who goes voluntarily into the way of temptation. One who does not watch has no right to pray. A man, exhorted to abandon a habit of drinking that was fast dragging him to ruin, replied: "I magnify more than you do the grace of God. Without drinking any one could save himself. I believe in grace that can save a man when he does drink." He held that delusion till he died a sot. That is a Divine law with reference to all sin. If you throw yourself from the top of the temple, God has power to keep your bones from breaking; but you had better not do so, for it is written: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The precept, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," means, if you are walking in slippery places, watch every little danger, every least step. One may slip as badly on a foot of ice as on an acre. Peter would not have fallen if he had remembered Christ's caution spoken to him: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." III. PETER REPENTED. There is no other way back to Christ for one who has fallen. IV. PETER FOUND MERCY. (*T. J. Holmes.*) *The denier*:—Let us endeavour to understand this melancholy event, Peter's denial of his Lord. In order to this, let us advert to the circumstances which attended it, and the causes which led to it; and then consider seriously the improvement which we should make of it. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES under which an offence is committed often greatly affect its character; they sometimes even change its complexion altogether. The first circumstance of aggravation is found in the repeated warnings which he received. Forewarned is forearmed; when, therefore, Peter had been warned by our Lord of his danger, we might have expected on his part the utmost vigilance and prayerfulness. The second circumstance of aggravation is found in the solemn protestations and vows which he made. After each warning he solemnly avowed his willingness to go with his Lord to prison and to death. Humility, self-abasement, prayers, tears, had been far more suitable in his

case than those solemn protestations. And ever does it become us to say, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." The third circumstance of aggravation is found in the recency of the warnings and vows to which we have adverted. If the warnings had been given, and the vows made, some years before, they might have been forgotten; but they were all given and made the same night in which the offence was committed. A very few hours only could have elapsed between the last warning especially, and the first denial. A fourth circumstance of aggravation is found in the repetition of the offence. It was not once that he denied his Lord, but a second, and again a third time. And this leads to another circumstance of aggravation, that is to say, the profaneness and the perjury with which his denial was attended. We have just seen that the second time he did not simply deny his Lord, but he did it with an oath. He appealed to high heaven as his witness and his judge—when he swore falsely. The last circumstance of aggravation which we shall notice is, that all this was done in the very presence of the Redeemer. It was not done in a corner: it was not a secret offence, which might for ever remain unknown; but it was done publicly, before many witnesses. John was there. It was in the presence of this faithful friend that Peter denied his Lord—with oaths and curses. Above all, Jesus was there. II. Such are the circumstances of aggravation which marked the offence of Peter; we shall now advert with great brevity to the CAUSES of this strange conduct. How can we account for it? 1. One cause is found in the known character of Peter. He was a man of ardour, impetuosity, zeal; but, like many others of a similar temperament, he was destitute of moral courage. There is no necessary connection between physical and moral courage, some of the finest specimens of the former having proved themselves utterly destitute of the latter. How many there are who suffer from the same moral infirmity! Let our young friends especially guard against it, and labour to correct it. In order to this I would earnestly recommend two things. (1) An intimate acquaintance with some of the noble characters presented to us in history, as well as with some of the writings of choice spirits which have the most direct tendency to strengthen the mind. Let them steep their minds in the noble sentiments which are there so appropriately expressed. (2) An habitual realization of the Divine presence. Let them feel that God's eye is ever upon them; and let it be their study to approve themselves to Him. 2. We have another cause in the state of mind which he had recently indulged. I refer particularly to his overweening confidence and pride. The solemn warnings of his Lord ought to have humbled him; but his confidence was in himself, not in his God. "God will humble the proud, but will give grace to the lowly." 3. A third cause is found in the danger, real or imaginary, in which he was placed. It would not appear that there was any danger involved in the fact of his discipleship. John was a disciple; known as such to the High Priest, and yet he was in the palace, and appears to have apprehended no danger. But Peter had been active, in one sense mischievously active, in the garden. He had cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest, and this might be construed into a crime; an attempt to rescue or prevent the capture of a criminal. Hence Peter's fears; his wish to be unknown; his denial. How closely rashness and cowardice are allied! III. Let us now see what INSTRUCTION we may derive from this mournful spectacle. We regard it as an affecting illustration of the frailty of our nature; as a melancholy proof of what man can do under the influence of temptation, considered simply as a morally imperfect being. It thus presents one phasis at least of human character in an instructive light. Let us illustrate this. We may divide the human family into three classes. First, there are, in the worst sense of the term, wicked beings—beings whose moral nature is entirely perverted, whose good is evil; malevolent beings who can do evil for evil's sake, and have real delight in mischief. There are others who have by no means attained to this completeness in evil, who are, nevertheless, the slaves of some one dominant passion. And from his affecting case we see what evil a man may commit, how low he may sink in moral degradation from mere frailty, from inherent defectiveness of character, when sore pressed by a temptation adapted to his weakness. It may be proper to remark here, that one act, whether good or bad, does not constitute a character. We should guard against the severity, the injustice of representing men as guilty of hypocrisy, of insincerity, because they have once, or even twice, under the influence of temptation, acted in opposition to their professions. The fall of Peter is further instructive to us, as it affords a striking illustration of man's ignorance of himself. How little man knows—can know of what is in him! The

fall of Peter calls upon us to review our past history, and to look carefully into our own hearts. We may learn from the case of Peter the nature of true repentance. "Peter went out and wept bitterly." If we compare the case of Peter with that of Judas, we shall learn the nature of true repentance, we shall perceive the characteristic difference between that which is true and that which is false, that which is saving and that which is destructive. Wherein does the difference consist? 1. Judas saw clearly the enormity of his conduct, but it was only in and through its consequences; he had no perception of the evil of his conduct in itself. 2. The second point of difference between the repentance of Judas and of Peter is in the subject. (*J. J. Davies.*) *Peter's second denial of Christ*:—He who once cracks his conscience will not much strain at it the second time. 1. Sin is very bold when once it is bid welcome. If it once enter, it knows the way again, and once admitted will plead, not possession, but prescription. An army is easier kept out than beaten out. 2. The sinner is less able to resist the second time than he was the first. Grace is weakened and decayed by yielding to the first temptation, and the strength of God, which only makes the way of grace easy, is plucked away by grieving His Holy Spirit. 3. The way of sin once set open, is as the gates of a city thrown open for an enemy, by which Satan bringing in his forces, strongly plants them, and quickly so fortifies them, that it will require great strength to remove them. 4. Every sin admitted, not only weakens, but corrupts the faculties of the soul by which it is upheld. It darkens the understanding, corrupts the will, disturbs the affections, and raises a cloud of passions to dazzle reason. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Peter's degeneration*:—A dicer, they say, will grow to be a beggar in a night; and in a night Peter will grow from a dissembler to be a swearer and forswearer. (*Ibid.*) *Why Christians are allowed to fall*:—Why (it may be asked) does the Lord leave His saints and children to themselves, by withdrawing His grace from them, and so suffer them to fall into sin? 1. To correct their carelessness and carnal security. 2. To stir them up to more watchfulness over themselves for time to come, when they know their own weakness. 3. To pull down their pride, and humble them more thoroughly before God (2 Cor. xii. 7). 4. To drive out of them all confidence in themselves, and presumption of their own strength. 5. To make them more compassionate toward others (Luke xxii. 32). 6. That by this means He may make them examples, and grounds of comfort to other poor sinners. (*George Petter.*) *The heinousness of Peter's third denial*:—Peter was now in great danger. He hears of the garden, and is likely to be revenged for his tumult, his quarrel, and wronging Malchus. He is pressed by evident signs that he was with Christ, and now if he bestir him not, he shall not avoid present danger; or if he do, he shall be branded for a common liar and perjured person for ever; and therefore out of great fear he more stoutly denies his Master than before, and because neither his simple denial will serve him as in the first instanee, nor his binding it with oaths and swearing as in the second, as if he had not done enough, he curses and imprecates himself, wishing not only mischief to himself, but calling on God, a just Judge, to avenge that falsehood, and inflict the deserved punishment if he knew Him of Whom they spake. Oh, fearful sin! 1. To deny his Lord and dear Master. 2. After so many warnings on Christ's part. 3. After so many confessions and professions of his own. 4. After so often, three several times, so much time of deliberation coming between. One might seem infirmity, but thrice argues resolution. 5. With lying and perjury. 6. With cursing and imprecation. Thus Peter is among the forwardest of those who make falsehood their refuge, and who trust in lies. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Lying a slough of despond*:—Benvenuto Cellini records in his autobiography the bitter experiences he endured in being tempted to lie to the Duke, his patron, lest he should forfeit the favours of the Duchess—he, who "was always a lover of truth and an enemy to falsehood, being then under a necessity of telling lies." "As I had begun to tell lies, I plunged deeper and deeper into the mire," till a very slough of despond it became to him. (*Francis Jacox.*)

Ver. 72. **And Peter called to mind the word.**—*Peter's repentance*:—That the cock crew again was an ordinary and natural thing, but at this time ordained for a special end. 1. To put Peter in mind of his promise. 2. To bear witness to the words of Christ, which Peter will not, till now, believe to be true. 3. To reprove Peter of His sin. 4. To accuse Peter to his own conscience. He needs the voice of a cock to help him out of his sin! He is admonished by this voice, that the silly cock kept his watch, according to the word of his Creator; but Peter has not kept

his watch with his Lord, but fearfully fallen in his station. I. THE TIME OF PETER'S REPENTANCE. "Then." The fittest time for repentance is immediately after the sin, without delay. 1. Consider the exhortation in Heb. iii. 7. Hast thou a lease of thy life till to-morrow, that thou refusest to repent to-day? 2. Sin gets strength by continuance. 3. Nature teaches in other things to take the fittest season; to sow in seed-time, to make hay while the sun shines, to take wind and tide which wait for no man. Let grace teach thee to know thy season, thy day of visitation. 4. Late repentance is seldom true repentance. II. THE MEANS OF PETER'S REPENTANCE. 1. External. (1) The crowing of the cock. (2) The looking back of Christ. 2. Internal. (1) Remembering the Lord's words. (2) Weighing the Lord's words. (*Dr. Thomas Taylor.*) *Peter goes out*:—Peter went out—1. In respect of the place. The hall and the porch were no places of safety or tranquility, but full of danger and fear and tumult, and no fit place for meditation. 2. In respect of the company. He sees that the longer he stays among wicked men, the more sins he heaps up against the Lord, and against his own conscience, and therefore he sees it high time to be gone. 3. In respect of the business in hand. He is to bewail his sin, to weep bitterly, to get out of himself; and to do this, he must be alone with God. (*Ibid.*) *Reasons for avoiding evil company*:—1. He that will cleave to God, must sever from God's enemies. The same grace that binds us to God, looses us from the wicked. Solitariness is better than bad company. 2. What comfort can a sheep have among a herd of swine, which wallow and tumble in foul lusts? or a silly dove among a company of ravens? How can a good heart but grieve in their society whose sports and pleasures are in such things as only grieve the Spirit of God? How can a Christian solace himself among such as care for none but brutish delights, in eating, drinking, sporting, gaming, attended with swearing, railing, drunkenness, and idleness? 3. What safety among evil men, whether we respect themselves or their practices? For themselves, they are so poisonful, so infectious, that we can hardly participate with them in good things and not be defiled. For their practices, how just is it if we join ourselves in their sins, that we should not be disjoined in their judgments! 4. This has been the practice of the godly (Psa. xxvi. 4). (*Ibid.*) *How to act in bad company*:—If we fall among, or be cast into bad company—1. Let us not fashion ourselves to them. 2. Consider who thou art—a disciple, separated by grace—a son of God. 3. Look upon ungodly examples to detest them, to grieve at the dishonour of God, to grieve at the wickedness of man made in God's image. 4. See them, to stop them if possible. If there be hope of doing good, admonish them. Warn them of the wrath of God, coming on those who do such things. Win them, and pray for them and their amendment. 5. If their be no hope of winning them, yet by thy godly carriage convince them, check them, confute, shut their mouths. Let thy light shine in spite of their darkness, to glorify thy Father; and at least let them see thy watch and godly care to preserve thyself from their contagion. (*Ibid.*) *Times for calling sins to mind*:—We ought to take all occasions offered to think of our sins, and to be stirred up to humiliation and repentance for them. Especially, for example—1. When in the public ministry of the Word we hear such sins reproved as we are guilty of. 2. When we come to Holy Communion. 3. When we read the Scriptures, or hear them read. 4. When we are privately admonished of our sins, either by the ministers of God, or by any other that have a calling to do it. 5. When God lays upon us any grievous affliction or chastisement; such as sickness, loss of goods, loss of near friends by death, &c. When we either see or hear of the judgments of God inflicted upon others for sin. (*George Petter.*) *Fountains of repentant tears*:—Repentance is wrought by the Spirit of God. But He works it in us by leading us to think upon the evil of sin. Peter could not help weeping when he remembered his grievous fault. Let us at this time—I. STUDY PETER'S CASE, AND USE IT FOR OUR OWN INSTRUCTION. 1. He considered that he had denied his Lord. Have we never done the like? It may be done in various ways. 2. He reflected upon the excellence of the Lord whom he had denied. 3. He remembered the position in which his Lord had placed him—making him an apostle, and one of the first of them. Have we not been placed in positions of trust? 4. He bethought him of the special intercourse which he had enjoyed. Have not we known joyous fellowship with our Lord? 5. He recollected that he had been solemnly forewarned by his Lord. Have not we sinned against light and knowledge? 6. He recalled his own vows, pledges, and boasts. Have we not broken very earnest declarations? 7. He thought upon the special circumstances of his Lord when he had so wickedly denied Him. Are there no aggravations in our case? 8. He revolved in his mind

his repetitions of the offence, and those repetitions with added aggravations: lie, oath, &c. We ought to dwell on each item of our transgressions, that we may be brought to a more thorough repentance of them. II. STUDY OUR OWN LIVES, AND USE THE STUDY FOR OUR FURTHER HUMILIATION. 1. Think upon our transgressions while unrepentant. 2. Think upon our resistance of light, and conscience, and the Holy Spirit, before we were overcome by Divine grace. 3. Think upon our small progress in the Divine life. 4. Think upon our backslidings and heart-wanderings. 5. Think upon our neglect of the souls of others. 6. Think upon our little communion with our Lord. 7. Think upon the little glory we are bringing to His great name. 8. Think upon our matchless obligations to His infinite love. Each of these meditations is calculated to make us weep. III. STUDY THE EFFECT OF THESE THOUGHTS UPON OUR OWN MINDS. 1. Can we think of these things without emotion? This is possible; for many excuse their sin on the ground of their circumstances, constitution, company, trade, fate: they even lay the blame on Satan, or some other tempter. Certain hard hearts treat the matter with supreme indifference. This is perilous. It is to be feared that such a man is not Peter, but Judas; not a fallen saint, but a son of perdition. 2. Are we moved by thoughts of these things? There are other reflections which may move us far more. Our Lord forgives us, and numbers us with His brethren. He asks us if we love Him, and He bids us feed His sheep. Surely, when we dwell on these themes, it must be true of each of us—"When he thought thereon, he wept." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Recollection:*—Peter's recollection of what he had formerly heard was another occasion of his repentance. We do not sufficiently consider how much more we need recollection than information. We know a thousand things, but it is necessary that they should be kept alive in our hearts by constant and vivid recollection. It is, therefore, extremely absurd and childish for people to say, "You tell me nothing but what I know." I answer, You forget many things, and, therefore, it is necessary that line should be upon line, and precept upon precept. Peter himself afterwards said in his Epistle, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." We are prone to forget what we do know; whereas we should consider that, whatever good thing we know is only so far good to us as it is remembered to purpose. (*R. Cecil.*) *Peter's life-long repentance:*—Peter falls dreadfully, but by repentance rises sweetly; a look of love from Christ melts him into tears. He knew that repentance was the key to the kingdom of grace. At once his faith was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of waters to come to Christ; so now his repentance was so great that he leaped, as it were, into a sea of tears, for that he had gone from Christ. Some say that, after his sad fall, he was ever and anon weeping, and that his face was even furrowed with continual tears. He had no sooner taken its poison but he vomited it up again, ere it got to the vitals; he had no sooner handled this serpent but he turned it into a rod, to scourge his soul with remorse for sinning against such clear light, and strong love, and sweet discoveries of the heart of Christ to him. Clement notes that Peter so repented that, all his life after, every night when he heard the cock crow, he would fall upon his knees, and, weeping bitterly, would beg pardon for his sin. Ah! souls, you can easily sin as the saints, but can you repent with the saints? Many can sin with David and Peter, who cannot repent with David and Peter, and so must perish for ever. (*Thomas Brooks.*) *Washing with tears:*—Nothing will make the faces of God's children more fair than for them to wash themselves every morning in their tears. (*S. Clark.*) *Tears of repentance:*—A saint's tears are better than a sinner's triumphs. Bernard saith, "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels." (*Archbishop Secker.*) *The fall of St. Peter:*—"And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept." I. THE FIRST ERROR OF THE APOSTLE WAS CONFIDENCE IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS OWN VIRTUE, FOLLOWED BY ITS NATURAL RESULT—THE WANT OF WATCHFULNESS. This was the commencement of his aberration, and the origin of all his subsequent sorrow. Our only strength is in humble and earnest reliance upon the grace of Christ. It is rare that an humble and watchful soul is overcome by temptation. Temptations are seldom nearer than when we suppose them most distant. If we commit our way unto the Lord, He will direct our steps. II. THE FIRST SINFUL ACT OF PETER AROSE FROM VAINGLORY. He wished to make a display of his courage. One extreme is always liable to be succeeded by its opposite. Rashness is naturally followed by cowardice. He who smote off the servant's ear was seen, in a few minutes, hiding himself in the darkness among the trees of the garden. III. THE VACILLATION OF PETER PRODUCED ITS NATURAL RESULT—

INSUFFICIENT AND UNDECIDED REPENTANCE. He could not forsake his Master entirely. He dared not openly confess his fault, and meet the consequences of doing right. He followed Christ afar off. Thus difficult is it to do right, after we have once commenced the doing of wrong. A course only half-way right is as perilous a one as can be chosen. Nothing could have restored to Peter the moral courage of innocence, but going at once to Christ, confessing his sin, and avowing his attachment, no matter what the avowal might have cost him. We may be surprised into sin. Our only safety consists in forsaking it immediately. If we hesitate, our conscience will become defiled, and our resolution weakened. It is also of the utmost importance that our reformation be bold, manly, and entire. IV. PETER HEARD JESUS FALSELY ACCUSED, AND HE UTTERED NOT A WORD IN HIS DEFENCE. He was the friend and the witness of Christ. It was his duty to act, and to act promptly. By quietly looking on, when he ought to have acted, Peter prepared himself for all the guilt and misery that ensued. Hence let us learn the danger of being found in any company in which the cause of Christ is liable to be treated with indignity. If we enter such company from choice we are accessory to the breaking of Christ's commandments. If our lawful duties call us into society, where the name of Christ is not revered, we can never remain in it innocently for a moment, unless we promptly act as disciples of Christ. V. PETER ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE FROM THE EMBARRASSMENTS OF HIS SITUATION BY EQUIVOCATION. "I know not," said he, "nor understand what thou sayest." This only in the end rendered his embarrassment the more inextricable. Let this part of the history teach us the importance of cultivating, on all occasions, the habit of bold and transparent veracity. Equivocation is always a sort of moral absurdity. It is an attempt to make a lie answer the purpose of the truth. He who does this when his attachment to Christ is called in question has already fallen. He denies his Lord in the sight of his all-seeing Judge, though his cowardice will not permit him to do it openly. The man who has gone thus far will soon be brought into circumstances which will openly reveal his guilt. VI. PETER WAS RAPIDLY LED ON TO THE COMMISSION OF CRIMES IN THEMSELVES MOST ABHORRENT TO HIS NATURE, AND CRIMES OF WHICH, AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS WRONG-DOING, NEITHER HE NOR ANY ONE ELSE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED HIM CAPABLE. He began by nothing more guilty than self-confidence and the want of watchfulness. He ended with shameless and repeated lying—the public denial of his Master, accompanied by the exhibition of frantic rage, and the uttering of oaths and blasphemy in the hearing of all Jerusalem. Thus, step after step, he plunged headlong into more and more atrocious guilt, until, without the power of resistance, he surrendered himself up to do the whole will of the adversary of souls. (*Francis Wayland.*) *True contrition:*—When King Henry II., in the ages gone by, was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son being near to death, desired to see his father, and confess his wrong-doing; but the stern old sire refused to look the rebel in the face. The young man, being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, "I am dying; take me from my bed, and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father." Thus he died; and when the tidings came to the old man, outside the walls, that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth, like another David, and said, "Would God I had died for him." The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the heart of the father. (*Spurgeon.*) *Peter's recovery:*—I. LET NO CHRISTIAN RELY ON HIS DISPOSITION OR FEELING FOR SAFETY FROM FALLING. Virtues lean towards their vices: liberty to license; liberality to waste. And when we see only our virtues, others see only our vices. II. LET NO CHRISTIAN RELY UPON HIS PAST CONDUCT AS A SAFEGUARD. Peter had been nearest of all the disciples to Christ for three years. He had deep and pure affection. III. LET NO CHRISTIAN PRESUME TO TRUST IN CONSCIENCE TO KEEP HIM RIGHT IN THE HOUR OF DANGER. There are many moral forces which hinder conscience. The danger of Peter had been distinctly pointed out. IV. FROM THIS EXAMPLE LEARN TO REALIZE THE BITTER MEMORY OF GOOD WORDS WHICH COME TOO LATE. The great regrets of life consist in the memory of graces which might have made us good, but which we have neglected. And oh how awful is this bitterness! (*F. Skerry.*) *True penitence:*—The naturally warm and impetuous temperament is liable to extremes under the pressure of circumstances. This tendency to vacillation can only be corrected by a severe trial. There is one sentence in the history which shows that Peter began the downward course when he followed afar off. Had he been close to the Master's side all through the trial his courage would have stood the strain.

The florist who forgot to close the skylights of his conservatory, saw his rare plants withered by the frost of the night. So the warm heart of the Christian can only live in the warmth of Divine love. I. EVERY SIN IS IN THE FACE OF WARNING. Where there is no law there is no sin, and where there is no warning the transgression is more excusable. II. EVERY SIN IN THE FACE OF WARNING AWAKENS A PAINFUL REFLECTION. It is not enough that sin is denounced by justice, and that warning is added to the denunciation; we must be brought into a state of observation and reflection in which to have a deep insight into the nature and consequences of sin. The very painful part of this state is the reappearance of the discarded warning. The mercy of God came to the apostle through a very humble channel; and how often we are awakened to reflection by unimportant incidents! God has blessed the tick of the clock, and the falling of a leaf, to rouse in man's breast a sense of responsibility. A thousand voices in nature call us to reflection, but sometimes a simple incident in daily life has done so more effectually. The hard-hearted father who had listened to remonstrance and warning for many a year, was at last touched. He had heard most of the temperance orators of the day, but he continued the drink. One Sunday afternoon he took his little girl to the Sunday-school, intending himself to go after more drink. At the door of the school-house he put the child down from his arms, but observed that tears started into her eyes. "Why do you cry?" he asked. The little one sobbed out her answer, "Because you go to public-house, and frighten us when you come home." It was enough. He never entered a public-house again. God can bless simple means to reach great ends. The narrative states, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Nothing can hide us from the Saviour's view. It was a living and a life-giving look. It brought back moral sensibility. The living heart of Jesus travelled through that look to the cold heart of Peter. He was moved by it to reflection. The look spurned the offence but recalled the offender. It was a magnet, with both a negative and a positive pole. It repelled sin, but attracted the sinner. There is mercy in God's rebuke, and an invitation in His warning. The road back to rectitude, to truth, to honesty, to moral courage, and to discipleship was a thorny one. III. EVERY SIN WHICH AWAKENS A PAINFUL REFLECTION LEADS TO TRUE PENITENCE. "And when he thought thereon, he wept." 1. His repentance was genuine. St. Matthew says, "He went out and wept bitterly." His spirit was broken and his heart contrite. 2. His penitence was effective. He was led to see the error, and to feel the power of forgiveness. Here is an illustration of the power of thought—dive to the depths of sin and rise to the lights of peace. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) "*Blotting out*":—The old Greeks thought that memory must be a source of torture in the next world, so they interposed between the two worlds the waters of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness; but believers in Christ want no river of oblivion on the borders of Elysium. Calvary is on this side, and that is enough. (*Dr. Alexander Maclaren.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VER. 1. **And bound Jesus.**—*The Lamb of God*:—It is interesting to observe the remarkable resemblance which is found to exist in several particulars between the ceremonial of the daily sacrifice of the lamb on the altar in the Temple and the sacrifice of the true, spotless Lamb of God. After the lamb had been kept under watch for four days, and had been examined by an inquisition of the priests on the evening before, to make sure that it was without spot or blemish, it was brought forth early in the morning as soon as it was light. At the cockcrow the altar had been swept clear of ashes to prepare it for the victim. Then "the president said to the other priests, 'Go out and see if it be time to slay the lamb.' If it was, the observer said, 'There are bright streaks of light in the east.' The president asked, 'Do they stretch as far as to Hebron?' If he answered that it was so, then he said, 'Go ye and bring the lamb from the prison of the lamb.'" Now, in like manner, on the fourth day after Jesus had come to Jerusalem to be offered up as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," when the morning was come after the night-inquisition into the spotlessness of the Lamb of God, He is brought forth from His prison to be re-examined and ordered to be slain. The lamb of the daily sacrifice, before being laid on the altar, was bound. "Those priests," we read, "whose lot it

is to attend to the pieces (with the view of laying them upon the altar) took hold of the lamb and bound it." So in the Antitype, "they bound Jesus, and carried Him away." Christ is bound when He is in the hands, the power, of men. So is it always with the world. It desires to have not a free, but a bound Jesus. As the servants covered His face, so does the world desire to have a not all-seeing God. The world strives to emancipate itself from the bonds of obedience to the will of God. Let us break, they say, the bonds which the Lord God and His Christ lay on us; and even the very cords of love whereby they would draw us, let us cast away. There is a cry for freedom. Freedom is the most perfect blessing man can have. Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? Among the many, the desire is to be freed from responsibilities caused by duty, and to do their own will unrestrained by any obligations. That is, indeed, the great cry of the day. All duties are irksome, all obligations intolerable. No man can develop his individuality except in absolute freedom. But at the same time that the world seeks freedom from the bonds of Christ, it tries to impose bonds on Christ. Providence is to be bound with laws. Science imposes rules on the Most High, and lays down principles by which God must act—if there be a God—or science will do without Him. Prayer is declared to be worthless, because man cannot alter the course of Nature. God is fettered by self-imposed laws. He is not a free agent. Not only so, but God's Church must not be free. It also must be hampered and restricted in every way—prevented from doing all it may for the cause of Christ. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. **But He answered nothing.**—*The silence of our Lord:*—From our Lord's sublime silence we may learn—1. That the manifestation of anger and temper is inconsistent with a Christian spirit. Again, anger is said to rest "in the bosom of fools," a mortifying fact, which should be a corrective to this tendency. Socrates, when kicked by a profligate person, said to those who would have him retaliate, "Had an ass kicked me, would you have me kick back in return?" It requires no intellect to be angry. It is rather a sign of mulishness. You give an advantage to your adversary. Men get the fruit of the cocoa-nut tree by exasperating the monkeys that live among the branches, so that the animals hurl down the fruit. The assailants keep up the altercation until their end is gained and their baskets are full. But to be patient is to be godlike. Here, then, are two mirrors. In which is your face reflected? Are you easily irritated, or are you able to patiently stand, like your Lord, answering not a word? 2. No one grace more glorifies God than the spirit shown in the silence of Christ. The following incident is related of that eminent minister, Dr. Hopkins: A brother-in-law who was a sceptic, said that his pious kinsman would bear exasperating circumstances no better than any one else, and, to try him, stated to him some facts peculiarly aggravating. Dr. H. went away very angry, and the remark was made, "I told you so." The night, however, was spent in prayer, and with the morning Dr. H. came and confessed his sin of unholy passion, whereupon his brother was deeply affected, and admitted that this was a spirit which he did not possess. The infidel was led to re-examine the grounds on which he stood. He became a humble follower of Christ and a minister of the gospel. But the objector says, I cannot control myself: what is the remedy? In general, we may answer, Watch and pray. God will do His part, we must do ours. More specifically: Keep yourself from temptations. Again, your physical condition is to be cared for. Late hours, bad ventilation, and improper diet affect the temper. If you eat mince pie, fruit cake, and lobster salad at night, you will have dyspepsia. If you have dyspepsia, you will be cross. Think, again, how belittling to you are these spurts of ill-temper, and let it shame you. Think, too, how trivial are these annoyances, and how transitory life is. Look at Christ, whose whole nature was sweet to the depths of His being, and so was not obliged continually to curb the risings of unholy emotion. Commit your cause unto Him who judgeth righteously, and answer not a word. (*American Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 6. **He released unto them one prisoner whomsoever they desired.**—*Barabbas or Christ?*—It affords the most vivid illustration in the New Testament of just two great moral lessons: Pilate's behaviour shows the wicked wrong of indecision, and the chief priests' choice of Barabbas's release shows the utter ruin of a wrong decision. These will become apparent, each in its turn, as we study the story. I. EARLIEST OF ALL, LET US GROUP TOGETHER THE INCIDENTS OF THE HISTORY, SO THAT THEIR ORDER MAY BE SEEN. 1. Observe the rapid action of the priests (Mark xv. 1).

It must have been very late on Thursday night when the great council finished the condemnation of Jesus. But the moment that was over, the priests hurried Him at dawn into the presence of the Roman governor. Their feet ran to evil, and they made haste to shed innocent blood (Isa. lix. 7). 2. Now comes the providential moment for Pilate. For the wisdom of God so orders it that this man shall be able to meet his tremendous responsibility unembarrassed by a mob for his audience. These zealots, like all creatures who have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof, are so emphatically pious that even in the midst of murder they pause on a punctilio; they will not enter the judgment hall lest they should be so defiled that they could not eat the passover (John xviii. 28). This left Pilate the chance calmly to converse with Jesus alone. 3. Then succeeds the pitiable period of subterfuge which always follows a shirked duty. Convinced of our Lord's innocence, Pilate proposed that his official authority should just be counted out in this matter. He bade the chief priests take their prisoner themselves, and deal with Him as they pleased. To this he received a reply which showed their savage animosity, and at the same instant disclosed the use they meant to make of his power. They cried out that the only reason why they had consulted him at all was found in the unlawfulness of killing a man without due form of procedure (John xviii. 30, 31). 4. Next to this is recorded the attempt of the governor to shift his responsibility. Pilate learned from the mere chance use of a word that Jesus was from Galilee; and as this province was in the jurisdiction of Herod, the titular monarch of the Jews, he sent his prisoner under a guard over to the other palace (Luke xxiii. 7). The king was quite glad to see this Nazarene prophet, and tried to get Him to work a miracle, but did not succeed in evoking so much as a word from His lips (Isa. liii. 7). But before the return, he put a slight on Jesus' kingly claims, so that Pilate might know how much in derision he held them. The soldiers mocked Him, arraying Him in a gorgeous robe, and then led Him back into the presence of the governor again. 5. At his wits' end, Pilate at last proposes a compromise. He remembered that there was a custom, lately brought over from Italy into Palestine, of freeing some one of the State's prisoners every year at Passover as a matter of proconsular clemency (Mark xv. 6). He offered to let Jesus go under this rule. Such a procedure would be equivalent to pronouncing him technically a criminal, but thus His life would be spared. But the subtle priests put the people up to refuse this favour flatly. 6. The governor's wife now meets him with a warning from a dream. He had returned to the judgment seat, and was just about to pronounce the decision. His wife interrupted: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matt. xxvii. 19). This threw Pilate into a frantic irresolution once more. A second time he left the room, and went forth to reason and expostulate with the infuriated crowd at the door. With renewed urgency he pressed upon their consideration the half-threat that he would let loose on them this wretch Barabbas, if they persisted in demanding Jesus' death (Luke xxiii. 18). This only exasperated them the more. 7. Finally, this bewildered judge gave his reluctant consent to their clamours. But in the act of condemnation he did the foolishest thing of all he did that awful day. He took water and washed his hands before the mob, declaring thus that he was innocent of the blood of the just person he was delivering up to their spite (Matt. xxvii. 24). II. So WE REACH THE CRISIS OF EVENTS IN THE SPIRITUAL CAREER OF THAT RULER AND OF THAT NATION. 1. Observe the singular picture. It is all in one verse of the Scripture (Mark xv. 15). Two men, now in the same moment, appear in public on the steps of the Prætorium: Jesus and Barabbas. One of them was the Son of God, the Saviour of men. "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" (John xix. 5). Art has tried to reproduce this scene. Doré has painted the whole of it; Guido Reni has painted the head with thorns around the forehead. Others have made similar attempts according to their fancy or their ability. It is a spectacle which attracts and discourages. Beyond them all, however, lies the fact which each Christian will be likely to fashion before his own imagination. Jesus comes forth with His reed and His robe: *Ecce Homo!* Barabbas alongside! This creature has never been a favourite with artists. He was a paltry wretch any way, thrust up into a fictitious importance by the supreme occasion. We suppose him to have been quite a commonplace impostor. *Bar* means son; *Abba*, which some interpret as father. Very likely he chose his own name as a false Messiah, "Son of the Father;" indeed, some of the ancient manuscripts call him "Jesus Barabbas." He does not poise picturesquely; look at him! 2. The moral of this scene turns upon the wilful choice made between these two leaders, the real and the

pretended Christ. Now let it be said here that the whole history is often repeated even in these modern times. It is unwise to lose the lesson taught us by rushing off into pious execration of those bigoted Jews. Men had better look into their own hearts. In his introduction to the study of metaphysics, Malebranche remarks very quietly, "It is not into a strange country that such guides as these volumes of mine will conduct you; but it is into your own, in which, not unlikely, you are a stranger." It will be well to bear in mind that the decision is offered and made between Jesus and Barabbas whenever the Lord of glory is represented in a principle, in an institution, in a truth, in a person. 3. So let us pause right here to inquire what this decision involves for those who make it. The illustration is helpful, and we can still employ it. Dwell a moment upon the deliberateness of the choice which the multitude made that day. The exhibition was perfectly intelligible: it always is. There is Barabbas! there is Christ! When a sharp moral crisis is reached, men generally know the side they ought to choose. Right and wrong, truth and error, sin and holiness, the world or God—this is just the old Jerusalem scene back again. Such a choice fixes character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." When one wills strongly, he moulds himself in the likeness of the thing he chooses. The old Castilian proverb says, "Every man is the son of his own work." Then observe the responsibility of the choice between Barabbas and Christ. The chief priests declared they would take it (Matt. xxvii. 25). Pilate could ruin no soul but his own. In the end Jesus' blood rested upon the nation that slew Him. Oh, what a history! a land without a nation—a nation without a land! All the vast future swung on the hinge of that choice. Note, therefore, the reach of this decision. It exhausted all the chances. Once—on that Friday morning early—those two men stood side by side, and Pilate asked the question, "Whether of the twain?" (Matt. xxvii. 21). It was never possible after that to traverse the same spiritual ground of alternative again. Whoever chooses the wrong must go and fare for good or ill with the thing he has chosen. The thief becomes master, the murderer lord. III. WE ARE READY NOW TO RECEIVE THE FULL TEACHING OF THE STORY: OUR TWO LESSONS APPEAR PLAINLY. 1. We see the wicked wrong of indecision. We are agreed that Pilate wished to let Jesus go. But when he gave Him up to the spite of His murderers, he himself "consented" and so shared the crime (Psa. l. 18). Thus he destroyed his character. Trimming, injustice, cruelty: step by step he went down, till he added a scourging which nobody demanded. "The facility with which we commit certain sins," says Augustine, "is a punishment for sins already committed." Thus he also destroyed his reputation. One man there has been whose name was put in an epistle just for a black background on which to write a name that was white (1 Tim. vi. 13). The same was put in the Apostles' Creed that all Christendom might hold it in "everlasting fame" of infamy: "crucified under Pontius Pilate." 2. We see also the utter ruin of a wrong decision. Do not waste any more thought on Pilate or the Jews. Think of yourself. See life and death, blessing and cursing; choose life (Deut. xxx. 15, 19). Do not forfeit what may be your soul's last chance. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Not Barabbas but Jesus:*—Tremellius was a Jew, from whose heart the veil had been taken away, and who had been led by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. The Jews who had condemned our Saviour had said, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" Tremellius, when near his end, glorying in Christ alone, and renouncing whatever came in competition with Him, used very different words, "Not Barabbas, but Jesus." (*Baxendale's Dictionary of Anecdote.*) *Barabbas preferred to Christ:*—I. THIS IMPLIES A HISTORY. II. IT RECORDS A CHOICE. The choice involves two things—first, what was repudiated; next, what was approved. Here was the repudiation of One who was absolutely faultless. Here was the repudiation by the world of One who had wrought for the world the greatest wonders of material kindness. Here was the repudiation of One who loved them, knowing their lack of love to Himself. Here was the repudiation of One who had at His command power to destroy as well as to save. From what was repudiated, turn to what was approved. "Not this man, but Barabbas." III. IT SUGGESTS A PARALLEL. If you prefer any passion or habit, any thing or man, any person or personification, to Christ, that is your Barabbas. If you prefer any treasure to Him who is "value," that is your Barabbas. If you prefer any company to His company, any love to His love, that object of preference is your Barabbas. If you prefer any given sin to the grace that would conquer it, that sin is your Barabbas. If, though you ought to know that this sin is destructive, that the blood of souls is on it, that it is a robber, and that

it still lurks in darkness to rob you of your nobility, of your peace, of your spiritual sensitiveness, of your liberty to have fellowship with the Infinite One, and still refuse to give the vile thing up to be crucified, but will rather give up Christ, that vile thing is your Barabbas. If, refusing Christ, you trust something else to be the "Jesus" of your souls, that false righteousness, false foundation, false comfort, false hope, is your "Jesus Barabbas." Of all the faculties with which God has enriched man, there is not one so mysterious in its nature and awful in its working as the choosing faculty. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. Had delivered Him for envy.—*Envy and malevolence:*—Mutius, a citizen of Rome, was noted to be of such an envious and malevolent disposition, that Publius, one day, observing him to be very sad, said, "Either some great evil is happened to Mutius, or some great good to another." *Envy and malevolence:*—Dionysius the tyrant, out of envy, punished Philoxenius the musician because he could sing, and Plato the philosopher because he could dispute, better than himself. *Envy in a Christian:*—"Who is this elder son?" was once asked in an assembly of ministers at Elberfeldt. Daniel Krummacher made answer: "I know him very well; I met him yesterday." "Who is he?" they asked eagerly; and he replied solemnly, "Myself." He then explained that on the previous day, hearing that a very ill-conditioned person had received a very gracious visitation of God's goodness, he had felt not a little envy and irritation. *Envy punishes itself:*—A Burmese potter, says the legend, became envious of the prosperity of a washerman, and, in order to ruin him, induced the king to order him to wash one of his black elephants white, that he might be lord of the white elephant. The washerman replied that, by the rules of his art, he must have a vessel large enough to wash him in. The king ordered the potter to make him such a vessel. When made, it was crushed by the first step of the elephant in it. Many trials failed, and the potter was ruined by the very scheme he had devised to crush his enemy. *The persecutors—the causes of their hostility:*—We now proceed to the consideration of the "causes" of this strange conduct; in other words, we shall inquire, Why the chief priests and rulers of the Jews acted thus towards our Lord? We remark, in general, that the cause was this—that the whole of our Lord's conduct and ministry was in direct opposition to their views, prejudices, and interests. 1. It is obvious to remark, that there was much in what may be called their national feelings and prejudices, against which our Lord greatly and constantly offended. The chief priests and rulers would, of course, share with the people generally, in the expectation of a temporal prince in the person of Messiah, and of national distinctions and honours under his reign. But there was nothing in our Lord's conduct or ministry to favour these views. 2. But this is not all. There was much in their official position and interests which rendered our Lord an object of constant suspicion, and of bitter hatred. The whole of their power and influence depended on the continuance of the ecclesiastical system which then existed. Their power and influence in their own nation were very great; and few who have once possessed power are willing to relinquish it. But our Lord's conduct and ministry appeared not only unfavourable to their expectations of national aggrandizement, but they seemed to threaten even the existence of the system of ecclesiastical polity which then obtained amongst them. 3. But the grounds of hostility to our Lord were carried further still. He had rendered himself personally offensive to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. "Beautiful," said men, "these prayers and fastings, these alms and phylacteries, this scrupulous attention to the smallest points of the law!" "Beautiful," replied our Lord, "as whited sepulchres, which are full of corruption and dead men's bones; the very abodes of putridity, loathsomeness, and death." It was a very common thing with Him, not only in His private intercourse with His disciples, but also in His public ministry, to caution men against the designs and the practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, of whom these chief priests and rulers, for the most part, consisted. "Beware of them," He often cried. "Do not as the Pharisees do;" "they give alms, and say long prayers, to be seen of men." It may not be improper to confirm the view we have taken of their conduct by a more direct reference to the evangelical history. I remark, then, that the truth of it appears in the origin of their opposition. It is evident that their hostility originated in the success of our Lord's ministry; and it increased with the increase of His influence. To point out every illustration of this which the sacred narratives afford, would be to go through a great part of our Lord's history. But we may notice the extraordinary event which specially stimulated their malignity, and led

to their determination to destroy Him; that is to say, the resurrection of Lazarus. It was not many months before His crucifixion that this, in some respects His greatest miracle, was performed. "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death." They tried to put the people down, but in vain; they appealed to our Lord, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples; but Jesus said, If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Then "they said among themselves, Perceive ye how that ye prevail nothing; behold the world is gone after Him." Thus we find that their hostility increased just as His influence increased. But, in addition to His influence with the people, our Lord, as we have already seen, rendered Himself personally offensive to the chief priests and rulers by His unsparing exposure of their hypocrisy. Before we leave this part of our subject, let us pause for a moment to inquire whether the same spirit has ever been displayed since the persecutors of Jesus went to give in their account? 1. There are very few men who will not decidedly oppose every effort to overturn a system, on the continuance of which their worldly interests depend. Very few who are fed, enriched, ennobled by any social arrangement, will ever care to inquire whether it be in itself good, whether it be generally beneficial, or whether it be not for the public weal that it give place to another? For them and theirs it is good; and they are all the world to themselves. They can see nothing but disaster in its overthrow, and nothing but wickedness in those who wish to effect it. And this suggests a passing remark, that the best institution may become antiquated. All the unprejudiced perceive that it is fast becoming a nuisance, and that the sooner it is allowed to be decently interred, the better for all interests. But the fact that it was once a benefit, helps to blind the eyes of those who are still interested in its continuance to another fact—that it has ceased to be so. 2. It is also worthy of remark, that generally speaking, their hostility is bitter in proportion to their apprehensions of the unsoundness of the system with which they are connected. 3. No men are more frequently placed in this position, or have more frequently displayed this spirit, than ecclesiastics. Their power is of a peculiar kind, and always rests, more or less, on public opinion. 4. It is still worse when they have become completely corrupt, and their corruption and hypocrisy are exposed to the world. Hence the persecutions which faithful men have endured in every age, and almost invariably through the instigation of ecclesiastics. Hence the sufferings of the Lollards, the Puritans, the Nonconformists, in our own country; of the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Huguenots, on the continent of Europe. Hence, we say, and hence alone. Why was Wycliffe so hateful to the ecclesiastical rulers of his day? Simply because of the light which, from time to time, he threw on the system of corruption with which they were identified, and by which they were enriched and ennobled; because, by the calm and earnest exhibition of the truth, he was undermining their influence, and exposing them to contempt. Were Gardiner and Bonner, men of some note in their day, better than Annas and Caiaphas? Wherein, beloved reader, and how much, were they better? They acted on precisely the same principles, and in precisely the same spirit; and if they were not better than the persecutors of Jesus, were they worse than some of their successors, the Elizabethan bishops? Were they worse than Parker and Whitgift; than Aylmer, and many others? (*J. J. Davies.*)

Ver. 12. **The King of the Jews.**—*Pilate's question:*—I. THE TITLE—"King of the Jews." II. THE EMBARRASSMENT THAT PROMPTED THE UTTERANCE OF THIS QUESTION. III. REGARD THIS AS A PRESENT QUESTION. What shall you do with reference to Him who is "King of the Jews"? Will you reject Him? Will you be neutral? Will you be like the Jews—for Him to-day, against Him to-morrow? Will your conscience be content if you simply call Him by His name? (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. **Crucify Him.**—*The world's treatment of Christ:*—John Wesley, at a considerable party, had been maintaining with great earnestness the doctrine of *Vox populi, vox Dei*, against his sister, a lady whose talents were not unworthy the family to which she belonged. At last the preacher, to put an end to the controversy, put his argument in the shape of a dictum, and said, "I tell you, sister, the voice of the people *is* the voice of God." "Yes," she replied, mildly, "it cried, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.'" A more admirable answer was, perhaps, never given. *The world's treatment of Christ:*—Dr. Blair, at the conclusion of a sermon in which he had descanted with his usual eloquence on the loveliness of virtue, gave utterance to the following apostrophe: "O virtue, if thou wert

embodied, how would all men love and imitate thee." His colleague, the Rev. R. Walker, preached that afternoon, and took occasion to say, "My reverend friend observed in the morning that, if virtue were embodied, all men would love and imitate her. Well, virtue has been embodied; but how was she treated? Did all men love her? Did they copy her? No! She was despised and rejected of men, who, after defaming, insulting, and scourging her, led her to Calvary, where they crucified her between two thieves." *Fickleness of the populace:*—When Napoleon was returning from his successful wars in Austria and Italy, amid the huzzas of the people, Bourrienne remarked to him that "it must be delightful to be greeted with such demonstrations of enthusiastic admiration." "Bah!" replied Napoleon, "this same unthinking crowd, under a slight change of circumstances, would follow me just as eagerly to the scaffold." (*Dictionary of Anecdote.*) *An indictment against man:*—I. Here we have THE BASIS OF A TREMENDOUS INDICTMENT against human nature. 1. Human nature does not know good. It if had, it would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 2. Human nature hated goodness in its most attractive form. 3. Humanity is guilty of the utmost possible folly, because in crucifying Jesus it crucified its best friend. 4. Human nature destroyed its best instructor. 5. Human nature submitted to the insolent tyranny of the priests. 6. Human nature was guilty of craven cowardice in striking One who would not defend Himself. II. Let me shut the door against some SELF-RIGHTEOUS DISCLAIMERS. 1. "I should not have done so." Of whom wast thou born, but of a woman, as they were? 2. "I would have spoken for Him." Yes; and dost thou speak for Him now? What have you done already? Have you sneered at the gospel? Have you rejected it? Are you ignorant of it? Have you ever doubted His power and His willingness to save? For believers—oh what a sorrow to think we stabbed our Friend to the heart. If we have crucified Him—let us resolve to crown Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 15. **And so Pilate, willing to content the people.**—*Pilate and Jesus:*—I. WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS PILATE? Probably not worse than many Roman governors; not very unlike Festus, Felix, Gallio, and the rest. 1. Cruel. 2. Determined. 3. Worldly. II. WHAT WAS HE TO DO WITH JESUS? This was his difficulty; this was the rock on which he was stranded. The voice of the nation demanded Christ's death. Insurrection, possibly even war, impended, if the demand was refused. What was to be done? III. PILATE TRIES TO EVADE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DECIDING. IV. WHY DID NOT PILATE DARE TO REFUSE THE JEWS' DEMAND? 1. He had an evil conscience. 2. By defending Jesus, he would run the risk of earthly loss. 3. He had no fixed belief to support him. V. OBSERVE THE EFFECT OF LIVING HABITUALLY FOR THE PRESENT WORLD. A man of the world, who lives only for the things of time and sense, content if he can satisfy Cæsar and the people, has authority given him to deal with the cause of Christ. He cannot make up his mind to take up the cross and follow Him; for he has lived for self alone, and walked only by sight. What will such a man do in time of sudden trial but follow Pontius Pilate. If I must, I must. I see it is WRONG. I would give much to escape, but there is no other way open. I must be content to satisfy the people. Jesus of Nazareth, His Church, His kingdom, His interest, His people, I surrender them to your will. (*C. H. Waller, M.A.*) *Pilate's weakness and the chief priests' guilt:*—I. PRINCIPLE WILL, BUT POLICY WILL NOT, PRESERVE YOU FROM SIN. If you will not make the sacrifice which goodness requires, give up all hope of keeping your goodness. Courage is absolutely necessary for goodness. II. A MAN'S SINS WEIGH HIM HEAVILY. If Pilate had had a guiltless conscience, he would have defied the clamour of the rulers. He walks along the downward path to hell with his eyes open. III. BEWARE OF COMPROMISE. Come to no terms with evil, but resist it. IV. IF WE CAN PREVENT WRONG BEING DONE, WE CANNOT BY VERBAL PROTESTS ESCAPE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. Pilate's handwashing has many imitators, men substituting a feeble protest for vigorous and dutiful action. But in vain does Pilate think to wash his hands of guilt. V. THE HOLLOWNESS OF EARTHLY PRIDE AND POMP COMES OUT HERE. VI. THERE IS AN EXHIBITION HERE OF THE SINFUL SIDE OF HUMAN NATURE. Self-will seems a bright, brave thing, very excusable. Behold its guiltiness here. Weakness seems a harmless, good-tempered thing; it may easily commit the greatest crime. VII. THE HARDSHIPS OF TRANSGRESSORS WAYS IS ILLUSTRATED HERE. Pilate would have found it ten times easier to do right. Think of his shame, self-contempt; of the horror he would feel when Christ rose from the dead; of the penalties which followed. It was not more than

seven or eight years before Caiaphas and Pilate were both degraded from their posts; and shortly after, Pilate, weary with misfortunes, killed himself. Nor, when we hear the men of Jerusalem ask the Roman governor for a cross, can we help remembering that they got their fill of crosses from the Romans; when, Titus crucifying sometimes 500 a day of those seeking to escape from the doomed city, at length, in the circuit of Jerusalem, room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies. VIII. OUR WEAKNESS INCREASES THE SAVIOUR'S TROUBLES. IX. CHRIST NEVER GOES WITHOUT A WITNESS. Pilate, Herod, Pilate's wife, and even the hypocrisy of the crowd, all proclaim, "There is no fault in Him." X. THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERINGS CLAIM OUR GRATITUDE, BUT THEY ALSO CALL ON US TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND GO AFTER HIM. Let us copy the Divine meekness, majesty, and love which met in the cross of Christ. (*R. Glover.*) *Pilate*:—The miserable governor is an example to us of a man of infirm principle who seeks to tide over a difficulty by temporising. He proposed to inflict ignominious sufferings on Christ, grievous in themselves, but yet short of death; hoping in this way to appease the multitude, and by moving their fickle humour by the sight of blood, to induce them to remit the punishment they had just cried out to have executed on Christ. Pilate had no strength of character, no moral rectitude and fortitude. He could not do a right thing unless he were backed up by the people. He must have the popular voice with him to do justice or to commit an injustice. A terrible instance is Pilate to us of what comes of seeking a principle of action, direction, outside of our own selves, of being swayed by popular opinion. Pilate knew too well what were the Jewish expectations of a Messiah to suppose for an instant that the High Priests had delivered Jesus over because He sought to rescue His nation from a foreign domination. He appears never to have been deceived for a moment as to the malignant motives of those who sought the death of Christ; but he had not the moral courage to stand out against the popular voice. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *Triumph of evil only apparent*:—Jesus is given over to death. Wickedness has had its way; righteousness and pity have been trodden down. Yet no Divine defeat here. Though seemingly a victory for hell, it was really a triumph for heaven. I. AS A VINDICATION OF CHARACTER. In no other way could such irresistible proof have been given of Christ's sinlessness. Deadly foes, with everything their own way, cannot find against Him a single cause of just accusation. Six times He is declared by two Roman officials to be without fault. Throughout the scene it is continually forced on us that Jew and Roman are on trial, and Jesus is the judge. Not by His charges, but by His silence, they are made to convict themselves of prejudice, envy, hypocrisy, falsehood, outrage of justice, cruelty, and murder. II. AS A FULFILMENT OF THE DIVINE PLAN. The hope of the world was fulfilled at this hour. Eden's distant anticipation of bruising the heel of Him who should bruise the serpent's head; Abraham, across the altar of his son, beholding this day afar off; Moses, lifting up the serpent in the wilderness; the Psalmist's picture of rejection, trial, and death; that chapter in Isaiah where we are made to stand beside the cross; all these, and many another prophetic assurance, waited for this tragic hour of salvation. Not alone through the love of friends, but even more through the wrath of man, the purpose of God marched on through tears and crime to redemption. III. THE FINAL OUTCOME OF CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION DISPLAYED WITH STARTLING POWER WHERE DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH RESTED. Pilate gave up Jesus to death to save his place; soon he was accused to his master, and driven forth, a broken-hearted exile. The priests persuaded the people to give Jesus to death to save their place and nation; that generation had not passed away before their own madness brought down on them, ten thousand times repeated, all the cruelty and outrage to which they had surrendered Him. But the crucified One—on the third day rises, and on the fortieth ascends to the throne of God. To-day, while the Roman Empire is only a name, and the Jew is a restless and afflicted wanderer, Jesus triumphs. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Christ willing to be crucified*:—Among the Romans the despotic power was so terrible, that if a slave had attempted the life of his master, all the rest had been crucified with the guilty person. But our gracious Master died for His slaves who had conspired against Him. He shed His blood for those who spilt it. He was willing to be crucified, that we might be glorified. Our redemption was sweeter to Him than death was bitter, by which it was to be obtained. It was excellently said by Pherecides that God transformed Himself into love when He made the world. But with greater reason it is said by the apostle, God is love, when He redeemed it. (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *The scourging*:—"I will chastise Him," said Pilate. The word used (παιδεύειν)

is contemptuous; it means to correct as a naughty child, or, as a slave, to scare him against again committing the same offence. By Roman usage, when a slave was about to be set free, his master led him before the Praetor, and the latter then slightly beat the slave on the back with a rod (*virgulta*), as a reminder to him of the slavery in which he had been, and from which he was about to be set free. And now, see, the Jewish people lead Jesus, bound as a slave, before the Roman governor, and Pilate ignorantly deals with Him according to the law for the manumission of slaves. He beats Him—but Jesus does not pass at once from His court to freedom. He must first traverse the dark valley of death, and go to His death through the way of sorrows. There were various kinds of scourges employed among the Romans. There was the stick (*fustis*), the rod (*virga*), the whip (*lorum*), which was of leather-platted thongs, and into the plats were woven iron spikes (*scorpio*) or knuckle-bones of animals. When Rehoboam said to the deputation, "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions," he contrasted the simple scourge of leather thongs with that which was made more terrible with the nails and spikes, and which was called the scorpion, and was in use among the Jews as well as among the Romans. The lictors who stood about the Praetor bore axes tied in bundles of rods. The rods were for beating, the axes for decapitating; but they only used the rods for persons of distinction and quality. A Praetor such as Pilate had six of such officers by him. We may be quite sure that they did not proceed to unbind their bundles of rods to scourge Jesus with them—that would be rendering Him too much respect. He would not be beaten with the lictors' rods, but be scourged with the thonged whip, armed either with scorpions or knuckle-bones, the instrument of chastisement for slaves and common criminals. Before Christ was scourged He was stripped of His raiment before the people, His hands being bound and attached to a pillar. We have descriptions from old heathen writers of the manner in which such a scourging was performed. "In Rome," says Aulus Gellius, "in the Forum was a post by itself, and to this the most illustrous man was brought, his clothes stripped off, and he was beaten with rods." There is a profane Life of Christ, of uncertain date, written in Hebrew, circulating anciently among the Jews, that embodies their traditions about Christ, and in it it is said that "The elders of Jerusalem took Jesus and bound Him to a marble pillar in the city, and scourged Him there with whips, crying out, 'Where now are the wondrous works that Thou hast done?'" In the Jewish laws it is ordered that behind the man to be scourged shall stand a stone, upon which the executioner shall take his place, so as to be well raised, that thereby the blows he deals may fall with greater effect. It is probable that before Herod's palace, where Pilate held his court, was a low pillar, and the prescribed square block on which the executioner was to stand, whilst the person to be scourged was fastened to the low pillar in a bowed position, the ropes knotted about his wrists being passed through a ring strongly soldered into the stone pillar. Thus the scourger stood above the man he beat, and struck downwards at his bent back. The tradition that the scourging of Jesus took place somehow thus, that He was attached to a pillar when beaten, is very old. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *Contrast between a scourged Christ and a pampered Christian:*—Christ shows us how the flesh is to be mastered by the spirit, how we are to strive to obtain such a dominion over our bodies that we can bear pain without outcry and anger. God Himself sends us pain sometimes, and we are disposed to be restive under it, to murmur, and to reproach Him. Let us look to Jesus, scourged at the pillar, and see how He endured patiently. Let us learn to keep the body under, and bring it into subjection; ease, luxury, self-indulgence have a deadening effect on the soul, and this is an age of self-indulgence. We are always intent on heaping to ourselves comforts; we have no idea of "enduring hardships." We must have softer, deeper carpets for our feet; garments that fit us most perfectly and becomingly, easy chairs, soft springy beds, more warmth, better food, purple, fine linen, sumptuous fare every day. Our rooms must be artistic, the decorations and colours æsthetic; the eye, the ear, the nose, the touch must all be gratified, and we seek to live for the pleasures of the sense, and think it a sort of duty to have the senses tickled or soothed. How strangely does the figure of Jesus, bowed at the pillar, with His back exposed, and the soldiers lashing at Him with their whips loaded with knuckle-bones, contrast with this modern foppishness and effeminacy! What a lesson he teaches of the control of the senses, of the conquest of the flesh! I would not say that it is wrong to cultivate art and to love that which is beautiful; but it is wrong to be so given up to it as to allow the love of the ease and beauty and

gracefulness in modern life to take the fibre out of our souls, and reduce us to moral limpness. We must endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; we must strive to be above the comforts and adornments of modern life, and make of them the accident and not the substance of our existence. (*Ibid.*) *Duty and interest*:—In Pilate's case, the particular influence that prevented was the fear of man. "What will the Jews say, what will the Jews do, if I discharge this Prisoner whom they wish me to condemn?" When once men are governed in their conduct, not by the sense of right, but by the desire to obtain the world's approval, or the fear of incurring the world's hatred, they are at the mercy of the winds and waves, without chart or rudder. They are not rocks against which the waters break, but which stand unmoved because they are rooted into the solid earth, but they are things that drift upon the surface, borne hither and thither as the current sets or the breezes drive them. The man who owns Christ only when the world tolerates it, or as far as the world bears it, will deny Christ when the world frowns. It is impossible to be a lover of Christ and a lover of the world; it is impossible to fear God and man too; it is absolutely impossible to please men and be the servant of Christ. (*Oxford Lent Sermons.*)

Vers. 17–19. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns.—*Mock dignity*:—Among the Babylonians and Persians it was customary on a certain feast to bring forth a malefactor from the prison, to place him on a throne, adorned with the royal insignia, to treat him with homage and honour, give him a splendid banquet, and then tear off his crown and royal apparel, scourge him, and put him to death by burning him alive. In Aricia, the priest, king for the year, was anciently sacrificed annually, but afterwards a slave was taken and adorned with royal and priestly ornaments for a few days, and treated with all reverence, and then was stripped and put to death. Throughout the heathen world, at midwinter, it was customary to thus give a short-lived dignity to some person, who was afterwards despoiled of his splendour and put to death, and this custom lingered on in a modified form in Europe, and at Twelfth Night Epiphany kings and queens were installed. Even in Mexico, when discovered and invaded by the Spaniards, a somewhat similar usage was found. A young man for a whole year was treated with homage, and given everything he desired, and then was suddenly despoiled and put to death. Haman, when he desired the royal apparel for himself, and the royal steed, had little idea that he was seeking a brief glory which would end in the gallows, just like the annual exaltation and execution of the Sagan, as he was called. The Romans kept their Saturnalia when the slaves took their masters' places, and were dressed in the best robes, and banqueted at their tables, whilst their lords served them. And then, in a night, all was changed, and the slave was subjected to the rod and bondage. The soldiers were wont to keep their Saturnalia, and knew all about the custom of dressing up a victim as a king, then disrobing him and putting him to death, and now they practised this on Jesus. Their act was not one prompted by a sudden fancy. It was a thing to which they were either themselves accustomed, or knew of it as a rite still in use. They regarded Jesus as a victim, and as a victim they treated Him to this short honour; but they did it, for all that, in mockery. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *A crown of thorns*:—We usually think of it as with an Eastern diadem; but it was far more probably in imitation of the victor's wreath, which the emperor of the time was so fond of wearing, as the statues of Liberius abundantly testify. One of the soldiers must have run into the garden of the palace, or down the rocky valley hard by, and gathered a handful of thorny bramble; of what kind it was, has been often disputed. Those who thought most of the infliction of pain fixed on an Acanthus, with long spikes that sting as well as prick; others, who saw in the crowning more of mockery than cruelty, chose the Nebk—the Spina Christi—which, with its pliant twigs and bright ivy-like leaves, best recalls the Imperial wreath. Whichever it was, it is enough for us to feel, as an evidence of the restitution wrought by the Incarnation, that what sprang from the ground as a curse on Adam's transgression, was woven into a crown, and worn by Christ. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *The curse and crown of thorns*:—And thus, as the curse began in thorns (Gen. iii. 18), it ended in thorns. (*Hiller.*) *Symbolism of the crown of thorns*:—Thorns and briars were the curse of the earth, sent because of man's disobedience, and after his expulsion from Paradise. There is, therefore, a symbolical propriety in Christ assuming a crown of thorns. He who had come to undo the fault of Adam, to take away its consequences, takes to His head the symbol of the evil brought on the earth, and bears it on His temples. . . .

God of old likened the law which He gave to Israel to a thorn hedge enclosing His people. Christ has come to take away the law of ordinances which tore and tortured the Jewish people, and He takes its symbol, the thorny circle, and is crowned with it. . . . The thorn has also the symbolic meaning of sin, and a dry thorn was regarded as the symbol of a sinner (Ezek. ii. 3, 6). . . . A thorn is symbolical, not of sin only, but of mockery. As the thorn enters into the flesh and works itself deeper in, and rankles there, causing intolerable pain, and can only with the greatest difficulty be extracted, so is it with the stabbing word of sarcasm—it pierces deep into the heart, and festers there. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The coronation of Christ:*—The thorn chaplet was a triumphal crown. Christ had fought with sin from the day when he first stood foot to foot with it in the wilderness, up to the time when He entered Pilate's hall, and He had conquered it. As a witness that He had gained the victory, behold, sin's crown seized as a trophy! What was the crown of sin? Thorns. But now Christ has spoiled sin of its richest regalia, and He wears it Himself. Glorious Champion, all hail! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The thorn crown a stimulus:*—In the thorn crown I see a mighty stimulus. 1. To fervent love. Can you see Christ crowned with thorns, and not be drawn to Him? 2. To repentance. Can you see your best-beloved put to such shame, and yet hold truce or parley with the sins which pierced Him. It cannot be. (*Ibid.*) *The thorn crown a shelter:*—Ofttimes I have seen the blackthorn growing in the hedge all bristling with a thousand prickles, but right in the centre of the bush have I seen the pretty nest of a little bird. Why did the creature place its habitation there? Because the thorns become a protection to it, and shelter it from harm. And to you I would say—Build your nests within the thorns of Christ. It is a safe place for sinners. Neither Satan, sin, nor death can reach you there. And when you have done that, then come and crown His sacred head with other crowns. What glory does He deserve? What is good enough for Him? If we could take all the precious things from all the treasuries of monarchs, they would not be worthy to be pebbles beneath His feet. If we could bring Him all the sceptres, mitres, tiaras, diadems, and all other pomp of earth, they would be altogether unworthy to be thrown in the dust before Him. Wherewith shall we crown Him? Come, let us weave our praises together, and set our tears for pearls, our love for gold. They will sparkle like so many diamonds in His esteem, for He loves repentance, and He loves faith. Let us make a chaplet with our praises, and crown Him as the laureate of grace. Oh, for grace to do it in the heart, and then in the life, and then with the tongue, that we may praise Him for ever who bowed His head to shame for us. (*Ibid.*) *A crown of thorns:*—When John Huss, the Bohemian martyr, was brought out to be burnt, they put on his head a triple crown of paper, with painted devils on it. On seeing it he said, "The Lord Jesus Christ for my sake wore a crown of thorns. Why should not I then for His sake wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious? Truly I will do it and that willingly." When it was set upon his head, the bishop said, "Now we commend thy soul to the devil." "But I," said Huss, lifting up his eyes to heaven, "do commit my spirit into Thy hands. O Lord Jesus Christ, to Thee I commend my spirit, which Thou hast redeemed!" When the fagots were piled up to his very neck, the Duke of Bavaria was officious enough to desire him to abjure. "No," said Huss, "I never preached any doctrine of any evil tendency, and what I have taught with my lips I now seal with my blood." (*Mother's Treasury.*) *The cruel coronation:*—First, the cruel coronation is set before us; secondly, the abjects exulting over their supposed victim, mocking Him and hailing Him with the supposition that He only pretended to be a king; but we cannot stop there—we must go on to notice His exaltation in consequence, and look to Him where He is. I. I was led to the first statement from the circumstance of the rejoicings in the week that is past, on account of its being coronation week, or coronation day. "Well," I said in my own soul, as I turned over the leaves of my Bible, "every day of my life, God helping me, shall be a coronation day. He must be crowned Lord of all. But mark, in His official character He must be crowned cruelly with thorns first. Thorns were the symbol of the curse. When God pronounced a curse upon creation, in consequence of man's fall, it was said, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." Not a few, yea, probably, all of God's saints have had to experience that there are thorns in their path, that there are thorns around them, that there are thorns in their choicest gardens, perhaps, in their families, in their children; that there are thorns in their most pleasant circumstances, that there are thorns in their most prosperous businesses, that there are thorns in their fondest hopes; but none among them, that I have ever

heard of, have been crowned with thorns. I sometimes flinch if a thorn only touches my finger—I sometimes flinch if a thorn seems threatening the destruction of my fond expectation. What should I do if I were brought to be crowned with them? That was only the honour belonging to the King of kings, who, though King of kings, was the Prince of sufferers; and this Prince of sufferers was crowned with that curse which belonged to poor, fallen, ruined sinners, and which must have crushed you and me into eternal destruction, if He had not been crowned with it. Have we never read, that He was "made a curse for us," because "it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." When this crown of thorns was placed upon the head of our blessed Lord, it was that as a crowned head He should proclaim the liberation of His people from the curse. As though He had said, "Plat it closely, take them all in, do not leave a single thorn for My bride, do not leave a single point that shall be experienced, in a judicial sense, for any that the Father gave Me; plat it thicker, plat it higher, lay it heavier, that I may endure all." And why? Because He loved His Church, and would put away the curse, and secure the blessing of His Father upon them, and at least welcome them home with the very appellation of blessing, "Come, ye blessed of My Father." II. LET US ADVANCE TO TAKE A VIEW OF THESE ABJECTS, THAT WERE EXULTING IN HIS SUFFERINGS. Are there not many such mockers now? But just look for a moment at the characters set forth here, as the abjects that mocked Him. "What!" say you, "are we to count chief priests and scribes among the abjects?" I do so always, and among the very worst of abjects. What was Pilate? an abject. What were the priests, that prompted and goaded the people to cry, "Away with Him, away with Him." They were all abjects, decided mockers of Christ. And yet these abjects did not like to go forward in a party by themselves, but must summon the other abjects to do so for them. Now look for a moment how Christ is mocked, in the present day, with all the gaudy show, with all the mimicry of expressions in honour of Him, in which the heart does not go, with all the superstitious ceremonies and abominable idolatries that are palmed upon men under the name of Christianity! But you will observe, that amidst all this insult and mockery, which was heaped upon Jesus when He was upon earth, by these abjects, yet they were obliged to honour Him as King, and they cried out, though they only meant it in mockery, "Hail, King of the Jews." Now pause here for a moment, just to ask the quession, "How do I honour Him?" Are we really honouring Him as our King? or are we fleeing from Him, as His disciples did amidst His sufferings. III. THIS WILL LEAD ME TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT HIS PRESENT EXALTATION. Now this present exaltation, I am told, is "at the right hand of the Majesty on high," where He is enthroned in glory. (*J. Irons, M.A.*)

Ver. 20. **And led Him out to crucify Him.**—*Preparations for crucifixion*:—The case was shut and the last chance was gone, and Pilate uttered the terrible formula, "Go, soldier; get the cross ready!" The cross, perhaps, was found on a pile of grim lumber in some prison-yard not far off. Perhaps it was a bole of some common tree, with the boughs lopped off and the bark left on. This log and its transverse beam had to be roughly knocked together at the place of crucifixion—not before. Some officer would say to the man and his mates who went for it: "You may as well bring two other crosses, for there are two other men to be crucified, and we may as well put them all three to death together, and so save trouble." Meanwhile, there stands Jesus meekly waiting, still thorn-crowned—for, when the soldiers took away the fantastic robe they did not take away (according to any evidence that we have) the crown of thorns. Then the two convicts are fetched out, and yonder they slouch. Ah! I can almost see the two horrors—two hard, white-grey cruel faces, two pairs of eyes that shift and shine under two shocks of rough wild hair. Now all is ready. The three are formed into a line, each one carrying a part of his cross, and each one has slung before him, from his neck, a board whitened with gypsum, on which you see his name and crime scored in great red letters. A centurion, on horseback, goes first; and then comes the Holy One, sinking under the shaft of His cross. The crier walks by His side, shouting, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews! Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!" The second man comes after Him, and the third man after him, attended in like manner. As they stagger slowly along, all the reeking, ragged lazzaroni swarm out in larger numbers from the slums of outcast Jerusalem, leaping, laughing, swearing, and playing off practical jokes upon one another. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *The way to the cross*:—The procession formed, and started on its way. First went a trumpeter to

call attention and clear the road. This was usual both among the Romans and the Jews. Among the latter a herald led the way, crying out, "So and so, the son of so and so, is being led forth to execution. The witnesses against Him are so and so. If any one knows any reason why the sentence be remitted or deferred, let him now declare it." Also, when a criminal had been sentenced, two members of the council accompanied him to execution. We may be sure it was so on this occasion. Jesus had been condemned to death by the Sanhedrim, and members of it would be likely to attend and see that Christ was really slain; we find also that when He hung upon the cross some of these were present, who mocked, and these were probably the two members delegated to assist at the execution, according to law. A centurion also attended the procession, mounted on horseback. He represented the governor, and his function was to see that the execution was properly and fully carried out, and that the person executed died on his cross. We see in the presence of the centurion under the cross, when Christ died, as well as in that of the chief priests deriding Jesus as He hung, one of those many little touches of truth, those undesigned coincidences, which serve to show the fidelity of the record to the facts of the case. A considerable detachment of soldiers was also in attendance, and accompanied the Lord on His way to death. There were fears of a riot, and possibly of an attempt to release the two thieves. If these were, as we may suppose, of the band of Barabbas, they were not only found guilty because they were robbers, but also because they were political offenders. The mob had demanded and obtained the release of Barabbas; it was not unlikely they might make an attempt to free the two other conspirators. Now try to picture the train as it moved. The streets of Jerusalem were narrow, and though the road chosen was one of the principal streets, yet that street was by no means broad. It was part of the custom to convey criminals to death through the most frequented portions of the city. Quinctilian says, "As often as we crucify criminals, the most populous streets are traversed, so that the crowd may see and be filled with fear." Another ancient writer gives a description of the cross-bearing of a slave, which is interesting, as it shows what the usage then was, and helps us to realize the scene when Christ went through the streets of Jerusalem to His passion. He says that a noble Roman had delivered over one of his slaves to death, and he bade the fellow-slaves convey this man about Rome, and make his death as conspicuous and notorious as possible. He had been first scourged in the Forum, and then dragged about to all the most frequented parts of the city. He was made to carry his cross, his hands were bound to the arms of the cross, and the full weight of the rough cross was laid on his back and shoulders, bleeding and raw from the scourging he had received. . . . The streets were not only narrow, but they were winding. The way led to the gate Gennath, or the Garden Gate, which was in the corner between the old wall of Zion and the wall of the lower town, and belonged to the latter. It was so called, because, outside the city, to the north of the Pool of Hezekiah, lay gardens belonging to citizens, one of which, as we learn later, belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. The procession moves on, in the full glare of day, with the hot Syrian sun streaming down on the train. Above, the sky is blue, the street, though narrow, is full of light, for the walls reflect the glare of the sun. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The scene at Calvary*:—I. What was crucifixion? To the devout Christian every item of information he can gain concerning that dread scene at Calvary is of the utmost value. 1. It was foreign in every sense in its infliction upon our Lord. This kind of capital punishment was Roman, and not Jewish. 2. It was excessively cruel in its details. The word which it has given to our English language indicates its severity. To be "excruciated" simply means to be in suffering like that of crucifixion; it signifies the extreme anguish to which human sensibility can go. 3. It was long and lingering in its operation. Severe as these wounds were, they could never be very dangerous. Hardly more than a few drops of blood fell from them. It would have been too much of a merciful indulgence for this mode of execution to make any of its agonizing strokes immediately fatal. Death did not ensue sometimes until after several days of torture. Even then it was brought on by weakness and starvation, coupled with the low fever which the inflammation from the wounds sooner or later produced. The great suffering was caused by the constrained posture on the cross, the soreness of the members from the nails, and of the back from the welts raised by the whips in the scourging. Every motion brought with it only anguish without relief. Thus the poor body was permitted to hang with no respite and no hope, through the night and through the day, in the chillness of the evening, in the heat of the noon, until death put an end to consciousness and to life. 4.

Such a punishment powerfully arrested the popular imagination as a spectacle. Sometimes the military men put on guard were compelled to accelerate the final agony by brutally beating the legs of the victims with bludgeons till the bones were crushed and the sudden shocks produced collapse. No wonder people called this "the most cruel, the worst possible fate." It is on record that a soldier once said that, of all the awful sounds human ears could be forced to listen to, the most terrible out of hell were those pitiable cries, in the solemn silence of the midnight, from the lonely hill where crucified men were hanging in agonies out of which they could not even die while a breath to suffer with remained. 5. So we see whence came the suggestion of a crucifix as a symbol of faith and penitence. It is not likely that the physical pains of our Lord were the severest He had to bear; but they certainly have availed from the earliest time to move the hearts of the simple-minded common people. Nor is this all: there are moments of deep spiritual feeling when even the most cultivated penitent will find an argument in the "agony and bloody sweat" as well as in the "cross and passion" of the Divine Redeemer. The popular mind is moved by such a picture; but the mistake might easily be made of trusting a crucifix in an impulse of superstition, instead of Christ on a principle of faith. II. So much, then, as to the manner of our Lord's crucifixion; now comes up for our study a far more interesting question concerning its meaning. 1. Considered merely as a matter of historic incident, the death of Jesus Christ is of little, if any, spiritual value. Doubtless there were other executions at Golgotha before and after this one, equally painful and equally iniquitous—for the Roman government in Palestine was never free from charges of injustice. We do not care, however, to remember the sufferers' names. And Christ's crucifixion is but one more wail of abused humanity, if we contemplate it alone. 2. We must consider this event as a matter of theological doctrine. When history is so momentous and so mysterious as this, we are compelled to read below the surface and between the lines. He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" in order that He should suffer precisely as He did (Acts ii. 23). Men wreaked their violent passions upon Him, and it was by wicked and responsible hands He was crucified and slain. Messiah was "cut off, but not for Himself" (Dan. ix. 26). The wisdom of God overruled the wrath of His murderers to the Divine glory and the salvation of men. One of the ancient commentators springs up almost out of sober exposition into the realm of song, as he exclaims; "In their frantic anger they pluck to pieces the Rose of Sharon; but by so doing they only display the brilliance of every petal. In their fury they break a diamond into fragments; by which they only cause it to show its genuineness by its sparkling splinters. They are anxious to tear from Immanuel's head the last remnant of a crown; but they only lift the veil from the forehead of His majesty!" 3. More than anything else we must also consider the crucifixion of Jesus as a matter of vicarious atonement. There is something very fine in the quiet simplicity with which one of the apostles explains this entire scene at Calvary: "All have sinned." Christ died to be "a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. iii. 23–26). Pilate wrote an inscription to be put over the head of the Saviour; according to a Roman custom, this was designed to explain the transaction to all who stood by. The true inscription on the cross would be "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." These are the words which would give to the scene at Calvary its eternal interpretation before the Church and the ages. The very voice of Immanuel Himself as He seems to speak out of the midst of His suffering, is: "See! I have taken away the handwriting that was against you, and have nailed it to My cross" (Col. ii. 13, 14). The one word which describes the whole gospel plan of salvation is substitution. Christ was sinless, yet He suffered: we are sinful, yet we go free (2 Cor. v. 21). 4. This will lead at last to our consideration of the crucifixion as a matter of personal experience. Believers all glory in the cross. Many a death-bed has been illumined by its light. Many a sorrowful and lonely heart has been encouraged by the remembrance of it. There have been old men, just trembling on the verge of the tomb, whose eyes filled with the tears of grateful gladness as they died thinking of it. There have arisen voices from around the stake in the midst of the martyr's flames, singing praise to Him who hung upon it. Many a bowed sinner has come forth into freedom as he laid his burden at the foot of the cross. This personal experience begins with self-renunciation. Every other reliance must absolutely be surrendered, and each soul must become content to owe its salvation to Jesus Christ's merits, not to its own. So this personal experience continues to the end with a deep solicitude against lapsing into sin again. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian.**—*Bearing the cross*:—I. In going through the history of the fact, our thoughts must glance along THE LINES OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LAST APPEAL OF PILATE, "Behold, the Man," AND THE SUBJECT WHICH CLAIMS OUR ATTENTION NOW. II. WE PASS FROM THE HISTORIC FACT TO THE CHALLENGE FOUNDED UPON IT. In view of what is now meant by cross-bearing, we ask, "Who among you is willing to become a cross-bearer for Christ?" The only cross in prospect now is a cross for the soul. Carrying a cross after Christ means, for one thing, some kind of suffering for Christ. View the cross-bearing as something practical, in distinction from something only emotional, and answer the question, "who is now willing to be a cross-bearer for Christ?" "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and your children!" On the roadside near an old Hungarian town, grey with the stains of time and weather, there is a stone image of the great Cross-bearer, and under it is sculptured this inscription in Latin; "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." "The thorough woe-begoneness of that image," remarks an old scholar, "used to haunt me long: that old bit of granite—the beau-ideal of human sorrow, weakness, and woe-begoneness. To this day it will come back upon me." Natural sensibility is not irreligious; but, considered in itself alone, it is not religion. With all the pain of bursting heart, and all the leverage of straining strength, Simon, bearing the cross for Christ, is the perpetual type of one who not only feels for Christ, but who tries to do something. I charge you by the crown of thorns, that you shrink from no ridicule that comes upon you simply for Christ's sake. On July 1st, 1415, when John Huss had to die for Christ's sake, and when, on the way to the dread spot, the priests put upon his head a large paper cap, painted with grotesque figures of devils, and inscribed with the word, "Hæresiarcha!" he said, "Our Lord wore a crown of thorns for me; why should not I wear this for Him?" I charge you by the truth that Christ was not ashamed of you, that you be not ashamed of Christ. In view of the strength assured to each cross-bearer, who is willing? (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *Carrying the cross for Christ*:—Christ comes forth from Pilate's hall with the cumbrous wood upon His shoulder, but through weariness He travels slowly, and His enemies urgent for His death, and half afraid, from His emaciated appearance, that He may die before He reaches the place of execution, allow another to carry His burden. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, they cannot spare Him the agonies of dying on the cross, they will therefore remit the labour of carrying it. They place the cross upon Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country. We do not know what may have been the colour of Simon's face, but it was most likely black. Simon was an African; he came from Cyrene. Alas poor African, thou hast been compelled to carry the cross even until now. Hail, ye despised children of the sun, ye follow first after the King in the march of woe. We are not sure that Simon was a disciple of Christ; he may have been a friendly spectator; yet one would think the Jews would naturally select a disciple if they could. Coming fresh from the country, not knowing what was going on, he joined with the mob, and they made him carry the cross. Whether a disciple then or not, we have every reason to believe that he became so afterwards; he was the father, we read, of Alexander and Rufus, two persons who appear to have been well-known in the early Church; let us hope that salvation came to his house when he was compelled to bear the Saviour's cross. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Simon helping Jesus*:—Little did these people know that they were making this man immortal! Notice in this connection: I. THE GREATNESS OF TRIFLES. Had Simon started from the little village where he lived five minutes earlier or later, had he walked a little faster or slower, had he happened to be lodging on the other side of Jerusalem, had he gone in at another gate, had the centurion not fixed on him to carry the cross, all his life would have been different. And so it is always. Our lives are like the Cornish rocking-stones, pivoted on little points. 1. Let us bring the highest and largest principles to bear on the smallest events and circumstances. 2. Let us repose in quiet confidence on Him in whose hands the whole puzzling overwhelming mystery lies. To Him "great" and "small" are terms that have no meaning. He looks upon men's lives, not according to the apparent magnitude of the deeds with which they are filled, but simply according to the motives from which, and the purpose towards which, they were done. II. THE BLESSEDNESS AND HONOUR OF HELPING JESUS CHRIST. Though He bore Simon's sins in His Own Body on the tree, He needed Simon to help Him to bear the cross; and He needs us to help Him to spread throughout the world the blessed consequences of that

cross. For us all there is granted the honour, and from us all there is required the sacrifice and the service of helping the suffering Saviour of men. III. THE PERPETUAL RECOMPENSE AND RECORD OF HUMBLEST CHRISTIAN WORK. How little Simon thought, when he went back to his rural lodging that night, that he had written his name high up on the tablet of the world's memory, to be legible for ever. God never forgets, or allows to be forgotten, anything done for Him. We may not leave our works on any record that men can read. What of that, if they are written in letters of light in the Lamb's Book of Life, to be read out by Him, before His Father and the holy angels, in the last great day. We may not leave any separate traces of our service, any more than the little brook that comes down some gulley on the hillside flows separate from its sisters, with whom it has coalesced in the bed of the great river, or in the rolling, boundless ocean. What of that, so long as the work, in its consequences, shall last? IV. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF CONTACT WITH THE SUFFERING CHRIST. Only by standing near the cross, and gazing on the Crucified Jesus, will any of us ever learn the true mystery and miracle of Christ's great and loving Being and work. Take your place there behind Him, near His cross; gazing upon Him till your heart melts, and you, too, learn that He is your Lord, and Saviour, and God. Look to Him who bears what none can help Him to carry—the burden of the world's sin; let Him bear yours; yield to Him your grateful obedience; and then take up your cross daily, and bear the light burden of self-denying service to Him who has borne the heavy load of sin for you and all mankind. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The compulsion of Simon:*—The Persian monarchs had a service of carriers or post, and these were called *angari;* they were allowed to seize on any horses and equipages they needed, to demand entertainment wherever they came, free of expense, and this proved a great grievance. The word passed into use among the Greeks (ἀγγαρεύειν), and the Romans exercised pretty freely the same rights of requisitioning. When the Baptist said to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man," he doubtless referred to this system of extorting the use of their horses, their beasts, even their own work, out of subject people, without payment. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *Simon helping Jesus:*—We are not told as much, but we may conclude that Jesus had fallen under the weight. He seemed unable to bear the cross any further. Perhaps He had fainted from the loss of blood and from the long fasting. He sank on the pavement, and could bear the wood no longer. Something of the sort must have occurred, or the centurion would not have halted the convoy, and ordered that the cross should be transferred to another. This was not done out of compassion, but out of necessity. Jesus could not bear it any further; therefore, in order that the place of execution might be quickly reached, some one else must be got to carry it. No Roman would carry the cross. To do so would dishonour him. The soldiers looked out for some one, and seized on Simon. They were wont thus to requisition men and animals for the service of the State. Simon was a foreigner, a native of Lybia in Africa, a dark man, possibly not exactly a negro, but so dark-complexioned that he went by the name of Niger, or the Black Man. He was coming into the town, probably laden with the wood for the fire on which the Easter lamb was to be burnt, for on this day of the preparation the Jews were wont to go out of the city and collect the necessary wood, lay it on their shoulders and bring it home. So now, on the day of the preparation, the Lord carries on His shoulders the wood for the new sacrifice, on which He, the Lamb of God, was to have His life consumed. As He goes, He meets Simon carrying the wood into Jerusalem for the typical lamb. The soldiers at once seize Simon, make him cast down his load, and take on his shoulders the burden of Christ's cross. He was the first; he, this African, to take up the cross, and follow Christ; he, the representative of the race of Ham, the most despised of all the descendants of Noah, that on which the yoke of bondage seems ever to have pressed. And now, how wonderful, if this our conjecture be true. The Romans and Greek, representatives of Japhet; the Jews, representatives of Shem; and Simon, the representative of Ham, are all united in one stream, setting forward to Calvary. Each, this day, gives a pledge of conversion; the centurion, the son of Japhet; the thief, the son of Israel, of Shem; and, first of all, the Cyrenian, the descendant of Ham. . . . Simon was compelled. He was not, at first, willing to take it; if, as we suppose, he was carrying his bundle of wood, he was constrained to lay that down. So must we lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, that we may follow after Jesus, bearing His reproach. Simon shrank both from the burden and from the shame, and the natural man shrinks from the cross of Christ, shrinks from the cross that God lays on us.

He compels us to bear the cross; and though we may wish to escape it at first, yet, if like Simon we submit, and bear it in a right spirit, it will bring us, as it did Simon, to meekness and patience, and a more perfect knowledge of Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Shape of the cross*:—The shape of the cross on which our Lord suffered has been much debated. Some ancient Fathers, fancying they found a typical reference in the crossing of the hands over the head of the scape-goat, and in the peculiar mode in which Jacob blessed his grandsons, often assumed that it was in the form of what is commonly called a St. Andrew's Cross; others again, seeing in the mystical mark or Tau set upon the foreheads of the righteous in Ezekiel's vision a foreshadowing of the cross, concluded that it was like that which bears the name of St. Anthony, in form like a capital T. It is far more probable that it was what is known familiarly as the Latin Cross. It was prefigured by the transverse spits which the priest placed in the Pascal lamb. Its four arms, pointing to the four quarters of the globe, symbolized "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of Christ's universal Church. It is a strong argument in favour of this form that "the inscription" was set above the head of the Crucified, which would be impossible in either of the other forms. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Sharing the cross with Jesus*:—Jesus was pleased to take man unto His aid, not only to represent His Own need, and the dolorousness of His Passion, but to consign the duty unto man, that we must enter into a fellowship of Christ's sufferings, taking up a cross of martyrdom when God requires us, enduring affronts, being patient under affliction, loving them that hate us, and being benefactors to our enemies, abstaining from sensual and intemperate delight, forbidding ourselves lawful recreations when we have an end of the spirit to serve upon the ruins of the body's strength, mortifying our desires, breaking our own will, not seeking ourselves, being entirely resigned to God. These are the cross and the nails, and the spear and the whip, and all the instruments of a Christian's passion. (*Bishop Jeremy Taylor.*) *Simon bearing the cross*:—A scene for all the ages of time and all the cycles of eternity; a cross with Jesus at the one end of it, and Simon at the other, suggesting the idea to every troubled soul, that no one need ever carry a whole cross. You have only half a cross to carry. If you are in poverty, Jesus was poor, and He comes and takes the other end of the cross. If you are in persecution, Jesus was persecuted too. If you are in any kind of trouble, you have a sympathizing Redeemer. Let this be a lesson to each of us. If you find a man in persecution, or in sickness, or in trouble of any kind, go up to him and say, "My brother, I have come to help you. You take hold of one end of this cross, and I will take hold of the other end, and Jesus Christ will come in and take hold of the middle of the cross; after a while there will be no cross at all." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *A strange episode*:—Simon was probably a pilgrim to the feast; possibly had not known of the existence of Jesus Christ before; is not now seeking Him. But Christ crosses his path; and forced to yield a detested service, Simon learns in the brief companionship of a few hours enough to lead him to yield to Christ the service of a life. There is something very characteristic about this story. The Saviour is perpetually crossing men's paths in life; doing so sometimes painfully with some awful thought, painful aspect, thwarting some plan, spoiling some holiday pleasure, or some effort to get gain. And constantly we see the pain of first acquaintance, the early resentment against the gospel for spoiling plans and pleasures, giving way, and changing into lifelong fidelity. (*R. Glover.*) So he got linked for ever to the Lord! (*J. Morison, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. **The place Golgotha.**—*Golgotha.—The place of execution*:—Calvary, or Golgotha, is not now distinguishable as a hill, partly because of the accumulation of rubbish from the ruin of the city, in the hollows and valleys, and partly because it is doubtful whether it ever was, properly, a hill. It stood below Zion, and was looked down on from Herod's new palace, but it was slightly above the elevation of the lower town. Its name, Golgotha, more correctly, Golgoltha, comes from the same root as Gilgal, that signifies a hill, and the term *golgoi* was used for sacred stones, employed in the heathen rites of the Canaanites and Phœnicians, in their worship of Venus (Baaltis). As in Wales and Cornwall, and in Scotland, *Pen* means "head" and "mountain," so this word *golgol* came to have a double meaning. Among the early Christians a legend existed, that Calvary took its name from Adam's skull having been buried there, and it is possible that the Jewish rabbis had such a story; but the name Calvary, or Golgotha, properly means only the *rounded stone*, and by a corruption of the original signification was taken to signify "the

place of a skull." Just in the same way, the Capitoline hill, in Rome, was so called, because it was a rounded elevation, but afterwards a fable grew up that it took its designation from the head of a certain Tolus having been dug up there. The spot, Calvary, would seem to have been the place of execution from an ancient date. It is probably mentioned by Jeremiah (xxxi. 38, 39), in a prophecy concerning the rebuilding and enlargement of Jerusalem, in which he foretells that the wall would be built in an extended arc from the hill of Gareb in the East, sweeping round, along the North, to the hill of Goath in the West—and Goath, here, answers to Calvary, and means the place of execution. His prophecy was fulfilled about seven years after the death of Christ, by Agrippa, when Golgotha was actually enclosed within the new walls; and at the present day it lies within the city. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 24. **But He received it not.**—*Wine mingled with myrrh.—The stupefying potion:*—Solomon's words in Prov. xxxi. 6, 7, were taken by the Jews to apply to such as were condemned to death, and it was usual for the most illustrious and honourable women of Jerusalem to attend criminals to their execution, and to give them to drink, before they were put to death, wine and myrrh, with gall, which was regarded as numbing the nerves, and superinducing sleep. The Talmud says that they were wont to put a grain of incense in the draught, as that deadened the sense of pain. It says further, "The women of highest rank in Jerusalem, out of free impulse, and at their own cost, gave the condemned man this draught. But if it should so happen that the noble ladies failed to do so, then the cost of providing this drink fell on the community, and was paid for out of the public fund." This was sometimes the case among the heathen. We are told that at the annual feast of Chronos, when a man was put to death to expiate the sins of the people, he was first made drunk with wine, and then executed whilst in a state of intoxication. Among the ancients, myrrh was regarded as having great effect as a pain-killer, and, indeed, it will be found to be one of the principal ingredients in modern compounds, sold for the purpose of deadening the nerves to suffering. Accordingly, the pious women who followed Jesus were only acting according to immemorial custom, when they followed Him weeping, bearing the cup of wine, mingled with myrrh and gall, and offered it to Him before He was stretched on the cross, and His hands and feet nailed to the wood. He, however, turned away His head. He would not drink of the offered cup; not because He disapproved of the piety and pity of the women who offered it, but because He would not seem in any way to evade the sufferings He had come to endure. (*Ibid.*) *Christ refusing any alleviation of His suffering:*—I. THE SOURCE OF THE MORAL MAJESTY OF THE SON OF MAN. That was Christ's power, the yielding to the loving will of Heaven, even though it led Him into darkness so deep and vice so unutterable, that His fainting humanity sank beneath the awful burden of the spirit's agony; not choosing suffering in order that He might grandly bear it, but, because it came from Heaven, refusing to accept any deliverance from man. II. WHAT WAS THE MEANING OF THE CONSUMMATION OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS? That man might be reconciled to God, and two things were requisite. 1. Man must learn the majesty of God's law. 2. He must be drawn by love to the Divine One. Both these receive glorious illustrations from these words. III. THE CLEARNESS OF CHRIST'S VISION OF DEATH. He resolved to die with His mental vision clear and calm. IV. THE DUTY OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES. Not to seek suffering, but when it comes in the path of duty to meet it calmly, resolutely, and fearlessly. V. THE POWER OF CHRIST'S CLAIMS ON ALL MEN. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *Christ refusing the stupefying draught:*—The intention of the soldiers was humane. Crucifixion was so lingering and painful that it was customary thus to deaden the consciousness of the criminal. I. WHAT WAS THE SAVIOUR'S CONDITION AT THAT MOMENT? Intense anguish of soul combined with physical suffering. Christ's nature was peculiarly sensitive. The sorrow at Gethsemane had already weakened Him. Now His sorrow had reached its height. II. WHY DID HE REFUSE THE PROFFERED RELIEF? Not to awaken men's admiration. Not to awaken men's sympathy. 1. Because His sufferings were by Divine appointment; not simply accidental. He would not escape the full force of the penalty which He had undertaken to endure. 2. Because He was unwilling to die without a full consciousness of the conquest which He was achieving over sin and death. III. WHAT ENABLED HIM TO DISPENSE WITH THIS STUPEFYING DRAUGHT? It was the direct result of His self-surrender to the Father. He who gives up will, purpose, life, into the hands of God, may expect that God will be all in all to him. IV. WHAT LESSON DOES HIS

REFUSAL TEACH US? 1. His true nobility. 2. Our own duty under trial. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" It is our privilege to accept the Saviour's love. He suffered, died, arose, ascended to Heaven, and pleads now for us. (*Seeds and Saplings.*)

Ver. 24. **They parted His garments.**—*The soldiers:*—The soldiers who crucified our Lord were not Jews, but Romans; they had not, therefore, the same grounds of opposition to Him which the Jews had: they had not the same expectations of the Messiah, nor the same prejudices as to the perpetuity of the Mosaic ritual; and yet they participated largely in the great crime of His crucifixion. All classes were, in an extraordinary manner, brought in contact with the Redeemer during His last sufferings, that all might have an opportunity of displaying the state of their minds towards Him, of showing how they were affected towards the Saviour of men. It is remarkable what a share all ranks had in His death,—priests, rulers, the common people, kings, governors, soldiers; the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the religious and the profligate, the learned and the rude; from the representative of Cæsar on the Roman tribunal, to the wretched malefactor on the cross; from the sanctimonious Pharisee, with his phylacteries and his prayers, to the profane and profligate wretch who lived without a thought of God; from the learned Rabbi, with his books and his speculations, to the illiterate peasant who knew not the use of letters; from the king, with his insignia of royalty, down to the poor drudge who scarcely dared to call himself a man; from the high priest, with his sacerdotal vestments and functions, down to the Gentile soldier,—all were brought near Him during His last sufferings; all had a voice or a hand in them; and all showed that their hearts were not with Him. We have now brought before us the actual perpetrators of the murder of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we have here a striking illustration of the difference between the act and the guilt. The actual murderers of Jesus were not the most criminal; perhaps they were the least so of all the parties concerned in the transaction. The soldiers who executed the sentence of death upon Jesus were not so guilty as Pilate who pronounced it; Pilate who pronounced it was not so guilty as the people who demanded it; and the people who demanded it were not so guilty as the priests and rulers who designed it, and who instigated the whole proceeding. Guilt pertains not so much to the hand as to the head, and still more to the heart; it lies not so much in the deed, as in the design and purpose of the inner man. The priests and rulers who did not touch Him were far more guilty of His murder than the soldiers who actually nailed Him to the cross. The remarks we have to offer on the conduct of the soldiers will relate to the brutality which marked their treatment of the Redeemer, and then to their unconscious connection with the greatest event which the history of the world records. I. Our first remarks will relate to THE BRUTALITY AND CRUELTY OF THE SOLDIERS TOWARDS JESUS. It is to be observed that there was not, on the part of the soldiers, any personal enmity to Jesus. But still there were evident marks of brutality and cruelty; such were their stripping Him of His raiment, arraying Him in the old scarlet robe, putting the reed in His hand as a mock sceptre, crowning Him with thorns, bowing the knee to Him, and crying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" How are we to account for this barbarity of the Roman soldiers towards one who was guilty of no crime. 1. Their occupation tended to blunt their sensibilities, and to harden their hearts. They were familiar with deeds of horror and of blood, not only on the field of battle, but in the prison-house, and the place of public execution; they were familiar with fetters and stripes; they sported with lacerations and death. Strange things the human heart can be brought to. 2. But another reason may be assigned for it; it is found in our Lord's claim to royalty. He was accused of attempts against the Roman government, and of declaring Himself the King of the Jews. They may have heard of the expectations which prevailed amongst the Jews respecting the Messiah. But the claims of Jesus, who seemed only a poor oppressed peasant, to royalty, would appear to them ineffably absurd—a fit subject for derision and scorn. Hence their indignities and insults were founded chiefly on this. Thus it often is: men pronounce that ridiculous which they do not understand; they declare there is nothing visible, because they are too blind to see. Hence, we perceive, how almost all sin is based on ignorance. Had the soldiers known Jesus they could not have mocked Him. 3. But we have one remark more to offer on this part of our subject. The character which the soldier has ever been taught and accustomed to admire is the opposite of that of Jesus Christ. The character which he admires is the bold, high-spirited—keen to perceive insult, and quick to resent an injury; the meekness,

gentleness, forbearance of Jesus Christ were beyond his comprehension. It is a true remark, that mankind have almost always admired and lauded the destroyers of their race more than their greatest benefactors. Indeed, the world's admiration of conquerors is wonderful. Military greatness, as the eloquent Channing has justly remarked, is by no means the highest order of greatness. With him we claim the first rank for the moral; real magnanimity, which, perceiving the true, the right, the good, the pure, and loving it, cleaves to it at all hazards, and will die for it rather than deny it. The second rank we assign to the intellectual; the power of thought which perceives the harmonies of the universe, which discloses the secrets of nature, and, revealing to men some of the laws by which God governs the material or the spiritual word, augments the power of man, and increases his means of enjoyment. We cannot assign a higher than the third rank to the active; the energy and force of will which surmounts practical difficulties. And it is to this class the soldier belongs: it is with the physical, not with the spiritual, that he has to do. Hence Napoleon was not so great a man as Bacon and Newton, as Milton and Shakespeare; nor so great a benefactor to his race. Still less is he to be compared with Howard, with Carey, with Williams. Napoleon felt this; hence he wished to rest his fame far more on the noble code of laws which he was the means of giving to his vast empire, than on all his splendid victories. We trust the days are coming in which correct views of this subject will be generally formed; and that the discoveries of science, and the various inventions of man, will contribute, in conjunction with the diffusion of the spirit of the gospel, to banish wars from the earth. Meantime, as to the military profession, one wonders at the estimate in which it is held. I speak not of individuals, but of the system. To think of men letting themselves out for a shilling a day to shoot their fellow-creatures, and to be shot at! What a high estimate they must form of themselves! II. It is time that we adverted to the second train of remark in which we propose to indulge. They knew they had many hours to wait, and, having completed their task, they composed themselves as well as they could; they put themselves, mentally and physically, in an attitude of patience, till death slowly, but surely, accomplished his work. "They sat down and watched him there." There is something very affecting in the position of him who sits down and watches a fellow-creature as life slowly ebbs. The tender mother, as she watches her beloved child, or the affectionate daughter, as she watches her aged parent, thus sinking in the arms of death, feels her position to be at once a painful and a solemn one. Oh! yes, in the chamber of the dying saint, what solemn and impressive thoughts may we not indulge! But the men who were appointed to see the last of Jesus, watched Him without the slightest emotion; they were not impressed with the solemn character of their position; death was there at work, but they had been accustomed to his neighbourhood, and were unmoved by his presence. Oh! how closely, and yet how unconsciously, may men be allied to the most interesting and the most important events. How unconscious were they of the character of Him who was suffering there. They were utterly unconscious of His dignity or His worth; they did not know that when they saw Him, they saw the fullest and clearest revelation of God that the world ever beheld—that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. When God appeared on Mount Sinai, the Jews trembled; when the cloud filled the tabernacle and the temple, the priests could not abide there, they were awe-struck; but in Jesus, they had not simply a symbol of the Divine presence—the Divinity itself dwelt in Him, so that His disciple said, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and He said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." And little did they think, when they roughly bound Him, fiercely scourged Him, and rudely nailed Him to the tree, that they had in their hands the Lord's anointed; that they were thus treating the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God; that they were thus touching the apple of His eye. Had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; had they known Him they would not readily have touched Him, they would rather have trembled in His presence; they would have fallen down at His feet and worshipped Him. But not knowing Him, they imbrued their hands in His blood; unconsciously they crucified the Son of God. Ignorance is a fearful thing; say we not truly, sometimes, that all sin is a mistake, —a grand, a fatal mistake? How much evil may we do ignorantly? Take heed of your sins of ignorance. The apostle says, "Unawares some have entertained angels," and some have entertained them strangely. Prophets, God-sent men, have been among them, and they have not regarded them, but have treated them most contumeliously. The soldiers were equally unconscious of the nature and grandeur

of the transaction in which they were concerned; they saw in it merely a very common occurrence, an event of no importance, and of very partial and transient interest. They were wholly unconscious of the real nature of the transaction, of the infinite and enduring interest of the event. Little did they think, while they sat down watching Him there, of the relation of what was passing before them to all worlds and to all beings—to heaven, earth, hell—to God, to man, to angels, and apostate spirits. Little did they think that they were witnessing the greatest act of obedience to the Divine commands which God had ever received; that the Divine law was never so magnified. They were equally ignorant of the consequences which would result from it. Ah! no; while men live in opposition to God, they are ignorant of the real nature of their conduct, and are altogether unprepared for the consequences which must ensue. The responsibility increases, however, with the means of information within our reach. Ignorance, so far from excusing the transgressions which grow out of it, may itself be exceedingly sinful. All that they did had been foreseen and foretold by some of the ancient seers; the whole of their conduct had been described by inspired men, who had looked at it through the vista of ages; and every action of theirs, in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus, was the fulfilment of some prediction; but they knew it not. In this sense, too, "they knew not what they did." This part of our subject suggests an important reflection: it relates to the consistency between the free agency of man, and the foreknowledge of God. (*J. J. Davies.*) *Stripped of His raiment*:—Tom Baird, the carter, the beadle of my working-man's church, was as noble a fellow as ever lived—God-fearing, true, unselfish. I shall never forget what he said when I asked him to stand at the door of the working-man's congregation, and when I thought he was unwilling to do so in his working clothes. "If," said I, "you don't like to do it, Tom; if you are ashamed——" "Ashamed!" he exclaimed, as he turned round upon me; "I'm mair ashamed o' yersel', sir. Div ye think that I believe, as ye ken I do, that Jesus Christ, who died for me, was stripped o' His raiment on the cross, and that I—— Na, na, I'm proud to stand at the door." Dear, good fellow! There he stood for seven winters, without a sixpence of pay; all from love, though at my request the working congregation gave him a silver watch. When he was dying from small pox, the same unselfish nature appeared. When asked if they would let me know, he replied: "There's nae man leevin' I like as I do him. I know he would come. But he shouldna' come on account of his wife and bairns, and so ye maunna' tell him!" I never saw him in his illness, never hearing of his danger till it was too late. (*Norman Macleod.*) *The hardened gamester*:—There was a profligate gamester, whose conversion was attempted by some honest monks, and they in order to break his heart for sin, put into his hands a fine picture of the crucifixion of Christ; but when they inquired what he was studying so intently in the picture, hoping his conversion was going forward, he replied, "I was examining whether the dice, with which the soldiers are casting lots for the garment, be like ours." This man too well resembles bad men in the ceremonies of religion, and their hearts guide their eyes to what nourish their vices, not to what would destroy them. (*Robert Robinson.*)

Ver. 25. **And they crucified Him.**—*The mystery of eternity*:—It was a death of horror; yet inflicted on Jesus, the Son of God, whose crime was mercy, whose mission here was one of redeeming love. I. ALL THE MYSTERIES OF HUMAN NATURE ARE HERE. 1. Sin. 2. Freewill. 3. Judgment. After these things must there not be some reckoning? II. THE MYSTERIES OF DIVINE REVELATION. 1. God's love. 2. God's meekness. 3. God's method of curing sin. By enduring its strokes He shames and vanquishes transgression. III. THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION. 1. Atonement. 2. Reconciliation. In the cross our love meets God's love, and we are reconciled. 3. A great inspiration. Ever since, the cross has been the pattern on the mount which holy lives have copied, and it has inspired love and sacrifice into countless hearts. IV. ALL MYSTERIES OF CONSOLATION. Had Christ evaded death, who would have dared to face it? He has changed Jordan's streams into still waters, and its banks to green pastures. Death fixed its sting in Christ, and left and lost it there. Thus Christ's cross is our Alpha and Omega, glowing with law and gospel, comfort and restraint, power and peace; it is the new Tree of life in the midst of life's wilderness. (*R. Glover.*) *Crucifixion of Christ*:—I. THE DEATH OF CRUCIFIXION. 1. Degrading. 2. Involving self-abasement on Christ's part. 3. Conformity in will on ours. II. THE PLACE OF CRUCIFIXION. 1. Common execution-ground for felons and outlaws. A place of desolation and horror. 2.

We have to bear His reproach. III. THE BLINDNESS OF HATE. They did all in their power against Him. But with what result? 1. That was the salvation hour for the whole world. 2. Jesus went into the realm of the dead, and revolutionized it, opening the door of Satan's stronghold and setting the captives free. 3. He has changed the aspect of death for ever—rolled away its sting. (*F. B. Proctor, M.A.*) *Our part in Christ's crucifixion:*—A traveller ascends a hill: having reached the summit and seen the view, he descends. As he descends he sees at the foot of the hill a little cottage from which cries of lamentation proceed. He enters. He sees the mangled form of a strong man surrounded by a weeping wife and children. He sympathizes. He pities. But when, on inquiry, he learns that a stone rolling down the hill put an end to that man's life, how different are his feelings—not sympathy, but shame; not pity, but anguish: for he remembers that he wilfully (for there was a notice up, warning him) hurled a boulder down the hill-side for his own gratification. (*G. Calthrop, D.D.*) *Whitfield and the execution:*—During one of the visits which the Rev. George Whitfield paid to Edinburgh, an unhappy man, who had forfeited his life to the offended laws of his country, was executed in that neighbourhood. Whitfield mingled with the crowd that was collected on the occasion, and was struck with the solemnity and decorum which were observable at so awful a scene. His appearance, however, drew the eyes of all upon him, and raised a variety of speculations as to the motives which had induced him to join the crowd. The next day being Sunday, he preached to a very large congregation in a field near the city; and in the course of his sermon he adverted to the event of the previous day. "I know, said he, "that many of you will find it difficult to reconcile my appearance yesterday with my character. Many of you, I know, will say that my moments would have been better employed in praying for the unhappy man, than in attending him to the fatal tree; and that, perhaps, curiosity was the only cause that converted me into a spectator on that occasion; but those who ascribe that uncharitable motive to me are mistaken. I went as an observer of human nature, and to see the effect that such an example would have on those who witnessed it. I watched the conduct of those who were present on that awful occasion, and I was highly pleased with their demeanour, which has given me a very favourable opinion of the Scottish nation. Your sympathy was visible on your countenances, particularly when the moment arrived that your unhappy fellow-creature was to close his eyes on this world for ever; and then you all, as if moved by one impulse, turned your heads aside and wept. Those tears were precious, and will be held in remembrance. How different it was when the Saviour of mankind was extended on the cross! The Jews, instead of sympathizing with the Divine Sufferer, gloried in His agony. They reviled Him with bitter words,—ay, with words more bitter than the gall and vinegar which they handed Him to drink. Not one, of all that witnessed His pains, turned his head aside, even in the last pang. Yes, my friends, there was *one*; that glorious luminary," pointing to the sun, "veiled his brightness, and travelled on his course in tenfold night." *Jesus crucified:*—I. WHY CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED. The sufferings of our Lord were not less because He was the Son of God. His was a Divine sorrow. Natures most sensitive to all that is holy and true, most keenly aware of all that is false, suffer sharpest torture when rudely invaded. These sufferings came upon Him from the first. To John the Baptist He appeared as the Lamb of God. Christ's sufferings were public and ignominious. It was in the broad, open day, and in the most public place, that He was crucified. His most sacred sufferings were made a public spectacle. It was a part of His degradation that He did not suffer alone. Two wretched criminals from the city were crucified with Him. For one moment He lost sight of His Father's face. In that hour He was linked to all that is worst and vilest in our common humanity. II. HOW CHRIST SUFFERED. Through it all He showed the faith of the Son of God—"My God." He suffered as a king might suffer. III. WHY CHRIST SUFFERED. He suffered in order that He might obey the Father. "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." He suffered to make known the Father. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He suffered that men might be redeemed. (*E. B. Mason.*) *The sufferings of Christ:*—Our Lord's sufferings were inexpressibly great and exquisitely painful. They may be said to have commenced at the very first moment He came in contact with our nature. He suffered in every possible way, and in every possible degree. He suffered in His body and in His soul; He suffered personally, and He suffered relatively. If we had been told that the Son of God was to come into our world, and to save us by His sufferings, we naturally would have

supposed that He was to die, and if to die, that He would die in a state of glory—if He were to fall, that He would fall in the field of war: and that, when He died, His praises would be shouted by the whole world. But how different a lot was assigned to the Saviour of sinners. Moreover, He suffered under the seal of the curse. Crucifixion was, among the Romans, the death awarded only to slaves, and by the Jews it was held in execration. Remember, too, that the influence of many, and of various characters, contributed to our Lord's last sufferings. Here, above all the rest, was to be seen the supreme hand of God allotting to Him the various parts of His suffering, and overruling those who had an instrumental hand in bringing it about. Then again, there are wonderful things to be seen in the manner and circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion. We see here God withdrawing, and yet God supporting; the Redeemer sinking under His sufferings, and, at the same time, rising triumphantly above them all. And, once more, we observe in the last sufferings of Christ a remarkable accomplishment of the Word of God. In Him all the ancient predictions of the Jewish prophets were fulfilled. So much in relation to the history of the death and last sufferings of our Saviour. Let these things be deeply impressed upon your minds. But beware of regarding them in the mere light of history. You may be acquainted with all the historical facts relating to our Lord's sufferings and death, and yet you may obtain no interest whatever in their benefits. They may float in your understanding without ever sinking into your heart, or influencing your conduct. Yet the bare history, the minute facts of the Saviour's life are of such importance that they ought to be known. Traced in their connection one with another, they throw a flood of light over the Bible. (*Thos. McCrie, D.D.*) *Lessons at the cross*:—I. We may learn something from the fact that our Lord was actually put to death like an ordinary criminal. All of the evangelists call attention to the circumstance of Christ's having been associated with two malefactors crucified at the same moment. Thus Pilate makes the two robbers intensify Jesus' shame in the eyes of the multitude. Each one of the common people who saw the sad spectacle, would inevitably draw the conclusion that Christ was the chief malefactor of them all. The terrible humiliation of the death which our Saviour suffered is thus made apparent. But the power of this scene is, singularly enough, deepened by this very particular. We call to mind as an illustration of such a statement the tale of Colonel Gardiner's conversion,—a tale so remarkable that it has remained historic for more than a hundred and fifty years. He was a gay military man, without any virtues to commend him, licentious, profane, and intemperate. One Sabbath evening he had been carousing in company with some roystering comrades; late at night he retired to his chamber. There his eye accidentally lighted upon a book entitled "The Christian Soldier; or, Heaven taken by storm." He took it up to ridicule it, but fell asleep while it lay in his hand. He dreamed: he thought he saw a prodigious blaze of light shining upon the volume; raising his eyes to know what was so suddenly bright overhead, he saw suspended in the air a vivid representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross; distinctly then he heard some one saying, "This I did for thee; what hast thou done for Me?" Struck to the very depth of his conscience, he was wakened instantly; at once, filled with contrition, as a sinner he sought peace and found pardon for his soul. II. We may learn, also, something from the record that this form of death was a fulfilment of prophecy. Mark says that when Jesus was "numbered with transgressors," the scripture "was fulfilled." III. We may learn, once more, something from the account given of the taunts which our Lord received. It would appear that all sorts of people joined in this sarcasm. The passers-by "railed," the rulers "derided," the soldiers "mocked;" even the thieves "reviled" Him. The utmost ingenuity in invention of jibes and epithets seemed to grow in demand that awful morning. The lesson here is plain; the patience of our Lord is simply wonderful. How He could bear all this contumely and reproach passes understanding. IV. In like manner, we may learn something from the sudden darkness which Jesus endured on that day. This darkness is to be understood as symbolical of God's horror of sin even when borne vicariously by an innocent Christ. How an impenitent man can hope to have audience with his Maker, so as to implore and obtain pardon, when even Christ was left in the darkness unpitied, passes all comprehension. V. We may likewise learn something from the grief of our blessed Lord when He found Himself deserted. VI. We may learn something, also, from our Lord's rejection of the draught proffered for His relief. What an example of self-sacrificing fidelity there is here for us! How little courage

we have when our day of trial comes on! Jesus had always been the embodiment and pattern of dutifulness and affection in His Father's sight; He was not going to shirk and shrink and fail now. He told His disciples once in simple sincerity just what was His purpose: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." VII. Finally, we may learn something from the cry which our Lord uttered as His "great voice" at the last. It was really a shout—a shout of triumph. There is great significance in the fact that not one of the inspired biographers says Jesus died; they all agree in an unusual form of speech which preserves the notion of His entire voluntariness in the surrender He made to death's power. He "yielded" His soul, He "gave up" His breath—such are the expressions; but the adversary did not gain the victory: it was Death that died in the conflict. What this cry was is told us in the Gospel of John—"It is finished!" His entire work was done. The Lord standeth sure now for the believer. It is recorded of a dying minister, one of the faithfullest of modern times, that in his last hour his son asked him, "Father, are you comfortable now?" And he answered, "Certainly: why not? for I lie most comfortably resting upon the finished work of my Lord Jesus Christ." (*C. S. Robinson.*)

Ver. 26. **The King of the Jews.**—*Jesus mocked and crucified:*—Jesus suffered and died under the forms of law. His execution was the result of a six-fold trial—three trials at the hands of the Jews, and three at the hands of the Romans. When Jesus was led to Golgotha bearing His cross, He had stood at the focal point of the world's best light and been pronounced guilty of death. For what offence? Pilate, as the custom was, with his own hand wrote the charge. "And the superscription of His accusation was written over, 'The King of the Jews.'" I. THE WORDS OF THE SUPERSCRIPTION CORRECTLY EXPRESS WHAT JESUS CLAIMED. He was condemned, not so much upon the testimony of the non-agreeing witnesses, as upon His own admission of this. He maintained it to the last. No terror from the sight of the cross could make Him withdraw the claim. He died resolutely claiming that He was King. II. THE WORDS OF THE SUPERSCRIPTION INDICATE THE CLAIM CHRIST MAKES TO-DAY. Eighteen centuries have not dimmed the title Pilate wrote. As decisively now as then He stands at every court, at every public and private tribunal, at the door of every man's heart, at every turn in our journey, before every thought of our mind, every choice of our will, every act of our life, and says, "I am King." If He be indeed King, His offices and attributes are kingly, and He has the right to demand that no one dim the lustre of His crown, or weaken the sway of His sceptre. It is sometimes said that it matters little what place we assign to Christ, or with what attributes we clothe Him, so that life is only upright, and our conduct such as He would not condemn. At His trial before the Jewish and Roman Courts it mattered much what place was allotted Him and what title He should be allowed to bear. He died rather than disown His royal title. Is He less mindful of it now in His exalted glory, and less regardful of those attributes which rightfully constitute His regal claim? If He be a King, His is the right to hold the name and place thereof. Who shall dare to put forth the hand and pluck one jewel from His diadem of omnipotence, or efface one ray from His halo of infinite wisdom? III. THE WORDS OF THE SUPERSCRIPTION INDICATE WHY SO MANY NOW REJECT CHRIST. Because He asserts kingly authority—the right to rule, and to control men's hearts and lives. Men exalt the compassion of Jesus; they praise His teachings; they laud the good deeds with which His life was full; they extol the lustre of His example; but when asked if they have placed within their heart a throne on which He may sit and reign, they falter. The title they apply to Him is burden-bearer rather than law-maker, benefactor rather than king, counsellor rather than judge, one to admire and extol rather than obey. IV. THE WORDS OF THE SUPERSCRIPTION INDICATE IN WHAT WAY CHRIST IS NOW TO BE RECEIVED. As the world's Redeemer Christ fulfils the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. To accept Him as the first is to believe and adopt His teachings; as the second, to rely for pardon and approach to God upon His atonement and intercession; as the third, to add to the others a surrender of the will to Him in loyalty and love, to instal Him as ruler of our hearts and lives. We thus receive Him as our Saviour and Lord; we at once believe in Him and submit to Him; we ask Him to both pardon us and control us; and while He justifies He takes us, with our cordial consent, into His own care for the direction and government of our life both here and hereafter. Henceforth the thought that Christ is King is welcome. A place is gladly made in the heart for His throne to

stand immutably. He is supreme. His will is law. (*P. B. Davis.*) *Christ the King of kings* :—When Mr. Dawson was preaching in South Lambeth on the offices of Christ, he presented Him as Prophet and Priest, and then as the King of saints. He marshalled patriarchs, kings, prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors of every age and clime, to place the insignia of royalty upon the head of the King of kings. The audience was wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement, and, as if waiting to hear the anthem peal out the coronation hymn, the preacher commenced singing "All hail the power of Jesus' Name." The audience, rising as one man, sang the hymn as perhaps it was never sung before. (*Foster's Cyclopædia.*)

Ver. 27. And with him they crucify two thieves.—*The malefactors* :—We propose to advert to THE FACT THAT JESUS ENDURED HIS LAST AGONIES BETWEEN TWO MALEFACTORS ; and then to notice THE RESPECTIVE CHARACTERS OF HIS COMPANIONS IN SUFFERING. I. Let us behold this strange sight : JESUS SUFFERING, DYING BETWEEN TWO MALEFACTORS ! What an amazing spectacle ! And it may have been without any specific design on the part of his oppressors that He was crucified in the midst, rather than on either side of His companions in suffering. But whether it was designed by His enemies or not, there can be no doubt that this circumstance constituted a part of our Lord's humiliation. A pre-eminence was thus assigned Him in ignominy and shame. This circumstance affords a striking fulfilment of prophecy ; then was accomplished the declaration of the prophet, "He was numbered with the transgressors :" and not only so, but it is also illustrative of the prophetic Scriptures, as it shows how, without any design whatever, and sometimes with the very opposite design, men may be fulfilling God's purposes, and accomplishing the predictions of His Word. That strange spectacle suggests the remark, how closely men may be allied by circumstances—how completely identified as to their lot on earth —between whom there is no resemblance in real character. Here are three persons suffering at the same time, and in the same place, the same cruel and ignominious death, and yet how perfectly dissimilar in point of character ! Outwardly their lot is the same ; but inwardly there is not the slightest resemblance between them. Heaven, earth, and hell, are brought into closest contact in the persons of those three sufferers. In the elevated character of Jesus we have all that is highest, purest, best in heaven ; in the obduracy, the profaneness, and the impiety of one of the malefactors, we have the most striking characteristic of the lost, who are hardened in sin beyond the possibility of repentance ; while in the contrition and prayerfulness of the other, we have what is peculiar to the good on earth. Often may the best and the worst be found in close connection here, sitting at the same able, or suffering on the same scaffold. How clearly does this indicate another state of being ! Under the government of one infinitely wise and just, as well as almighty, such disorders cannot be final ; there surely must come a time of separation, of adjustment ! II. We now proceed to consider THE CHARACTER OF THE MALEFACTORS WHO SUFFERED WITH OUR LORD. We have already intimated, that they differed essentially from each other ; we must, therefore, consider them separately. And, first, of THE IMPENITENT MALEFACTOR. The treatment which our Lord received at his hands is remarkable, and deserves our attention. He reviled the Redeemer, even on the cross. The conduct of this wretched man, in reviling the Redeemer on the cross, not only illustrates the power of example, but it is further instructive, as showing how near death a man may be, and yet how far from thinking seriously of any of the consequences of dying ; how far from any reflections suited to his solemn position and prospects ! How strikingly does this illustrate the folly of deferring to a dying hour, the all-important work of preparation for an eternal world ! Men often speak of the penitent thief, and expect, like him, in their last moments, to find repentance unto life ; but they rarely think of his companion who died unchanged ; and yet it is to be feared he is the representative of a far larger class than the other. Let us turn to a more pleasing theme—THE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT OF THE PENITENT THIEF ; in which there is much that is extraordinary, and deserving of our best attention. We may notice his deep sense of the solemnity of his situation. "He feared God," into whose immediate presence he was so soon to enter. Nothing can operate so powerfully, so constantly, in deterring from evil, and in imparting to the character the highest elevation and purity ; and those who do not realize this are exposed to every breath of temptation, and are guilty of neglecting their noblest and best interests. We notice, also, the free and spontaneous acknowledgment of his guilt. He felt and confessed that he and his companion deserved to die, and that they were justly exposed to the displeasure of God—"We, indeed, justly ; for

we receive the due reward of our deeds." How deep seemed to be his conviction of sin and demerit; and how free and full his acknowledgment of it! What a touching illustration we have here of the distinguishing grace of God! The two malefactors who suffered with our Lord were probably condemned for the same offence. They had been associates in sin, and now they were companions in shame, and suffering, and death; and yet, how the one is made to differ from the other! And this leads me to notice his knowledge of the character of Christ. "This man has done nothing amiss." Whence he derived his knowledge of the character of the Redeemer, it were in vain to inquire. It is not impossible that, in former days, he may have heard Jesus preach, and may have witnessed some of His stupendous miracles of power and of mercy. It is not improbable that, while on his way to the cross, and while hanging on it, he heard much of Jesus; for while the multitude reviled and reproached Him, there were some amongst them who bewailed and lamented Him; and these, doubtless, spoke of His worth; and it is certain that he that day saw much of the spirit and conduct of the Redeemer, as well as of His enemies; and no man could observe the conduct of Jesus with an impartial mind, without being convinced that He was a righteous person. Still more remarkable is the persuasion which he entertained and expressed of the dominion and spiritual power of the Redeemer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Strange that he could recognize a king in one whose environment was so humiliating. I cannot but remark, finally, his deep humility, which appears in his throwing himself so unreservedly on the compassion and grace of the Saviour. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." There is no presumption, no dictation, here. There is nothing of the Spirit of the two disciples who prayed that they might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom; but there is the deep humility which is always characteristic of genuine repentance. (*J. J. Davies.*)

Vers. 31, 32. **Let Christ, the King of Israel, now descend from the cross.**—*A glorious reproach*:—In the Divinest sense He could not save Himself. Physically, of course, He could have delivered Himself, "come down from the cross," and overwhelmed His enemies with destruction. But morally He could not, and His moral weakness here is His glory. He could not because He had promised to die, and He could not break His word. He could not, because the salvation of the world depended upon His death. The greatest man on earth is the man who cannot be unkind, who cannot tell a falsehood, who cannot do a dishonourable act or be guilty of a mean, selfish deed. The glory of the omnipotent God is, that "He cannot lie." These men, therefore, should have honoured the weakness that they acknowledged; adored it. Their very confession condemns their conduct. (*Homilist.*) *The heroism of the crucified*:—The testimony of an enemy is always valuable. What is it that they testify? First, that "He saved others:" and second, that in order to save others—nay, they testify not that, yet it is implied in the assertion they make—in order to save others He was content not to save Himself. Perhaps there never was a sentence, that was in one sense so radically false, and in another sense so sublimely true, as this particular sentence. Take it in the abstract, and it contains a most outrageous and glaring falsehood. There was not a moment from beginning to end of His human career in which our blessed Lord might not have turned back from shame and suffering. Yet while these words are false absolutely, they are none the less true relatively. Relatively to the work which our blessed Lord had undertaken, it was necessary that He Himself should not be saved. Because He was the Son, there was a certain blessed, constraining influence which rendered it, in one sense, necessary that He should go forward: but the necessity was not imposed upon Him from without, but accepted from within. It was the necessity of love; love, first and foremost to His Father, and then love to thee and to me. When you look over His history, how much there was to lead Him to exercise this power which all along He possessed. How natural it would have been if He had done so. He has scarcely come into the world before He begins to meet with the world's bad treatment. When He was born, they had no room for Him in the inn. Would it not have been most natural if our blessed Lord had even then thought better of it. "These rebel sinners, these thoughtless beings, I have come into the world to save—they have not even a place whereon to lay My infant form." As He grew up to be a young man, "He came unto His own:" His very brethren did not believe in Him. When He found that there was cold incredulity, an absence of sympathy in His own family circle, might He not reason-

ably have been expected to say, "Ah, well! this is not what I expected: I thought I should have been received with open arms; that every heart would have been full of sympathizing tenderness towards Me: but they have nothing but hard thoughts to think, and hard sayings to say of Me. Let them alone: from this time I give up the task: it is a hopeless one." We read "that He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." How wonderful a thing it was that Jesus Christ should have stood all this, and yet continued true to His purpose still. They laid the cross upon Him, and He faints on the way to Calvary. O, Son of God! Thy body has fainted! Weakness has done its work! Surely Thou wouldest be justified in giving in now! He might reasonably have said, "Flesh and blood will bear no more; My physical strength has absolutely yielded under the terrible shock; I can carry it no further." But no, no. He may faint; but He will not yield. Is it not wonderful? What made Him stand to His purpose? What gave Him that strange stability? Well, I can only say, "He loved us." Why He loved us, I do not know; but He loved us, and He loves us still; and it is because He loved us that "He saved others; Himself He could not save." But we are only skimming the surface. We must endeavour, if we can, to go deeper than this. There is a mystery of sorrow here. If we are to understand what is transpiring on yonder cross, we must endeavour to look within the veil; we must try to see things as God saw them. Yet it is an awful thing to think of that world descending in that gradually lowering scale into the very jaws of darkness and death. Where are we to find the hero of humanity? Who shall fight our battle for us? Who shall avail to lift that sinking world from the very depth of doom into which it is disappearing? No angel in heaven can do it. There is only One who can do it, and there is only one way in which He can do it. By a sovereign effort of His own will, Christ might have called a new world into existence; He might have blasted this world with judgment, and caused it to disappear altogether; but in doing so He would have been stultifying—shall I say?—His own designs; He would have been withdrawing from His own eternal purposes of mercy and love. Nay, nay; the ruinous world must be saved—How is it to be done? The Son of the Father's bosom steps into that ascending scale. Now look! He does it voluntarily. "I lay down My life," He says; "no man taketh it from Me; I give it; for it was His own free gift for man, for you, for me. What means this strange sense of desolation! Through all His human life, there was one thing that had sustained Him, one joy that had ever been present to Him. It was the joy of His Father's presence. He had lived in the light of His countenance. He had refreshed Himself with His fellowship. "He had drank of the brook by the way, and therefore He lifted up His head." But lo! the brook by the way seems to be dried up. It was no mere natural thirst that parched Emmanuel. That outward thirst was but the indication, the type, the symbol, of the inward thirst which burned within His soul. What means this strange sense of desolation? What is it? Is it the loss of human friends? No; something more than that. That is bad enough to bear; but it is something more than that. What is it? For the first time in His human life He finds Himself alone. The light is eclipsed; the sun has disappeared from His heaven, and the joy of existence is gone. He gazes round and round—east, and west, and north, and south. What is it? It is but a little matter that the outward sun was eclipsed; but there was a dread eclipse had taken place within the soul of Emmanuel, of which that outward darkness was but the type. What was it? Wherever sin goes it brings its own deadly shame of everlasting night along with it. And because He had taken the burden of the world's sin upon Him, therefore the shadows of night were resting upon Him now. One shrinks from following out these words, yet one can fancy—and it is no mere fancy—what must have passed through His heart. "I could have borne that My own people should treat Me thus: I could have borne that My own disciple should betray Me for thirty pence: I might have borne that Simon Peter should deny me with oaths and curses: I might have borne the outward pain, the bodily anguish: but O, My God, My God, Thy smile has been my light: Thy presence has been My joy. What have I done? How comes it to pass that instead of fellowship I have desolation; instead of Thy joyful company, Thy blessed society, I have this awful sense of loneliness? What is it? What means it?" "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What did it all mean? It meant that "He saved others:" and because "He saved others, Himself He could not save:" and so the scale that bore the Christ descended into the deepest darkness, and the scale that bore a ruined world began to rise, and to rise. Lo! the gloom is settled on that, and the sunlight on this: that, is sinking down into the darkness of

death; this, is rising into the glories of life. The angels are veiling their faces in horror as they behold the Son of God disappear beneath the cloud: the sons of God are shouting in triumph as they behold a ransomed world rising into the very sunlight of the Divine smile, the curse revoked, the doom recalled, the gates of everlasting life opened to a ruined world. So He carried it through,—that wonderful enterprise—through to the bitter end: and so He drank the cup to the last drop, and He paid the ransom to the last penny, sinner, for thee, and for me. I want to ask you, Have you accepted that which He has purchased at such a price? What is it that renders sin inexcusable? Just this glorious fact we are gazing at. Your condemnation, my friend, lies in this: that at the cost of such indescribable agony as we shall never know, until we get to the other side: and not even then,—Christ has bought everlasting life for you, and you have refused to accept it. To-night, that pierced hand seems to hold it out for you. It seems as though He pleaded with you; as if He were saying, "Now, my dear brother, I have saved, not Myself, that I might save thee: I turned not my face from shame and spitting, that thy face might be irradiated with Divine glory: I wore that crown of thorns that thou mightest wear the crown of glory: I carried that cross that thou mightest sway the sceptre: I hung in agony that thou mightest sit in triumph: I fathomed the depth that thou mightest rise to the height. Men! do you think there is anything manly in trampling such love as that under your feet? Women! do you think there is anything womanlike in turning your back upon such love as that? Oh, let us be ashamed of ourselves to-night, that we have sinned against that love so long! (*W. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *The demand of sinners unreasonable*:—These words are a demand that He would prove His claims to the Messiahship by coming down from the cross, and a promise that, if He would do this, they would receive Him as the Messiah. It strikes us at once that this demand is unreasonable, even to effrontery. I. YOU MAKE DEMANDS WHICH ARE UNREASONABLE, BECAUSE COMPLIANCE WITH THEM WOULD DEFEAT THE DIVINE PLAN OF REDEMPTION. This was one characteristic of the unreasonable demand of the Pharisees. If Christ had come down from the cross, the work of redemption would never have been finished. Similar demands are often made by ungodly men—demands that Christ would come down from the cross—that He would save them in some other way than by His atoning sacrifice, and His blood. II. YOUR DEMANDS ARE UNREASONABLE, BECAUSE YOU CREATE YOURSELVES THE VERY DIFFICULTIES WHICH YOU CLAIM TO HAVE REMOVED. Jesus was moving among the Jews, working the most convincing miracles. They seized Him, and nailed Him to the cross: then they demanded that He should undo what their own malice had done—"Come down from the cross, and we will believe." A similar unreasonableness belongs to many of your demands. Is it not your own hand that has plunged your soul into this flood of worldliness, &c.? With what reason can you urge, as your apology for inaction, the chains which your own hands have fastened on your souls? III. DEMANDS ARE UNREASONABLE WHICH REQUIRE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION, WHEN SUFFICIENT HAS BEEN ALREADY GIVEN. Unreasonableness of this kind characterized the demand of the Pharisees. They had seen the Saviour's miracles, &c. It was unreasonable in them to propose that, if a single miracle should be added to the multitude already given, they would be ready to receive Jesus as the Christ. Precisely similar is the unreasonableness of many of your demands. You say, "If I had lived in Christ's day, and had seen His miracles, I should have been His disciple. Other demands exhibit the same unreasonableness. The reason most commonly given for indifference to religion, is the inconsistency of professors. I presume every one of you knows some whom he acknowledges as real Christians. You are no stranger to these triumphs of the cross, to these demonstrations of its Divine power. And yet you plead that, because A, B, and C do not live consistently with their profession, you will neglect religion, and treat it as if it were a worthless imposture. Similar are all the reasons for neglecting religion, founded on its mysteries. If men never engaged in worldly business till all who engage in it manage it wisely, honestly, and successfully; if they never acted except on certainty—never acted till everything dark was cleared up, and every objection removed, they would never act at all. IV. IT IS UNREASONABLE TO DEMAND MORE, WHEN GOD HAS ALREADY DONE SO MUCH IN YOUR BEHALF, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU HAVE NOT MADE IMPROVEMENT OF WHAT HE HAS DONE. The Jews might have known, from the ancient prophecies, that Christ was to suffer an ignominious death. It was unreasonable. V. YOUR DEMANDS ARE UNREASONABLE, BECAUSE GOD HAS PROVED IT BY TESTING THEM. YOU HAVE MADE SIMILAR DEMANDS BEFORE; GOD HAS CONDESCENDED TO COMPLY WITH THEM, AND YET YOU DID NOT,

EVEN THEN, KEEP THE PROMISES YOU HAD MADE. Time and again had the Pharisees asked Jesus to give them a sign that they might see and believe. Signs He had given them, the most stupendous and convincing; yet they were not more ready to receive Him than before. And even when He rose from the dead, they still rejected Him. VI. YOUR DEMANDS ARE UNREASONABLE, BECAUSE, IN THE VERY ACT OF MAKING THEM, YOU ADMIT WHAT JUSTIFIES YOUR CONDEMNATION. The Pharisees said, "He saved others." They admitted that He had wrought miracles. Thus, by the very justification which they attempted, they condemned themselves. So it is with you. Whatever reason you may give for neglecting religion, you admit its Divine authority, its reality, and importance. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." VII. YOUR DEMANDS AND APOLOGIES ARE UNREASONABLE, BECAUSE THEY LAY THE BLAME OF YOUR CONTINUED IMPENITENCE ON GOD. (*S. Harris.*) *The sight of the Saviour's suffering* :—Do you not know that this simple story of a Saviour's kindness is to redeem all nations? The hard heart of this world's obduracy is to be broken before that story. There is in Antwerp, Belgium, one of the most remarkable pictures I ever saw. It is "The Descent of Christ from the Cross." It is one of Rubens' pictures. No man can stand and look at that "Descent from the Cross," as Rubens pictured it, without having his eyes flooded with tears, if he have any sensibility at all. It is an overmastering picture—one that stuns you, and staggers you, and haunts your dreams. One afternoon a man stood in that cathedral looking at Reubens' "Descent from the Cross." He was all absorbed in that scene of a Saviour's sufferings when the janitor came in and said: "It is time to close up the cathedral for the night. I wish you would depart." The pilgrim, looking at that "Descent from the Cross," turned around to the janitor and said: "No, no; not yet. Wait until they get Him down." O, it is the story of a Saviour's suffering kindness that is to capture the world. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 33. **There was darkness over the whole land.**—*The three hours' darkness* :—What a call must that mid-day midnight have been to the careless! They knew not that the Son of God was among them; nor that He was working out human redemption. The grandest hour in all history seemed likely to pass by unheeded, when suddenly night hastened from her chambers and usurped the day. Every one asked his fellow, "What means this darkness?" Business stood still: the plough stayed in mid-furrow, and the axe paused uplifted. There was a halt in the caravan of life. Men were startled, and hushed into silence. I. LET US VIEW THIS DARKNESS AS A MIRACLE WHICH AMAZES US. Abundant reason for a miracle at this time. The unusual in lower nature is made to consort with the unusual in the dealings of nature's Lord. The sun darkened at noon is a fit accompaniment of the death of Jesus. II. LET US REGARD THIS DARKNESS AS A VEIL WHICH CONCEALS. 1. A concealment for guilty enemies. 2. A sacred concealment for the blessed Person of our Divine Lord. The angels found for their King a pavilion of thick clouds, in the which His Majesty might be sheltered in its hour of misery. 3. The Passion is a great mystery, into which we cannot pry. 4. The powers of darkness will always endeavour to conceal the cross of Christ. III. LET US CONSIDER THIS DARKNESS AS A SYMBOL WHICH INSTRUCTS. The veil falls down and conceals; but, at the same time, as an emblem it reveals. 1. It is the symbol of the wrath of God which fell on those who slew His only-begotten son. 2. It tells us what our Lord Jesus Christ suffered. 3. It shows us what it was that Jesus was battling with—darkness. IV. A PROPHETICAL DISPLAY OF SYMPATHY. 1. All lights are dim when Christ shines not. 2. See the dependence of all creation on Christ. 3. If under a cloud, take comfort from the thought that Jesus also was once there. Feel after Him. Lean on Him. He will hold you up. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Total eclipse of the sun* :—A pious astronomer, in describing an eclipse which he witnessed in Norway, says: "I watched the instantaneous extinction of light, and saw the glorious scene on which I had been gazing turned into darkness. All the horizon seemed to speak of terror, death, and judgment; and overhead sat, not the clear flood of light which a starry night sends down, but there hung over me dark and leaden blackness, which seemed as if it would crush me into the earth. And as I beheld it I thought, How miserable is the soul to whom Christ is eclipsed! The thought was answered by a voice; for a fierce and powerful sea-bird which had been swooping around us, apparently infuriated at our intrusion on its domain, poured out a scream of despairing agony when it was surprised in the darkness." What, then, will be the fearful surprise, when the lost soul finds itself in that world "where hope, withering, flees, and mercy sighs, Farewell!" (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 34. **My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**—*Forsaken of God:*—One thing we know, He was alone; He had reached the climax of that loneliness in which His whole earthly work had been carried on. It is hardly possible for us to understand the nature of the solitude of the life of Christ. "It was not the solitude of the hermit or monk; He ever lived among his fellow-men; not the solitude of pride, sullenly refusing all sympathy and aid; not the solitude of selfishness, creating around its icy centre a cold, bleak, barren wilderness; not the solitude of sickly sentimentality, for ever crying out that it can find no one to understand or appreciate; but the solitude of a pure, holy, heavenly spirit, into all whose deeper thoughts there was not a single human being near Him, or around Him, who could enter; with all whose deeper feelings there was not one who could sympathize; whose truest, deepest motives, ends, and objects, in living and dying as He did, not one could comprehend. Spiritually, and all throughout, the loneliest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ." (Hanna.) Yet there were times when this loneliness deepened on His soul. Again and again, when in this place or that, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." But one other stage was reached of yet more utter solitude when, in the darkness of that most mysterious noonday that veiled the scene of Calvary, and in the grosser darkness of unfathomable anguish that enveloped the human soul of Jesus, He trod the winepress of the wrath and justice of God alone, and entered that last stage of solitude in which He could no longer say, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me," but uttered that bitter cry—a cry from the darkest, deepest, dreariest loneliness into which a pure and holy spirit ever passed—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We may in reverence consider three causes which seem to have produced this element of the Sacred Passion. The first cause of this awful desolation was the fact of the accumulated sin of the whole world, from the disobedience of Eden down to the last intention of sin that shall be disturbed by the archangel's trumpet, resting upon one Human Soul, to whom the faintest shadow of sin was intolerable. The second cause was the gathering of the hosts of darkness, vanquished in the wilderness, and in the garden, and in many of the souls they had possessed, but now, rallied and marshalled, and massed for one last supreme effort, hurling themselves with the fury of despair and hate upon their Vanquisher. The third cause was the hiding of the Father's face. He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity could not look even upon His beloved Son, when deluged thns in our sin. Beloved, out of the depths of this most bitter woe of the passion of Jesus there comes some solid comfort for us. He endured that utter loneliness that we might never be alone. (*Henry S. Miles, M.A.*) *Eclipse of the face of God:*—The black miphitic cloud of a world's sin came between God and Christ. Necessarily there was an eclipse of the face of God. An eclipse of the sun is caused, as you are all aware, by that opaque body the moon coming between the earth and it. That preternatural darkness of which we read in the preceding verse, was caused by some thick veil of sulphureous clouds being drawn across the face of the sun—the sun veiling his face, that he might not witness the perpetration of the blackest crime ever perpetrated on even our sin-cursed earth—a crime that made even incarnate nature shudder to its innermost core. So when this opaque body of our sins came between Christ and God, when that dark sulphureous cloud of a world's sins enwrapped the being of Christ like some great funereal pall, necessarily there was an eclipse of the loving face of God, who is light. Necessarily there was, on the part of Christ, spiritual darkness, and desertion, and loneliness—a darkness, and desertion, and loneliness which found expression in the wailing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (*J. Black.*) *The presence of God the support of the martyrs:*—What was it that enabled Ignatius, waiting to be thrown to the lions, to say—"Let me be food for the wild beasts, if only God be glorified;" that enabled the aged Polycarp, the flames lapping his body, to cry—"I thank Thee, O Father, that Thou hast numbered me among the martyrs;" that enabled Latimer, under the same circumstances, to say—"Be of good cheer, Brother Ridley"—What but the feeling of His nearness to them; the thought of His approving smile; and that though they were hated and persecuted by men, they were not forsaken of God. But Christ, in His hour of deepest need—He is robbed of that all and alone sufficient help. When He most needs the presence of God, just then God forsakes Him. Friends! we are here brought face to face with a great mystery. Christ Himself feels that. His words, if they mean anything, mean that. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (*Ibid.*) *The cry of the forsaken one:*—I. And first, let us not forget that THIS CRY WAS A PANG

PUT INTO OLD TESTAMENT WORDS. To be perfectly fair in any consideration of the phase of anguish expressed by them, we must look to the twenty-second Psalm, where the words first of all occur. Let us read a verse or two of the Psalm. Take vers. 7, 8, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him;" almost the very cry of the railing passers by. Verse sixteen is yet more remarkable in its application: "They pierced my hands and my feet." Equally so is the eighteenth verse: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." If the Psalm had been written after the occurrences of that day, it might almost have been given as an historical record of them in these particulars. But I want you to think of the possibility—nay, extreme probability—that while our Lord's mind in that dark hour rested upon these portions of the Psalm, it would also recall other portions of it. For mark how from the cry of the twenty-first verse there arises a strong hope: "Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." From these words forth there is no longer any sense of desolation. "For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard." Now, I say, we ought to remember this in our endeavour to interpret the cry. Heavy enough indeed, with all the suffering it involved, was the hand of God that day as it rested upon the patient Sufferer; and life was ebbing out even while the cry came forth. And yet surely the blessed Saviour was not long bereft of consolation. Did He cling only to the first cry of the Psalm? Was this all? Was there no mounting aloft into the blessed heights of faith and of hope and of praise? I would believe there was; and this, though it may not deprive the scene of all its mysteriousness, helps me somewhat to apprehend its significance, which, as I have already intimated, is about all I thought we could attempt to do—all we purposed to attempt. II. Next, we will view the words AS THE REVELATION OF A GREAT ANGUISH. And yet, when we began to think a little more about this, Christ's sense of utter desertion and loneliness, in the light especially of His relation to our race as its true head and High Priest; we should find ourselves ready to admit some sort of a congruousness in the fact. For we know that this experience, a sense of God-desertion, is one of the most real of men's troubles. And there seems a fitness in the ordination of the Redemptive scheme which allows a place for this sense of God-desertion in those sufferings by which that Redemption was secured and ratified. So far as we have any knowledge of Christ's inner experience during the years before, we fail to discern any trace of this God-desertion. On the contrary, it was the one sweetness and light of His life, even when He thought and told of the coming desertion of His chosen ones, that still amid all circumstances the Father was with Him. It was not always so in the case of the Old Testament saints and worthies. They had, as we have, intervals, when the clear shining of the Divine face is interfered with, and the summer of the soul ceases awhile. When God is nigh, when we feel able to say, "The Lord is at my right hand," we can add, "I shall not be greatly moved." But up comes the mist from the rolling sea of passion and self-will and pride and human weaknesses, and we find that the light of our life is awhile quenched. Many days we may have lost sight of land and sun and star, and God appears to hide Himself, until the soul cries out passionately, "Where is thy God—where?" And the tempter echoes and re-echoes the dreary desolate cry, "Where, ah, where indeed?" And any one who has ever found himself in such darkness knows that it is most profound; he who has felt such a distance between God and him knows it is most terrible and dreary. He who perfectly fulfilled the Eternal Will, and who was at that very moment fulfilling its more mysterious ordinations, cannot wholly escape this bitterness. And yet, I say, never was Christ more truly fulfilling the Divine Will than now. Never was the Father more delighted in the blessed Son than now. Why, it was the suffering of a perfect sacrifice. It was a true self-offering. If Christ had been dragged to this tree against His will, if Christ had tried to escape from the hands of his tormentors, it would have been different. O, my brethren, instead of trying to build upon this cry of the Saviour's any strange theory, let us rather think how much of real and abiding comfort we may draw from it. You and I may often have had to pass through the gloomy way unrelieved by any of heaven's sunshine. It may seem to us that everything has conspired against us, and that the very heavens are sealed against our cry. Our prayers may seem to return to us unanswered. All may

appear to be lost, even God. Let us but at such moments look at the blessed Christ. Let us think how God put His best beloved One through the hottest fires and the most searching tests. He knew once what it was to have the heavens above Him darkened. And yet the Eternal Father loved Him. May He not love you too? III. And now we come to these words from another point of view. We have seen in them the utterance of a great anguish; let us look at them as the expression of A CLINGING FAITH AND LOVE. You will perceive why we called attention to the twenty-second Psalm. That Psalm shows us one who felt himself forsaken, and who was by no means actually forsaken; and the words used by Christ may serve also to show us how very close Christ was to the Eternal heart when He uttered them. "My God"—O, if we can only say this, "My God." It matters little what we may say afterward. If we can only say "My God," the darkness will not long brood upon our souls. They are words of faith and love, which, when truly spoken, must bring in the daylight. In the battle of the Christian faith and life, the victory is more than half won when we can say, "My God." No soul that is lost can say, "My God." I turn again to the real comfort wrapped up within the very words which expressed the Saviour's agony. How often is this the case. The very words by which we express our sorrow, our trouble, are themselves often charged with deep and true solace and refreshment. We know not how long this cloud rested over the Saviour. I do not think it could be for long. Presently, we know, the Father was looking upon Him with shining, unveiled face; for calmly and restfully He breathed forth the dying sigh of thousands since, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (*C. J. Proctor, B.A.*) *Jesus, throwing Himself into the bosom of His Father, implores consolation:*—This Scripture leads our thoughts to the desolation of our Jesus; to inquiry after the cause; and to the exclamation that passed from His lips, through the intense suffering of His heart. I. FIRST, THE DESOLATION OF JESUS. It was not unforeseen. With regard to the desolation of Him, whose love undertook our cause; that we may understand the meaning of the term He used, it becomes us to enter on a clear, a Scriptural view of His person, and of the intimate relation which subsisted between the Father and Himself. He was emphatically "the Word," that was "in the beginning," eternal, before all time, before the glowing sun came forth from his chamber, as a bridegroom, and rejoiced as a giant to run his course. He "was with God"—distinct in His Person; and He "was God"—self-existent in nature or essence. "All things were made by Him;" then He is the mighty Creator of the universe, of which we form an insignificant part; and "without Him was not anything made that was made." As to the nature, then, of this forsaking, of which the lips of Jesus utter lamentation, it is clear, to him who receives the word of Scripture in simplicity, that there was no desertion of His humanity by the Word. This Eternal Word took His human flesh and reasonable soul into union with itself; and that union was never dissolved. By this oneness, the body never saw corruption, although, after death, it was laid in Joseph's tomb: nor was it separated from the reasonable soul in Paradise. By this Godhead body and soul were re-united on the morning of the Resurrection; that union is preserved to the present, and will be after that wondrous prediction shall be accomplished, that all things having been subdued unto Him, the Son, the Mediator, the ancient Daysman, shall Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him; that God may be all in all. We are instructed likewise by Holy Scripture, as to the nature of that intimate and mysterious relationship that subsisted between the Father and the Son, co-equal, co-eternal. What testimony can be plainer than the words of Christ Jesus, written in St. John x. 37, 38? "If I do not," says He, "the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." He entreats, with an earnestness His own, that all the children of faith may be one: as "Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." If the Word forsook not the humanity, it follows that the Father essentially deserted not the same, because the Father and the Son are One in nature, eternally, inseparably. Hence, then, the question, What are we to understand by the complaint of being forsaken? That He was bereft of the countenance, the comforts, the consolations of the Father, in which He had rejoiced. II. WE HAVE VIEWED THE FIRST PART OF OUR SUBJECT, NAMELY, CHRIST FORSAKEN; AND COME TO THE CAUSE, WHICH WAS ASKED BY HIS LIPS. The Father gives the answer to this interrogation—"Why?" Because you have become the Bondsman of sinners, have consented to stand in their stead; therefore, as at your hands, I look for a continual and perfect obedience to the law

in its exceeding breadth, so, in your person, I exact the penalty to its utmost tittle." Here Isaiah, who seems to look upon the scene before us: "the Lord hath lain on Him the iniquity of us all. Be attentive to Paul: "He made Him to be sin for us," therefore to bleed and die, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Little did the Jews imagine, when they exulted in the ignominy of Jesus, who was without sin, and lived without guile, that in gratifying their malice, they were but dealing the second blow; that the first was dealt by a secret, powerful, invisible hand; yet such was the fact, according to the testimony of prophets and apostles. St. Peter, addressing the men of Israel at Jerusalem concerning Israel, says, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"—there is the secret purpose—"ye have taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain;" there is the resulting blow. In a Psalm of the passion (lxix. 26) we read, "They persecute Him" (the second blow), whom Thou hast smitten" (the first stroke), "and they talk to the grief of those whom Thou hast wounded." That secret blow was the fruit of sin, which covered perfect innocence with confusion. Thus Jesus speaks, in the seventh verse, "Shame hath covered My face." "Why?" As there was no impatience under the blow, there was no ignorance of the cause. Jesus asks, not for knowledge, but to call our notice to the fearful cause. Himself gives the answer, as we have it in the Vulgate. "Far from My deliverance is the matter of My sins." III. THIRDLY, WE LOOK AT THE EXCLAMATION THAT PASSED THROUGH HIS LIPS, ARISING FROM THE INTENSE SUFFERING OF THE HEART. Jesus at this time does not simply speak; and who can imagine the bitterness of that cry — it pierced the heavens — He cried — "He cried with a loud voice." It before was the sweet word "Father," but not so now. Is He forsaken? why should we wonder at the hiding of Heaven's countenance? Jesus in His agony, inquires, "Why?" Is it not our wisdom to say, "Is there not a cause?"—to search it out and expose our sore to the pitying eye of a Father? Jesus was made desolate by that Father, that we might be supported, comforted, delivered. Jesus instructs us for a dying hour: He turns from creatures, and occupies Himself with God. Be this our happiness, as it is our privilege; and when heart and flesh both fail, the Lord will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever. (*Thomas Ward, M.A.*)

Ver. 36. **A sponge full of vinegar.**—*The acids of life:*—They go to a cup of vinegar, and soak a sponge in it, and put it on a stick of hyssop, and then press it against the hot lips of Christ. You say the wine was an anæsthetic, and intended to relieve or deaden the pain. But the vinegar was an insult. I am disposed to adopt the theory of the old English commentators, who believed that instead of its being an opiate to soothe, it was vinegar to insult. Malaga and Burgundy for grand dukes and duchesses, and costly wines from royal vats for bloated imperials—but stinging acids for a dying Christ. He took the vinegar! In some lives the saccharine seems to predominate. Life is sunshine on a bank of flowers. A thousand hands to clap approval. In December or in January, looking across their table, they see all their family present. Health rubicund. Skies flamboyant. Days resilient. But in a great many cases there are not so many sugars as acids. The annoyances, and the vexations, and the disappointments of life overpower the successes. There is a gravel in almost every shoe. An Arabian legend says that there was a worm in Solomon's staff, gnawing its strength away; and there is a weak spot in every earthly support that a man leans on. King George of England forgot all the grandeurs of his throne because, one day in an interview, Beau Brummell called him by his first name, and addressed him as a servant, crying: "George, ring the bell!" Miss Langdon, honoured all the world over for her poetic genius, is so worried with the evil reports set afloat regarding her that she is found dead with an empty bottle of prussic acid in her hand. Goldsmith said that his life was a wretched being, and that all that want and discontent could bring to it had been brought and cries out: "What, then, is there formidable in a gaol?" Corregio's fine painting is hung up for a tavern sign. Hogarth cannot sell his best paintings, except through a raffle. Andrew Delsart makes the great fresco in the Church of the Annunciata at Florence, and gets for pay a sack of corn; and there are annoyances and vexations in high places as well as in low places, showing that in a great many lives the sours are greater than the sweets. "When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar." It is absurd to suppose that a man who has always been well can sympathize with those who are sick, or that one who has always been honoured can appreciate the sorrow of those who are despised, or that one who

has been born to a great fortune can understand the distress and the straits of those who are destitute. The fact that Christ Himself took the vinegar makes Him able to sympathize to-day and for ever with all those whose cup is filled with sharp acids of this life. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 37. **And Jesus cried with a loud voice.**—*Christ died as a substitute*:—In one sense, Jesus died as our substitute. Now, what is a substitute. A substitute is one who suffers for or instead of another. A schoolboy feeble of body was brought up to the master's desk for breaking one of the laws of the school. In those days, the punishment at school was something like that which is given to garrotters in our prisons. The poor boy took off his clothes, and stood there with his thin body and his bones almost pushing through his skin. It was a pitiable sight, so poor and thin and wretched was that body! There was a great hush in the school! Then one of the leading boys sprang up with tears in his eyes, and in a moment almost tore his clothes from his back, and, while every boy wept, he stood before the master, saying, "Please, sir, he cannot bear it; I will take his punishment." (*W. Birch.*) *The death of death*:—Last winter, Jacob, a native assistant of mine, was summoned to his rest. On the day before his death, having been asked how he felt, he replied, "I shall not rise from this bed again. I am called hence to the Lord." He then raised his arm, stretched it out, and said, "Look! my arm is nothing but bones and skin; it is the same with my earthly body. The flesh is dead within me; my desire is fixed on my heavenly country—that country where I shall behold Him who loves me, and whom I love. Yes, I shall see Him shortly." When asked whether he feared death, "Oh, no," he answered, "how can I love Christ and fear death? How can death affect me? The death of Christ was the death of Death!" (*J. Kogel, Greenland.*) *Vicarious dying*:—In the recent floods in France, at Castle-zarazin, while the house was being swept away, the mother, in agony to save her two children, put them in a bread tray and floated the bread tray off upon the waves; but the tray with the two children had gone but a short distance when it struck a tree and capsized. The mother started out for the place. She got there. She took the two children. She somehow clambered up into the tree with them, and held on to a branch. But while hanging there the branch began to crack, and she knew it could not long hold the three, and so she wrapped up her little ones as well as she could, and she tied them fast to the branch, and then she kissed the darlings good-bye, and fell backward into the wave and died, while they lived and were recovered. What do you think of that? O! you say: "Bravo! bravo! That was just like a mother to do that;" but what do you say when I tell you that these tides of sin and death are bearing away the race, and that Jesus Christ swims through the flood, and He comes to us to-night to lift us out and to fasten us to the tree of life, and then having given us the kiss of pardon and peace, falls back Himself in the billows of death, dying Himself that we might live. O! the sacrifice of the Son of God! Bleeding Jesus, let me embrace Thee now! (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 38. And the veil of the temple was rent.—*The rent veil*:—If you look into the account of the arrangements and furniture of the Jewish temple, you will find that there were two veils—the one at the entrance into the holy place; the other between the holy place, or the sanctuary, and the most holy, or the holy of holies. This latter is called by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "the second veil;" and its position is thus described by him—"After the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all;" for therein, as the apostle goes on to enumerate, were deposited the most sacred of those mystic articles, which were appropriated to the rites of the Jewish religion. The second veil is always considered to have been that which was rent in twain at the death of our Lord; so that the thing done through the rending; was the throwing open that heretofore invisible and inaccessible place, the holy of holies. Invisible and inaccessible, forasmuch as no one but the High Priest was ever permitted to pass the veil, and he but once in the year, on the great day of atonement. On that day—all whose ceremonies and sacrifices were so wondrously significative, representing as with the accuracy of history rather than of prophecy, the expiatory work of the Lord our Redeemer—it was ordered that the High Priest having slain certain victims, should carry the blood within the veil, that he might therewith sprinkle the mercy seat. There is no debate that in performing this, the High Priest was a type of Christ in His office of intercessor; for Christ after suffering without the camp, offering Himself up as a sin-offering to the Almighty, was to pass within the veil—to enter, that is, into the immediate presence

of God in heaven—carrying with Him His own blood, that He might plead its virtue on behalf of His church. Here is the office which Christ still discharges as Mediator—He died but once, for one offering sufficed to make expiation for the sins of the whole world, but He ever liveth to present the merits of His oblation, and through it to act in heaven as the advocate of those for whom He submitted to the death of the cross. But we can perhaps scarcely say, that the rending of the veil had reference to Christ's entrance on His office of intercessor, except that He may thus have shown that He had opened the way into the holy of holies, and had obtained a right to enter as our advocate. Until He had completed on the cross the redemption of the world, He could not become an intercessor with the Father: He must have blood wherewith to sprinkle the mercy-seat; and therefore as the rent rocks and opened graves proclaimed Him victorious in death, so may the riven veil have declared that He had won for Himself an access into heavenly places, there to perpetuate the work which had been wrought out on Calvary. And there are other intimations which may, perhaps, have been conveyed by the occurrence in question. It is probable, for example, that the abolition of the Mosaic economy was hereby figuratively taught. What could be more significative of a change of dispensation, than that, at the moment of Christ's death, there should have been miraculously destroyed the covering which had heretofore shrouded the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; those majestic and mysterious things which looked upon by any but the High Priest, demanded the death of the presumptuous beholder? The priests may have been in the holy place, when suddenly an invisible hand tore in twain the veil, within which they had never dared to gaze, and revealed those symbols of divinity which gave an awful sacredness to the unapproached shrine. What thought they? How felt they? If the flashing light from characters traced by an unseen hand, spread consternation through the halls of the Assyrian, and caused the monarch to tremble, though girt round with guards, what effect should have been wrought on the ministering priests by the sudden shining of all that bright gold which had long been hidden from the human eye, and in whose deep rich lustres Deity might be said to have imaged His presence? Did they turn and flee, as if fearing that Jehovah was about to come forth from the tremendous solitude, and purify His temple; or did they dare to stand and look at the uncovered shrine, amazed that they might behold, and not be instantly struck dead? Nay, I know not what may have been the feelings of the officiating priests at this strange, this fearful visitation of the holy of holies; but they knew what was then transacting on Calvary. Their voices had been loud in demanding the death of Jesus of Nazareth; and had they not been given up to a judicial blindness—a blindness justly awarded them for their long rejection of light—they could scarcely have resisted the surpassing evidence, that the Mosaic economy was now to pass by. Had, indeed, the expiring groan of Jesus of Nazareth rent asunder the veil of the temple, and thus made common things of those which for ages had been fearfully sacred? O, then, ye priests, ye ought to learn that your office is at an end; O quench the fires on your altars; O drive the sacrificial victims from your courts; and whilst the earth yet trembles, and appalling and portentous things tell out the majesty of your crucified King, fall down before Him whom ye have crucified and slain, and learn, as ye may learn, the most amazing thing of all, that He is compassionate enough to love His enemies, and powerful enough to save His murderers. Yes, learn that He has indeed come to destroy the law, but only that He might substitute for it a better covenant; for all that is taught you by the fact, that immediately on His giving up the ghost, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." But we do not thus exactly bring home to ourselves the type of the rent veil, or give it part in that continuous instruction which we look for in the prodigies which attended Christ's death. You will remember that not only was there a very quick rending of the veil, but that the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after His resurrection and appeared unto many. The quaking of the earth was as much as to tell us that Satan's dominion was overthrown—that dominion of which the earth was the seat. The solid globe shook to its centre, indicating the falling to ruin of that empire of evil which had been erected upon it. And the rocks were rent; mountains had been piled up between God and man; the barrier was as that of the everlasting hills; but the Redeemer in dying broke into shivers the vast impediment, and reconciled the world to its Creator. But the parable was yet more explicit—the graves were opened. It had been through apostasy that death had entered the world; it was

one of the most fearful and comprehensive of the consequences of sin; and, therefore was its abolition to be looked for, as one of the chief results of the interference of a surety. Hence the opening of the graves. In dying, Christ destroyed death; and therefore did the sepulchres at once throw open their gloomy doors, as though in confession that they had no longer right to hold fast their prey. And if the bars are loosened, and the prison gates opened, may not the captives march instantly forth? What can longer hinder the emancipation of the dead? Yet here there is a pause; a delay intervenes; and the evangelist specially notes that it was after the resurrection of Jesus, that many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves. Does not this figuratively teach that Christ was to be raised again for our justification: that although the sacrifice of the cross had perfected our redemption, in respect of God shaking the earth, rending the rocks, opening the graves, there yet remained a further act to complete it towards us? Resurrection must follow on death, otherwise would the prison be opened, and yet the prisoner not discharged. As we gaze on the dying Redeemer, and listen to the piteous exclamation which marks how He is deserted of the Father, we are tempted to doubt whether it be indeed as a conqueror that He departs from this earth, whether He has indeed vanquished our enemies and those of God, as He bows His head and gives up the ghost. But soon is heard a sound as of victory. Proof after proof crowds in upon us, that whatsoever was undertaken has been accomplished, whatsoever we needed been obtained. First, there are general symbols—a trembling earth and riven rocks. Creation has recognized her Maker in the expiring man, and confesses by the dissolving of her most solid parts, that He has now effected a wondrous transformation, extracting good out of evil, converting the fall of man into an occasion of discomfiture to Satan and of glory to God, and thus virtually turning the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters. But I seem to crave yet more specific testimony. I know that creation has before now been disquieted, when it was no message of comfort to man which was written in its struggles and uttered through its groans; and I have the more specific testimony. What shall I say to opened graves and quickened bodies? I remember the Saviour to have said, "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And now the voice which they have heard, and on which they stirred in their narrow beds, is the voice which had exclaimed, "It is finished." O beautiful token that in dying Christ hath indeed mastered death, and that what He finished on the cross is my rescue from the powers of darkness. But still I crave further testimony; I need a higher blessing; it is not enough for me to be emancipated from corruption; I long for admission into the world which is radiant with the presence of the Lord God Almighty; I long for companionship with angels; I would walk where they walk; I would wait with cherubim and seraphim in the court of the celestial King, gazing on His glories, and delighting to execute His will. Is this possible? A creature of dust—where are the wings with which I may soar, where the path which I may tread, and find that it conducts me within the veil? Within the veil! Why, whilst I look on the graves which Christ hath opened by the greatness of His might, and feel that though they tell me of a resurrection, they do not tell me of entrance into the celestial courts, there come tidings which announce that the veil of the temple has been rent in twain—that very veil which I have always regarded as being before the holy of holies, to show me that there is no admission for such as myself into the place where Deity is specially manifested. The veil is rent. Then with it should be rent away all doubt and all unbelief. The door of heaven, as well as the door of the grave, is thrown open through the work of mediation. I may not only rise from the dust; I may tread the firmament; I may enter by the gate of pearl, and I may walk the street of gold. There is a remarkable propheoy in the writings of Micah, which seems closely to bear upon the subject of our present discourse: it is this—"The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out of it; and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them." Now, here is presented to us a magnificent procession, led by a chief under the expressive title of the breaker; He heads a vast company, He directs them through some gate, which He presses open by His own energy or labour; and they follow in triumph, and pass on like marching conquerors. Who is this but the Lord Jesus Christ, who, having vanquished death, and opened the closed gate of everlasting life, has gone before that He may prepare a place for His followers, who through faith and patience, shall inherit His promise. And do you observe how the title of the breaker, as applied to our Redeemer, is verified or

vindicated by the prodigies which throng the crucifixion! The broken earth, the broken rocks, the broken graves, the broken veil of the temple—how do all these seem to correspond with the name of the breaker! Oh! that in our own case we might be able to add broken hearts to the list, and thus prove that Christ is still a breaker; but a breaker who breaks only with the gracious purpose of making whole. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 39. **Truly this Man was the Son of God.**—*The centurion's confession:*—Never did reason obtain a more complete victory over prejudice. Death is the touchstone of the soul. Even in the most favourable circumstances it tries a man severely. But in this instance there were many aggravating circumstances to weigh down and overwhelm the soul. 1. The treason of Judas. Jesus had been delivered up to His enemies by one who had been admitted to His friendship and close intercourse with Him. 2. Christ's utter abandonment by His disciples. Not a voice had been uttered in His defence, or to comfort Him; not one was found to come forward courageously and acknowledge Him. 3. The injustice of His sentence. Even His judge was convinced of His innocence; yet He was condemned to the most cruel death ever devised. 4. The ignominy accompanying His punishment. The death of Jesus, "expiring in the midst of tortures, abused, insulted, cursed by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared." 5. His knowledge of all that was to come upon Him. His passion and death commenced in Gethsemane. There He resigned Himself unreservedly to all the anguish He afterwards underwent. Nor did He for one moment draw back from the awful sufferings that followed. Was not the centurion justified in the conclusion forced upon him by such a spectacle as this—that He who could thus die must be of a truth not Man only, but the very Son of God? (*L. H. Horne, B.D.*) *The believing centurion:*—What was Jesus Christ to this heavy-bearded, battle-scarred soldier? He had heard of Him, doubtless, for the hot talk and the excited crowds in the streets of Jerusalem could not have escaped the notice of one of the officers appointed to preserve order in the city. But in his opinion Christ was nothing but a Jewish fanatic, in regard to whom he was profoundly indifferent. He had received the order to superintend the execution of this disturber of the peace without any emotion. After an impassive fashion he had directed the details of the execution, supposing that it would be only the repetition of a scene familiar to him. The fact was far otherwise. As has been said, he "halted as he passed the cross when Jesus uttered His loud death-cry. He was within a few feet of Him, and must have involuntarily fixed his gaze on Him at such a sound. He saw the change pass over His features; the light of life leaving them, and the head suddenly sink. As it did so, the earthquake shook the ground, and made the three crosses tremble. But the tremor of the earth affected the Roman less than the piercing cry and sudden death. He had likely attended many crucifixions, but had never seen or heard of a man dying within a few hours on a cross. He had never heard a crucified man, strong to the last, utter a shriek that showed, as that of Jesus did, the full vigour of the vital organs to the last. He felt that there was something mysterious in it, and joining with it all he had seen and heard of the sufferer, he broke involuntarily into this confession." The triumphs of the kingdom of the cross were beginning. The Jewish thief had already asked and received Messiah's salvation, and now the Gentile centurion bowed in loyalty to the Divine Sufferer. The confession of the centurion was a sort of first-fruits of the crucifixion. Tradition has it that years afterwards, unable to shake off the influence, he became a preacher of the gospel; and certainly that cross testified, as nothing else could, to the divinity of Him who endured its pains. (*E. S. Atwood.*) *Converting power in the sight of Christ:*—The Roman centurion is not one you would have expected to be impressed. He was there but casually; had probably only been in Jerusalem a few days, Cæsarea being his station. His deities were those whose chief characteristic was power. Meekness and lowliness were, by his people, considered failings, not virtues. He had probably everything about religion to learn; and yet he follows the dying thief in the path of faith and of salvation. He would not mean, perhaps, by his exclamation, all that St. Paul would have meant; but he meant that Christ was more than mere man; that God was in Him; that whatever claims He made we should reverently admit them. Such a converting power is there in the mere sight of Christ. We have but to fix our honest gaze on Him, and we begin to believe upon Him and to become like Him. (*R. Glover.*) *The risen Lord Divine:*—If in dying the Roman officer became convinced that Jesus was

Divine, how much more should we be convinced of the Divinity of a risen and exalted Christ. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Involuntary testimony to the Divinity of Jesus*:—A well-known learned man of Saxony, after having all his life long attacked Jesus and His gospel with all the weapons of sophistry he could command, was in his old age partially deprived of his reason, chiefly through the fear of death, and frequently fell into religious paroxysms of a peculiar nature. He was almost daily observed conversing with himself, while pacing to and fro in his chamber, on one of the walls of which, between other pictures, hung one of the Saviour. Repeatedly he halted before the latter, and said, in a horrifying tone of voice, "After all, Thou wast only a Man." Then, after a short pause, he would continue, "What wast Thou more than a Man? Ought I to worship Thee? No, I will not worship Thee, for Thou art only Rabbi Jesus, Joseph's son, of Nazareth." Uttering these words, he would return with a deeply-affected countenance, and exclaim, "What dost Thou say? That Thou camest from above! How terribly Thou eyest me! Oh, Thou art dreadful! But Thou art only a Man, after all!" Then he would again rush away, but soon return with faltering step, crying out, "What! Art Thou in reality the Son of God?" The same scenes were daily renewed, till the unhappy man, struck by paralysis, dropped down dead; and then really stood before his Judge, who, even in His picture, had so strikingly and overpoweringly judged him. *The evidence which arises from the nature and character of the gospel*:—I. That the religion of the gospel is the only one which has ever yet appeared among mankind which is adequate to all the instinctive desires and expectations of the human mind. II. There is a second view of it which arises from its relation to the welfare of society, or the prosperity of the world. III. That the religion of the gospel is the only one which has ever appeared among mankind which is commensurate to the future hopes or expectations of the human soul. (*A. Alison, LL.B.*) *The centurion*:—He had been condemned as a blasphemer by the ecclesiastical authorities, because He had said that He was the Son of God. It was proper, it was needful, that His claims should be vindicated. This was done, indeed, effectually by His resurrection from the dead: He was then declared to be the Son of God with power—with the most powerful weight of evidence. But it was not necessary to wait till the third day; it was fitting rather that something should be done to vindicate His claims while He yet suffered, so that His enemies should not completely triumph. The prodigies which attended the crucifixion of our Lord seemed necessary also, in order to bring His death into harmony with His life. As in the person so also in the history of Jesus, there was a strange combination of humiliation and dignity, of power and weakness. The centurion was convinced by the scenes which he witnessed of the innocence of Jesus. "When the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." His enemies had said all manner of evil of Him. They had said that He was a sinner, a Sabbath-breaker, a profane person, a leader of sedition, a Samaritan who had a devil and was mad. But to the centurion all nature became animated, vocal, and refuted these foul calumnies. The centurion was convinced by the scenes which he witnessed, not only of the innocence of our Lord, but also of His Messiahship; he not only exclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous man," but he said again, "Truly this was the Son of God." Some have supposed that we should interpret this as the language of a heathen; and that it means simply this was "a son of a god;" He was a hero; there was something Divine in Him. But in reading the new Testament we are struck with the fact that many of the Roman soldiers, those especially of any rank, who were stationed in Judea, appear to have derived much religious knowledge from their intercourse with the Jews. It is necessary only to refer to the centurion at Capernaum. This centurion appears to have known that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the promised deliverer of mankind, but that the Jews denied the claims of Jesus, that they rejected Him, that they pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy, and worthy of death; and now the centurion felt that God had decided the controversy—that He had decided it against the Jews and in favour of Jesus. He and those with him felt that those prodigies were expressions of the Divine displeasure; they said therefore, "What have we done? We have been partakers with the Jews in this great sin; we have contributed to the murder of this righteous man; we have crucified the Son of God. And what will God do? He will surely be avenged on such a people; He will punish such a deed as this!" Here it is worthy of remark, that they were soldiers, Roman soldiers who were thus impressed by the prodigies which attended the death of our Lord; they were

Gentile soldiers who were convinced by those signs and wonders of the innocence of Jesus, and of the justice of His claims; the Jews were not impressed, were not convinced by them; nothing could convince them; nothing could remove their prejudices and unbelief; especially of the chief priests and rulers. So it often is; we frequently find most where we expect least; we often find publicans and sinners, soldiers and Gentiles, more open to conviction, and more susceptible of impression, than religious professors and self-righteous Pharisees. Of all men these indeed are generally the most hardened and the most hopeless. We should remark further: the centurion and those that were with him watching Jesus, that is to say, those who were the least guilty of all the parties concerned in the melancholy transactions of that day, feared greatly when they saw in the wonders which attended the death of our Lord the proofs of His Messiahship, and of the Divine displeasure against His enemies; but those who were most guilty had no fear. Luke tells us indeed that all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned. But Annas and Caiaphas, the chief priests and rulers, were not amongst them. Their consciences were seared, their minds were reprobate; they were given up to judicial blindness and obduracy. (*J. J. Davies.*)

Vers. 42–47. **Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor.**—*The crisis in Joseph's life*:—The record of spiritual progress through many years is given here. Long looking for the promised Saviour, almost convinced that Jesus is the Christ, yet for a while doubting so great a consolation, we find him at last settling in the great belief that He was the promised Saviour. With the timidity natural to a rich man and a ruler, he waits to be still more fully assured before openly committing himself to a discipleship which will involve him in persecution of the sternest kind. He, therefore, opposes in the Sanhedrin the persecution of Christ, but does nothing more. But the constraining power of the cross makes him abandon his policy of secrecy. It is not a time to shrink from shame or danger when Jesus hangs upon the cross. 1. Give men time to grow. "First the blade," &c. 2. Secrecy invariably kills discipleship, or discipleship secrecy. Here the latter happier result is seen; but beware of concealing God's righteousness in your heart. 3. The rulers had thought to rob Christ of His followers among the people; but all they really do is to give Him additional followers (Nicodemus, as well as Joseph) among themselves. 4. There is always "a remnant" that remains faithful to God. Even in the Sanhedrin there are some that believe. 5. In no circumstances is goodness an impossibility. (*R. Glover.*) *Joseph of Arimathæa*:—This man becomes prominent on the momentous day of Calvary, but till then unknown. He belongs to a class who appear for a moment on the stage of the history, to teach some great lesson or to perform some special service, and then disappear. All we know of him is that he was of Arimathæa (the site of which is not certainly known), a man of wealth, a member of the Jewish Council, a good man and a just, who waited for the kingdom of God, and a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, through fear of the Jews; that his fear gave place to courage in that day of Christ's greatest humiliation, when he avowed himself His disciple, and boldly craved the body of the crucified Jesus; and that he had the high honour of laying it in his own new tomb, hewn in a rock, near the city. In his story we see how—I. Faith is sometimes found in unexpected quarters. II. Faith, hitherto weak, by God's grace may spring into strength to meet and surmount greatest difficulties. III. Instruments are forthcoming at the right moment to fulfil God's purposes, when to man it would seem impossible. (*T. M. Macdonald, M.A.*) *Secret discipleship*:—Secret discipleship like that of Joseph is truly excellent, inasmuch as times and opportunities will occur for it to render essential service to truth and virtue; but open discipleship is infinitely preferable, inasmuch as in season and out of season its example and action are continuously and powerfully influencing for good, more or less, all who come into contact with it. (*Dr. Davies.*) *Legend respecting Joseph*:—A special interest attaches to his name for Englishmen from his supposed connection with this country. He is one of the few Scriptural names that are associated with the early legends of British history. He shares the distinction with Pudens, Claudia, and St. Paul. Tradition says that he was sent by St. Philip as a missionary to this island, and that, settling at Glastonbury, he erected the first Christian Church in Britain, made of wicker twigs, on the site where the noblest abbey was subsequently built. His pilgrim's staff, which he drove into the ground, is said to have taken root and grown into an umbrageous thorn to protect him from the heat. We smile, perhaps, at the legend, but it was

only the romantic dress in which an imaginative age clothed an important truth. It tells how, from a small and unpretending enterprise, the founder, whoever he may have been, was able to raise up a vast monastery, within the walls of which he took refuge himself, and offered means of shelter to others from the bustle and turmoil of the world. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*) *Joseph's position and character:*—The Sanhedrin of Jerusalem consisted of seventy members, of whom twenty-four were the heads of the priesthood, twenty-four were heads of the tribes of Israel, and twenty-two were scribes learned in the law. Joseph was, no doubt, one of the noble representatives of the people, and, as such, shared in the functions of government, and was conversant with those sacred Scriptures which formed the basis of the Jewish Commonwealth. Arimathæa is thought to have been situated on the fertile plain of Sharon, where, probably, Joseph's property lay. He also possessed an estate in Jerusalem—possibly a house in the city—certainly a garden in the outskirts. Josephus tells us that the Holy City was in those times thickly surrounded by groves and gardens; shady retreats in the heat from the crowded streets of the metropolis. Captain Conder, and some of the leading topographical experts, are of opinion that recent research has fixed on the probable site of Calvary, and of Joseph's garden near at hand, some short distance outside the city, where an elevation of the ground, in the form of a skull, abuts upon an old Roman road; and near at hand, till lately buried under the accumulated soil, a sepulchre in the adjacent rock has been discovered, which, it is thought, may have been the very tomb happily concealed for so many ages from the corrupt worshippers and crusaders, who have lavished their regard upon a mistaken site inside the walls. Be this as it may, we know that Jesus died "outside the camp," and from St. John that "in the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden," and that "the sepulchre was nigh at hand" to Calvary. A place of public execution, and a garden nigh at hand, were both more probably situated outside the city wall, and abutting on some roadway, rather than within the immediate precincts of Zion. Here, then, under the shade and concealment of trees and umbrageous shrubs, we may think of this honourable counsellor as refreshing his spirit in peaceful meditations, by day and night, when his public duties permitted of repose. One's thoughts picture this good man sitting under the shadow of some terebinth or sycamore, in full view of the holy temple rising in the distance, and reading the prophet Isaiah, very likely reading sometimes the fifty-third chapter, and asking himself—"Of whom speaketh the prophet, of himself, or of some other man?" How little he imagined, as he sat there, poring over the sacred scroll, that he himself was denoted on that wondrous page as the "rich man" who should furnish a "sepulchre" to the crucified Messiah; much less did he imagine, as he paced along his favourite shady pathway, in the morning or the evening light, and stood before the door of his tomb, that that garden of his was destined to be most holy ground, the scene of an event on which the justification, redemption, and immortal life of mankind depended. (*Ed. White.*) *Burial of Christ:*—I have been told that the bells in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, never toll save when the king or some member of the royal family dies. The thunders in the dome of heaven never tolled so dolefully as when they rang out to the world the news, "King Jesus is dead!" When a king dies, the whole land is put in black: they shroud the pillars; they put the people in procession; they march to a doleful drum-beat. What shall we do now that our King is dead? Put blackness on the gates of the morning. Let the cathedral organs wail. Let the winds sob. Let all the generations of men fall in line, and beat a funeral-march of woe! woe! woe! as we go to the grave of our dead King. In Philadelphia they have a habit, after the coffin is deposited in the grave, of the friends going formally up and standing at the brink of the grave and looking in. So, I take you all to-night to look into the grave of our dead King. The lines of care are gone out of his face. The wounds have stopped bleeding. Just lift up that lacerated hand. Lift it up, and then lay it down softly over that awful gash in the left side. He is dead! He is dead! (*Dr. Talmage.*) *An honourable man:*—The power of religious character in men of high station.—The humblest Christian life has an irresistible influence for good in some measure and in certain directions. A man need not be nobly born, or distinguished for talent and wealth, in order to do brave work for God. And yet it remains true that those who are held in high esteem among men have an exceptional influence, and so are weighted with an exceptional responsibility. It is probable that no other of the disciples could have accomplished what Joseph effected. Mary Magdalene would have been turned away from the door of Pilate's palace; Peter and John would have been answered with a curt rebuff, even if they had gained a scant hear

ing from the Roman governor. But Joseph's social standing was such that he could not be dismissed with a sneer and a frown. He matched his station against that of Pilate, and so received courteous treatment, and had his request granted. Constituted as human society is, how often this incident has been repeated in history. Constantine embraced Christianity, and all the idolatry of the empire shrank in sudden collapse. President Garfield confessed Christ in creed and life, and the nation kindled with a new reverence for the faith of the gospel. His dying bed was a pulpit that preached more emphatically than all the other pulpits of the land. Men in authority, civic or social, by reason of their opportunities, owe more to God than the great multitude. Their service need not be ostentatious. Rulers and statesmen and scholars need not flaunt their piety in the eyes of men, but if it is genuine and earnest it can make channels of influence for itself, as the streams from the mountain-tops cleave their way to the sea by simple momentum, through intervening ridges and barriers of rock, beautifying all the leagues through which they flow. Great opportunities bring great responsibilities. It is well for men in high places when they recognize the fact and accept the burden. (*E. S. Atwood.*) *Went in boldly.—Moral courage:*—A great deal of talent is lost in the world for the want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves a number of obscure men, who have only remained in obscurity because their timidity has prevented them from making a first effort; and who, if they could have been induced to begin, would in all probability have gone great lengths in the career of fame. The fact is, that to do anything in this world worth doing, we must not stand back shivering and thinking of the cold and danger, but jump in and scramble through as well as we can. It will not do to be perpetually calculating risks and adjusting nice chances; it did very well before the flood, when a man could consult his friends upon an intended publication for a hundred and fifty years, and then live to see its success afterwards; but at present a man waits and doubts, and consults his brother and his particular friends, till one fine day he finds that he is sixty years of age; that he has lost so much time in consulting his first cousins and particular friends that he has no more time to follow their advice. (*Sydney Smith.*) *Great occasions discover great qualities:*—Some natures need powerful incentives to draw out their better traits and nobler qualities. Close to Bracelet Bay, Mumbles, is a bell-buoy marking a concealed rock. This bell rings only in the storm. It is only when the wind is high and the billows roll and beat against it that it gives forth the music that is in it. *On the crucifixion, death, and burial, of Christ:*—You are invited—1. To witness the crucifixion of Christ. 2. To attend the burial of Christ; and—3. To watch at His grave. I. YOU ARE INVITED TO WITNESS THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST. "It was the third hour of the day, and they crucified Him." Here you will naturally mark—1. The instrument of His torture. It was a cross—a cross composed of two pieces of timber; one a transverse beam, and the other a perpendicular one, the foot of which was inserted into the ground; and then the sufferer was nailed to that cross, and suspended in bleeding anguish, till life became extinct. It was not only a most ignominious, but it was a most agonizing death; and not only was it agonizing, but it was lingering. You will naturally think of the place of His crucifixion. "They led Him to a place called Golgotha," which signifies, the place of skulls. There it was that malefactors were executed. In that gloomy, melancholy, horrifying spot, did the Saviour pay the forfeiture of our guilt. You will naturally revert, not only to the instrument of His torture, and the place of His suffering, but to the time of His crucifixion. It was a very remarkable season; at the particular moment when the Jewish Passover was held, and when, consequently, there was a vast concourse of persons gathered, both Jews and proselytes from among the Gentiles, in order to keep this annual feast. This was remarkable, both with respect to the typical relation of Christ's death, and with respect to the open publicity or popularity of His death. You will not only think of the instrument, and the time, and the place, of His crucifixion, but you will think of the aggravations of it. In His agonies He met with mockery, insult, and derision. He was exposed to the rude treatment of the soldiers, and had the mortification of beholding their avaricious contention among themselves, when they "parted His raiment, and for His vesture they did cast lots." There are those who care little for Christ, beyond His robes and His vesture. If they can enrich themselves with the smallest perquisite from His wardrobe, this is all that concerns them, and all that they are disposed to contend about. But that which seems to have constituted the greatest aggravation of His crucifixion, was this—the withdrawment of the light, and sensible consolation, derived from the presence of His Divine

Father. You will not only notice the instrument, and the place, and the time, and the aggravations, of His crucifixion, but you will advert to those supernatural portents which accompanied this transaction, and which proved it to be decidedly extraordinary, and of what we may call a miraculous character: for you will remember that while He was suspended on the cross, darkness extended itself over the whole land. He was crucified. II. WE ARE FURTHER INVITED, THIS MORNING, TO ATTEND HIS BURIAL. This demonstrates, in the first place, the truth and indubitable certainty of His death. All this was not an imaginary scene; it was no fantastic illusion. He really suffered, and He really died. The character of His death deserves our particular notice. He died not an ordinary or common death, but He died as a public person; and His death was of a threefold character. 1. It may be considered as a satisfaction for sin. 2. As a glorious triumph. 3. AS an edifying example. III. AND NOW, MY DEAR HEARERS, FOR A SHORT SEASON, YOU ARE INVITED TO WATCH AT HIS GRAVE. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." 1. It was a new tomb—it had never been previously occupied. By which, I think God intended, in His Providence, to put especial honour upon the mangled remains of His Son; "that in all things, He might have the pre-eminence"—that precedence might be given to Him, even in the lowest depths of His humiliation. 2. It was the tomb which Joseph of Arimathæa had prepared as his own resting place. How willingly should men sacrifice everything for Christ; the honour of an honourable interment, not excepted. Then, it was well for Joseph of Arimathæa, that Christ, by condescending to occupy his grave, seasoned it and perfumed it, and left there a lasting fragrance. 3. It was a tomb singularly guarded and fortified. I have only to add, once more, that it was in a garden. It was in a garden that man lost his innocency; in a garden that Adam sinned; and therefore in a garden Christ was buried, that He might expiate the guilt of sin, and take away the sting of death. Now, brethren, in retiring from the crucifixion, from the burial, and from the grave, of Jesus, we must first observe the vehement displeasure and indignation of God against sin. Secondly, in departing, let us bitterly bewail those sorrows which we have been instrumental in inflicting upon the immaculate Redeemer. Thirdly, let us accept the oblation and sacrifice of the Son of God. In the fourth place, how little reason have we to fear death. If we are united to Christ, "death is ours"—"to die, is gain." Lastly, how reasonable it is that we should give our lives to Him, who has encountered death in all its bitterness for us. (*G. Clayton, M.A.*) *The burial of Jesus*:—No mention is on record concerning the final disposal of Jesus' crucified body, except the somewhat bare statement that a stranger asked the privilege of laying it in his family tomb. I. THE FRIEND IN NEED. It was a settled principle of the Mosaic law, that, if a man had been executed for a capital crime, his body should not be suffered to remain unburied even over a night; for he that was hanged was accursed of God (Deut. xxi. 22, 23). This seems to have been borne in mind by the chief priests when they suggested that Jesus' legs should be broken in order that he might not be dilatory in dying (John xix. 31). And after He was dead the same recollection led a new man—a stranger from one of the towns in Ephraim, but having a residence in Jerusalem—to the carrying out of a much more generous purpose. On Friday evening he went to the governor, and gained permission for the interment of the body. 1. Who was Joseph of Arimathæa? Mark tells us he was a councillor who like old Simeon had "waited for the kingdom of God" (xv. 43). John says he was a true disciple of Jesus, only he had hitherto been afraid to confess Him openly (xix. 38). Matthew adds that he was a "rich man" (xxvii. 57). And Luke informs us that in character he was "a good man and a just," and that although he was a member of the Sanhedrin, he had refused to vote for Christ's condemnation (xxiii. 50, 51). 2. What was his special usefulness? (1) He furnished generous help. Just then there was a supreme need in the circle of Jesus' friends. Crisis periods in the providence of God, occurring now and then, cause even commonplace services to become intensely important. Who else would have buried Jesus, when all the disciples had forsaken him and fled? (2) He fulfilled an embarrassing prophecy. It had been declared many hundred years before that the Messiah should make His grave with the rich in His death (Isa. liii. 9). There surely was no wealth within reach for those faithful women who were exhausting their resources on the costly spices they purchased for the embalming. Joseph was raised up for this grand office. Noble opportunity always discloses the needed man. (3) He obtained a valuable argument. In the endless debate about Christ's resurrection from the dead, it has pleased some reck-

less disputants to assert that the reason why Jesus was found alive on Sunday morning, was because he had never been actually dead after all. Joseph's request for the body surprised Pilate, for he did not suppose that the man he had crucified would have died so soon; hence he instantly took measures to ascertain from the military officer who had conducted the execution the facts in the case. Satisfied on this point, he gave his consent at once (Mark xv. 44, 45). Thus Joseph's consideration and courage added another unanswerable testimony to the truth for the Church's use. II. THE NEW SEPULCHRE. Our next question arises most naturally concerning the exact place where our Lord Jesus was laid. Joseph did not find it necessary to consult any one as to the disposal of the body his bold petition had gained. He seems to have had his own way about everything. 1. What tradition has to say concerning the locality is easily stated; but it will bring no satisfaction. There stands in Jerusalem to this day what is called the "Church of the Holy Sepulchre;" a dirty, rambling, old structure, which the resident priests of many faiths assert was raised upon the precise field of the crucifixion, and now covers the whole area of Golgotha. The tomb of Jesus is represented by an imposing mausoleum in the midst of it; and beside it, and around it, is almost everything else under that extensive roof which the imagination could wish or the purse could pay for. Calvary is a domed room upstairs and in the air. A knob in the floor marks the exact "centre of the earth." Underneath this is Adam's grave, and the tomb of Melchizedek is close by. One can have almost any historic site within this absurd enclosure, at a proper price and with fit notice. It is evident at once, when a man in simplest of candour sets his eyes upon this place with its surroundings, that such an edifice, with its populous shrines, could never by any possibility have been situated beyond the city wall, "without the gate," and yet have left room for Jerusalem to exist on its sacred hills. 2. The Scriptures do not pretend to give any aid in locating the tomb of Jesus. Matthew says Joseph laid the body in a sepulchre which was "his own," and which was "new" (xxvii. 60). Mark relates that this burial-ground was hewn out of the rock (xv. 46). Luke adds that it had never been used for an interment before (xxiii. 53). John furnishes all the hints of help we have, when he states that it was in a "garden," and the garden was "in the place where Jesus was crucified" (xix. 41, 42). Some of the best scholars on both sides of the ocean are coming to believe that the spot which best answers all the requisitions of the inspired narrative, is to be found in the neighbourhood of the northern wall of Jerusalem, close by what is called the Damascus Gate; and that to the rounded knoll, of slight elevation, but resembling a skull in general shape so strikingly as to arrest the attention of every beholder,— the knoll, which arches over what is known as the "Cave of Jeremiah,"—was once given the name of Calvary. 3. The decision, even if it could be made, however, might prove far from valuable now. When we remember the follies of devoteeism, and the offensive wrestle of the Eastern national churches over so-called holy shrines for many a century, we may perhaps be willing to think it is better that the exact locality of Jesus' burial should never be known, and Golgotha remain unmarked on the map. III. THE FEW MOURNERS. To most of us it appears passing strange that not one of the disciples is recorded as having been present at the burial of Jesus. John tells us that Nicodemus, that other wealthy ruler of the Jews who once came for an interview with Our Lord in the night, was associated with Joseph in these kind offices of affection (xix. 39). Mark mentions the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene by name (xv. 47). This is confirmed by Matthew (xxvii. 61). Luke, by a singular form of expression, seems to refer us to another verse in his own gospel (xxiii. 55). These "women also which came with him from Galilee" are named once before (Luke viii. 2, 3). And Mark likewise identifies them for us by the same expression; those who "ministered unto Him when He was in Galilee" were "looking on afar off" during the crucifixion (xv. 40, 41). Thus, as we compare the narratives of the different Evangelists, do what we will, we cannot find that more than these seven or eight persons—two men and five or six women—assisted in this last service. 1. As to the men—Joseph and Nicodemus—it is suggestive to remark that they resembled each other in public position; they were both senators in the grand council of the nation. Moreover, they had both been timid and backward all along, till this great crisis in affairs brought them out. They perilled fame and fortune now in uniting themselves to the cause of Christ, when the look of it on the human side was most melancholy and desperate. 2. As to the women—Mary the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; Joanna; Susanna: Mary the mother of James; and Salome,—

some few particulars may profitably be noted. (1) How tender was their spirit! For of course we reckon them in that pathetic group of the "daughters of Jerusalem," to whom, as they wept, Jesus had spoken on His way to the cross (Luke xxiii. 27, 28). Some of them had stood patiently at His feet all through the dark time when He was dying (John xix. 25). (2) How grateful were their memories! It was impossible for Mary of Magdala to forget the favour she had received. Each of them all must have recalled some good deed Jesus had done, or some kind word He had spoken. (3) How lavish were their offerings! They had been in the habit of ministering to Him "with their substance" while in Galilee; and even now, on that melancholy Friday evening, they were at much expense preparing unguents and "sweet spices" with which to anoint His body (Luke xxiii. 56). So we conclude as before, that these devout and honourable women have a right to have the grand memorial that remains of them. Wherever the Bible goes, will go the story of that gentle group of Christian friends around Jesus' grave in the garden. IV. THE SILENT TOMB. Our study closes to-day with the vision of that impressive scene still resting upon our imagination. A few reflections arise as we remain sitting among the shadows by the sepulchre. 1. Things are not what they seem. What contrasts are here of the mean with the majestic! A poor crucified body lies in a borrowed tomb. A slender company of friends are in waiting. A band of drowsy soldiers are stationed before the sealed door (Matt. xxvii. 66). But within the enclosure, unseen as yet, there are already two angels from heaven, one at the feet, one at the head, reverently keeping watch (John xx. 12). And the supreme God is looking down providently; for He is not going to suffer His Holy One to see corruption (Acts ii. 31). 2. Redemption is not yet fully completed. We ask curiously, Where was our Saviour's soul during those three days? The Apostles' Creed assumes to answer "He descended into hell;" thus it follows David's Psalm (xvi. 10). But it cannot mean what it appears to say. Simon Peter (1 Peter iii. 19) speaks about His preaching to "spirits in prison;" but commentators differ sharply concerning the interpretation his words will bear. We do not know: this mystery lies concealed in the infinite reserve of God. 3. Our only glory is in the cross (Gal. vi. 14). We have nothing to glory over in the burial. It seems sad and lonely: but the resurrection was coming. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The buriers:*—Some topics of interest present themselves for our consideration, on a view of the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus; such as the fact of their discipleship; the secrecy of it; the noble avowal of it on occasion of our Lord's deepest humiliation; and the bearing of this on the evidence of His Divine mission, and of His resurrection from the dead. In the fact that our Lord was buried by Joseph and Nicodemus, and in the grave of the former, we have the accomplishment of an important prediction respecting the Messiah, while, at the same time, it served to render the fact of His resurrection undeniable. I. We notice THE FACT THAT JOSEPH AND NICODEMUS WERE THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS; and the first thing which strikes us in connection with the fact of their discipleship, is their position in society. They were distinguished at once by their wealth, and by their rank and influence. "Not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" and, while our Lord was yet on earth, His enemies asked, with an air of triumph, "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on Him?" And it is certain that He had but few disciples amongst the respectabilities of His day. But yet He had some, and Joseph and Nicodemus were of them. This fact also suggests a very cheering reflection, that true piety may sometimes be found where we least expect to meet with it. Joseph and Nicodemus were the disciples of Jesus. This expression cannot signify less, in my opinion, than this, that they believed His Messiahship; they believed, not only that He was a just man and a prophet, but that He was the Christ—the long-promised and earnestly-expected deliverer of Israel. The professed disciples of Jesus avowed this as their belief, and were understood to avow it. But as Joseph and Nicodemus were disciples secretly, they did not avow it, but they inwardly cherished it; in their hearts they believed that Jesus was the Christ. They, too, had found the Messiah, but in how strange an environment! How different the reality from all the expectations which they had formed of Him! "Blessed are our eyes, for they have seen the Lord's Anointed; blessed are our ears, for they have heard Messiah's voice." They were the disciples of Jesus. This suggests another reflection: how great the diversity of opinion which obtained amongst the Jews respecting the character and claims of the Redeemer! We find amongst them all shades of opinion respecting Him, from the most exalted conceptions of His dignity, and the most profound veneration for His worth, down to the most profane

and impious ideas of His character. And yet, believe me, the truth you will never receive unless you are yourself true. They were the disciples of Jesus. How or when Joseph was convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus we are not informed; but an interesting narrative, in the early part of St. John's Gospel, acquaints us with the introduction of Nicodemus to our Lord, and informs us of the subject of their conversation. It appears that, from that time, Nicodemus was inwardly persuaded that Jesus was the Christ. And as the miracles of Jesus convinced him that He was a prophet, so His wisdom and knowledge convinced him that He was the Messiah. From that night he appears to have been the sincere, though secret disciple of Jesus. II. And this leads us to our next topic, THE SECRECY OF THEIR DISCIPLESHIP. They were the disciples of Jesus sincerely, but secretly; they were inwardly persuaded of His Divine mission, and of His Messiahship, but they kept their convictions and feelings to themselves. How far did they proceed in the concealment of their attachment to Jesus? We are mistaken if we imagine that they were guilty of positive duplicity, or that they used any art to conceal their real sentiments. But why did they hesitate to avow their conviction? They were evidently amiable, and perhaps, also, they were timid men. The amiable are often timid, though not always, or necessarily so, by any means. The amiable, but, at the same time, thoroughly principled and devout man, is not unlike the verdant slopes in the midst of rugged rocks, which you sometimes see beside our broad rivers, where all seems so soft, so gentle, and so green, and presents an air of so much tranquility and repose, that the eye delights to rest upon it, and the mind is soothed and refreshed by its sweet influence; but around and underneath that softness and gentleness, there is a solid rock, on which the fiercest storms may beat in vain. The Jews had resolved that whosoever confessed that Jesus was the Christ should be "cast out of the synagogue"—should be excommunicated. This was a terrible evil, amounting, in its severest form, to nothing less than civil death; and Joseph and Nicodemus had much to lose. We are mistaken if we suppose that the rich and powerful can more easily avow their convictions, especially in times of danger, than the poor and destitute. The more men have to lose, the greater in general is their reluctance to part with it. Under these circumstances, Joseph and Nicodemus, while in reality yielding to the fear of man, perhaps thought, that in not avowing their belief of the Messiahship of Jesus, they were but acting with justifiable prudence and caution. This is one way in which we often deceive ourselves. We would fain be persuaded that we are exercising a moral virtue, that we are even wiser than other men, when, in truth, we are yielding to temptation, and falling into a snare. The language of Scripture would lead us to regard the situation of these men as one of great peril. It is the duty of all who receive the righteousness of God to make it known. In making man the depository of His richest treasure, Divine truth, it is God's gracious design, not that it should be concealed, but communicated. To hide the truth that is in us, is, therefore, unfaithfulness to God and man; and this, surely, is a state of guilt and of danger. III. We proceed to notice the NOBLE AVOWAL of their real sentiments and feelings, which Joseph and Nicodemus made on the occasion of our Lord's death. How strange that these men who begged the body of Jesus, and who united in showing the utmost respect to His lifeless remains, did not rise up, some hours before, to demand, or, at least, to solicit, His acquittal! While the trial proceeds, no voice is heard on His behalf; He must be condemned—He must die. But no sooner is He condemned than tones of the bitterest woe are heard in the temple: it is Judas, exclaiming, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" As He is led away to be crucified amidst the tramp and confused noise of myriads moving in one mass through the streets of Jerusalem, you distinctly hear the sighs and cries of those who bewailed and lamented Him. While He is hanging on the cross, the penitent malefactor testifies to His innocence, His power, and His grace. When He is dying, all nature sympathizes with Him; Gentile soldiers smite on their breasts, and exclaim, "This was the Son of God." And no sooner has He expired, than the flame of love, which had been long pent up, blazes in the hearts of these noble counsellors, and a spirit of holy courage animates them, and they beg the body of Jesus; and they bury Him with the profoundest respect, with their own hands performing the funeral rites. The conduct of these noblemen appears remarkable when contrasted with that of the apostles. They all forsook Him when He was apprehended; and afterwards, they seemed, for the most part, ashamed to show themselves openly. Their conduct is still the more remarkable when taken in connection with their own previous history. When Jesus was alive and at liberty, when all confessed His power, and the world went after Him, their attachment to Him was a

secret; but now that He is publicly condemned and crucified, and His chosen disciples have deserted Him, they come forward and beg His body, and honour His sacred remains. How strangely men change! Often do they change with circumstances; sometimes they change even against them. With what feelings did they bury Him? With what faith? Did they still believe that He was the Messiah? IV. We must just advert to the BEARING OF THIS FACT ON THE EVIDENCE OF OUR LORD'S DIVINE MISSION, AND OF THE TRUTH OF HIS RESURRECTION. The fact that our Lord was buried by these noblemen in the grave of Joseph of Arimathæa, affords one more evidence of His Divine mission: it was necessary to complete the proof of His Messiahship; for thus was fulfilled a very remarkable prophecy concerning Him: "His grave was appointed with the wicked; but with the rich man was His tomb" (Isa. liii. 9. [Lowth's translation]). But this fact has also an important bearing on the resurrection of our Lord: it has served to render it undeniable. If Jesus had been buried with the malefactors with whom He suffered, in some common grave, His resurrection might have been very doubtful; an air of uncertainty might always have attached to it. But the circumstances of His burial were so ordered that there could be no possibility of a mistake touching His resurrection; that if He were not risen there could be no doubt about it, and that, if He were risen, the fact must be unquestionable. (*J. J. Davies.*) *The character of an honourable counsellor:*—A counsellor is a man who studies the law, to qualify himself for defending the life, property, or reputation of his client. To become an honourable counsellor, a man must be—1. Perfectly satisfied that the basis of the law is justice; and—2. He must be irrevocably determined neither to engage in an unjust action, nor to continue the defence of one from the time he discovers it to be so. (1) Because he will thereby take part with the oppressor, and become an accomplice in depriving the injured parties of their rights. (2) Because, in such an action he must speak against his conscience, and advance untruths to support his cause, and must descend to despicably mean arts to confound the evidence, and to influence the jury to decide in opposition to justice. (3) Because nothing less than total depravity could, for the love of money, induce a man to appear in defence of injustice, at the hazard of his conscience, his integrity, his veracity, the salvation of his soul, and the esteem of man. (4) Because retrospection must be painful. (5) Because to obviate the consequences of such proceedings, it will be absolutely requisite that restitution should be made to every one whose injury he has been the means of occasioning. (*The Pulpit.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

VERS. 1–8. **And when the Sabbath was past.**—*The Sabbath before the resurrection of Christ:*—There never was such a Sabbath on earth as that described here. 1. To Jesus, our Divine Master, it was a Sabbath of silence. His ministry had closed. His public career had ended. Love and hate, and want and weakness, were all outside, and Jesus was in the sepulchre. 2. To the disciples it was a sabbath of grief. The heart had been torn out of their lives. This was the darkest sabbath they had ever known. 3. To the churchmen in their temple-worship it was a sabbath of guilt and fear. Sing they might; but there lay that dead Saint in the garden, and they seemed to hear His deep pantings as He travelled under the cross towards Golgotha. Pray they might; but they would seem to hear Jehovah telling them to wash their hands in innocency, and so surround His altar. Then there was something about that garden-sepulchre that was frightful to them. They had rolled up a huge stone and sealed it, set a guard, and yet that Teacher seemed to be abroad and walking through the temple, and ever and anon His great eyes would throw out flashes from their awful depths, which made their souls quail in them, And ever and anon their hearts beat as they seemed to hear the accents of His marvellous voice, as if its echoes still hung on cloister-beams, and would occasionally descend with its palpitating utterances on their horror-stricken ears. No living man could scare them as that dead Man did. (*Dr. Deems.*) *Jesus risen:*—I. WHAT WAS THE OBJECT OF THESE WOMEN IN GOING TO THE SEPULCHRE? That they might anoint the body of the dead Christ. This was their only thought. They had loved Him. They loved Him still: and with a woman's fidelity loved Him though He were not merely unfortunate, but false to His word. It was do-

spairing, yet unbelieving love. The Easter morning's sun has risen in the Church these eighteen hundred years, and there are those who still go to the tomb looking for their Christ. The Church for such is but a sepulchre. Their Christ is a dead Christ. Their Christian love is tearful. The world, the Church, needs enthusiastic believers; and they can never be had except as each can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Despairing, unbelieving love is always timid and distrustful. It always sees obstacles ahead. It cannot go easily in an open path. Faith removes mountains. Faith in a living Christ makes the way to heaven easy to tread, open to view. II. THE CHANGED ERRAND OF THESE VISITORS TO THE TOMB OF JESUS. They had come to embalm Him. Their spirit, purpose, all are changed. It is not now in sadness to anoint a dead Christ, but in gladness to announce a risen Christ. And the new work of hope is much easier than the old errand of despair. Is there not just this difference between the spirit and work of those who heartily believe and trust a living Christ and those whose faith all centres about a dead Christ? Let us not underrate the value of the death of Christ, it is the foundation of our peace with God. But the foundation is not the whole of the temple of our faith. The cross is no more the sign of suffering, but the symbol of victory and power. It is the royal sceptre in His hands who rules in the kingdom which is righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. In this spirit of courageous hope we are to go and tell the story of the risen Jesus. (*G. M. Boynton.*) *The mission of the holy women:*—Our Lord was already in His grave, but He was not covered with earth; He was not enclosed in a coffin, but merely lay in a recess hollowed out of the rock, where Joseph of Arimathæa had placed Him on the evening of Good Friday. Joseph had probably been forced to do His work hurriedly, in order to get it done before the Sabbath came on. He had been contented with wrapping the body in fair linen, and hastily covering it with some preparation that might preserve the bruised and mangled flesh from the rapid corruption that might naturally be looked for. Mary Magdalene and her companions came to complete what Joseph had begun—to re-arrange with more care and attention to detail the position of the body in its last resting-place, and while doing this to cover it with such preservatives against decomposition as to ensure its integrity for many years to come. Now, Mary Magdalene and her companions would have expected to encounter at least one difficulty, for they had watched the burial on the evening of Good Friday; they had even noted how the Lord's body was laid; they would have observed how, under the direction of Joseph of Arimathæa, the doorway which formed the entrance to the tomb had been closed up by a large stone, which, spanning an opening of some four feet in height by three in breadth, could not have been moved by fewer than two or three men. They could not hope to roll away such a stone by themselves, and how were they, at that early hour, to procure the necessary assistance? Their anxiety did not last long. "When they looked," says St. Mark, "they saw that the stone was rolled away." It seems to have been rolled into the first or outer chamber of the tomb, where the angel was sitting upon it when he addressed the holy women. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Holy Sepulchre—its interest to Christians:*—No other spot on the surface of this earth can equally rouse Christian interest. Rome and Athens have glories all their own: they say much to the historical imagination; but they say little by comparison to all that is deepest in our nature—little to the conscience, little to the heart. Sinai and Horeb, Lebanon and Hermon, Hebron and Bethel, Shechem and the Valley of the Jordan and the Valley of the Kishon, have high claims on Jews and Christians from their place in the history and books of the chosen people; but dearer still to us Christians are Bethlehem and Nazareth, and Jericho and Bethany, and Tabor and the Hill of the Beatitudes, and Bethsaida and Capernaum, and Gethsemane and Calvary; and yet the interest even of these must pale before that which attracts us to the Tomb of Jesus. When in the Middle Ages the flower of European chivalry, and amongst them our own King Richard, set forth on that succession of enterprises which we know as the Crusades, the special object which roused Europe to this great and prolonged effort was the deliverance not so much of the Holy Land, but the Holy Sepulchre from the rule of the infidel; and when a Christian in our day finds himself in the Holy City, what is it to which his eager steps first and naturally turn? There is much, indeed, on every side to detain him; but one spot there is which gives to the rest the importance which in his eyes they possess, and one spot compared with which the site of the Temple itself is insignificant; he must take the advice of the Angel of the Sepulchre (Matt. xxviii. 6),—he must "come and see the place where the Lord lay." (*Ibid.*) *The Holy Sepulchre—its appearance now:*—

Under the larger of the two cupolas of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, there stands what is to all appearance a chapel, twenty-six feet in length by eighteen in breadth. It is cased in stone; around it is a row of slender pilasters and half columns; and at the summit is a crown-like tomb. At the east end of this chapel a low door opens into a small square room, called the Chapel of the Angel, because here the angel sat on the stone that had been rolled inside from the door of the sepulchre. At the western end of this ante-chamber is another much lower door leading into the sepulchre. The sepulchre itself is a vaulted chamber about six feet by seven feet, and the resting-place of the holy Body of our Lord is at the right side as you enter, and is now covered with a marble slab which serves as an altar; indeed, the sides and the floor of this sepulchral chamber are cased in marble, which hides the rock beneath. Immediately over the slab there is a bas-relief of the resurrection, while forty-three lamps of gold and silver hang from the roof, and shed a brilliant light in what would be otherwise a perfectly dark vault. No doubt it all wears a different aspect from that which met the eyes of Mary Magdalene. Then there was only a low, rocky ridge, the boundary of a small suburban garden, in the face of which rock the tomb was excavated. Since then all the ridge except that which contains the tomb itself has been cut away in order to form a level floor for the great Church. Mary saw no incrustation of architectural ornament, no marble, no lamps; only a tomb of two chambers, one inside—the other cut out of the face of the rock. Thus it is that, as the ages pass, human hands, like human minds, are wont to surround whatever is most dear and precious with creations of their own; but, like the native rock inside the marble, the reality remains beneath. If the surroundings are thus utterly changed, the original spot—the original tomb—still remains; and if Christian pilgrims from well-nigh all the nations of the world still seek it year by year, and if prayer and praise is almost incessantly offered around it in rites and tongues the most various and dissimilar, it is because its interest to the Christian heart is beyond that of any other spot on the surface of this globe—it is "the place where the Lord lay." (*Ibid.*) *The Holy Sepulchre—authenticity of the site:*—Can we believe, some one asks, that this is really the place where the Body of the Lord was laid after His death? Why not? Christendom, east and west, has believed it, at least since A.D. 335. In that year the first Christian Emperor Constantine completed the church which the historian Eusebius tells us he made up his mind to build on this spot immediately after the Nicene Council. At its consecration a great many bishops came to Jerusalem, and Eusebius himself among the rest; and no doubt was entertained by them that this was the genuine tomb of our Lord. But then the question arose, How did Constantine and his bishops know that the sepulchre over which he built his church was really the sepulchre of our Lord, and not of some one else? And one answer which is sometimes given to this question, as by Robinson, is, that the place was revealed to Constantine by a miracle, and that as the miracle may at least conceivably have been a pious fraud of some kind, there is no certainty that the presumed site was the true one. Robinson quotes a letter of Constantine to the then Bishop of Jerusalem, in which the Emperor speaks of the gladdening discovery of the Sign of the sacred Passion of the Redeemer as miraculous. But the allusion in this expression is to the real or supposed finding of the wood of the Cross. Constantine says nothing about the finding of the Sepulchre, nor is there any real ground for thinking that it was ever discovered at all, for the simple reason that its position had never been at all lost sight of. The wood of the Cross might well have been buried and forgotten; and if it was ever to be certainly identified, some extraordinary occurrence might be necessary to identify it; but the burial-place of Jesus was not likely to have been lost sight of. Constantine was not farther removed in point of time from the date of the earthly life of our Lord, than we are from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and we know pretty well where most people who attracted any public attention during her reign were buried. The Jews, like the Egyptians, took especial care to preserve memorials of the dead. St. Peter, in his first sermon, alludes to David's sepulchre as being "with us even to this day." Would St. Peter, think you, or those whom he taught, have ever lost sight of the sepulchre of "David's greater Son?" Would not each generation of Christians have learned, and handed on to their successors, all that was known about it? Above all, would not the great Alexandrian school, who diffused so much light and knowledge in the first ages of the Church, have kept its eyes steadily on a matter of some real importance like this? Even in those days a visit from Alexandria to Jerusalem and back might have been easily taken, the weather being favourable, in

three weeks; and men like Clement and Origen would have learnt, either from personal observation or through others, all that could be learnt respecting the exact scene of the momentous event which was the key-stone of the religion which they taught. Indeed, it was notorious amongst the Christians, that in the days of the Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 132) a temple of Venus had been built on this very spot, and this building, in something less than two centuries was finally removed by Constantine, who uncovered the tomb in the rock beneath. Notwithstanding the ruin which fell upon Constantine's Church at the time of the Persian invasion, and upon its successor under the mad Caliph El Hakim, there is no reason to think that the site and identity of the tomb were ever lost sight of. There are, of course, other opinions on the subject. The late Mr. Ferguson maintained with great ability what scholars have come to consider a paradox, viz., that the site of the Sepulchre was that of the so-called Mosque of Omar in the Temple area. A more plausible opinion, warmly upheld by the late General Gordon, is, that it is in a garden at the foot of the striking hill which is just outside the Gate of Damascus. This site is so much more picturesque and imposing than the traditional one that, had there been any evidence in its favour in Constantine's day, it would certainly have been adopted. The old belief is likely to hold its ground unless one thing should happen. We know that our Lord was crucified and buried outside the Gate of Jerusalem. The Epistle to the Hebrews points out the typical importance of His suffering "without the gate." If excavations ever should show that the second (*i.e.*, in our Lord's day, the outer) wall of the city embraced the site of the Sepulchre within its circuit, then it would be certain that the traditional site is not the true one. At present there is not much chance of these necessarily difficult excavations being made; and while no one can speak positively, high authorities believe that the real direction of the second wall is that which Constantine and his advisers took for granted. We may therefore continue to hold with our forefathers that the chapel under the larger cupola of the Church of the Sepulchre does really contain the place where the Lord lay. (*Ibid.*) *The joy of Easter:*—The humiliation of Jesus reached its lowest depths when He "gave up the ghost." Everything after that moment gave symptoms of change in the current of affairs. The very enmity which crucified Him started us heroes in His favour—Nicodemus: Joseph. Even His descent into hell was more a thing of victory than of abasement. Spirits in prison are made sensible of a new achievement in the universe, of which He is the hero. Angels in glory are despatched on new embassies, and mysteriously move about the place where His Body lay. A new era breaks upon the course of time. "He is risen." Blessed news! Joyous tidings! Solemn wonder! Glorious triumph! Well may we gather flowers for the altar, and tune our voices to exultant songs, and call every instrument of music to our aid, to give utterance to the holy cheer which such an occasion carries with it. I. EASTER IS THE ROLLING AWAY OF SORROW FROM DISTRESSED AND LOVING HEARTS. A death day to the tormenting distresses of human care and heart-oppressions. Believest thou the tidings? then why afflict thyself any longer with thy bereavements and weaknesses? Lift up your downcast eyes and look, and you will see that the stone is rolled away, and greater comfort at hand than we ever imagined. Easter brings comfort and joy to (1) the poor, (2) the suffering, (3) the bereaved, (4) the fearful. Guilt is cancelled, condemnation is past, peace with God is made. Open thy heart to these Easter tidings, and as thou hungerest and thirsteth after righteousness, thou shalt be satisfied. The stone is rolled away. II. EASTER IS THE SETTING UP OF A GLORIOUS REFUGE FOR ASSAULTED AND ENDANGERED FAITH. If we have any doubts about the Divine Sonship of Jesus, or any questions about the truthfulness of Christianity, or any disheartening scepticism about the reality of gospel blessings, it is because we have not done justice to the facts of the Christian Easter. It is the impregnable fortress of our faith. There is nothing in Christianity which does not there find shelter, entrenchment, vindication. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates: 1. That Jesus was the Christ. 2. That there is another life after this. 3. That it is safe to trust in a complete forgiveness in the merits and righteousness of Christ alone. He died as thy substitute; therefore the account must be settled, or he never could have thus triumphantly been made alive again. 4. That He is now ever with and in His Church and Sacraments, there to dispense the blessings of His efficacious presence, to breathe His Spirit on men's souls, and to make them participants in His new life. III. EASTER IS THE STATIONING OF LOVING ANGELS ROUND THE GRAVE, CONDUCTING TO CONVERSE WITH THE GLORIFIED. By nature we have no fellowship with

heaven, and no communion with the dwellers there. Our sins have sundered us from that bright and happy world. But Jesus has brought us and angels together again. Easter has put an angel of God in every sepulchre. A higher and a better world there joins upon this life of sorrow and tears. As the friends of Jesus come thither with spices of love in their hands, they come into the communion of the glorified, and begin to have converse with angelic excellence. Heaven borders on the tomb. Another step, and the "loud uplifted angel trumpets" bid us welcome to the mansions of the everlasting home. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Love's tribute*:—I. A STRIKING EXAMPLE OF CONSTANT LOVE. It is usual to regard man as typifying strength and courage, and woman as typifying love and tenderness. But often those who typify love and tenderness prove stronger and more courageous in the sense of clinging constancy than those who claim to have a monopoly of the robuster qualities. It was certainly so here. II. LOVE ACTS PROMPTLY. Here love had imposed a task upon itself, and, true to its nature, sought the earliest opportunity for discharging it. These women could not have entered earlier upon this business. 1. Promptness to perform an act of kindness. 2. Loving service rendered in relation to one from whom there was no prospect of a return. III. LOVE IS OBLIVIOUS TO OBSTACLES. It forms its plans, marks its course, regards ardently its object, but takes no account of the stones, great or small, that may be in its way. Well for the world that love is thus characteristically blind to hindrances; ninety-nine out of every hundred efforts made for its welfare have been the achievements of men who have been gloriously oblivions of the stones. Carey: Livingstone. IV. LOVE NEVER RETREATS. Ever accompanied by faith and hope, it dares to pursue its course whatever the difficulties may appear. V. GOD HAS ANGELS OVER AGAINST THE STONES THAT MAY BE IN THE PATHWAY OF LOVE. Men are never so angel-like as when engaged in removing hindrances out of the way of those who seek to serve God. (*A. J. Parry.*) *Songs in the night*:—The nightingale is celebrated for its singing in the night. We have, however, seen it maintained that it is all a mistake to suppose that she sings only in the night. She sings in the day as well; only, as other songsters are then in full chorus, her sweeter strains are not particularly distinguishable from the rest. But at night, when all others are hushed, her song is heard, and is more sweet by reason of the contrast with the surrounding stillness. So it was with these women. They served in the day of bright sunshine, but their service was then overshadowed, so to speak, by the demonstrative crowd that thronged around the Saviour. Amidst all the marks of attention paid Him, theirs did not appear particularly distinguishable. But when the voice of the noisy, effusive crowd was hushed during the dark night of trial and suffering which followed the brief day of popularity, they continued to give forth the music of love and sympathy through the dark loneliness of the night. This is love indeed, and the world needs more of it—love that will give forth the music of service in the night, and even at the grave of its hope. (*Ibid.*) *Love's tenacity*:—The little English drummer boy's apt reply to Napoleon indicates the spirit of love in this respect. The story relates, that when the little drummer was brought prisoner before the Emperor, he was told to sound the retreat. "I never learnt it," was the prompt answer. Love has never learnt to sound the retreat, or practise it. Love is ever accompanied by faith and hope, and in their company it always dares to pursue its course, however great may appear the odds against it. (*Ibid.*) *Moral strength in women*: — It is a curious psychological fact that women, though usually much weaker than men, develop, in the hour of affliction, a wonderful degree of moral strength. They bear up under a weight of adversity which would completely crush a man; but as soon as the painful ordeal is over, then nature seems to resume its sway, and the stoic of a few moments before melts into a flood of tears, and gives herself up to a season of uncontrollable weeping. Just as the stately oak affords an impervious shelter from the pouring tempest; but so soon as the fury of the storm is past, and the sun shines out again from behind the clouds, then the slightest touch brings the great raindrops rattling to the ground. Hence we are not surprised that these three women came with tearless eyes to anoint our Saviour's body. Their hearts were sore with grief, but theirs was a depth of woe that found no relief in weeping. (*J. E. Johnson.*) *The stone of death rolled away*:—"They saw that the stone had beeen rolled away." How I love to dwell upon these words; they are so full of comfort to every stricken soul. There is not only a great beauty, but there is a profound significance in them. The mass of men at that time believed that, when a man died, that was the end of him; he was indeed dead—he was annihilated. It was

a common custom among the Romans to heap great piles of rough rocks upon the graves of the dead, as though they would bind them down to the only scene of their existence. Men everywhere shrank with terror from the grave, and the thought of death filled them with horror. On Easter eve, nearly nineteen centuries ago, the fear of death rested like an immense rock upon the great heart of humanity, but on Easter morn that weight of fear and dread was rolled away, and a risen Saviour proclaimed to the world the glorious fact of an immortal existence. (*Ibid.*) *The import of death* :—The complexion of our religious thought depends upon the view we take of death. This life is but the foreground of that which is to come, and death is the narrow bridge upon which we pass from one state of existence to another; or, rather, it is our initiation into the hidden mysteries of the future. The initiatory ceremony is attended with some pain, it is true; but, as in ancient times, when a king wished to raise a brave man to knighthood, he struck him lightly with a sword, and then pronounced him noble: even so, death is but the soft sword-touch by which the Eternal King elevates His faithful servant to the knight-errantry of heaven. There is, in the German, a beautiful fable which represents the angel of slumber wandering over the earth in company with the angel of death. As the evening draws near they approach a village and encamp upon one of its hills, listening to the curfew as it tolls the knell of parting day. At last the sounds cease, profound silence reigns round about, and the dark mantle of night covers the earth. Now the angel of sleep rises from her bed of moss, and, stepping forward to the brink of the height, silently scatters the unseen seeds of slumber. The evening wind noiselessly wafts them out over the habitations of weary men. Sweet sleep settles down upon all the inhabitants of the village, and overcomes them all, from the old man who nods in his chair to the infant resting in its cradle. The sick forget their pain; the afflicted their anguish: even poverty is oblivious of its wants. All eyes are closed. After her task has been performed, the angel of slumber turns to her sister and says: "When the morning sun appears, all these people will praise me as their benefactor and friend. How delightful it is to go about doing good so silently and all unseen! What a beautiful calling we have!" Thus spoke the angel of sleep; but the angel of death gazed upon her in silent sorrow, and a tear, such as the undying shed, stood in her eye. "Alas!" said she, "I cannot rejoice like you in the gratitude of men. The earth calls me its enemy, and the destroyer of its peace." "O my sister," replied the angel of slumber, "at the great awakening of the resurrection morning the souls of the blessed will recognize you as their friend and benefactor. Are we not sisters, and the messengers of our common Father?" They ceased to speak, but the eyes of the death-angel glistened with tears as they both fled out into the darkness of the night. (*Ibid.*) *Hope in death*:—Visitors to the catacombs at Rome never fail to observe the inscriptions over the graves of those early Christians who, escaping from persecution, took refuge in these subterranean abodes. Their friends inscribed over their resting-place these blessed words, "*Requiescat in pace*"—"Rest in peace." Sometimes they added an anchor, which was a favourite emblem with them—the symbol at once of their tempestuous lot, and of the calm trust with which it was borne. (*Ibid.*) *Reunion after the resurrection*:—If you have taken a sail, on a pleasant day, down the harbour of some great city by the sea, you have seen there, perhaps, a noble ship sailing up the bay. All her canvas is set, and shines brightly in the sun. Her crew crowd the rail, and earnestly gaze at the familiar landscape. Here they are at last. They have been round the world, or in search of whale in the Arctic Ocean. At times, during their absence, it seemed as though this hour would never come. In the night when the waves tossed their ship, when the wind whistled through the rigging, and the blocks and cords were covered with ice, they thought of home and loved ones, but long years must elapse before they could return, and hope sunk utterly in their bosom. Now, however, it is all over; the pain is passed; their eyes are rejoiced once more with the sight of their native land, and, as the ship draws near the shore, they eagerly scan the faces on the pier—fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, little ones, and friends have come down to welcome them. The vessel is made fast, a plank is thrown to the land, they step upon it, pass over, and all hearts rejoice in the present gladness. No one thinks of the past; the anguish of parting is forgotten; the long separation fades into a brief moment; all is bliss. My friends, this is but a figure. We are the crew of that vessel, Jesus is the Captain, life is the long voyage upon which we are all embarked, and the landing is that glorious moment when we shall all be united beyond the deep, dark ocean of eternity. And may we not see in those who stand upon the

pier, and scan, with eager, earnest gaze, the faces on the ship, that throng of friends who await us on the other side? (*Ibid.*) *Angels in graves*:—It is very pleasant to note how the ministering angels gather round death and the grave. There is the supporting angel, in what we may truly call the dying agony of Gethsemane. There are the angels who waited to waft the soul set free to that inner heaven, familiar, in Hebrew imagery, as Abraham's bosom. There is the angel of the resurrection, who takes away the bar, and lets out the prisoners of hope. And still, even in the empty grave, tarrying there as if he loved it, there is an angel—strong, beautiful, and fresh as a young man—pure, and bridal, and modest in his long white robe. And why should I put such a difference between the Head and the members as to think that Jesus' tomb was so tenanted, and that mine is empty? Why should that have such sweet company, and a Christian's grave be solitary? Or why should that be shrouded, in our imagination, in darkness and gloom, which is so beautiful and so attractive to those heavenly visitors? (*James Vaughan, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. **They came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.**—*The sedulity of the devout women*:—Consider their sedulity—sedulity that admits no intermission, no interruption, no discontinuance, no indifference in religious offices. Consider we therefore their sedulity, if we can. I say, if we can; because if a man should sit down at a beehive or an ant-hill, and determine to watch such an ant or such a bee in its work, he would find that bee or that ant so sedulous, so serious, so various, so concurrent with others, so contributary to others, as that he would quickly lose his marks and his sight of that ant or that bee. So, if we fix our consideration upon these devout women, and the sedulity of their devotion, as the several evangelists present it to us, we may easily lose our sight, and hardly know which was which, or at what time she or she came to the sepulchre. "They came, in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," says St. Matthew; "they came very early in the morning, the first day of the week, at the rising of the sun," says St. Mark; "they prepared their spices, and rested the Sabbath, and came early the next day," says St. Luke; "they came the first day when it was yet dark," says St John. From Friday evening till Sunday morning they were sedulous, busy upon this service; so sedulous, that Athanasius thinks these women came four several times to the sepulchre, and that the four evangelists have relation to their four comings, and Jerome argues that this variety is no sign of untruthfulness in the evangelists, but testifies the sedulity of the women they speak of, going and coming, and unwilling to be far distant or long absent from their devout exercise. Beloved, true devotion is a serious, a sedulous, an impatient thing. He who said, "I fast twice in the week," was but a Pharisee; he who can reckon his devout actions is no better; he who can tell how often he has thought upon God to-day, has not thought upon Him often enough. It is St. Augustine's holy circle, "to pray that we may hear sermons profitably, and to hear sermons that we may learn to pray acceptably." Devotion is no marginal note, no interlineary gloss, no parenthesis that may be left out; it is no occasional thing, no conditional thing: "I will go if I like the preacher, the place, the company, the weather;" but it is of the body of the text, and lays upon us an obligation of fervour and continuance. (*John Donne, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Who shall roll us away the stone?**—*The death unto sin*:—So said the women who came to see Christ, who had died upon the cross. Are they the last who have had the like fears on a like occasion? Has not every Christian who has set himself in earnest to the work of following Christ in His death been alarmed at an equal difficulty? Are not many frightened at the very outset of their course? I. THE STONE AT THE DOOR. Surely no one who understands anything of the nature of his Christian profession expects to maintain it without trial of his strength; he that seeks Christ crucified and dead for sin, sees that he has first of all to roll away the stone from the sepulchre. This exclamation of the women is continually the cry of our weak nature, of the old man within us who is of little faith, and sees not that the finger of God is stronger than the arm of man. And to our natural weakness the devil adds his wiles to add to our perplexities. 1. To seek Christ as dead for our sins is to resolve to forsake them, and to follow Him to His sepulchre with the earnest desire and full determination of crucifying some sinful affection and resisting some evil inclination or purpose. 2. When a man begins to attempt this a struggle ensues, and he discovers his own weakness. Every sin, every infirmity,

pleads to be heard before it be urned off from his service. Who demands from you such a surrender of your former habits? Are you to live a life of continual struggle? Is watching unto righteousness as pleasant as sleeping in sin? Is swimming against the flood of ungodliness as easy as swimming with it? Is a distant prize, which you may miss, to be preferred to one at hand which is certain? So says the law of sin, and thus, with all his desire to follow Christ unto His death and burial, he is at the same time tempted with a number of hindrances which seem effectually to block up the way, and if he feels the spirit to be willing, he also feels the flesh to be weak. He begins to despair of strength to remove them, and asks in his despondency, "Who shall roll me away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, that I may see and find Christ crucified for me?" II. THE STONE ROLLED AWAY. 1. As the women who uttered these words had no sooner spoken them than they saw that the stone was already rolled away, so it befalls every one who through the sincere purpose of the death unto sin, seeks Christ crucified. Those hindrances, which his weak unassisted nature never could so much as hope to remove, are rolled away by the arm of the power of God. If he feels the power of the death of his Saviour, he feels also the glorious power of His resurrection; he is enabled by the grace of God to overcome all the hindrances and stones of offence which before seemed so great and difficult of removal. 2. Many there are who would rather forsake a course of carelessness and forgetfulness of God; they see its folly and unreasonableness; they perceive in what it must end; but they have not the resolution to free themselves. They no sooner see the sepulchre of Christ, and the spot where they must become partakers in His death by dying to their besetting sin, than they give up the trial, crying out that the thing is impossible. But this would not be so if they accompanied hearty prayer to the Lord with hearty endeavours at removing the hindrances from the way. Let them begin to practise with the lighter ones, with overcoming, *e.g.*, the habit of frivolous excuses, which is so general an obstacle to a consistent course. When a man has once overcome one ever so frivolous, he is prepared for overcoming one more serious. And when he has overcome it, he is quite astonished and ashamed that he should ever for a moment have yielded to it. He is thenceforward convinced that all the rest are not at all more serious and substantial, and goes to work with them, with the strong hand of a just indignation at having been so befooled and perilled by them; and thus, under the grace of God, his faith becomes strong enough to remove mountains. (*R. W. Evans, M.A.*) *Fear exaggerating danger*:—When the first ironclad vessel was used in naval warfare, the news of its victory sent a panic through the Federal rulers. At a cabinet meeting called on receipt of the news, Mr. Stanton, the Secretary of State, said: "This will change the whole character of the war; she will destroy seriatim every naval vessel; she will lay all the cities on the seaboard under contribution. Port Royal must be abandoned; the governors and authorities must take instant measures to protect their harbours." Looking out of the window, which commanded a view of the Potomac for many miles, he said, "Not unlikely, we shall have a shell or cannonball from one of her guns in the White House before we leave this room." Mr. Seward, usually buoyant and self-reliant, was overwhelmed with the intelligence, and listened in responsive sympathy to Stanton; he was greatly depressed, as, indeed, were all the members. *Needless fears*:—The trouble we expect scarcely ever comes. How much pain the evils cost us that have never happened! (*George Moore.*) *Difficulties are phantoms*:—There is a beautiful tradition among the American Indians that Manaton was travelling in the invisible world, and that he came upon a hedge of thorns, and after a while he saw wild beasts glare upon him from the thicket, and after a while he saw an impassable river; but, as he determined to proceed, and did go on, the thorns turned to phantoms; the wild beasts a powerless ghost; the river, only the phantom of a river. And it is the simple fact of our lives that the vast majority of the obstacles in our way disappear when we march upon them. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *How to deal with difficulties*:—Dr. Raleigh used to tell of an old Scotch minister who, when he came to a peculiarly difficult passage of Scripture, would say to his people, "No doubt, my brethren, there is great difficulty here; all the commentators are agreed upon that; so let us look the difficulty boldly in the face, and—pass on!" *Help from above*:—It much perplexed these women how they should roll away the tombstone, and so purchase the sight of their beloved Master; but He that has given His angels charge over His children, that they hurt not their foot against a stone, sent a messenger from heaven to roll back that huge stone for them. Even as a loving father, when he carries his little child to the town, will let him alone to walk in the plain and fair way; but, when he

comes to slippery paths, he takes him by the hand, and in dirty passages bears him in his arms, and, when he comes to a stile, gently lifts him over; so God, our heavenly Father, uses His dear children. If they endeavour to go as far as they may in the ways of His commandments, so fast as they can in the way to the celestial Jerusalem, He will assist them in danger, and help them over stiles of discouragement; take away all rubs of offence, remove all blocks and hindrances in their passage; and the very great stone parting Christ and them, even while they least think of it, shall be rolled away. (*Dean Boys.*) *The opened sepulchre:*—Beneath Westminster Abbey is an old cloister which for centuries was used as the burial-place of the early kings. There, in their stone sarcophagi, are the remains of the Saxon sovereigns, some of them over twelve hundred years entombed. It is related that one day, a few years since, a visitor, who had wandered into this vault, was locked in. He did not notice as the door swung together. The janitors were busy. The usual throng of visitors was in the spacious building. No one heard the muffled voice which began to cry from the cloister, or the muffled blows which began to beat upon its oaken door. The afternoon passed away. What that imprisoned man suffered, as it gradually grew upon him that he was buried alive, who can know? At the usual hour the janitor made his evening rounds, before closing the building for the night. The entombed man heard him as his footsteps came near, then retreated, came near again, then, finally receding, grew fainter and fainter, and died away at length in the distance. What imagination can conceive his agony! He redoubled his cries. He shrieked. He dashed himself wildly against the solid door. In vain. Now he thought he heard the distant entrance-doors creak on their hinges, and the key pushed into the great iron lock. In a moment more the vast tomb would be closed for the night. Fortunately, before turning the key, the janitor paused a moment and listened. He thought he heard dull blows, faint and far away, a sound as of stifled, agonizing cries. He listened more intently. A horrible thought suggested itself to his mind: "Some one is locked into the cloister." He hastened to the place, threw open the heavy oaken door, and held his lantern up to see. The buried man had fallen senseless upon the stone floor. He was rescued just in time to save his reason. Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we men had been like that poor wretch, helplessly and hopelessly beating against the bolted door of a living tomb. Some tell us that Christ came to influence men, to draw us to God, to make an effectual appeal to men by His life and His death to repent and imitate Him. Is this all? we ask. We lay away our friends, and over the coffin and the tomb we say: "Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life." If He is not; if He is dead; then we ask in awe-struck dread: "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Christ came to bring life and immortality to light. What hope could we have if He still lay in His grave? What would this earth then be but the eternal grave and charnel-house of the human race? (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *The stone was rolled away.—The door unlocked:*—Some time since we wished to enter a strange church with a minister, a little before the time for service. We procured a key, but tried in vain to unlock the outside door with it. We concluded we had brought the wrong key, so sent to the janitor for the right one. But he came and told us that the door was already unlocked. All we had to do was to push, and the door would open. We thought ourselves locked out, when there was nothing but that mistaken thought to hinder us from entering. In the same way we fail to enter into love and fellowship with God. The door, we think, is locked against us. We try to fit some key of extraordinary faith to open it. We try to get our minds wrought up to some high pitch of feeling. We say, "I have the wrong key; I must feel more sorry; I must weep more." And all the time the door is ready to open. If we but come boldly, with humble earnestness, to the throne of grace, we may enter at once, without having to unlock the door. Christ is the door, and His heart is not shut against us. We must enter without stopping to fit our key of studied faith, for His mercy is not locked up. We must enter boldly, trustingly, not doubting His readiness to receive us just as we are. He is willing already, and we must not stop to make Him willing by our prayers or our tears. (*Anon.*) *Sunshine in a shady place:*—The place where Jesus lay was a dark spot to His disciples. Little did they know that speedily He was to leave that grave, victor over death, and that heaven's rare sunshine should come to that shady place. Yet so it was. Other captains may gather laurels from a hundred fields, their very names may be proverbs of conquest; but when they lie in the narrow house appointed for all living, they cease from fight, and no more conquests are in store for them. Not so was it with the Captain of our

salvation. His greatest victory was gained in the grave and over it. Every hour of His life yielded the palm to that in which He rose from death. I. CHRIST'S RISING WAS TO HIS DISCIPLES THE RESURRECTION OF HOPE. 1. It proved to them the acceptance of His atonement. 2. It was to them a verification of all His claims. II. CHRIST'S RISING WAS TO HIS DISCIPLES THE RESURRECTION OF COURAGE. What changed men they were after Easter Day! The craven deserters were thereafter bold as lions. III. CHRIST'S RISING WAS TO HIS DISCIPLES THE RESURRECTION OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY. Till He rose, their activities were paralyzed. When He rose, how they began to preach the gospel of the grace of God; and, more than all besides, they preached not Jesus and the cross, but "Jesus and the resurrection"—the empty sepulchre, rather than the uplifted cross. (*George T. Coster.*) *Empty sepulchres:*—1. There are some sepulchres from which we would not desire to roll the stone away. The past has many such sepulchres. In that past there is a sepulchre in which corpses lie—corpses of sinful facts; corpses of broken vows; corpses of old hates; corpses of old loves. Oh! that we could never see them more. Oh! that we could forget their very names. 2. But there is another sepulchre of the past where there do lie some things very sweet, holy, and precious. We long to live these memories over again. We long to walk again, hand in hand, with childlike trust, beside the Galilean lake, or climb the Judean mount with one who lies asleep and has gone into the memory-sepulchre. Let us keep our spices ready. When the bitter Sabbath which has followed the sorrowful interment shall have passed, there will be an Easter morn, and as we run sobbing to the sepulchre we shall see the splendours of the face and hear the music of the voice of our risen and immortal Lord. (*Dr. Deems.*) *Love takes us to Jesus:*—It is not my work to roll away the stone, but it is my duty to go to the grave. Nay, we will not talk of duty. Love sends me to Jesus, living or dead. My love does that. His love will see that the stone is rolled away. (*Ibid.*) *Love works for faith:*—It is said that love is blind. I do not believe it. Love is full of eyes. The sharp-eyed intellect—that Polyphemus of the brain which has only one eye—may miss many a thing. Even cunning, that carries a calcium lamp, may fail to see many a thing. But love will see all. Love is the highest philosophy. Love is the eyes of faith. Love is the hand of faith. Be not faithless, and then you will not be loveless nor blind. (*Ibid.*) *The power of the resurrection:*—The facts of our religion are, when rightly appreciated, so many moral forces for the soul, incorporating ideas which give courage and gladness, and containing principles which are at the root of conduct and life. Pre-eminent among them all is the resurrection. Faith in this is the one and only force that adequately enables us to roll away the stones that encounter us in the struggles of life. What St. Paul calls the "power" of the resurrection is for all of us the mighty secret of a steady triumph over temptation, difficulty, and sorrow. I. THE RESURRECTION IS A POWER TO HEAL CONSCIENCE. Looking back upon the cross and forward to the ascension, it tells us both of pardon and righteousness. II. THE RESURRECTION IS A POWER TO ENNOBLE DUTY. In its light life is seen to be worth living, for the stone of a purposeless and brief existence is rolled away, and with its new aims, responsibilities, functions, and motives, this life on earth has a new meaning and force. There is its stupendous responsibility, for some day we shall rise to receive the things done in our body, *i.e.*, their results, whether they be good or bad. There is its universal jurisdiction. For the resurrection of the race, like its inevitable mortality, is generically bound up with the resurrection of its Head (1 Cor. xv. 22). There is its potential grace (Col. iii. 1). There is its majestic consecration (Rom. xii. 1). III. THE RESURRECTION IS A POWER TO EXPLAIN DEATH. It shows us that death is not the end of our journey, only a stage in it. Because Christ lives, we shall live also. We have each of us to go down alone to the brink of the river, and to leave behind us all we have ever known and possessed and loved, and to pass into another condition of which we have no kind of experience, and most probably to abandon schemes but half completed, and lessons but scantily learned. Yet in the world to which we go, there will be leisure enough in the great spaces of eternity to mellow and develop in that land which needeth not sun or moon to lighten it, the gems of thought and action which we sowed here. IV. THE RESURRECTION IS A POWER TO CONSOLE SORROW. (*Bishop Thorold.*) *Courage rewarded:*—Scipio Africanus besieged a city in Spain well fortified every way, and wanting nothing, and no hope did appear to take it. In the meantime Scipio heard many causes pleaded before him, and put off one before it was ended, to be heard three days after; and, being asked by his officers where he would keep his next court, he pointed to the chief citadel of the besieged city, and told them he would hear the

cause there. In that space he became master of the town, and did as he had appointed. He was not more confident to enter into a city fortified against him, by his valour, than these women were to enter by faith into a sepulchre sealed and shut up, but the Lord is present with courageous attempts, and He sent His angel to assist them. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *The rolled stone*:—The angel was present on this occasion for—1. A witness. The empty sepulchre confirmed his words. 2. A preparation. They were soon to see the Lord in His glorious resurrection-body. 3. A pledge. Peace established between heaven and earth. A new and sweet communion opened. 4. A help. They could not have moved the stone without assistance. God always aids those who seek to go onwards in the path of duty. An angel is ever by holy places—thoughts—words—works, leading us upwards to higher gifts. (*M. Faber.*) *The question of the bereaved heart answered*:—I. WHY WAS THERE EVER A SEPULCHRE ON EARTH? A sepulchre tells of sorrow, sickness, bereavement, death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." II. WHY WAS THERE A SEPULCHRE FOR JESUS? To remove all doubt as to the reality of His death. III. WHY WAS THAT STONE PUT THERE? St. Matthew gives the reason. The very means by which they hoped to prevent the resurrection, were made the occasion of more glorious triumph. Thus did God cause the wrath of man to praise Him, and the plottings of enemies to give the strongest proofs of His resurrection. IV. WHO ROLLED THAT STONE AWAY, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE? Had the Lord rolled it away it would have been said that He was not dead, but only in a state of trance. We must not weep as if we had no one to roll away the stone from the sepulchre. The grave will hold our bodies but a little while. (*Bishop Stevens.*) *Imaginary difficulties*:—We may note some important lessons which this incident teaches. 1. That gloomy forebodings should never prevent us from doing our duty. 2. That those who talk of difficulties, have frequently but little knowledge of the actual state of affairs. 3. That difficulties, as difficulties, are sometimes more imaginary than real. I. THE FEARS OF AN AWAKENED SINNER. These are represented in the earnest inquiry of the woman. Whence these fears? 1. They may be due to want of thorough knowledge of God's character. 2. That men who are exceedingly anxious in reference to any matter are prone to dwell upon the dark side. Let us look at the different forms which these fears assume. 1. The awaked sinner sometimes doubts the readiness of God to receive him. 2. Fears that he can never lead a godly life. 3. Fears that he will never be ready for heaven. II. THAT THESE FEARS ARE GROUNDLESS. This is represented in the fact recorded here. Note—1. That difficulties are oftentimes advantages. 2. Difficulties generally dwindle away as we grapple with them. 3. God has abundantly provided against every difficulty. (*D. Rowlands, B.A.*) *Difficulties removed*:—Prospective difficulties in the path of duty, persons often find removed when they come to the place of meeting them. This may be inferred—I. FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Instance Abraham, Moses, the Israelites in the time of Joshua and Esther, the three Hebrews, Daniel, &c., the apostles and primitive Christians, &c. II. FROM THE PROMISES OF GOD. 1. The promises of God should not inspire us with a false confidence, blind us to the consequences of our conduct, or render us remiss in endeavours to know the will of God. We may be presumptuous in our reliance on the government and promises of God. 2. God has, in the Scriptures, given assurance of a special providence over those who obey His commands. 3. Professors of religion have suffered much in peace of mind, and in efficiency of Christian character, because, by apparent difficulties in prospect, they have been deterred from going forward in duty, when, had they trusted in God and gone forward, they would not have experienced the difficulties anticipated. 4. Where God directs, there go. What God commands, that do. (*G. A. Calhoun.*) *Hindrances removed*:—I. LOOK MORE CAREFULLY AND MINUTELY AT THE NARRATIVE. Costly were the spices brought by Nicodemus, costlier than they could buy; but the first anointing was hurried, the time before Jewish Sabbath so brief. With women's eyes they saw defects, deplored haste. They would anoint carefully. Love prompted resolution; love is often oblivious of hindrances. They had not thought of the stone which the combined strength of many had rolled into its place. II. THE NARRATIVE SPEAKS TO US ON THIS EASTER DAY OF—1. A work of love. (1) Love prompted the purchase of spices; the preparation, the early journey to tomb. Love compelled them with sweet compulsion. (2) Love to Christ has led to greater sacrifices, more toilsome work; *e.g.*, love led St. Paul to give up all things; St. Peter to go to prison and unto death. Motive power of all true work for Christ, love. 2. The cause of that love. (1) Mary Magdalene loved Christ as her Deliverer, Emancipator. Mary the mother of James, and Salome the mother of James and John, loved Him because of what He had been.

to their sons as well as to themselves. (2) We love Him because He first loved us. 3. The hindrances which seem to be in the way of performing the work of love Many great stones in our way. (1) Our ignorance, incompetency, insufficiency. (2) The world's sin, indifference, distrust, sorrow. (3) The formality of the Church lack of unity and love. (4) Other hindrances of which we may be as ignorant as women were of seal and guard. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who shall roll these stones away? 4. These hindrances are more than removed if we go on in spite of them. The stone was rolled away, and the Lord was risen. A living present Saviour our strength and joy. (*J. M. Blackie, LL.B.*) *Symbol of the resurrection:*—A monument erected to the memory of a Spanish lady was of peculiar and happy design. It represented a full-sized marble coffin, with the lid burst open, revealing the place where the body had lain. A Bible and a cross lay in the vacant place upon the grave-clothes, and on the inside of the half-raised lid these words were graven: "*Non est hic, sed resurrexit.*" (*Burritt.*)

Ver. 5. **They saw a young man sitting on the right side.**—*Perpetual youth:*—Very remarkable that this super-human being should be described as a "*young* man." Immortal youth, with buoyant energy and fresh power, belongs to angelic beings, and to the children of the resurrection, who are to be "equal unto the angels." No waste decays their strength, no change robs them of forces which have ceased to increase. Age cannot wither them. I. THE LIFE OF THE FAITHFUL DEAD IS ETERNAL PROGRESS TOWARDS INFINITE PERFECTION. Their being never reaches its climax; it is ever but entering on its glory. Their goal is the likeness of God in Christ—all His wisdom, His love, His holiness. He is all theirs, and all that He is is to be transfused into their growing greatness. They rise like the song-bird, aspiring to the heavens, circling round, and ever higher, up and up through the steadfast blue to the sun! They shall lose the marks of age as they grow in eternity, and they who have stood before the throne the longest shall be likest him who sat in the sepulchre young with immortal strength, radiant with unwithering beauty. II. THE LIFE OF THE FAITHFUL DEAD RECOVERS AND RETAINS THE BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH. 1. Hope. No more disappointments; a boundless future of blessedness. 2. Keenness of relish. The pleasures of heaven always satisfy, but never cloy. 3. Fervour of love. Zeal such as that of the seraphs, that have burned before the throne unconsumed and undecaying for unknown ages. 4. Buoyant energy. All that maturity and old age took away, is given back in nobler form. All the limitation and weakness which they brought, the coldness, monotony, torpor, weariness, will drop away; but we shall keep all the precious gifts they brought—calm wisdom, ripened knowledge, full-summed experience, powers of service acquired in life's long apprenticeship. The perfect man in the heavens will include the graces of childhood, the energies of youth, the steadfastness of manhood, the calmness of old age; as on some tropical trees you may see at once bud, blossom, fruit—the expectancy of spring, the maturing promise of summer, and the fulfilled fruition of autumn—hanging together on the unexhausted bough. III. THE FAITHFUL DEAD SHALL LIVE IN A BODY THAT CANNOT GROW OLD. No weariness. Needing no repose. No death (1 Cor. xv. 42–44; 2 Cor. v. 1–4; Rev. vii. 13–17). (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Youth in heaven:*—If all this be true, that glorious and undecaying body shall then be the equal and fit instrument of the perfected spirit, not, as it is now, the adequate instrument only of the natural life. The deepest emotions then will be capable of expression—nor, as now, like some rushing tide, choke the floodgates through whose narrow aperture they try to press, and be all tossed into foam in the attempt. All outward things shall then be fully and clearly communicated to the spirit; that glorious body will be a perfect instrument of knowledge. All that we desire to do we shall then do, nor be longer tortured with tremulous hands that can never draw the perfect circle we plan, and stammering lips that will not obey the heart, and throbing brain that will ache when we would have it clear. The young spirit shall have for true yokefellow a body that cannot tire, nor grow old, nor die. The aged saints of God shall rise then in youthful beauty. More than the long-vanished comeliness shall then rest on faces that were here haggard with anxiety, and pinched with penury and years. No more palsied hands, no more scattered grey hairs, no more dim and horny eyes, no more stiffened muscles and slow-throbbing hearts. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." It is sown in decaying old age; it is raised in immortal youth. His servants shall stand in that day among "the young-eyed cherubim," and be like them for ever. (*Ibid.*) *The presence of the angel:*—Here is one keeper more than the Jews looked for about our Saviour's sepulchre. on

more than Pilate appointed. One mighty prince of that supernal host, whose countenance was able to daunt a legion of the best Roman soldiers; perhaps there was a multitude with him to celebrate the resurrection, as there was a multitude that appeared in the fields of Bethlehem to rejoice at Christ's Nativity. But this angel, I may say determinately, was one of the most royal spirits that stand before the face of God for ever. How sweetly the eternal wisdom did dispose to let an angel show himself openly at this place of the grave, and upon the celebration of this great day! 1. Those ministering spirits had been attendants upon all the parts of our Saviour's humility; good reason they should be occupied upon all occasions of His exaltation and glory. 2. The women came out with confidence to embalm Christ's body, without considering how many difficulties were in their way; such difficulties as could never have been mastered if the angel had not been sent to facilitate all things for them. 3. The presence of the angel showed that He who had been buried there was God as well as man; for angels were as officious at the sepulchre as they use to be in heaven, which is the throne of God. 4. If not an angel, who else would be believed in so great a matter as this? Tell me, who could give testimony beside that would be credited? The disciples were never so tardy to conceive, never so unapprehensive in anything else as in this! They knew not as yet what the rising from the dead did mean. 5. It is in effect a promise that we shall be exalted after death to the society of angels. 6. Angels desire to be present at everything wherein mankind is benefited, that they may rejoice with us. No envy, no malignity in them, that we shall be made perfect in both parts of nature, both in body and soul, and so in that respect exceed them who are only spiritual substances. (*Bishop Hacket.*)

Vers. 6, 7. He is risen; He is not here.—*The words of an angel*:—Here we have the first gospel sermon preached after the gospel had been finished on the cross, and sealed by the fact of the resurrection. Not a sentence that dropped from the speaker's lips by accident; nor are its words mere words that came uppermost, as though some other words might have done as well. They hold the germ of which the preaching of all true evangelists is but the expansion. I. THE FIRST TITLE UNDER WHICH CHRIST WAS PROCLAIMED BY A MESSENGER FROM HEAVEN AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION. 1. Jesus. The name given at the annunciation. Now it is fulfilled. He *has* saved His people from their sins. Henceforth this name shall be above every name. All through our life in time let us sing with Bernard, "This name is sweetness in the mouth, music in the ear, joy in the heart;" and all through our life in eternity let us expect to penetrate deeper and deeper into the soul of its beauty, and glory, and meaning. 2. Jesus of Nazareth. A lowly title, despised by men. 3. Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. Words used among men to express contempt, an angel is proud to use; and the last phrase of degradation which His enemies flung at Him on earth was the first title under which He is proclaimed by a flaming prophet from heaven. II. THE FIRST NOTICE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Christ's resurrection is—1. A mystery. 2. A miracle. 3. A victory over death. 4. A fulfilment of His promise. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *The angel's words*:—I. This message brings to us the glad tidings that HE WHO ONCE DIED FOR US NOW LIVES FOR US. For the sake of convenience in the presentation of thought, we may be permitted to speak of Christ's death as having two aspects in its saving efficacy—a heavenward and an earthward aspect,—and we assert that its power in both directions depends upon the truth that He is risen. 1. The heavenward aspect. Our benefit, in this direction, from the death of Christ, depends on our trust in Him, and not on our ability to explain precisely what His death has done. We know, at any rate, that it has done all that was necessary, and that not only has He died, but also risen again. His resurrection, sanctioned by the seal of law and all the pomp of heaven, gave to His redeeming act the most public and solemn satisfaction. 2. The earthward aspect. He who is our Saviour must be our Saviour every day, and our Saviour in every place; our Saviour from Satan, from the world, and from ourselves. Not only must we, by the heavenward efficacy of His death, have the forgiveness of sins; but, by its earthward efficacy have Him with us as a living presence, ever at work by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Some time ago the agents of Anti-Christianity placed posters about London, on doors, on walls, and on wooden fences, advertising the question, "Will faith in a dead man save you?" If, as thus insinuated, the Christian faith is like this, then Christianity is a shock to common sense. Dead Hampden will not take a hand against tyranny; dead Milton will not sing; dead Wellington will not fight; dead Wilberforce will not work for the emancipation of slaves in the Soudan; a dead

lawyer will not save you from legal complications; a dead doctor will not save you from the grasp of fever; and just as fantastic, and just as insane, is the conception of salvation by faith in a dead Saviour—a Saviour who is behind eighteen centuries, a Saviour who was crucified but of whom we have been told nothing more. Without the resurrection all the gospel would collapse, as an arch would collapse without the key-stone. II. THE GRAVE IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THE TRUE SEEKERS OF JESUS MAY NOT FIND HIM. 1. "He is not here": this will not apply to heaven. 2. "He is not here": this will not apply to any earthly solitude. 3. "He is not here": this will not apply to the walks of human life. A Christian may say of his place of business, "Here I pass most of my life; this is my soul's battlefield; and will Christ leave me to fight my battles alone?" Never! "Here, in my commercial life," one may say, "Christ is with me, quickening my conscience, and holding my soul in life, while I seem to be only dealing with questions of material, colour, and shape; or with distinctions of weight and currency; or with tables of value, or calculations of outlay, or rates of exchange." It is an axiom of sanctified reason and a sovereign article of faith, that Christ most is—where Christ is most wanted; and that wherever I am, if I want Him, and seek Him, He is near to my heart as the sun is to that which it shines upon. 4. "He is not here": this will not apply to the worshipping assembly. 5. "He is not here": this will not apply to the place where the prodigal stands in his rags and tries to pray, but is speechless; it will not apply to the place where the backslider bemoans himself; it will not apply to the spot where some interceding soul, whose concern for some other soul has risen to the point of intolerable, bursts into the prayer, "Lord help me!" 6. "He is not here": Christ is not in the grave. To think of Christ as among the dead would be to give up faith in Christ. Christ is the life; He cannot, therefore, be among the dead; He must, therefore, be everywhere except in the grave. III. THE SEEKERS OF JESUS HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR, even from that which may look most alarming. When we are overpowered with a sense of the awful other world, let us remember that angels and ministers of grace are all our friends. We and they are under the same Lord, at home in the same heaven, choristers in the same service. IV. ALL WHO KNOW THE GLAD TIDINGS ARE BOUND TO TELL THEM TO OTHERS. (*Ibid.*) *The women at the sepulchre:*—Very signal and very beautiful was the devotedness of these women. They put to shame the stronger sex. 1. Their faith, it is true, was weak. They cherished no hope of finding Christ alive. They had forgotten His own express prediction. 2. Yet, if there be no faith to admire, there is great love to commend. 3. And then, what zeal was in their love. They well knew how carefully the grave had been closed; but they did not turn back at the prospect of a difficulty which they might justly have reasoned was too much for their strength. Theirs was the love which seems to itself able to break through rocks, though hope might have been perplexed had it been called upon for a reason. 4. And love had its reward. They came with the pious intent of anointing the dead, and themselves were anointed with the most fragrant tidings that ever fell on mortal ear. I. THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO THE WOMEN. 1. Their fears are quieted. "Be not affrighted." They had no need to be terrified at the glories of an angel, who had not been alarmed at the indignities heaped upon their Lord. They who could come seeking the crucified Nazarene in the grave were not unworthy to hold converse with celestial beings themselves. 2. But the women needed more than the quieting of those fears which the apparition of the angel had naturally excited. They wanted information as to the disappearance of Christ's body, and this was quickly furnished. There is something remarkable in the reasoning of the angel. He calls upon the women to behold the place where their Lord's body had lain, as though its mere desertion were evidence enough of the fact of a resurrection. And so, in real truth, it was; to all, at least, who like the women, knew and considered the characters and circumstances of the disciples of Christ. The body was gone. Either, therefore, it had been raised from the dead, or it had been removed for the purpose of deception. If removed, it could only be by some of his immediate followers and adherents. But could they have stolen the body? The supposition is absurd. In believing that Christ was raised from the dead, I believe a miracle for which there was adequate power; but in believing that Christ's disciples stole away His body, I believe a miracle for which there was no power at all. Hence the simple fact, ascertainable by the senses, that Christ's body had disappeared, was, and should be still, sufficient evidence of the resurrection. 3. It may not, however, have been only as proving the fact of a resurrection, that the angel directed attention to the deserted grave; but yet further, because there

would be high topics of meditation and comfort suggested by the fact that it had been hallowed by the body of the Lord. Pause awhile, that you may gaze on the consecrated spot, and gather in the wonders with which it is haunted. So interwoven is the fact of Christ's resurrection with the whole scheme of redemption—so dependent is the entire gospel, whether for its truth or its worth, upon its not being possible He should be holden of death,—that if we could but fix attention on that empty grave, we should give hope to the desponding, constancy to the wavering, warning to the careless, comfort to the sorrowing, courage to the dying. Oh, linger awhile at the tomb in holy meditation. Solemn thoughts may steal over you, and brilliant visions may pass before you. That empty vault is full of sublime, and stirring, and glorious things—things which escape the mere passer-by, but present themselves to the patient inspector. II. THE COMMISSION WITH WHICH THE WOMEN WERE ENTRUSTED. 1. The glad tidings were not for them alone; and the angel directs them to hasten at once to give intelligence of the glorious fact. Were not these women highly honoured? Were they not well recompensed for their zeal and love? They became apostles to the apostles themselves; they first preached the resurrection to those who were to preach it to the farthest ends of the earth. As the first news of death came by woman, by woman came the first news of resurrection. 2. What a breaking-forth of long-suffering and forgiving love is there in the fact, that the tidings were first sent to the disciples of the Lord. It seems to have been the first object of the risen Redeemer to quiet the apprehensions of His followers to assure them that so far from feeling sternly towards them on account of their desertion, He had returned to life for their comfort and welfare. Christ did not think little of having been deserted; but He knew how His disciples sorrowed for their fault; that they loved Him sincerely, notwithstanding their having been overcome by fear; and He gave a proof of His readiness to forgive and welcome the backslider, whensoever there is compunction of heart, in sending the first tidings of His resurrection to the men who had all forsaken Him and fled. 3. And this were but little. The disciples as a body had indeed played the coward; yet they had rather avoided standing forth in His defence, than shrunk from Him in open apostacy. One only had done that—denied his Lord—denied Him thrice, with all that was vehement and blasphemous in expression. Alas for Peter! But oh! the gracious consideration of Christ! for indeed it is His voice which must be recognized in the voice of the angel: "Go your way; tell His disciples and Peter." Those two words—"and Peter"—thrown into the commission are, I might almost say, a gospel in themselves. To all repentant backsliders, Easter brings glad tidings of great joy. III. THE PROMISE. 1. There was an appropriateness in the selection of Galilee for this meeting of our Lord with His apostles, forasmuch as He was likely to be known to numbers there, He having been brought up in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, having wrought His first miracle in Cana of Galilee, and having laboured most abundantly in Capernaum and the neighbouring coast. 2. Moreover, as Galilee was called "Galilee of the Gentiles," from its proximity to the territories of the heathen, this fixing the place of meeting on the confines of Judea might be intended to mark that all men had an interest in the fact of the resurrection, or that the blessings of the new dispensation were not to be restricted as had been those of the old. 3. And if it were only to the then living disciples that the promise pertained, of meeting their risen Lord in Galilee, assuredly some place there is of which it may be said to the Church in every age—"There shall ye see Him." "He goeth before you" is, and always will be, the message to the Church. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The holy women's Easter and ours:*—Ah! my brethren, let us see whether, in our annual pilgrimage to the grave of our Lord, we have anything of the love which shows so conspicuously in these zealous women. It is so easy for us to keep Easter with high pomp and gratulation, coming to a tomb which we know to be empty, because death has been vanquished in his own domain, that we may readily overlook the strength of that affection which glowed fervently towards Christ whilst supposed to be dead—dead, too, with every circumstance of indignity and shame. When now the Church marshals her children in solemn procession, and leads them up to the place where the Lord was laid, there is a thorough consciousness that mourning is about to be turned into joy, and all remembrance of Christ's having died as a malefactor, is perhaps lost in the feeling of His having come forth as the resurrection and the life. What would it be, if as yet we only knew Him as "Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified," and not as the Son of God who stripped the grave of all victory? Is it not too much the fact that (if such expressions may be used) we tolerate the humiliation of Christ, in consider-

tion of His subsequent triumph, just as we can overlook the circumstance of a man's having been born a beggar, when we know him to have become a prince? We put up with, though we dislike, the cross, because we know that it conducted to a throne. And yet what ought so to endear to us the Redeemer, as the shame and the sorrow which He endured on our behalf? When ought He to seem so precious in our eyes as when, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," He "gives His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair?" Oh! that heart has scarcely yet been touched with celestial fire, which is forced to turn from Christ in His humility to Christ in His glory, ere it can be kindled into admiration and devotedness. (*Ibid.*) *The place where they laid the Lord:*—I. CONSIDER THE MANNER IN WHICH HE WAS COMMITTED THERE. 1. He was committed there by persons of remarkably interesting character. Joseph of Arimathea: Nicodemus. 2. He was committed there with many tokens of regard and affection. 3. He was committed there with unostentatious quietness and privacy. II. CONSIDER THE ENDS WHICH, BY HIS COMMITTAL TO IT, WERE ACCOMPLISHED THERE. 1. His committal to that place confirmed the reality of His death. 2. His committal to that place fulfilled the declarations of ancient prophecies and types. 3. His committal there completed the abasement of His humiliation. 4. His committal has delightfully softened and mitigated the terrors of the grave for His people. 5. By His committal there He immediately and necessarily introduced His own mediatorial exaltation and empire. This was the last step towards His exaltation; it provided for and secured it. III. LEARN THE LESSONS WHICH ARE INCULCATED THERE. 1. The tenderness and devotedness of His love. 2. The duty of unreserved devotedness to His will. 3. The abounding consolations we possess, in reflecting on the departure of our Christian friends, and in anticipating our own. (*James Parsons.*) *The risen Christ:*—Eight hundred years after Edward I. was buried, they brought up his body and they found that he still lay with a crown on his head. More than eighteen hundred years have passed, and I look into the grave of my dead King, and I see not only a crown, but "on his head are many crowns." And what is more, He is rising. Yea, He has risen! Ye who came to the grave weeping, go away rejoicing. Let your dirges now change to anthems. He lives! Take off the blackness from the gates of the morning. He lives! Let earth and heaven keep jubilee. He lives! I know that my Redeemer lives. For whom that battle and that victory? For whom? For you. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The lessons of the empty grave:*—I. IT IS FULL OF CONSOLATIONS. 1. It proclaims that life reigneth. The sorrow of earth is the seeming supremacy of death. The world's creed is a belief in death as the Lord God Almighty, the terror and destroyer of all things. But the empty grave of Christ teaches us that not death, but life, reigns. 2. It shows that love reigns. Death seems to suggest indifference on God's part to human woe. The resurrection tells a very different tale. 3. It restores hope to man. What Christ wins for Himself He wins for all. 4. It tells of redemption being perfected. It is accepted by God; or the great "Prisoner of Hope" would not have been discharged. And, accepted, Christ rises to reign, from a higher vantage-ground and with new sovereignty. We have a Saviour now on the throne of all things. II. LESSONS ON LIFE AND DUTY. 1. Self-sacrifice is the secret of goodness, success, and joy. The way of the cross always leads to some heaven. No love is ever lost, nor any sacrifice ever fruitless. 2. Nothing can by any means harm the good. By doing wrong we inflict the only thing worth calling injury upon ourselves. (*R. Glover.*) *The empty tomb:*—He lies there no longer. He was not lying there when the angel addressed Mary Magdalene. With most tombs the interest consists in the fact that all that is mortal of the saint, or hero, or near relative, rests beneath the stone or the sod on which we gaze. Of our Lord's sepulchre the ruling interest is that He no longer tenants it. It is not as the place in which He lies, it is not even chiefly as the place wherein He lay, it is as the place from which He rose—that the tomb of Jesus speaks to faith. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Importance of the resurrection to the Christian:*—Let us suppose—it is a terrible thing for a Christian even to suppose—but let us suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ had been betrayed, tried, condemned to death, and crucified; that He had died on the cross, and had been buried; and that, instead of rising the third day, He had lain on in His grave day after day, week after week, year after year, until corruption and the worm had done their work, and nothing was left of His bodily frame save perhaps a skull and a few bones and a little dust. Let us suppose that that was proved to have happened to Him which will happen to you and me, which does happen as a matter of course to the sons of men, to the wealthy and to the poor, to the wise and

the thoughtless, to the young and the old,—that which certainly happened to all the other founders of religion and martyrs, to Socrates and Confucius and Mohammed and Marcus Aurelius; what would be the result on the claims and works of the Christian religion? If anything is certain about the teaching of our Lord, it is certain that He foretold His resurrection, and that He pointed to it as being a coming proof of His being what He claimed to be. IF HE HAD NOT RISEN, HIS AUTHORITY WOULD HAVE BEEN FATALLY DISCREDITED; He would have stood forth in human history—may He forgive me for saying it—as a bombastic pretender to supernatural sanctions which He could not command. IF HE HAD NOT RISEN, WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE MEANING OF HIS DEATH? Even if it still retained the character of a martyrdom, it would have been only a martyrdom. It could not have been supposed to have any effect in the invisible world: to be in any sense a propitiation for human sin. The atoning virtue which, as we Christians believe, attaches to it, depends on the fact that He who died was more than man, and that He was more than man was made clear to the world by His resurrection. As St. Paul tells the Romans, He was powerfully declared to be the Son of God in respect of His holy and Divine nature by His resurrection from the dead. IF HE HAD ROTTED IN HIS GRAVE, WHAT MUST WE HAVE THOUGHT OF HIS CHARACTER AS A RELIGIOUS TEACHER? He said a great deal about Himself which is inconsistent with truthfulness and modesty in a mere man. He told us men to love Him, to trust Him, to believe in Him, to believe that He was the way, the truth, and the life, to believe that He was in God the Father, and the Father in Him, to believe that one day He would be seen sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. What should we think of language of this kind in the mouth of the very best man whom we have ever known? What should we think of it in our Lord Himself, if He was, after all, not merely, as He was, one of ourselves, but also, nothing more? He proved that He had a right to use this language when, after dying on the cross, at His own appointed time He rose from the dead. But it is His resurrection which enables us to think that He could speak thus without being intolerably conceited or profane. Faith in the resurrection is the very key-stone of the arch of Christian faith, and, when it is removed, all must inevitably crumble into ruin. The idea that the spiritual teaching, that the lofty moral character of our Lord, will survive faith in His resurrection, is one of those phantoms to which men cling when they are themselves, consciously or unconsciously, losing faith, and have not yet thought out the consequences of the loss. St. Paul knew what he was doing, when he made Christianity answer with its life for the truth of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 14). (*Ibid.*) *Christ's resurrection the Christian's hope:*—Christ is risen. O how do those words change the whole aspect of human life! The sunlight that gleams forth after the world has been drenched, and dashed, and terrified with the black thunder-drops, reawakening the song of birds and reilluminating the bloom of the folded flowers, does not more gloriously transfigure the landscape than these words transfigure the life of man. Nothing short of this could be our pledge and proof that we also shall arise. We are not left to dim intimations of it from the reminiscences of childhood; vague hopes of it in exalted moments; splendid guesses of it in ancient pages; faint analogies of it from the dawn of day, and the renovation of spring, and the quickened grain, and the butterfly shaking itself free of the enclosing chrysalis to wave its wings in the glories of summer light: all this might create a longing, the sense of some far-off possibility in a few chosen souls, but not for all the weary and suffering sons of humanity a permanent and ennobling conviction, a sure and certain hope. But Christ is risen, and we have it now; a thought to comfort us in the gloom of adversity, a belief to raise us into the high privilege of sons of God. They that are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished. Look into the Saviour's empty and angel-haunted tomb; He hath burst for us the bonds of the prison-house; He hath shattered at a touch the iron bars and brazen gates; He hath rifled the house of the spoiler, and torn away the serpent's sting; "He is risen; He is not here." They that sleep in all those narrow graves shall wake again, shall rise again. In innumerable myriads from the earth, and from the river, and from the rolling waves of the mighty sea, shall they start up at the sounding of that angel-trumpet; from peaceful church-yards, from bloody battle-fields, from the catacomb and from the pyramid, from the marble monument and the mountain-cave, great and small, saint and prophet and apostle, and thronging multitudes of unknown martyrs and unrewarded heroes, in every age and every climate, on whose forehead was the Lamb's seal—they shall come forth from the power of death and hell. This is the Christian's hope, and

thus we not only triumph over the enemy, but profit by him, wringing out of his curse a blessing, out of his prison a coronation and a home. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Christ's resurrection:*—Christ is the resurrection; therefore its source and spring, its author and finisher, in a sense in which no other can be. When He emerged from the tomb on the morning of the world's great Sabbath, He brought life and immortality with Him, by which the pearls of the deep sea, before awaiting the plunge of the diver, the treasures, before lying in the dark mine, were by Him seized and brought up to the light of day. Life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel, and with this knowledge in our minds, we seem to stand by the Saviour's broken sepulchre, just as a man stands upon the shelving brink of the precipice from which some friendly hand has snatched him, shuddering as he thinks of the awful death that he has only just escaped. Look, and see the place where the Lord lay, and tremble—but rejoice with trembling. Is the stone there yet? If it is, if the stone is not yet rolled away, if the grave clothes and spices yet shroud and embalm the corpse, then let the darkness come and blot out the sun, and bid a long, long good-night to all the world's hopes of life, for existence is a feverish dream, and death shall be its ghastly but its welcome end. "But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*) *The triumph of good:*—As a noble sonata, whose melodies are broken with pathetic minors and clanging discords, ends in a burst of triumphant harmony, so the story of the life of Jesus, beset with sins and piteous with sorrows, is crowned at last with the glory of His exaltation. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *The absent corpse:*—When we wander through a graveyard and look at the tombstones, or go into the church and examine the old monuments, we see one heading to them all: "Hic jacet," or "Here lies." Then follows the name, with date of death, and perhaps some praise of the good qualities of the departed. But how totally different is the epitaph on the tomb of Jesus! It is not written in gold, nor cut in stone; it is spoken by the mouth of an angel, and it is the exact reverse of what is put on all other tombs: "He is *not* here!" (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The resurrection guarantees success to Christianity:*—During the years that followed the outbreak of the French revolution, and the revolt against Christianity which accompanied it, there was an extraordinary activity in some sections of French society directed to projecting a religion that might, it was hoped, take the place of Christianity. New philanthropic enthusiasms, new speculative enthusiasms, were quite the order of the day. On one occasion a projector of one of these schemes came to Talleyrand, who, you will remember, was a bishop who had turned sceptic, and so had devoted himself to politics; but whatever is to be said of him, he was possessed in a very remarkable degree of a keen perception of the proportion of things, and of what is and is not possible in this human world. Well, his visitor observed, by way of complaint to Talleyrand, how hard it was to start a new religion, even though its tenets and its efforts were obviously directed to promoting the social and personal improvement of mankind. "Surely," said Talleyrand, with a fine smile, "surely it cannot be so difficult as you think." "How so?" said his friend. "Why," he replied, "the matter is simple; you have only to get yourself crucified, or anyhow put to death, and then, at your own time to rise from the dead, and you will have no difficulty." (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 7. **Tell His disciples and Peter.** *Love's triumph over sin:*—Matthew, who also reports the angel's words, has only "tell His disciples." Mark (the "interpreter" of Peter) adds words which must have come like wine and oil to the bruised heart of the denier, "and Peter." To the others, it was of less importance that his name should have been named then; to him it was life from the dead that he should have been singled out to receive a word of forgiveness and a summons to meet his Lord; as if He had said through His angel messenger, "I would see them all, but whoever may stay behind, let not *him* be wanting to our glad meeting again." I. NOTICE THE LOVING MESSAGE WITH WHICH HE BECKONS THE WANDERER BACK. 1. A revelation of love stronger than death. 2. A revelation of a love that is not turned away by our sinful changes. Whilst we forget Him, He remembers us. We cannot get away from the sweep of His love, wander we ever so far. 3. A love which sends a special message because of special sin. The depth of our need determines the strength of the restorative power put forth. The more we have sinned, the less can we believe in Christ's love; and so, the more we have sinned, the more marvellous and convincing does He make the testimony and operations of His love to us. 4. A love which singles out a sinful man by name.

Christ deals with us not in the mass but soul by soul. He has a clear individualizing knowledge of each. He loves every single soul with a distinct love. He calls to thee by thy name—as truly as He singled out Peter here, as truly as when His voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul." To thee forgiveness, help, purity, life eternal are offered. II. THE SECRET MEETING BETWEEN CHRIST AND PETER (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5). This is the second stage in the victorious conflict of Divine love with human sin. What tender consideration there is in meeting Peter alone, before seeing him in the company of others! How painful would have been the rush of the first emotions of shame awakened by Christ's presence, if their course had been checked by any eye but His own beholding them! The act of faith is the meeting of the soul with Christ alone. Do you know anything of that personal communion? Have you, your own very self, by your own penitence for your own sin, and your own thankful faith in the love which thereby becomes truly yours, isolated yourself from all companionship, and joined yourself to Christ? Then, through that narrow passage where we can only walk singly, you will come into a large place. The act of faith which separates us from all men, unites us for the first time in real brotherhood, Heb. xii. 22–24. III. THE GRADUAL CURE OF THE PARDONED APOSTLE (John xxi. 15–19). "Lovest thou Me?" includes everything. Hast thou learned the lesson of My mercy? Hast thou responded to My love? Then thou art fit for My work, and beginning to be perfected. So the third stage in the triumph of Christ's love over man's sin is when we, beholding that love flowing towards us, and accepting it by faith, respond to it with our own, and are able to say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." And when we love, we can follow. With love to Christ for motive, and Christ Himself for pattern, and following him for our one duty, all things are possible, and the utter defeat of sin in us is but a question of time. The love of Christ, received into the heart, triumphs gradually but surely over all sin, transforms character, turning even its weakness into strength, and so, from the depths of transgression and very gates of hell, raises men to God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *And Peter*:—I. Tell Peter, although he has sinned so grievously. It was heartless, repeated, public, wilful. II. Tell Peter, for he has wept. God's anger against His children ceases with the commencement of their penitence. III. Tell Peter, for he has suffered. His thoughts were God's chastening rod. IV. Tell Peter he is dear to Christ. Sin can grieve Christ, cause Him to withdraw, wound and disfigure us; but it cannot alter His love. V. Tell Peter, for he is your brother. They had sinned. Have not we denied our Lord? (*Stems and Twigs.*) *The news of Christ's resurrection sent to Peter*:—No action of Christ's life is without importance and significance. I. TO WHOM WAS THIS MESSAGE PARTICULARLY SENT? To Peter, who was then distinguished from the other disciples, not in merit, but in guilt. He was not thus honoured, however, because of his guilt, but because he was now penitent and sorrowful. It was not his cursing and oaths which brought this mercy to him, but his penitence and tears. There is no comfort here for the hardened or careless sinner, or for the self-righteous, or for the man who, in the midst of his iniquity, feels no self-abhorrence, no deep contrition, for his guilt. But for the broken-hearted sinner, there is the sweetest comfort. II. THE GRACIOUS BEING WHO SENT THIS MESSAGE. 1. Christ had just the same compassionate heart after His resurrection that he had before it. Death changed the nature of His body, but not the nature of His heart or the disposition of His soul. He still looks on those who seek Him, with the same tenderness, sympathy, and love. 2. The risen Jesus looks more on the graces than on the sins of the penitent Christian. He seems to have thought more of Peter's sorrow than of his curses, more of his tears than of his oaths. He sees so much of the desparate wickedness of our hearts, as to make Him contemplate with pleasure the least good His grace enables us to bring forth. Who would not value a flower which he should find blooming on a rock, or throwing its fragrance over the sands of a desert? Not that in giving His grace and pardon, He overlooks the sin; to Peter's everlasting shame the treachery which he committed is recorded against him in God's Holy Word. The sin is forgiven, but the remembrance and shame of it still remain. 3. Christ sometimes vouchsafes to the believer, when bowed down with extraordinary sorrow, more than ordinary comfort. It is not a light thing that will quiet the conscience of the Christian, after he has been overcome by temptation. The storm which sin occasions in his soul, cannot easily be soothed into a calm. The mourning Christian needs some special interposition of grace and mercy, before he can again cherish in his heart a hope of pardon and acceptance. In the mysterious riches of His goodness, the Lord some-

times vouchsafes to His Saints, in these seasons, peculiar consolations. He recalls their soul, "tossed with tempest and not comforted," from the contemplation of its own depravity, and tells it to look again with the eye of faith on the cross of His Son. 4. The contrite sinner may draw much comfort and hope from Christ's resurrection. What a ground for rejoicing have we in the fact that "Christ is risen!" Let us seek to know the power of His resurrection. III. THE MESSENGERS EMPLOYED. 1. An angel. Why? (1) To do honour to Christ. (2) To teach us, that the breach between us and the angels is healed. They again regard us as friends and love us as brethren. They are made our ministering servants, and do not disdain the office. (3) The contrite sinner is peculiarly an object of love to the heavenly hosts. The angel of the Lord has compassion on the weeping Peter, and rejoices to take to him a cup of consolation. What a lesson for ministers, what a lesson for every Christian, is here! It is a heavenly work to comfort the sorrowful. 2. Three poor women receive the message from the lips of this heavenly herald, and carry it to the mourning penitent. Why? They had been first in love, affection, service; it was but right that they should be first in honour and reward. And note the manner in which these women were sent. "Go quickly" (Matt. xxviii. 7). Why such haste? There was nothing sinful in the feelings which a view of their Lord's tomb was likely to excite; but they were not suffered to stay there to indulge them, that we might be taught that pious feeling must lead to pious actions. It is good and sweet to think of Christ; but it is better to act for Christ. He is the best servant, not who delights to stand in his master's presence, but who carefully minds and diligently goes about his master's business. (*Charles Bradley, M.A.*) *Women as ambassadors*:—The faculties and abilities of the soul appear both in affairs of state and in ecclesiastical affairs; in matters of government and in matters of religion; and in neither of these are we without examples of able women. For, for state affairs, and matters of government, our age hath given us such a queen, as scarce any former king hath equalled. And in the Venetian story, I remember, that certain matrons of that city were sent by commission, in quality of ambassadors, to an empress with whom that state had occasion to treat. And in the stories of the eastern parts of the world, it is said to be in ordinary practice to send women for ambassadors. And then in matters of religion, women have always had a great hand, though sometimes on the left as well as on the right hand. (*John Donne, D.D.*) *Reasons for the meeting in Galilee*:—Why was this meeting fixed in Galilee? Why was this long journey to be taken? Why did Jesus go to Galilee at all after His resurrection? Why was it evidently a matter of so much interest and importance to the mind of Jesus to go there? At Jerusalem He was crucified, at Jerusalem He rose, at Jerusalem He ascended; Jerusalem was the place of all honour; why then should He be so careful to go down to that northern province? Many reasons doubtless there were of which I know nothing; but I think we may be permitted to see some of them. 1. One might lie in that very fact of the distance and the difficulty. For it is a universal law that God always requires efforts, and always blesses the efforts He requires. You will not find your best privileges close to your hand. You must be content to go far for them. You must exercise self-denial and labour to get at them. 2. There is no doubt also that Jesus did it partly because Galilee was despised. He had lived in Galilee as a child and youth; He had taken most of His apostles from thence; and now that He was risen and almost glorified, He was not going to pass by the place He loved in humble life. That would not be the Jesus with whom we have to do. 3. Underlying this feeling, there can be little question that there was a great principle upon which Christ acted,—of extending the proofs of His resurrection as widely as possible. Therefore He manifested His risen body in the two extremes of the land to which that dispensation was confined. 4. Christ was true to all the finer sympathies of our nature, and amongst those sympathies is the love of old, and especially early, associations. (*James Vaughan, M.A.*) *Mary of Magdala*:—She was—I. A GREAT SUFFERER HEALED BY CHRIST. II. A GRATEFUL MINISTRANT TO CHRIST (Luke viii. 2, 3; Mark xv. 41). III. A FAITHFUL ADHERENT TO CHRIST. IV. A SINCERE MOURNER FOR CHRIST (Comp. Matt. xxvii. 61; Mark xv. 47; John xx. 1, 2, 11–18). V. AN HONOURED MESSENGER OF CHRIST (John xx. 17, 18; ch. xvi. 10). (*T. S. Dickson, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **Now when Jesus was risen.**—*Evidence of the fact of Christ's resurrection*:—The empty tomb of Jesus recalls an event which is as well attested as any in

history. It is so attested as to put the idea of what is called "illusion" out of the question. The main purpose, the first duty, of the apostolic ministry was to witness to the fact that Christ had risen. The apostles did not teach the resurrection as a revealed truth, as they taught, *e.g.*, the doctrine of justification; they taught the resurrection as a fact of experience—a fact of which they themselves had had experience. And this is why the different evangelists do not report the same appearances of our risen Lord. Each one reports that which he himself witnessed, or that which was witnessed by the eye-witness on whose authority he writes. Put the various attestations together, and the evidence is irresistible. That which these witnesses attest must be true, unless they have conspired to deceive us, or are themselves deceived. The idea that they are deceived, however, cannot be entertained by any man who understands human character; the idea that they were themselves deceived is inconsistent with the character of the witness which they give. No doubt there are states of hallucination, states of mental tension, in which a man may fancy that he sees something which does not in fact present itself to his senses. The imagination for the moment is so energetic as to impose upon the senses an impression which corresponds to that, whatever it be, which creates an emotion within the soul. Nay more, the New Testament itself speaks of inward revelations, sometimes during sleep, sometimes during the waking hours, as was that rapture of which St. Paul wrote, into "the third heaven, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell—God knoweth." But the accounts of the appearances of our risen Lord do not at all admit of either of these explanations. If He had been seen only for a passing moment, only by one or two individuals separately, only in one set of circumstances, under one set of conditions again and again repeated, then there would have been room for the suspicion of a morbid hallucination, or at least of an inward vision. But what is the real state of the case? The risen One was seen five times on the day that He was raised from the dead; He was seen a week after; He was seen more than a month after that; and frequently, on many occasions, during the interval; He was seen by women alone, by men alone, by parties of two and three, by disciples assembled in conclave, by multitudes of men, five hundred at a time; He was seen in a garden, in a public roadway, in an upper chamber, on a mountain in Galilee, on the shore by the lake, in the village where His friends dwelt. He taught as before His death, He instructed, He encouraged, He reproved, He blessed, He uttered prolonged discourses which were remembered, which were recorded; He explained passages of Scripture, He revealed great doctrines, He gave emphatic commands, He made large and new promises, He communicated ministerial powers; and they who pressed around Him knew that His risen body was no phantom form, for He ate and drank before them just as in the days of yore, and they could, if they would, have pressed their very fingers into the fresh wounds in His hands and feet and side. In short, He left on a group of minds, most unlike each other, one profound ineffaceable impression, that they had seen and lived with One who had died indeed and had risen again, and that this fact was in itself and in its import so precious, so pregnant with meaning and with blessing to the human race, that it threw in their minds all other facts into relative insignificance; it was worth living for, it was worth dying for. (*Canon Liddon.*) *He appeared first to Mary Magdalene:*—The Saviour's first appearance after resurrection was to a woman. For all He had died. But not to an assembled world does He manifest Himself now that He has risen victorious o'er the grave; not to angels, or apostles; not to the faithful Joseph, or the true-hearted Nicodemus; but to a woman! I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSON TO WHOM CHRIST APPEARED. A woman, and an inhabitant of a distant and unimportant town bordering towards the Gentile frontier, who had been possessed of demons, until Christ reached forth to her the hand of pity. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH HE APPEARED TO HER. He called her by her name. III. THE GRAND TRUTH HERE ILLUSTRATED. 1. It was not a mere chance encounter. Christ having already left the tomb, must have purposely concealed Himself from all His disciples save the one whom He wanted to see and comfort. 2. Jesus revealed Himself to her, unaccompanied by any. No angel hosts: Christ was "all in all." 3. The manifestation was afforded in a garden to a woman. Eden: Eve. (*George Venables.*) *The power of the gospel to restore the fallen:*—The free grace of the gospel, and the holiness it produces, distinguish it from every other system. It both justifies and sanctifies. In its method of justifying, it gives glory to God, and brings peace to man. In its method of sanctifying, it displays the fulness of grace, and delivers

from the power of Satan. I. THOSE WHO ARE MOST UNDER SATANIC INFLUENCE, ARE YET WITHIN THE REACH OF THE GOSPEL. 1. The power of evil spirits would be exerted over both body and soul, if they were not restrained by a greater power. As it is, Satan blinds the mind; works powerfully in the hearts of the children of disobedience; puts it into men's hearts to betray the best of Masters, and to lie against the best Friend. All sins, whether against God or against men, are committed in consequence of his temptation. 2. No power can counteract this evil influence but that which is Divine. In heathen countries Satan reigns uncontrolled; in Christian countries his devices are revealed, all his malice is baffled, his kingdom is overthrown. 3. The gospel not merely delivers men from Satanic influence, but exalts men into the most holy characters. II. THE GOSPEL CAN EFFECT THE REFORMATION OF THE MOST ABANDONED. No sooner was Mary Magdalene dispossessed, than she devotes herself to the service of her Lord. So with all who heartily embrace Christ's religion. The power of sin in them is destroyed, the influence of Satan is dissolved, and they become willing captives of Christ's love. Justin Martyr, in one of his apologies, says, "O Emperor; we, who were formerly adulterers, are now chaste; we, who used magic charms, now depend on the immortal God; we, who loved money, now cheerfully contribute to the wants of all; we, who would not sit down with those who were not of the same tribe with us, now cheerfully sit among and pray for the conversion of them that hate us, and persuade them to live according to the excellent precepts of Christ." 1. Let us learn how admirably the gospel is adapted to the present state of human nature. It finds us guilty, and reveals to us the sovereign mercy of God in Christ. It subdues the corrupt heart; turns men from darkness to light, &c. 2. See what ground this affords for exertion, even in the most desperate cases. (*W. Marsh, M.A.*) *Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene*:—I. WHO SHE WAS. Christ revealed Himself first to a woman. A woman out of whom He had cast seven devils. She had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power. In her mighty grace had proved its power. She had become a constant attendant on the Saviour. She spent her substance in relieving His wants. II. HOW SHE SOUGHT. Very early in the morning. With very great boldness. Very faithfully: stood at sepulchre. Very earnestly—weeping. Perseveringly. Sought Christ only. There was much ignorance, very little faith, but much love. III. HOW SHE FOUND HIM. Jesus Christ was discovered to her by a word. Her heart owned allegiance by another word. Her next impulse was to seek close fellowship. She then entered on His service. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Mary Magdalene*:—I. A melancholy instance of Satanic power. II. A glorious trophy of Divine grace. The cure was unsought by her. Mary resisted the healing hand. She was healed by a word. She was healed instantaneously. III. An ardent follower of Christ. IV. A faithful adherent to her Master under all trial. V. One of the most favoured beholders of Christ. VI. An honoured messenger of Christ to the apostles. (*Ibid.*) *Woman first*:—Was it not most meet that a woman should first see the risen Saviour. She was first in the transgression, let her be first in the justification. In yon garden she was first to work our woe; let her in that other garden be the first to see Him who works our weal. She takes the apple of that bitter tree which brings us all our sorrow; let her be the first to see the Mighty Gardener, who has planted a tree which brings forth fruit unto everlasting life. (*Ibid.*) *Magdalene*:—Mary Magdalene represents those who have come under the tormenting and distracting power of Satan, and whose lamp of joy is quenched in tenfold night. They are imprisoned not so much in the dens of sin as in the dungeons of sorrow; not so criminal as they are wretched; not so depraved as they are desolate. (*Ibid.*) *Demented*:—Persons possessed with devils were unhappy; they found the gloom of the sepulchre to be their most congenial resort. They were unsocial and solitary. If they were permitted, they broke away from all those dear associations of the family circle which gave half the charms to life; they delighted to wander in dry places, seeking rest and finding none; they were pictures of misery, images of woe. Such was the seven-times unhappy Magdalene, for into her there had entered a complete band of devils. She was overwhelmed with seven seas of agony, loaded with seven manacles of despair, encircled with seven walls of fire. Neither day nor night afforded her rest, her brain was on fire, and her soul foamed like a boiling cauldron. (*Ibid.*) *Demented*:—To sum up much in few words, there is no doubt that Mary Magdalene would have been considered by us to be demented; she was, practically, a maniac.

Reason was unshipped, and Satan stood at the helm instead of reason, and the poor barque was hurried hither and thither under the guidance of demons. (*Ibid.*) *A modern illustration*:—I remember a man of excellent character, well-beloved by his family and esteemed by his neighbours, who was for twenty years enveloped in unutterable gloom. He ceased to attend the house of God, because he said it was no use; and although always ready to help in every good work, yet he had an abiding conviction upon him that, personally, he had no part nor lot in this matter, and never could have. The more you talked to him the worse he became; even prayer seemed but to excite him to more fearful despondency. In the providence of God, I was called to preach the Word in his neighbourhood; he was induced to attend, and, by God's gracious power, under the sermon he obtained a joyful liberty. After twenty years of anguish and unrest, he ended his weary roamings at the foot of the cross, to the amazement of his neighbours, the joy of his friends, and to the glory of God. (*Ibid.*) *Hope for the worst*:—Until the gate of hell is shut upon a man, we must not cease to pray for him; and if we see him hugging the very door-posts of damnation, we must go to the mercy-seat and beseech the arm of grace to pluck him from his dangerous position. The case of Mary Magdalene is a looking-glass in which many souls, wrung with anguish, may see themselves. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **And she went and told them.**—*A sad interior and a cheery messenger*:—Mark is graphic: he paints an interior like a Dutch artist. We see a choice company —"Them that had been with Him." We know many of the individuals, and are interested to note what they are doing, and how they bear their bereavement. We see —I. A SORROWING ASSEMBLY. "As they mourned and wept." What a scene! We behold a common mourning, abundantly expressed by tears and lamentations. They mourned—1. Because they had believed in Jesus, and loved Him; and therefore they were concerned at what had happened. 2. Because they felt their great loss in losing Him. 3. Because they had seen His sufferings and death. 4. Because they remembered their ill-conduct towards Him. 5. Because their hopes concerning Him were disappointed. 6. Because they were utterly bewildered as to what was now to be done, seeing their Leader was gone. II. A CONSOLING MESSENGER. 1. Mary Magdalene was one of themselves. 2. She came with the best of news. The resurrection of Christ (*a*) removes the cause of sorrow; (*b*) assures of the help of a living Redeemer; (*c*) secures personal resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 23); (*d*) brings personal justification (Rom. iv. 25). 3. She was not believed. (*a*) Unbelief is apt to become chronic: they had not believed the Lord when He foretold His own resurrection, and so they do not believe an eye-witness who reported it. (*b*) Unbelief is cruelly unjust: they made Mary Magdalene a liar, and yet all of them esteemed her. III. A REASSURING REFLECTION. 1. We are not the only persons who have mourned an absent Lord. 2. We are not the only messengers who have been rejected. 3. We are sure beyond all doubt of the resurrection of Christ. (*a*) The evidence is more abundant than that which testifies to any other great historical event. (*b*) The apostles so believed it as to die as witnesses of it. (*c*) They were very slow to be convinced, and therefore that which forced them to believe should have the same effect on us. 4. Great reason, then, for us to rejoice. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Unnecessary grief*:—A sorrow is none the less sharp because it is founded upon a mistake. Jacob mourned very bitterly for Joseph, though his darling was not torn in pieces, but on the way to be lord over all Egypt. Yet while there is of necessity so much well-founded sorrow in the world, it is a pity that one unnecessary pang should be endured, and endured by those who have the best possible grounds for joy. The case in the text before us is a typical one. Thousands are at this day mourning and weeping who ought to be rejoicing. Oh, the mass of needless grief! Unbelief works for the father of lies in this matter, and works misery out of falsehood among those who are not in truth children of sadness but heirs of light and joy. Rise, faith, and with thy light chase away this darkness! And if ever thou must have thy lamp trimmed by a humble Mary, do not despise her kindly aid. *Transient unbelief*:—"Is it always foggy here?" inquired a lady passenger of a Cunard steamer's captain, when they were groping their way across the Banks of Newfoundland. "How should I know?" replied the captain, gruffly; "I do not live here." But there are some of Christ's professed followers who do manage to live in the chilling regions of spiritual fog for a great part of their unhappy lives. (*Cuyler.*)

Ver. 12. **After that He appeared in another form.**—*The changing form of the unchanging Saviour* :—I. CHRIST HAS A FORM. Eliphaz said (Job iv. 15, 16). Not thus is the Lord Jesus presented to us in the New Testament. Throughout His earthly life He appears, not in uncertain and wavering lines, but in all the distinctness and power of a human personality. And during the forty days it is the same. The corporeity of the Redeemer is glorified, but it is still the "man Christ Jesus" with all His individual characteristics. In our day strong endeavours are being made to get rid of the "form" of Christ; to substitute what is vague and visionary for the definite and palpable truth as it is in Jesus. The prophet says, "The heart is deceitful." Half this, it seems, is true; the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately good, for modern introspection has found in it a Messiah, a Church, and a Bible. Let us enter our protest against these endeavours to reject a substantive religion. 1. We have those who reject the historical Christ on behalf of a mystical Christ. Spiritual men, we are told, attain positions which render historical saviours redundancies. They find a diviner Christ in their heart. But, my brethren, can we forego the Christ who is painted with such severe realism in the New Testament for that idealistic Christ whom men assume to find in their own heart? Must we vaporize the Christ of the Gospels into that formless, bloodless Christ known in certain quarters as the inward, the spiritual, the eternal Christ? Surely not. If we reject the historic Christ we shall soon have no Christ at all, for the Christ we find in our heart is simply the reflection of the historic Christ. What Christ did Morison find in the heart of the Chinese? or Carey in the heart of the Hindoo? or John Hunt in the heart of the Fijian? A very equivocal Christ, surely! 2. We have those who reject the visible Church for the invisible Church. The Church of God does not exist, we are told, as a visible institution. The external Church—sacraments, ritual, ministers, and impertinences. "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." Once more Christ is to become disembodied and formless; His Church is to be sublimated into that featureless shade known as Plymouthism. Against this etherealization we must protest also. The true Church, which is Christ's "body," will resemble Christ's resurrection body; being at once spiritual and corporeal; heavenly and earthly; invisible, as its deepest life is hid in God, and yet revealing in its organisation and government and ordinances the power and grace of its immortal Head; with human features and human raiment, and yet standing before the world, as the Master stood on the Mount, transfigured in a glory altogether unearthly and Divine. 3. We have those who reject dogmatic theology for subjective truth. Some of these reject the Scriptures altogether—looking into the heart they find a surer Bible. They spurn a "book revelation;" the eternal truth is wronged by any attempt to give it "form." Or, if revelation is accepted, no "form of sound words" must be allowed; the teachings of revelation must not be expressed in any distinct and definite doctrine. They must have the milky way where all is nebulous and undistinguished light; they cannot tolerate the astronomy which for practical purposes makes a map of the stars; they must have the light—the pure, white, orbless light—and look with contempt on Sir Isaac Newton who with the prism breaks up the light for human uses. The mysticism which rejects the orb, which rejects the prism, forgets the limitations of man, and the practical needs of human life. The Word of God and the creed of His Church are sun and rainbow, one shedding the light, the other analyzing it, and both essential for the illumination and pacification of the world. II. THE FORM OF CHRIST IS SUSCEPTIBLE OF CHANGE. "In another form." The form of Christ still changes, as perhaps all forms change. There are constant and legitimate changes in the presentment of Christ; in the expression of evangelical doctrine; in the ritual and government of Christ's Church. Christ changes the form of His manifestation for great ends. 1. That the form shall not stand between us and the Saviour Himself. We can only know Christ through the form, and up to a certain point any particular form may help us, but at length the form instead of being a medium of revelation may become a screen. Spiritual meaning evaporates from the best definitions; ceremonies are emptied of their meaning; and the Church order which once aided the gospel may become inoperative and obstructive. The form may become a darkened glass to hide Christ, and lest this should be the case the form is ever being changed so that we may "all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord. 2. That He may make Himself known to men of the most diverse character and circumstance. It seems very probable that the appearance of Christ was altered from time to time during the forty days to meet the several cases of the disciples. Our religion, thank God, is for

the world, and it has all the richness and versatility of a universal faith. What a scene of infinite variety is this world of ours! How it teems with individuality, originality, eccentricity, divergence, contrast! So the Christian Church does not come with stereotyped language, a rigid ritual, an unalterable rubric, but it meets the infinite richness of human nature with infinite flexibility and inexhaustible resource. Christ comes in many forms that He may meet the multitudiousness and manifoldness of the race. 3. That He may become the Saviour of all generations. With the perpetual and inevitable changes of time Christ constantly reappears in new forms. The world does not outgrow Christ, but Christ confronts successive generations in new forms, appropriate forms, richer forms. Christianity never becomes obsolete; in the midst of a new world it stands forth in a new form, but with all its ancient power and grace. The old truth speaks in new language; the old spirit passes into new vessels; the old life pulsates in new organizations; the old purpose is accelerated by a new programme. The Church of Christ does not present the spectacle of an antique corporation, but it is strong, fresh, aggressive, and hopeful as ever to-day (Psalms ciii. 2, 3). The "new religion," what is that, Positivism? No, Positivism is the new superstition; Christianity is the new religion—the old religion and the new. This earth is old, very old, and yet to-day when you look at the primrose, the anemone, and all the fresh young beauty of the spring, you feel it is the new earth also. So is it with Christianity. Older than the hills, it is vital, and fresh and fruitful as ever. The Christianity of St. Paul, of Chrysostom, of Bernard, of John Howe, of John Wesley, produces at this very moment the brightest, grandest, happiest thoughts and things of the modern world. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Observe—III. THAT UNDER THE CHANGING FORM ARE ABIDING CHARACTERISTICS. For a time the eyes of the disciples were holden, and they knew not with whom they talked, but in the end they recognized their Master. How shall we recognise the Master? Under changing forms how shall we be sure of His presence? There are many anti-Christs in the world; many creeds and doctrines set forth as Christ's which are not Christ's. The old Scandinavian heroes after eating an ox are fabled as making another to grow in its hide the next day. Many in modern times have caught the trick of denying the vital facts and doctrines of the gospel, and then substituting vain dreams of their own under the language, institutions, and symbols of Christianity. But yet we need hardly be deceived. 1. There is the sign of reality. John writes (2 John vii.). Let us turn from all those who would turn Christ into an abstraction or personification. 2. There is the sign of glory. In the beginning of their intercourse with the stranger Cleophas and his companion had no exalted idea of the stranger, but as they conversed with Him their sense of His greatness grew until they knew Him to be their risen Lord. They recognized the sign of His divinity. Where the glory of the Divine, the Risen, the Reigning Lord does not shine forth, "this is a deceiver and anti-Christ." 3. There is the sign of sacrifice. It has been conjectured that in the breaking of the bread the disciples saw the mark of the nails in the Saviour's hands. However this may be, their mind was full of the sufferings of Christ, and they recognized in Him the Victim of Calvary. Let us, like the monk in the old legend, ask for the print of the nails. The true gospel is the gospel of the cross; the true ministry confesses, "I am determined to know nothing among men, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified;" the true worship ascribes salvation "to Him who has washed us from our sins in His own blood." The "form" may change, but by "the tokens of His Passion, by the marks received for me," all His people discern Him with exultation and assurance. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Vers. 14–20. **And upbraided them with their unbelief.**—*The departing Saviour:*—It cannot be a matter of indifference to the pious to know in what manner the blessed Saviour took final leave of His earthly Church. If we really love Him it cannot but interest us to understand how He conducted Himself, how He looked, and what were the last things He said and did. Upon these points the Scriptures are not silent; and the whole account is quite in keeping with what we would naturally expect. I. OUR DEPARTING SAVIOUR'S CHIDINGS. Love itself gave birth to these upbraidings. There is nothing so subtle or so damaging to the peace of souls as the workings of unbelief. Faith is the great saving grace; where it is wanting there is misery, darkness, death. Therefore, because He loved them, and wished to have them take in and possess the true joys of faith, Christ upbraided His disciples with their unbelief. They deserved and required chiding, for their

unbelief was due to their own hardness of heart, not to the want of evidence. The Lord's valedictory admonition is repeated to us again to-day. We may not have doubted that He rose from the dead, but have we so believed as to take all the momentous implications of Christ's resurrection home to our souls, and to have them living in our lives? (Rom. vi. 4-6; Col. iii. 1, 2.) II. OUR DEPARTING SAVIOUR'S COMMANDS. Another manifestation of His love. He would that all should be saved. 1. The gospel must be preached. This is a Divine work, and a binding obligation. No Christian is exempt from the duty, and none excluded from the privilege and honour of taking part in it, according to his sphere and measure. 2. The gospel must be heard. 3. The sacrament of baptism must be administered. Faith without obedience is nothing, and salvation is promised only to him "who believeth and is baptized." It may seem to be a very small thing—a mere insignificant ceremony; but in whatever way men look upon it Jesus appointed it, and has connected with it all the sublime benefits of His mediation. III. OUR DEPARTING SAVIOUR'S PROMISES (Heb. ii. 4; Acts xvi. 16-24; xix. 11, 12). Many demons, also, of pride, covetousness, uncleanness, drunkenness, gluttony, ambition, lust, hatred, moroseness, and spirits of wickedness innumerable, did the apostles expel by their preaching, turning men from their idols to serve the living and true God (Acts ii. 5-11; x. 46; xxviii. 1-6; iii. 1-9; ix. 33-35; xiv. 8-11). Time would fail to tell the works of healing wonder which the disciples wrought in the name of Jesus by prayer and the laying on of hands, in which the Master fulfilled His promise. Nor was the promise or the fulfilment of it confined to them alone. It is still outstanding, firm, and good; and always must hold good, as long as the gospel is preached, and men are found to believe it. IV. THE DEPARTURE ITSELF. No thunder, as at Sinai; no darkness, as at the crucifixion; no overpowering radiance, as at the transfiguration. Only the gentle lifting up of the hands to bless. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Upbraided them*:—1. That He might keep them humble through the memory of their past weakness, and their readiness at all times to fall away from Him. 2. He reminds them of their incredulity and blindness of heart, so that they might be gentler in dealing with those who sinned, and who were unable to perceive and hold the truth. 3. He did so also for our sakes in order that we may not doubt, seeing that they so greatly doubted, and yet had all their doubts removed by the clear evidence of their own senses. Their faithlessness is the stimulus to our faith, and their doubt removes all ground of doubt from us. And in thus showing the littleness of their faith and their natural unaptness to be His messengers, Christ indicates the greatness of that gift which was able to overcome all natural disqualifications, and to make these doubting disciples the faithful ministers and stewards of His gospel. Those who had fled when no real danger existed He sends into the midst of a people thirsting for their blood; those who had not comprehended Him He chooses for the work of making others comprehend Him; those who had not believed in the very witnesses of His resurrection He sends forth as the witnesses themselves of this same truth, that so we might know that the promulgation of Christianity is the direct work, not of men, but of God. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Effects of uncertainty*:—If one should go into the Louvre at Paris, and see the Venus de Milo, and begin to have admiration for that highest conception of a noble woman held by the Greek mind, and his guide should whisper to him, "It is very uncertain whether this is the original statue; in the time of Napoleon it was stolen, and it is said that it was sent back; but many think that another was made in imitation of it, and put in its place, and that this is the imitation," it would kill that man's enthusiasm in a second; and he is not going to say, "I admire that countenance," because it may not be that countenance. And the moment you introduce the element of uncertainty in regard to any substantial religious conviction, your doubt has taken away that enthusiasm which only goes out toward certainty. (*Beecher.*)

Ver. 15. **Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.** *Christ's commission to His apostles*:—I. THE WORK. Preaching the gospel. 1. Speaking. Much of the real and useful work of life is wrought by words. They are the tools of almost every worker in some department of his toil. In preaching the gospel they are the chief agency. 2. The gospel. Gospel, in the lips of Jesus, represented facts in the eternal past and in the eternal future—promises, predictions, His own history, dispensations of the grace of God, and certain aspects of the government of God; and gospel, to the ears of the eleven, represented the same central truths, with the outlying truths unrevealed, so that they could not mistake what Jesus meant

when He said, "Preach the gospel." 3. A new work this. Not preaching merely —that was old enough; but preaching the gospel. 4. A Divine work. Commenced by God Himself. A work which claims high esteem for all engaged in it; a work in which the loftiest ambition may be satiated; a work whose results surpass in blessedness the creation of earth and heaven. II. THE WORKMEN. 1. Men of little refinement or education. This gave them sympathy with the common people, if not influence over them. 2. Men of ordinary secular occupations. 3. Great varieties of natural character among them. No two were alike. Yet these very different men were called to do the same work. The same gospel may be preached in very different styles with equal success. 4. They had received special training for their special work. As more was expected from them than from others, more had been done for them. 5. Yet they were far from being perfect men. Just before this commission was addressed to them they were upbraided by Christ with their unbelief and hardness of heart. A perfect man or a perfect preacher is not necessary for the preaching of a perfect gospel. 6. Although not perfect men, they were men to whom special promises were made—promises of the presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost—promises of power. 7. They were representative men, foundation men, men who had to begin what others should carry on. III. THE SPHERE OF WORK. The whole world. No limitations of country or climate; no distinctions of barbarism and civilization, bondage and freedom, preparedness or otherwise of particular peoples. Wherever there were men these workmen were to go. "Every creature"—for every creature hath sinned, and every creature is guilty before God, and every creature is going astray, and every creature is liable to punishment. For every creature there is gospel enough and to spare. What a glorious sphere for working—the world, man, men, all men, every creature! And what work! These workmen are builders of a temple that shall fill the world, and stewards of wealth which shall enrich the world, and ambassadors upon an errand of supreme importance to the world, and sowers in the field of the world, by whose agency the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, men shall be reconciled to God, the poor shall become heirs of God, and "the tabernacle of God," &c. (Rev. xxi. 3, 4). IV. THE MASTER OF THE WORKMEN. He who saith "Go," came into the world. He who saith "Go ye," Himself came: came not by deputy or proxy, but Himself came. He who saith "Go ye and preach," Himself preached. He who saith "Go ye and preach the gospel," is the gospel. He who saith "Go into the world to every creature," is the propitiation for the sins of the world. With such a Master the lack of willing workmen is truly wonderful. Shall we neglect to obey? Shall we undervalue obedience as a means of redemption to others? All cannot preach, but all can repeat the faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and all can unite in sending forth men qualified to preach, and in sustaining such men by contributions of property, by manifestations of sympathy, and by prayer. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *Missionary zeal*:—A ragged-school teacher went out into the lanes of our city to bring in neglected children. He found a child, the very incarnation of wickedness and wretchedness, and led her to the school. There she heard expounded and applied the parable of the prodigal son. Shortly after the child was seized by fever, and the teacher visited her. In one of his visits he read this parable, and when he came to the words, "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," the child exclaimed, "Ah, that was just like me! That's good; say it again—'a great way off!' What, ever so far, away, away, like me with the devil? That must be far from God and the Lamb. Yes! I was a great way off. How good! how kind! But I'm afraid I have been worse than that bad son. Still, I have said 'Dear Jesus, I want to love you, I want to get away from the devil; please help me.' And I think He heard me, for I have felt somehow different ever since. I am not afraid now; no, not one bit." When death was so near that it was supposed that all power of utterance was gone, she aroused herself, and said, in a clear and distinct voice, evidently referring to destitute children allowed still to wander through the streets and lanes of the city: "Fetch them in; oh, be sure and fetch them in! Fetch them in and tell them of Jesus, tell them of Jesus; oh, be sure and fetch them in." (*Ibid.*) *The apostolic commission*:—I. THIS COMMISSION IS MOST IMPORTANT IN ITS NATURE. Consider—1. Its Divine origin. 2. Its adaptation to the circumstances of mankind. 3. Its efficiency. 4. Its individuality. One and the same salvation for all and each. One common remedy for the universal disease. If there were some given place where all must needs be, and many roads led to it, it would not be essentially im-

portant which we took; but if there were but one road which would conduct the traveller to the place where all should be, how carefully should that road be sought! And is not Christ the only way to heaven? II. THIS COMMISSION IS LEGITIMATE IN ITS AUTHORITY. It is the command of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And His authority is twofold. 1. It is official—by delegation from His Father. 2. It is essential. Authority without control. III. THIS COMMISSION IS OFFICIAL IN ITS EXECUTION. It is to be done by preaching. There is a special commission for those sent out to preach. 1. The preacher must have a personal realization of the benefits of the gospel in his own heart. How can an unbeliever inculcate faith? How can an impenitent man call sinners to repentance? 2. The preacher must have an ardent love to the fallen souls of men. 3. He must have a solemn, heartfelt impression, that the Author of the gospel requires this at his hands. 4. He must have suitable qualifications. 5. He must have the sanction of his brethren in the ministry. IV. THIS COMMISSION IS UNIVERSAL IN ITS EXTENT. 1. Universal in point of place. 2. Universal in point of persons. CONCLUSION: 1. This subject enables us to meet the infidel objection which is urged against the gospel on the ground of its partial diffusion. This is not God's fault. He commands that His salvation be proclaimed to the ends of the world. 2. How loud is the call on our gratitude that the gospel has been proclaimed to us. 3. How imperative is the obligation that we hand it on to others. (*R. Newton.*) *Reasons for the preaching of the gospel:*—I. THE WORLD KNOWS NOT GOD. By its own wisdom it cannot find Him out. Instruction needed which God alone can impart. God has imparted the knowledge of Divine things to some, and ordered them to convey that knowledge to the rest of the world. II. THE TEMPORAL MISERIES OF THE HEATHEN ARE VERY GREAT. To what torture do they submit in their blind devotion to false gods! Hasten to lead them out of their ignorance and superstition into the light of the knowledge of the only true God. III. THE WOE THAT AWAITS THEM BEYOND THE GRAVE. What an education for eternity is theirs! IV. THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD TO EVERY ONE WHO RECEIVES IT. (*H. Townley.*) *The duty of Christians with respect to missions:*—I. THE NATURE OF THIS COMMAND. II. THE EXTENT OF THIS COMMAND. III. THE PERIOD WHEN THIS COMMAND WAS GIVEN. (*J. Langley, M.A.*) *Good news for you:*—I. THE GOSPEL IS A REVELATION OF LOVE. Is there not sunshine enough in the sky for your daily paths, and is there not enough water in the ocean to bear your small craft? The love of God is like the sunshine, and His goodness is like the ocean; there is enough for you; and if you will but take the gospel as meant for you, His great love shall be shed abroad in your heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. II. THE GOSPEL ALSO IS A PROVISION OF PEACE. It takes the sting from trouble; it takes the pain from sickness; it breathes to all, hope, paradise, joy. And it imparts peace at all times. Wherever you are, whatsoever you may be, and through whatever you may pass, the gospel gives you a peace that sustains you safely. Like yonder impregnable British fortress at Gibraltar, so God's peace shall keep you. The waves may dash against that ancient fortress, and guns may burst their fire-balls upon it, but that rock is impregnable; held by British hearts it shall stand against all the foes of the world. So God's peace shall enter your soul, and keep you in all the trials and storms of life. III. THE GOSPEL IS A CALL TO LIBERTY. What is it that causes men to feel the pain of guilt? It is that they are afraid of being discovered; they are afraid of men pointing the finger of scorn at them. But how blessed to know that when we stand before the bar of God all our sins shall be blotted out. IV. THE GOSPEL IS AN INSPIRATION OF POWER. It tells us that the Lord shall stand up in your heart and raise a standard, which shall hurl back the flood of sin. However great the torrent may be the Lord shall breathe power to check it. V. THE GOSPEL IS THE INSPIRATION OF POWER TO BE HOLY. We cannot in our own strength run the heavenly race; but Jesus enters into us, abides in our hearts, and gives us His own almighty strength. VI. THE GOSPEL ALSO OFFERS A PRESENT JOY. Blessings, mercies, pardon, peace—all to be had now. VII. THE GOSPEL CONSTRAINS US TO LOVE GOD, AND TO LIVE HOLY LIVES, BY THE MOST POWERFUL MOTIVE. What can constrain us like the love of Jesus? (*W. Birch.*) *Life in the gospel:*—I. THE GOSPEL IS BROUGHT TO US BY JESUS, OUR KINSMAN. II. IN THE GOSPEL JESUS REVEALS TO US THE CHARACTER OF GOD. When you hold a magnet to a little bit of steel the two are drawn together, on account of some mysterious affinity between them. So, when a sincere mind examines the way to God pointed out by Jesus in the Gospel, and we are true as steel to the Saviour-magnet, we are drawn to the breast of our God. III. THE CHIEF GEM OF THE GOSPEL IS, THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING IS FORGIVEN. We

forgive men after they have begged us to do so, but God forgives men before they ask. IV. EVERY MAN WHO SINCERELY BELIEVES THE GOSPEL SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE POWER OF HIS SIN. Salvation is not a varnish to hide our blemishes; it is a new spirit which roots out every sin. V. THE GOSPEL IS FOR EVERY MAN. (*Ibid.*) *Preach, preach, preach everywhere*:—I. WHAT IT IS THAT WE HAVE TO CARRY TO EVERY CREATURE. The great truth that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." What is meant by the word preach? Its meaning is extensive. It includes all church work for the spread of the gospel. II. WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF THIS COMMISSION? No limit as to where this gospel is to be preached. No limit as to the persons to whom it is to be preached. III. THE INDUCEMENT TO ENLIST IN THIS SERVICE, AND OBEY THIS COMMAND. God has said it. It is a delight to God. By it the elect are to be gathered out. We should do it for our own sakes. Because Jesus wills it. IV. WHAT POWERS HAVE WE TO WORK WITH, AND HOW CAN WE DO IT? If all cannot preach, yet they may either teach the young or influence their own households. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "*Up, guards, and at them*":—Search ye out, and look what you can do, and whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do with all your might, for the grave will soon open for you, and there is no work nor device in the grave whither you are hastening. "Up, guards, and at them," was said in the day of battle, and I may say it to every Christian. We shall not bless the world by big schemes, mighty theories, gigantic plans. Little by little grows the coral reef on which afterwards gardens are to be planted. Little by little must the kingdom come, each man bringing his mite and laying it down at Jesus' feet. So breaks the light. Beam by beam it comes. One by one come the arrows from the bow of the sun, and at last darkness flies. So, so must break the everlasting morn. (*Ibid.*) "*Compel them to come in*":—He would be a poor sportsman who would sit in his house and expect the game to come to him. He that would have it must go abroad for it, and he that would serve his Master must go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. (*Ibid.*) *A great work*:—Oh, church of God! thy Lord has given thee a work almost as immense as the creation of a world; nay, it is a greater work than that; it is to recreate a world. What canst thou do in this? Thou canst do nothing effectively unless the Holy Spirit shall bless what thou attemptest to do. But that He will do, and if thou dost gird up thy loins, and thy heart be warm in this endeavour, thou shalt yet be able to preach Jesus Christ to every creature under heaven. (*Ibid.*) *The great commission*:—I. IT IS IMPLIED THAT THERE IS AT LAST A GOSPEL IN THE WORLD; not a history merely, not a philosophy, but a gospel—a way of salvation for dying men; a finished thing, to which nothing is to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken. II. This commission to preach the gospel to all the world also implies THE CONTINUITY OF THE CHURCH AS A PREACHING, TEACHING BODY. III. The extension and establishment of the gospel through the world, TILL IT EVERYWHERE COMES TO BE A DOMINANT POWER IN SOCIETY, is an obligation on our part in whatever light we examine it. 1. Consider the gospel as related to whatever is best in human civilization. Civilization is but a secular name for Christianity itself. Popular education comes from the gospel. As the dignity of man is realized there comes a liberalizing of government, and tyrannic dynasties are overthrown. Domestic felicity, literature and art, are aided by the gospel. 2. But beyond all this look at the spiritual wants of man to which the gospel ministers. It transfigures man's whole life. 3. Recall the new impressions which we ourselves have received of the greatness and value of the gospel. We have felt its inspiring energy in our own hearts. 4. Thus we enter the fellowship of the noblest souls of earth—a society grander than that of a mere intellectual companionship—even with the ancient martyrs. But best of all, the execution of this great commission brings us into fellowship with Jesus Christ, in His unique and royal work. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Every Christian a preacher*:—It is often said that there are not preachers enough to meet the demands of the land and of the world. That may be true. But every living Christian is a preacher. Every prayerful, earnest, godly life is a sermon. There are a hundred ways of preaching Jesus without choosing a Bible text or standing in a pulpit. A Wilberforce could proclaim the gospel of love on the floor of the British Parliament, even though he wore no surplice and never had a bishop's hand laid upon his honoured head. George H. Stuart was an apostle of the cross when he organized the Christian commission for soldiers' tents; and John Macgregor was another when he organized the "Shoe-black Brigades" in the streets of London. Hannah More preached Christ in the drawing-room, and Elizabeth Fry in prison-cells, and Florence

Nightingale in the hospitals, and Sarah F. Smiley among the negro freedmen of the South. Our Master scatters His commissions very widely. Harlan Page dropping the tract and the kind word through the city workshops; John Wanamaker, the Christian merchant, mustering poor children into his "Bethany" mission-house; James Lennox, giving his gold to build churches and hospitals; the Dairyman's Daughter, murmuring the name of Jesus with her faint, dying voice; George Müller, housing and feeding God's orphans—all these were effective and powerful preachers of the glorious gospel of the Son of God. There is a poor needlewoman in my congregation whose unselfish, cheerful, holy life impresses me as much as any pulpit message of mine can possibly impress her. A true and noble life is the mightiest of discourses. It is the sermons in shoes that must convert the world to Jesus, if it is ever to be converted. (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *To every creature*:—Christ's own word for it, come with me to that scene in Jerusalem where the disciples are bidding Him farewell. Calvary, with all its horrors, is behind Him; Gethsemane is over, and Pilate's judgment hall. He has passed the grave, and is about to take His place at the right hand of the Father. Around Him stands His little band of disciples, the little church He was to leave to be His witnesses. The hour of parting has come, and He has some "last words" for them. Is He thinking about Himself in these closing moments? Is He thinking about the throne that is waiting Him, and the Father's smile that will welcome Him to heaven? Is He going over in memory the scenes of the past; or is He thinking of the friends who have followed Him so far, who will miss Him so much when He is gone? No, He is thinking about you. You imagined He would think of those who loved Him? No, sinner, He thought of you then. He thought of His enemies, those who shunned Him, those who despised Him, those who killed Him—He thought what more He could do for them. He thought of those who would hate Him, of those who would have none of His gospel, of those who would say it was too good to be true, of those who would make excuse that He never died for them. And then turning to His disciples, His heart just bursting with compassion, He gives them His farewell charge: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They are almost His last words, "to every creature." (*D. L. Moody.*) *Preach the gospel*:—When we ask in these days what does this injunction mean, the answers which come to us, from within and from without the Church, are many and discordant. As in the earliest times of Christianity there were pseudo-gospels, counterfeits, and forgeries, so it is NOW. I. AMONG THESE PSEUDO-GOSPELS OUTSIDE THE PALE OF THE CHURCH WE HAVE—I. The gospel of reason; the idea that man, by his own mental power, is rapidly acquiring a newer and truer wisdom, which is to make the world happier and better than it has ever been. It is a religion of the head, not the heart; it cannot therefore apprehend spiritual verities. 2. The easy, plausible gospel of universal toleration and philanthropy, which assumes and abuses the sacred name of love. Indifferent altogether for truth, caring only for expediency. Anything for peace. 3. The gospel of sentiment—the religion which very much resembles those pictures in which the cross is almost hidden by gay-coloured flowers—satisfying itself with music, sensational preaching, controversial reading, and much speaking, but shirking the plain uninteresting duties of daily life, and doing no real work for others, for the soul, and for God. 4. The gospel of wealth, pleasure, honour, authority, believing (so falsely) that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things he possesses. II. AND THEN, WITHIN THE CHURCH, HOW MANY GOSPELS? Alas, what sore surprise and sorrow would vex the righteous soul of one of those who lived in the earlier, happier days of our faith could he re-visit this world and witness our unhappy divisions! "What has become," he would say, "of the apostles' doctrine and fellowship? How the seamless robe of our crucified Lord is rent and torn; and that, not by declared enemies, but by professed friends!" III. WHAT, THEN, ARE WE TO PREACH? We must appeal to two friends, whom we shall find in every heart; two allies who will help us; two witnesses who will come into court. (1) Love and (2) fear. Let all seek Christ as their Saviour, lest they tremble when He comes to be their Judge. (*S. R. Hole, M.A.*) *Missionary work for all Christians*:—After these words were spoken, the missionary duty of the Church, in its nearest and remotest extent, was as little a matter of doubt as the resurrection. A thousand other things it may do or neglect; may have elaborate organization or none; may build cathedrals, or pitch tents; may master all learning and art, or know nothing save Christ and Him crucified; but go it must, and preach it must, or it is not Christ's Church. You little children who love Jesus must tell others of His love. You rich men

must work through your money; you wise men by your wisdom; you poor uncultured souls through your prayers. Unless you do your utmost to spread the kingdom, you disobey the first law of the kingdom; unless your love reaches out to all men, you have not the spirit of Christ, who died for all. A positive belief and a missionary spirit have long ago been proved the indispensable characteristics of a living Church. The Lord speaks in tender tones to rouse our sympathy for those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. He unfolds the magnificent conception of the empire of holy love, exalting the continents and blessing the isles. He stands in the midst of these unredeemed millions and says: "Come. Lo! I am waiting for you here." But behind all invitations stands the command, "Go, preach;" and above them all rises the judgment, for us and for them, with its eternal blessedness and eternal woe. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Go:*—"I hope," says Mr. Knibb, of St. Petersburg, in a letter, "the subject of devoting ourselves and our children to God and to His service will be more thought of, and more acted upon, than it has been hitherto. I am more and more convinced that, if St. Paul had ever preached from this particular text, he would have laid great stress on the word 'go.' On your peril do not substitute another word for go. Preach is a good word; direct is a good word; collect is a good word; give is a good word. They are all important in their places, and cannot be dispensed with. The Lord bless and prosper those who are so engaged, but still lay the stress on the word go; for 'how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach except they be sent?' Six hundred millions of the human race are perishing, and there are perhaps thirty among all the Christians in Britain who are at this moment preparing to 'go'!" *The commission:*—Words of strong authority from the captain to the soldier; from master to servant; from Redeemer to redeemed; from king to subject. No doubt as to possibility, no discussing of dangers, no calculating of results—"Go!" Great oceans, high mountains, wide deserts are in the way; shipwreck, fever, starvation, death—"Go!" The people are brutish and hard of heart; they have slain the Lord; they will not hear the disciple—"Go!" I am but a child, a man of unclean lips; I forsook the Lord and fled; I denied Him—"Go!" (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Go ye into all the world.—Peculiarity of Christianity:*—There is one feature of Christianity which must strike the mind of every observer, viz., that no other system of religion in the world is missionary. They all limit themselves to the people, country, and clime where they have grown. Where are the missionaries of the religions of China, India, Africa, Persia, or Japan? But no sooner was Christianity introduced into the world than it sent forth its agencies beyond the place of its introduction. "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the utmost parts of the earth" are the scope of its operations. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is the command of the Spirit to all its agents. And hence Christianity has its agents, institutions, literature, and means in every quarter of the globe. What does this prove for Christianity? That, as a system of religion, it is nobler, grander, more benevolent and diffusive than any other; and the success which has crowned Christianity wherever it has gone demonstrates that it is Divine in its origin; adapted to all minds, hearts, lives, and countries; civilizing, meliorating, saving, and beautifying in its effects; and the only religion which can restore a fallen world to its glorious Creator and God. (*John Bate.*) *A strange messenger:*—A professional diver said he had in his house what would probably strike a visitor as a very strange chimney ornament—the shells of an oyster holding fast a piece of printed paper. The possessor of this ornament was diving on the coast, when he observed at the bottom of the sea this oyster on a rock, with a piece of paper in its mouth, which he detached, and commenced to read through the goggles of his head-dress. It was a gospel tract, and, coming to him thus strangely and unexpectedly, so impressed his unconverted heart, that he said, "I can hold out against God's mercy in Christ no longer, since it pursues me thus." He became, whilst in the ocean's depth, a repentant, converted, and (as he was assured) sin-forgiven man. Saved at the bottom of the sea. *Universality of the message:*—The apostles understood their commission to be general and indiscriminate for every creature; so they received it from Him who laid the foundation of such an extensive ministration by tasting death for every man. Accordingly, they went forth on their commission, to preach the gospel to all the world. They did not square their message by any human system of theology, nor measure their language to the lines of Procrustean creeds. They employed a dialect that traverses the length and breadth of the world. They did not tremble for such an unreserved exhibition of the ark and the mercy-seat. They

could not bring themselves to stint the remedy which was prepared and intended to restore a dying world, nor would they cramp the bow which God had lighted up in the storm which threatened all mankind. (*Dr. T. W. Jenkyn.*) *The Church's orders:*—During the American war, a regiment received orders to plant some heavy guns on the top of a very steep hill. The soldiers dragged them to the base of the hill, but were unable to get them any farther. An officer, learning the state of affairs, said, "Men, it must be done! I have the orders in my pocket." So the Church has orders to discipline the world. *Progress of missions:*—We sometimes complain of the slow progress of missions, as though nothing had been done. Is it nothing that the Church has been aroused to her duty? that every large branch of Zion has her missionary organization? that these amount to eighty? that four thousand missionaries are in the field? that the Word of God is preached in fifteen thousand localities of the heathen world? ten million dollars are collected annually to sustain these missions? that six hundred and eighty-seven thousand converts are enrolled in Africa, and seven hundred and thirteen thousand in Asia? and that, if we add to these the fruits of the Romish missions, we shall number Christians by the million in the heathen world? (*Bp. H. M. Thompson.*) *The universal gospel:*—The late Duke of Wellington once met a young clergyman, who, being aware of his Grace's former residence in the East, and of his familiarity with the ignorance and obstinacy of the Hindoos in support of their false religion, gravely proposed the following question: "Does not your Grace think it almost useless and absurd to preach the gospel to the Hindoos?" The Duke immediately rejoined: "Look, sir, to your marching orders, 'Preach the gospel to every creature,'" *Success of missions:*—Carey and his compeers, the first English Baptist missionaries, laboured seven years before the first Hindoo convert was baptized. Judson toiled on for years without any fruit of his labour, until the few churches in this land which sustained him began to be disheartened. He wrote. "Beg the churches to have patience. If a ship were here to carry me to any part of the world, I would not leave my field. Tell the brethren success is as certain as the promise of a faithful God can make it." The mission was commenced in 1814. In 1870 there were more than a hundred thousand converts. *Vivifying effects of missions:*—As Peter walked at eventide, his lengthened shadow, as it fell on the gathered sick in the streets of Jerusalem, healed as it swept over them; even so is Christianity going through the earth like a spirit of health, and the nations, miserable and fallen, start up and live as she passes. (*F. F. Trench.*) *The duty and results of preaching the gospel:*—I. THE EXTENT OF OUR COMMISSION. 1. "All the world"—because all the world is involved in transgression. (1) We learn this from Scripture (Rom. iii. 19, 23; v. 12). (2) Experience confirms this. All the foundations of the world are out of course. 2. "All the world"—because man's wants are everywhere the same. All need pardon; all need enlightenment; all need peace. 3. "All the world"—because God has designed to collect a people for Himself from all the tribes and families of men. II. THE OBJECT OF OUR EMBASSY. To preach the gospel—the glad tidings of mercy and grace. 1. The gospel must be preached faithfully. Nothing of our own put in; nothing of God's left out. 2. The gospel must be preached affectionately. Not to drive men away, but to gather them in; not to terrify, but to console. 3. The gospel must be preached in complete and entire dependence upon the grace of Christ. III. THE RESULTS THAT WILL ATTEND THE ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF OUR MESSAGE. None can perish but by their own fault. (*George Weight.*) *The obligations and requirements of the gospel:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S COMMISSION. To preach the gospel, explain its doctrines, to enforce its precepts, to proclaim its promises, and to denounce its threatenings. II. THE END OR DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S COMMISSION. To preach the gospel in all the world and to every creature. 1. This implies that all mankind stand in need of the gospel. 2. It implies universality of design on the part of God to bestow the benefits of the gospel on those who receive it. 3. It implies universal grace and efficiency as accompanying the ministry of the gospel to render it effectual for the salvation of all. 4. It implies an obligation on the part of the Church to send its ministers literally into all the world and to every creature. III. THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GOSPEL FROM THOSE TO WHOM IT IS PREACHED. 1. The gospel requires faith from those to whom it is preached. Saving faith consists of two parts. (1) The faith by which the sinner is justified. And in this there are three distinct acts. (i) The assent of the understanding. (ii) The consent of the will. (iii) The soul's repose and reliance upon Christ for pardon. (2) The faith by which the Christian

daily lives. Trust. Confidence in God, leading to prompt and willing obedience. 2. Baptism. The duties imposed upon all baptized are—(1) To maintain an open connection with the Church. (2) To defend the cause of Christ against all adversaries. (3) To live a holy life. IV. THE RESULTS OF THE RECEPTION OR REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL. (*E. Grindrod.*) *The duty of spreading the gospel:*—Huber, the great naturalist, tells us that if a single wasp discovers a deposit of honey or other food, he will return and impart the good news to his companions, who will then sally forth in great numbers to partake of the fare which has been discovered for them. . Shall we who have found honey in the rock Christ Jesus be less considerate of our fellow-men than wasps are of their fellow-insects? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gospel for every creature:*—I heard of a woman once who thought that there was no promise in the Bible for her; they were all for other people. One day she got a letter, and, when she opened it, found it was not for her at all, but for some other woman of the same name. It led her to ask herself, "If I should find some promise in the Bible directed to me, how should I know that it meant me, and not some other woman?" And she found out that she must just take God at His word, and include herself among the "whosoevers" and the "every creatures" to whom the gospel is freely preached. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The great commission:*—Christianity and missions are inseparable. A Christian is one who professes to obey Jesus. Jesus has distinctly told us to go and preach the gospel throughout the world; therefore, whatever objections may be brought against Christian missions, are really brought against the authority of Christ and against Christianity itself. The Christian who opposes Christian missions is an anomaly. Some philosophers may say that Christianity is unsuited to the circumstances of every nation. Some philanthropists may say there is a better method of doing good to the world; some patriots may say that all we can do should be done in our own country; some politicians may say that it is unwise to interfere with the established institutions of other countries; some practical men may say the results accomplished are not worth the pains taken. Now, if we have no distinct reply to any of these objections, it is sufficient that we are under the orders of Christ, and those orders we must comply with. Suppose that when the commander-in-chief of an army calls his officers to him and says: "You are to storm every battery, to attack every position, of the enemy," then the subordinate officers were to say: "I can't see the reason of this; there's an insuperable difficulty yonder; we had better delay the execution of the command." It would be monstrous, although it might be that your commander is mistaken, or perhaps the command itself is ambiguous. But in this case the command is not ambiguous; nothing could be more clear—go; go everywhere, go everywhere and preach; preach the gospel to every one. Nothing could be plainer. And then there is great emphasis given to the command by the circumstances under which it was uttered. A command in battle may be given in the time of conflict, and so the order may be mistaken; but this command was not given under the excitement of conflict; the conflict was over, the battle finished, the victory over death had been won, and calmly, as by a conqueror, this word of command was given. We think much of the last words of any one who addresses us. These are Christ's last words: there is great emphasis about them. Part of Christ's work was complete, the great work of offering a sacrifice for the world; but part of Christ's work was not complete, the work of publishing the gospel. His own personal ministry was limited—in locality, in time—it only extended over Palestine, and only lasted three years. But the ministry of Christ in the publication of His gospel was to be continued through the agency of His Church. I. WHAT? what is it we have to do? 1. Preach the gospel. The world had to be possessed for Christ. By the employment of what weapons? Shall swords and spears be collected, soldiers trained, armies organized? "Preach the gospel." Shall the arts of diplomacy be used? Shall statesmen and rulers be upraised so that they may pass laws by which whole communities under their influence shall be gathered, at least outwardly, into the Church? "Preach the gospel." Shall the servants of Christ be engaged to amass wealth, so that by money—which is said to be able to do everything—we may purchase the adhesion of the world? "Preach the gospel." Disdaining these carnal methods referred to, shall we apply ourselves to other methods more spiritual? Shall we apply ourselves to philosophy? Shall we take ourselves to the current theories of the day, and try to overcome the prejudices of the learned, and win the intellect of the wise? "Preach the gospel." 2. What, then, is this gospel? Good news. That, then, is the gospel—the Saviour—Christ. And this gospel is to be preached—not displayed in outward

forms and mystic ceremonies, as the ceremonies of the Old Testament indicated typically the glory that was to come. Go and preach it, declare the truth, speak it to men's minds, that it may enter their hearts. 3. But why should it be preached by men? Why should it not have been made known by some supernatural, miraculous manner to every one? Why the delay connected with preaching? There are mysteries we cannot solve. The arts and sciences have been left for man to work out. God gives us the materials for food—we prepare them; provides the land—we have to cultivate it; gives salvation—we have to accept it; the gospel message—we have to propagate it. Then, again, we might say our own spiritual culture requires this work; it would be an injurious thing for us if we had not this work to do. It is not likely we can understand all the mysteries of the Divine procedure, but there is the distinct precept we have to obey. "Preach the gospel." II. WHY? Ancient predictions prepared us for this commission. Some say—we all say—charity begins at home, so the commission runs, "beginning at Jerusalem." The apostles unfurled the banner of the cross at Jerusalem, and then went forth displaying it before all the world. Very soon after they began to preach at Jerusalem the gospel was proclaimed at Damascus, Ephesus, Athens, Rome, and afterwards it extended to Macedonia, Spain, and Britain. Does some one say our own country needs all we can do to benefit mankind, all our efforts and all our money, let us wait till all evil is rectified in our own land? Then I would ask who are doing the most for their own land; are they not generally found to be those who are doing most for other lands? But cannot man be saved without hearing the gospel? Why therefore go to them? That might be said with reference to people here in England. Why preach at home? If the objection holds good in one case, it would hold good in the other. "Go into all the world." But don't you increase the responsibility of a nation when you make known to them the gospel, supposing they reject it? Is not the man more guilty the more he knows? Such an objection would apply equally to preaching at home, so we should have no preaching at all. But if one country in the world is well adapted for this particular system of truth, there are other countries that are altogether different from that country, and what is fit for it cannot be good for the other. "Go ye into all the world." We keep to our commission; the command is very clear. Well, but some countries are too cold; their icy mountains frown away the fanatics who would go to those shivering wretches gorging their blubber in their snow-huts to try and explain to them the mysteries of Christianity. "Go into all the world." But some countries are too hot; the burning suns, scorching blast, and arid deserts forbid the things that are suited to temperate climes. "Go into all the world." But some nations are highly civilized, and don't need your gospel as savage nations do. "Go into all the world." But some are two barbarous, eating one another, and looking hungrily at you; it's madness to go and teach them the mysteries of Christianity. "Go into all the world." But some parts of the world are the homes of ancient idolatries; their gods are visible, and their worship is fortified by the indulgence of cruelty and lust. It is impossible to win such nations to the pure worship of an invisible Spirit. "Go into all the world." But some nations are the worshippers of one God with a comparatively pure form of faith; why disturb them? "Go into all the world." But your religion of the West cannot be suited to the customs of the East. That which suits Anglo-Saxons cannot suit Orientals. But our religion had its birthplace in the East. Missionaries from Syria first came to Britain; now we take back the gospel that we received from them. The gospel has been preached throughout the world: it has gone back to Palestine, Egypt, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. The Anglo-Saxon race —the depositories of Christianity—have spread through the world; our commerce is in every country, our ships sail over every sea, our language is spoken in every clime; by the aid of printing, Bibles and books are multiplied in almost every language. III. To WHOM? "To every creature." Not only to nations, you will observe, as though we could convert a nation at once by gaining over the rulers and their passing laws. No; "go and preach the gospel to every creature." Christianity is a personal thing. Believe thou the gospel. It is for every creature. God would not invite to a banquet those for whom there was no room. Yes, for "every creature." Christ, who constitutes the gospel, is Divine, and therefore infinite; if not Divine, and merely human, there would be a limitation about His power. "To every creature." The most unlikely persons to receive the gospel have often been the first to accept it. Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before some of those who seemed to be far advanced on the way; there-

fore we are to preach, not only to barbarous tribes as such, but to the most degraded specimens of those tribes. What! to this hoary-headed heathen whose heathenism is bound up in his very life? "Every creature." What! to this fierce cannibal gloating over his victories? "Every creature." What! to this wild tenant of the woods whose intellect seems little above the intellect of the brutes; who seems as if he had no wishes but the most debased of his own debased people. "To every creature." What! to this man of cultivation? "Every creature." It is for sinners, and I am a sinner. It is for all, and I am one of the all; and so, having received it, I publish it to others. (*N. Hall, LL.B.*)

Ver. 16. **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.**—*On that belief which is necessary to baptism:*—The text is an abridgement of our Lord's last instructions to His apostles before His ascension. Other parts of the same discourse are to be found in Matt. xxviii. 18–20; John xx. 21. See also Luke xxiv. 45. By comparing these passages with this, it will appear that by "believing and being baptized," St. Mark plainly means, "believing, repenting, and obeying the gospel"—three things which cannot be separated from each other. He who believes the doctrine of the gospel when preached to him, and by baptism enters into an obligation to live suitably to that belief, and verifies that obligation by his practice, in a life of virtue, righteousness, and charity—shall be saved; but he who rejects the doctrine of the gospel, when duly and reasonably proposed to him, or pretending to embrace it, yet obeys it not—shall be damned. I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE BELIEF NECESSARY TO SALVATION. 1. A doctrine of practice, virtue, and righteousness, within the comprehension of all men. 2. It is to be found in our very nature and reason. 3. It is delivered to us, over and over again, in the Scriptures. 4. It is briefly, but sufficiently, stated in the creeds of the Church. II. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ACT OF BELIEVING. 1. A firm persuasion, founded upon reasonable and good grounds. Not such a careless credulity as, like a foundation in the sand, quickly suffers whatever is built upon it to fall to the ground (Prov. xiv. 14; Acts xvii. 11). Wise believers will—(1) Consider the purity and excellence of the doctrine itself, and its accordance with reason, and the nature and attributes of God. (2) Ponder the evidence of the miracles wrought by Christ. (3) Examine the prophecies which went before concerning Him, and compare the actions of His life therewith. (4) Consider also the prophecies that He Himself delivered, and His apostles after Him, and compare them with the whole series of events from that time to this. Thus they will work in themselves a firm persuasion, founded upon reasonable and good grounds. 2. Such a persuasion of mind as produces suitable and proper effects. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *The necessity of believing:*—I. OBJECTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE to the fact that, in the great concern of man's salvation, so much stress is laid upon faith. 1. Objections respecting persons. Many have never heard of Christ or His gospel. True; therefore they cannot be included in the statement of the text. They are in the hands of a gracious God, who may bestow on them the mercies of a redemption of which they never heard. The same will apply to infants, idiots, insane persons, and those of defective understanding. God will not exact the tale of bricks, where He has not thought proper to furnish straw. We may conclude, in like manner, concerning what is called invincible ignorance, or ignorance so circumstanced as to admit of no remedy. Where nothing is taught, nothing can be learned. But let a man be very cautious how he attempts to shelter himself under this plea. At the great day it will be inquired very minutely, not only what we did know, but also what we might have known had we so pleased—had we been in earnest and taken due pains. However it may fare with the heathen and others, in a state really destitute of information, we shall in vain attempt to excuse our unbelief, or misbelief, by our ignorance. 2. Objections respecting doctrines. (1) They are mysterious; they relate to persons and things in another world, which are therefore hidden from us. What, then, is to be done? Why, certainly, we must believe what God has been pleased to reveal concerning them; and we must form our notions of them, as well as we can, by comparison with those things which are the objects of our senses. Our state, with regard to God and the glories of His heavenly kingdom, is exactly like the state of a blind man, with regard to the sun, and the light thereof. He cannot see the sun, or the light that issues from it; yet he would be unreasonable, should he refuse to believe what his friends, who do see it, tell him concerning it; though, after all, they can but give him a very poor, imperfect idea of it. If it pleased God to open his eyes, and bestow on him the blessing of sight, he would

know more of the matter in one single moment, than description, study, and meditation could have taught him in ten thousand years. Such is our case. We cannot see God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—we cannot see how they are three, and yet one. But shall we therefore, in opposition to the authority and word of God Himself, deny that they are so? We may reason and dispute upon the subject for ages; but in that instant when we are admitted to His presence, and see Him as He is, every doubt and difficulty will vanish at once; and we shall know how little we did know, or possibly could know, before. (2) Learned men have been engaged in controversies about these doctrines for many hundred years, and are not yet agreed; what, therefore, must the unlearned do? (i) Learned men have carried on controversies about everything. If we waited till they were agreed among themselves, we should believe nothing, and do nothing. (ii) All the disputes concerning the Trinity, have been owing to the vain, idle, and presumptuous curiosity of men, who, instead of believing what God has revealed will ever be prying into that which He has not revealed. II. THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF FAITH. Little need be said as to this. For, to what purpose is the gospel preached, unless that it should be believed? When God, with so stupendous a preparation of prophecies and miracles, has published His Word, can it be a matter of indifference whether we believe it or not? No; the Divine Word is not an insignificant Word; it is set, like its Author, for the falling or rising of many. It is not without its effect in every one to whom it is preached. A strange doctrine has of late years been diffused among us; that sincerity is everything, and that if a man be but sincere, it matters not what he believes, or what he does. If this principle be carried to its full extent, it must take away all distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong: it sets upon a level those who crucified Christ, and those who accepted Him as their Lord and Master; those who persecuted the Christians, and the Christians who were persecuted. Before a man can lay any claim to sincerity, in the full and proper sense of the word, he must be able to show, when God, to whom all things are known, and all hearts are open, shall call upon him, that he has not, through indolence, neglected to search after the truth; nor, through passion, prejudice, or interest, refused to receive it. This will go to the bottom of the dispute, and lay open the deception. It will enable us likewise to answer another plea sometimes urged in favour of infidelity, viz., that there can be no merit, or demerit, in believing, or disbelieving; that a man cannot believe as he pleases, but only as the evidence appears to him. Answer: If God have given, as He certainly has, good and sufficient evidence, it is at any man's peril that he rejects it; and he rejects it, not because the evidence is insufficient, but because his own heart is corrupt. (*Bishop Horne.*) *Christ's last words:*—These words require as serious attention as any ever spoken. They are the words of the risen Christ, and His last words. They contain in them the sum of the gospel. Life and death, and the conditions of both; the terms of eternal happiness and misery. If a malefactor at the bar should see the judge going about to declare to him upon what he might expect life or death, how diligently he would attend. All sinners are malefactors. The Judge of heaven and earth declares here, upon what terms we may live, though we be cast out, found guilty, and condemned. It is not a matter of credit or estate, but a matter of life and death, of the life of our souls. It is no less than eternal life or eternal death that these words concern. *Faith and unbelief:*—Salvation or damnation depend upon faith and unbelief. No salvation but by faith. Nothing but damnation by unbelief. Faith is the principal saving grace, and unbelief the chief damning sin. No sin can damn without this, and this will damn without any other sin (John iii. 18). Where there is not faith, the sentence of condemnation is in full force. Unbelief is the symptom of eternal death. There is nothing but death to be expected where this continues; no hope of eternal life for him who continues in unbelief. He is dead while he lives; in hell while on earth. This being so, it concerns us to know what it is to believe. Faith comprises—1. Knowledge. If knowledge be not faith, yet there can be no faith without knowledge. Blind faith is good for nothing but to lead people into the ditch. That ignorance is the mother of devotion is one of the principles of the father of lies. Rather, it is the nurse of unbelief. The first step to conversion is to open the eyes, to scatter darkness (Acts xxvi. 18). The first thing God produces in the soul, as in the natural creation, is light. The convert must have a competent knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel—a knowledge more distinct, more convincing, more affecting, than that which he had in the state of unbelief. 2. Assent. As to the principles of the doctrine of Christ, so especially to the following truths. (1) That he

needs a Saviour. Scripture declares this upon three grounds—(*a*) the sinfulness of a natural man; (*b*) his misery; (*c*) his inability to free himself from it. (2) That Christ is the only all-sufficient Saviour. 3. Reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Not to believe Him, but to believe on Him (Acts xix. 4; Rom. ix. 33; Gal. iii. 24; Eph. i. 15; &c.). Not to give credit to, but to rely on Him. This is the essence, the formality of saving faith. There cannot be justifying faith without knowledge and assent, though there may be knowledge and assent without it; these are as the body to faith, this relying is the soul; without this, knowledge and assent are but a carcase. The devils and hypocrites may have more knowledge, and they may have as firm an assent, but this act is above their reach, and they never attain it. (*Ibid.*) *The nature of faith*:—1. To believe is to come to Christ; to betake ourselves to Him. In Heb. x. 22, we are exhorted to come with full sail, with all haste, as a ship when it makes all its sail. There is no sanctuary for a guilty soul but Christ only; therefore the sinner must fly to the tabernacle of the Lord, and take hold of the horns of the altar. 2. To believe in Christ is to lean upon Him, to stay and rest on Him. None but Christ can stay the sinner's soul from falling into everlasting burnings. 3. To believe in Christ is to adhere to him, to cleave to Him, cling about Him. A man that has suffered shipwreck is left to the mercy of the waves; has nothing in his reach to save him but some plank or mast. How will he cling to it! how fast will he clasp! He will hold it as if it were his life (2 Kings xviii. 5; Deut. iv. 4). So Christ is our only security. 4. To believe in Christ is to roll, to cast ourselves upon Him (Psa. xxii. 8; xxxvii. 5; lv. 23). Sin is a heavy, a most grievous burden (Amos ii. 13). The weight of sin, though Christ had none of His own, made Him sweat blood. It is burdened with the wrath and heavy indignation of God; it is clogged with the curses and threatenings of the law. No wonder if one sin be as a millstone about the neck of the soul, able to sink it into the bottom of hell. But though so burdensome, yet the sinner, before conversion, feels no weight in it. How can he, seeing he is dead? Cast rocks and mountains upon a dead man, and he feels them not. Ay, but when the Lord begins to work faith, and brings the sinner to Himself, then he feels it burdensome indeed, and groans under its weight. None can ease him but Christ; and Christ bids him come, and lay his burden on Him. Glad tidings these; the sinner closes with Christ, rolls himself, casts his burdened soul upon Him, and so believes. 5. To believe in Christ is to apply Him. It is an intimate application, such as that of meat and drink by one pinched with hunger and fainting with thirst (John vi. 51–56). Nothing can save the soul, but a draught of the water of life, a taste of Christ. 6. To believe in Christ is to receive Him. A condemned person upon the scaffold, all the instruments of death ready, and nothing wanting but one blow to separate soul and body, while he is possessed with sad apprehensions of death one unexpectedly comes and brings him a pardon. Oh, how will his heart welcome it! How will his hands receive it, as though his soul were in his hands! So here. 7. To believe in Christ is to apprehend Him, to lay hold of Him, to embrace Him. As in the case of Peter walking on the water to come to Christ: so, to walk in the ways of sin, is to walk as it were upon the waters; there is no sure footing, how bold soever sinners are to venture. If God's patience were not infinite, we should sink every moment. The sensible sinner begins to see his danger, patience will ere long withdraw, it will not be always abused; a tempest of wrath will arise; nay, he finds it grow boisterous, it does already ruffle his conscience, he is as sure to sink as if he were walking upon the waves. Nay, he feels his soul already sinking; no wonder if he cry out as a lost man, as one ready to be swallowed up in a sea of wrath. But now Christ stretches out His hand in the gospel, and the soul stretches itself out and lays hold on the everlasting arm which alone can save it. This may be sufficient to discover the nature of faith. But for further evidence, observe what is included in it, as appears by what has gone before. (1) A sense of misery. It is a sensible dependence, therefore more than simple assent. A man who has read or heard much of the sad effects of war, may assent, believe that it is a great misery to be infected with war. Ay, but when the enemy is at his door, when they are driving his cattle and plundering his goods and firing his houses, he not only assents to it, he sees, he feels the miseries of it; he has more sensible, more affecting apprehensions of it than ever before. So a sinner who continues in unbelief, hearing the threatenings and wrath denounced against unbelievers, may assent to the statement that unbelievers are in a miserable condition; but when the Lord is working faith, he brings this home to himself, he sees justice ready to seize on him, he feels wrath kindling upon him. He now not only

believes it, but has a quick sense of it. (2) A rejecting of other supports. Dependence upon Christ alone. When the soul, feeling the flame of wrath kindling upon her, cries out as one already perishing, "None but Christ, none but Christ," then he is on the highway to faith. But alas! so averse are we, naturally, to Christ, that He is the last thing a sinner looks after. Till he apprehend himself as an orphan, without strength, without counsel, all his supports dead which were a father to him, he will not betake himself to Christ as his only guardian; till he thus betakes himself to Christ, he believes not. (3) Submission. Faith is a very submissive grace. Sin and wrath lie so heavy, that the soul bends itself gladly to whatever the Lord will. If the shipwrecked man can get to shore, can save himself from drowning, he regards not the wetting of his clothes, the spoiling of his goods; a greater matter is in danger. So it is with a sinner in whom faith is working. His soul is in a sea of wrath, and he is ready to sink. If he can but reach Christ, get to shore, he is content, though he come there naked, stripped of all that was otherwise dear to him. (4) Resolution to persist in his dependence. When Satan or his own guilty soul tells him that he must come forth, there is no mercy for such a traitor, such a heinous offender; nay, says the believing soul, but if I must die, I will die here; if justice smite me, it shall smite me with Christ in my arms; though He kill me, yet will I rely on Him; here will I live or here will I die; I will not quit my hold, though I die for it. (5) Support. He is on the Rock of Ages; he who stays on Him stands firm; he cannot but have some support for the present, though he has little confidence, no assurance. (6) A consent to accept Christ on His own terms. The will is naturally closed against Christ, but consent opens it; and when the will is open to receive Him, it always receives Him; when it opens, it consents; when it consents, it receives, *i.e.*, believes. (*Ibid.*) *The misery of unbelievers*:—A dreadful representation of this here. 1. The unbeliever is without Christ, the fountain of life. His heart is the habitation of the devil. He has no rights in Christ. Nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ. Nor with the intercession of Christ. No life in him. 2. He is without the covenant, the evidence of life. The promises are not for him. Nothing is sealed to him but condemnation. 3. Without grace, the beginning of life. How finely soever the sepulchre is painted and beautified without, if faith be not within there is nothing but dead bones and rottenness; nothing but what is as loathsome in the eye of God as the rottenness of a dead carcase is to us. 4. He has no title to heaven, which is eternal life. 5. He is far from life; so far as never to come in sight of it, never see it. 6. The wrath of God abides on him. (1) Wrath. Not anger or displeasure merely, though that were dreadful; but wrath—sublimated anger, anger blown up into a terrible flame. A consuming fire, the furnace made seven times hotter (Isa. xxxiii. 14). (2) The wrath of God. The wrath of all the kings of the earth and all the angels of heaven put together is as nothing compared with this. Theirs would but be as the breath of one's nostrils; whereas the wrath of God is as a whirlwind that rends the rocks, and tears up the mountains, and shakes the foundations of the earth, and shrivels up the heavens like a scroll, and causes the whole fabric of heaven and earth to stagger like a drunken man. Oh, who knows the power of His wrath! Their wrath is but like a spark; His wrath is like a river, a sea of kindled brimstone. This wrath of God will be thy portion if thou believe not. (3) It is the wrath of God on him. Not near, or coming towards, but *on* him. Not that all the wrath of God is on him already, for there are vials of wrath that will never be emptied, never emptier, though the Lord be pouring them forth to all eternity. It is compared to a river which is continually running; and when it has run some hundred years, there is as much to come as if there were none run by already; it will run on thee to eternity, unless by believing thou stop it, divert the course of it in time. The first-fruits of wrath are reaped now, but a full harvest is coming; and the longer thou continuest in unbelief, the riper thou art for that dreadful harvest. (4) It is abiding wrath. Not on and off, but always on without intermission. On him in every place, in every state, in every enjoyment, in every undertaking. (*Ibid.*) *The difficulty of faith*:—Some have an idea that faith is a business of no great difficulty. They wonder why any should make such ado about believing: they think it an easy thing to believe, and so trouble not themselves much about it, do not make it their business to look after it. Those who think thus show plainly that they never did believe, that they do not so much as know what it is to believe. 1. Faith is the gift of God. Not the work of man's hand, or head, or heart. Something without him, not in him naturally; something above him, out of the reach of nature. It must be reached down by the hand of

God, or man can never come by it. Not a *gift* of nature, but of grace. 2. Man is naturally unwilling to receive it (John v. 40). Coming is believing, but men refuse to come. 3. This opposition is so strong that it requires an exceeding mighty power to overcome it. The power of nature cannot master it, but only the power of Divine grace put forth in a special manner for this very purpose. Such a power is required to raise sinners out of the grave of unbelief, as was requisite to raise Christ from the dead (Eph. i. 19, 20). (*Ibid.*) *Wesley's improvement of infant baptism*:—Wesley's teaching on this subject is instructive. He recommends to us all, and enjoins upon us all, to follow the example of Philip Henry. He had a method of improving infant baptism, superior to that of most divines, and decidedly better than I have at any time met with. He drew out what he called a form of the Baptismal Covenant, "I take God the Father to be my Father; I take God the Son to be my Saviour; I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Comforter, Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier; I take the Word of God to be the rule of my actions; I take the people of God to be my people in all conditions: and all this I do deliberately, freely, and for ever." He taught all his children to say this to him every Sunday night: when they were able to write, he made every one of them write it, and sign it. "Now," he said, "I shall keep this as a testimony against you." And he did keep it. And there is found among his papers one of the most affecting documents in the English language—a copy of this covenant, signed by each of his children in succession. But he never had to produce it against them. By God's grace, they kept it; and thus verified his own frequent adage, "Fast bind, fast find." (*Dr. Osborn.*) *Saved*:—You remember that fearful shipwreck of the steamer *Atlantic*, which took place some years ago on the coast of Halifax. Hundreds of lives were lost, and dreadful scenes were witnessed on that occasion. Among the passengers on board that steamer was a merchant from Boston, who was a Christian man. When his family heard of the wreck they were in great distress. How anxiously they waited to hear from him! How eagerly they examined the newspapers, and read over the list of the lost to see if his name was among them! But God ordered it so that this gentleman was permitted to get safe to shore. As soon as he could reach the telegraph office he sent a telegram home to his family. There was but a single word in that telegram; but, O, it was worth more to his distressed family than all the world. It was the word *Saved*. And when that merchant returned home, he had that telegram framed, and hung up in his office with that important word—*Saved*—in it, so that he might see it every day, and be reminded of God's great goodness in sparing his life. Yet it was only that merchant's *body* that was saved then. And this is nothing compared to the soul. But when we become the sheep of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, He engages to save our souls in heaven for ever. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The sin of unbelief*:—One is sometimes asked, What is the use of preaching about infidelity in church? So that all may be able to give an intelligent explanation of their grounds for belief, to any who demand it of them. We cannot fail to notice that religion is, in our day, more generally and freely discussed than it has been for some preceding generations; and so long as this is done in an honest, thoughtful, truth-seeking, kindly spirit, we may be thankful and hope. I. What are the CAUSES of unbelief? 1. A wrong bias in the heart. Ever since the Fall, it has been natural for us to dislike religion, and to shirk its obligations if possible. Satan persuades us that his service is the easiest, and pays the best; so we prefer it. 2. The power of things seen over the natural man. The novel and the newspaper interest us more than the Bible: we neglect the latter: and then comes the suggestion, Perhaps the Bible is not God's book after all, &c. 3. Selfishness. Religion thwarts, opposes, reproves; so we naturally hate it. 3. Pride—desiring the praises of men rather than the favour of God, and exalting itself against His revealed will. Does not the pride of intellect say, "I will not believe what I cannot understand. I am much too clever to take things on hearsay: give me facts and proof." And does not the pride of society, money, health, high spirits, exalt itself against the spirit of Christianity, and refuse to believe that God is no respecter of persons. 5. Fear of the world. Young people, especially, find it very hard in society, or in an irreligious home, always to stand up for truth and God. Ridicule possesses a cruel and often fatal power: if those exposed to it do not pray for strength to resist, it will overcome them little by little: the pain which they feel, the shame which is a glory and grace, which troubles them when they hear sacred things lightly spoken of, will gradually cease; their spiritual sight will lose its keenness: the ears of the soul will become dull of hearing; and they will learn at last to mistake the false for the true,

and to enjoy that which once they despised and abhorred. 6. The false notion that religion is impracticable. 7. Evil lives of professing Christians. Remember, as to this, the question is not whether men or women calling themselves Christians are honest or hypocritical, but whether Christianity is true. Do you take care not to behave so inconsistently as to cause any brother to offend. II. The result of unbelief. As the causes of unbelief are contemptible, so the process is miserable, and the result is vile. In most cases, before a man can be an infidel, he must set himself against the witness of history, and his forefathers' faith; he must regard as lies the lessons of his childhood, and must erase from his memory the prayers learnt at his mother's knee; he must teach himself to regard those cravings for happiness, for life, for beauty, and for truth, as fond and hopeless desires; he must learn to feel, when his father or mother, wife or child, dies, "there is an end of everything, we shall meet no more." And when he has surrendered himself wholly into the power of God's enemy, what sort of a creature is the devil's masterpiece, after all? 1. See the result in communities. Look at him, first, with full scope to do his best and worst; give him multitudes of companions, who think as he thinks, and place a great city in his power. Look at infidel Paris, in our days, shooting down an archbishop in her streets. What follows?—fire, and sword, and famine—defeat, and degradation, and death. Would the result be different, do you suppose, in our land, if all were permitted to do what seems right in their own eyes—would life or property be safe? 2. Or look at the individual man. Who would trust an infidel? Who would make him a guardian or trustee? What motive has he to keep him from betraying his trust? Follow him to the end. His heart may grow harder, his assertions of unbelief may be louder; but what of him when his health and strength begin to fail? It was easy, when spirits were high, to say that clever profanity to applauding friends, easy to sneer at Church and Bible, to raise the ringing laughter of his boon companions; but what are his thoughts, now that he must spend long dreary days and nights alone,—alone, for his old mates are not the men to seek the society of the aged, or to watch by the sick; what if he should discover that he has not, after all, become that which he tried to be, and thought that he was, an infidel? III. The cure for unbelief. The treatment must vary with the case. For some, books of evidence, appeals to history, logical reasoning, close analogies. But here are some golden rules, applicable to all. 1. Go home and do your duty. Never mind how mean the work is: the lower your place here, the higher it may be hereafter. 2. Pray. 3. Study the Scriptures. 4. Seek Christ in the humble, teachable spirit He has promised to bless. 5. Seek Him in His children, His poor, His sick. (*S. R. Hole, M.A.*) *Believing and salvation*:—There is no way under heaven to be interested in Christ, but by believing. He that believeth shall be saved, let his sins be ever so great; and he that believeth not shall be damned, let his sins be ever so little. (*Thos. Brooks.*) *Destiny determined by belief*:—There is the way of salvation, and thou must trust Christ or perish; and there is nothing hard in it that thou shouldst perish if thou dost not. Here is a man out at sea; he has got a chart which, if well studied, will, with the help of the compass, guide him to his journey's end. The pole star gleams out amidst the cloud-rifts, and that too will help him. "No," says he, "I will have nothing to do with your stars; I do not believe in the North Pole; I shall not attend to that little thing inside the box; one needle is as good as another needle; I do not believe in your rubbish, and I will have nothing to do with it; it is only a lot of nonsense got up by people on purpose to make money, and I will have nothing to do with it." The man does not get to shore anywhere; he drifts about, but never reaches port, and he says it is a very hard thing. I do not think so. Some of you say, "Well, I am not going to read your Bible; I am not going to listen to your talk about Jesus Christ; I do not believe in such things." You will be damned then, sir. "That's very hard," say you. No it is not. It is not more so than the fact that if you reject the compass and the pole star you will not get to your journey's end. If a man will not do the thing that is necessary to a certain end, I do not see how he can expect to gain that end. You have taken poison, and the physician brings an antidote, and says, "Take it quickly, or you will die; but if you take it quickly I will guarantee that the poison will be neutralized." But you say, "No, doctor, I do not believe it; let everything take its course; let every tub stand on its own bottom; I will have nothing to do with you, doctor." "Well, sir, you will die; and when the coroner's inquest is held on your body, the verdict will be, 'Served him right!'" So will it be with you if, having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, you say, "Oh! pooh, pooh! I am too much of a common-sense man to have anything to do with that, and I shall not attend to it."

Then, when you perish, the verdict given by your conscience, which will sit upon the King's quest at last, will be a verdict of *felo-de-se*—he destroyed himself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Rejection of grace:*—A man being sick and like to die, the physician, knowing his case, takes with him some preservative to comfort him, and coming to the door falls a-knocking. Now, if he either will not or be not able to let him in, he must of necessity perish, and the cause cannot properly lie at the physician's door, who was ready and willing to relieve him; but in himself, that is not willing to be relieved. Thus it is that sin is a disease whereof we are all sick. We have all sinned. Now, Christ is the great Physician of our souls; He came down formerly from heaven on purpose to heal us, and He comes down daily to the door of our hearts, and there He knocks. If we but open the door of our hearts, He will come in and sup with us, as He did with Mary, and forgive all our sins; but if we will not let Him in, or, through long contagion of sin, be not able to let Him in, we must of necessity die in our sins; and the case is evident, not because He doth not offer grace, but because we receive it not when it is offered. (*Inchinus.*) *Christ's sayings determined the destiny of all who heard them,* and this peculiarity He specially pointed out as enduring for ever. To have heard these sayings is to have incurred the gravest responsibility. A man may read the Ethics of Aristotle, and treat the reasoning with contempt without endangering his fate; but no man can read Christ's sayings without finding *saved* upon one side and *damned* upon the other. Is this dogmatism on the part of Christ? Undoubtedly. God must be dogmatic. If God could hesitate, He would not be God. Do we stumble at the solemn words of the text? Why should we? An agriculturist says, practically, "Go ye into all the world, and say to every creature that there is a particular season for sowing seed: he that believeth shall be saved—shall have a harvest; he that believeth not shall be lost—shall have no harvest." There is a gospel of agriculture: why not a gospel of salvation? Men's disbelief of God will damn them in farming; why not in religion? Does God speak decisively in the one case, and hesitatingly in the other? There must be a climacteric point—a point of saving or damning—in all the declarations of God, because He has spoken the ultimate word on all the subjects which He has disclosed. The truth upon any matter, high or low, is the point of salvation or damnation. The man who merely points out the right road to a traveller is in a position (with proper modification of the terms) to say to that traveller, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned:" in other words, "Go thus, and you will reach the object of your journey; but go so, and you will never reach it." This is the position which Christ assumes,—"He that believeth Me hath life; he that believeth not Me hath not life." Is such a projection of His personality consistent with His being simply one who spoke with the authoritative tone and earnestness of a Jew? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Difference between penalty and consequence:*—It must not be forgotten that there is a broad distinction between a penalty and a consequence, as those terms are commonly understood. When Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," He announced a consequence. He did not threaten a penalty in the usual acceptation of the term. A consequence is the direct and inevitable result of certain processes, partaking of their very nature, and inseparable from them; but a penalty may possibly be something different, something arbitrarily superadded, regardless of adaptation or measure. Being chilled is a consequence of exposure to cold air, but being flogged for such exposure is a penalty. Eternal punishment is the consequence of rejecting the gospel, not a penalty (in the low sense of revenge) attached to a crime. (*Ibid.*) *Saving faith:*—It is not the quantity of thy faith that shall save thee. A drop of water is as true water as the whole ocean. So a little faith is as true faith as the greatest. A child eight days old is as really a man as one of sixty years; a spark of fire is as true fire as a great flame; a sickly man is as truly living as a well man. So it is not the measure of thy faith that saves thee—it is the Blood that it grips to, that saves thee; as the weak hand of a child, that leads the spoon to the mouth, will feed as well as the strong arm of a man; for it is not the hand that feeds thee—albeit it puts the meat into thy mouth, but it is the meat carried into the stomach that feeds thee. So if thou canst grip Christ ever so weakly, He will not let thee perish. All that looked to the brazen serpent, ever so far off, they were healed of the sting of the fiery serpent, yet all saw not alike clearly, for some were near at hand, and some were far off. Those that were near at hand might see more clearly than those that were far off; nevertheless, those that were far off were as soon healed of the sting, when they looked to the serpent, as those that were near at hand; for it was not their look that made them whole, but He whom the serpent

did represent. So if thou canst look to Christ ever so meanly, He can take away the sting of thy conscience, if thou believest; the weakest hands can take a gift, as well as the strongest. Now Christ is this gift, and weak faith may grip Him as well as strong faith, and Christ is as truly thine when thou hast weak faith, as when thou hast come to those triumphant joys through the strength of faith. (*Welsh.*) *A sailor's definition of faith:*—A sailor who had been brought to trust in Christ for salvation, meeting a friend who was anxious to find rest for his soul, addressed him thus: "It was just so with myself once; I did not know what faith was, or how to obtain it; but I know now what it is, and I believe I possess it. I do not know that I can tell you what it is, or how to get it; but I can tell you what it is not; it is not knocking off swearing, and drinking, and such like; and it is not reading the Bible, nor praying, nor being good; it is none of these; for even if they would answer for the time to come, there is the old score still,—and how are you to get clear of that? It is not anything you have done, or can do; it is believing and trusting what Christ has done; then it is forsaking your sins, and looking for their pardon and the salvation of your soul, because He died and shed His blood for sin: it is that, and it is nothing else." Where could we find a more simple, and accurate, and telling definition of faith? *True faith:*—A good man was considerably harassed as to the nature of true faith, so resolved to ask the assistance of his minister. Going to the minister's house, he stated that his fears had been great, that he had sinned beyond the reach of mercy; but that, while he was thinking on the subject, there was suggested to his mind this text of Scripture, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and that resting on this truth he had lost all his anxiety. The minister told him that this was nothing else than true faith. *Unbelief damning:*—It may be asked how it can be just in God to condemn men for ever for not believing the gospel. I answer: 1. God has a right to appoint His own terms of mercy. 2. Man has no claim on Him for heaven. 3. The sinner rejects the terms of salvation knowingly, deliberately, and perseveringly. 4. He has a special disregard and contempt for the gospel. 5. His unbelief is produced by the love of sin. 6. He shows by this that he has no love of God, and His law, and for eternity. 7. He slights the objects dearest to God, and most like Him. 8. He must, therefore, be miserable. He rejects God, and must go into eternity without a Father, &c. And he has no comfort in himself, and must die for ever. There is no being in eternity but God that can make man happy; and without His favour the sinner must be wretched. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The perils of unbelief:*—This is speaking out plainly. He who thus spoke, had a right so to speak. To be a believer, as scripturally understood, is to give that kind of credit to Christianity, which is associated with, and supported by, a holy life,—not the faith right, and the life wrong; but the life and faith both in the right. We proceed, now, to show —I. THAT CHRISTIANITY PRESENTS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO WARRANT RATIONAL BELIEF. The evidences which she has at her service may be presented in the form of answers to inquiries which may be instituted. Thus—1. Was Christianity necessary? Could not the world have done without it? These questions we negative most emphatically. It could not. It had tried, &c. 2. Was such a revelation as that which Christianity professes to be possible? Certainly. 3. Was it probable? It was. 4. Is that which was quite possible, and very probable, now a reality—a fact? Has there ever been such a person as Jesus Christ? Did He do what He is said to have done? Our answer is in the affirmative. There are no facts that are better attested than those which relate to the history of the Author of the Christian religion. 5. Are any books now extant purporting to contain sketches of His life, and an account of the rise of His religion; and, if so, are there arguments sufficient to evidence their genuineness, and uncorrupted preservation? Our reply again is a positive one. 6. Is the Divine origin of Christianity indicated by its success, and the circumstances with which that success was associated? It is, &c. 7. Is there any evidence of the Divinity of Christ's religion from human consciousness and experience? There is. II. THAT THE MAN WHO DOES NOT DILIGENTLY SEARCH FOR, AND CORDIALLY YIELD TO, THIS EVIDENCE IS HIGHLY CENSURABLE. Man is responsible for his belief. This will appear from the consideration that our belief is mainly influenced by the following circumstances:—1. By the books which we read. 2. The company we keep. 3. The latitude we allow to our likings, irrespective of their nature or tendency. As the religion of Christ presents to man sufficient proofs to warrant his credence, then, if that be refused, the results will be inconceivably perilous. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." This supposes a trial, and a sentence. (*J. Guttridge.*) *Salvation through believing:*—I. CONSIDER THE IM-

PORTANCE OF THIS DECLARATION. 1. Because of the character of the Being who has given it. He is God; therefore He has power to perform what He has said. 2. None can escape His scrutiny, as He is all wise and omnipotent. 3. The declaration remains unchangeable for ever, as He is a Being who possesses the attribute of truth. II. EXPLAIN THE GROUNDS ON WHICH SINNERS ARE TO BE SAVED. 1. Faith in Christ is necessary to salvation. 2. Baptism is necessary. III. THE AWFUL CONSEQUENCE OF NOT BELIEVING. 1. If we do not believe, we remain in sin. 2. Guilt and misery of mind arise from this condition. 3. Temporal punishment in this life is also the result. Wherever the gospel of Christ is received in the love of it, there will be stability of principle, and an inculcation of purity of morals; where it is absent there will be, in a less or greater degree, an entire want of its holy effects. Intemperance produces sickness; extravagance leads to poverty, &c. 4. Our not believing will have an evil effect on society at large. 5. Eternal torment. IV. THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF BELIEVING. 1. Deliverance from condemnation. 2. Emancipation from the dominion of sin. 3. Salvation from the fear of death and hell. 4. In proportion as our faith becomes strong, our spiritual wisdom will increase, as well as our happiness. (*W. Blood.*) *The indissoluble connection between faith and salvation:*—In order to illustrate this subject—consider—I. WHAT IS FAITH? 1. The real Christian believes the pure unadulterated gospel; the substance of which is, "God is in Christ" (2 Cor. 5, 19). The ground on which he believes, is the testimony of God (1 John v. 10). 2. The gospel which he thus believes he believes to be most important. It rouses his attention and calls all the powers of his soul to action. Like a man whose house is on fire, and is at his wit's end till he has found means to extinguish it—or like one who has a large estate depending, and uses every effort to get his title confirmed. 3. This belief in the gospel is accompanied with a cordial approbation of its gracious proposals. We have heard the gospel. Have we believed it? Have we received it in the love of it? Are our hearts and lives influenced by it? II. THE SALVATION PROMISED TO THEM THAT BELIEVE. Here a scene the most delightful and transporting opens to our view. A scene, the contemplation of which fills the Christian with admiration and wonder. 1. It is a salvation from moral evil. 2. From natural evil. 3. From penal evidences (Rom. iii. 25; Gal. iii. 13). To these miseries are to be opposed the joys of heaven, but, oh! what tongue can describe (Psa. xvi. 11). III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND SALVATION. It is necessary in order to our being saved that we believe. 1. It is the Divine appointment (John iii. 16; Mark xvi. 16). It is not a mere arbitrary command, but the result of infinite wisdom and goodness. 2. There is a fitness or suitableness in faith to the end of its appointment, so that the necessity arises out of the nature of things. The blessing of the gospel cannot be enjoyed without the medium of faith. Sin is atoned for—heaven opened—but the actual possession of the good thus procured is as necessary as a title to it. How is that good to be possessed without a suitable temper? How is this to be acquired but by believing? (*Outlines of Sermons.*)

Ver. 17. **And these signs shall follow.**—*New tongues:*—New, because strange to the natural man, because acquired not by nature, but by grace. As the world of old was divided by the confusion of tongues, so by the renewing of our nature, and by the oneness of our speech, shall all be united into one people, having one heart and one soul. This new tongue must be given as the special gift of God to His children, for the tongue can no man tame of himself. This new tongue we have if—(1) in the midst of adversity we refrain from murmuring, and are able to submit truly to the will of God, rendering Him thanks even in the midst of our sufferings; (2) we can make full and unreserved confession of our sins to God, without seeking to excuse ourselves in His sight; (3) we restrain ourselves from the censure of others, and use our tongue for the edification of our brethren. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Disappearance of miraculous powers accounted for:*—Probably God's sliding scale—by which supernatural aid increases and decreases inversely according to our strength—may explain how, in the course of time, the supernatural aids of the Church have merged into the more ordinary aids of grace. (*R. Glover.*) *Christ's presence in the Church continual:*—The co-operation of Christ was promised, not for the apostolic age alone, but for all time. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were withdrawn, and the third generation, at the latest, buried the last of "The Twelve;" but other men entered into their labours, and the office has been perpetuated by an unbroken lineage, so that those who minister in Christ's Church to-day can feel that the voice which sent them forth was but the echo of that which spake on the Gali-

lean hill to the first in the ministerial line. That Presence, which arrested the attention of an unbelieving age by startling manifestations, has been vouchsafed to the Church through all its chequered history in the power of an unseen but undiminished co-operation. In the Church at large it is borne witness to by the influence of Christianity upon the evil spirits of oppression and cruelty, of greed and profligate living. It has shown itself in a thousand ways in the alleviation of sickness and disease, and the tenderer care for the bereft of reason; while in a later age at least, the Pentecostal gift of tongues has been virtually repeated, by the translation of the gospel of glad tidings into wellnigh every spoken language. (*H. M. Luckock, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **They shall take up serpents.**—*The privileges of believers:*—It is to men who believe, through their belief, that privileges such as these are to be given. The essence and ground of the promised power is faith. That old word, Faith! That old thing, Faith! How men have stumbled over its definition, and bewildered and ensnarled themselves and those who heard them! God forbid that I should bewilder you to-day. I want to be as clear and simple as I can; and though I would be far from disparaging any of the subtler and more elaborate descriptions of what faith is, I am sure that we may give ourselves a definition which is true beyond all doubt, and which is full enough to answer all the need of definition which we shall meet to-day. Faith, then, personal faith, is this, the power by which one being's vitality, through love and obedience, becomes the vitality of another being. Simple enough that is, I am sure, for any man who will think. I believe in you, my friend; and your vitality, your character, your energy, the more I love and obey you, passes over into me. The saint believes in his pattern saint, the soldier believes in his brave captain, the scholar believes in his learned teacher. In every case the vitality of the object of faith comes through love and obedience to the believer. Faith is not love nor obedience, but it works by both. A man may love me and yet not have faith in me. A man may obey me, and yet not have faith in me. Faith is a distinct relation between soul and soul; but it is recognizable by this result, that the life of one soul becomes the life of another soul through obedience and love. Now faith in Christ, what is it? Just in the same simple way, it is that power by which the vitality of Christ, through our love and obedience to Him, becomes our vitality. The triumph of the believing soul is this, that he does not live by himself; that into him is ever flowing, by a law which is both natural and supernatural, a law that is supernatural only because it is the consummation and transfiguration of the most natural of all laws—there is always flowing into him the vitality of the Christ whom he loves and obeys. His whole nature beats with the inflow of that Divine life. He lives, but Christ lives in Him. And then add one thing more. That this vitality of Christ, which comes into a man by faith, is not a strange and foreign thing. Christ is the Son of Man, the perfect Man, the Divine Man. Add this, and then we know that His vitality filling us is the perfection of human life filling humanity. "They that believe" are not men turned into something else than men by the mixture of a new and strange Divine ingredient. They are men in whom human life is perfect in proportion to the completeness of their faith through the Son of Man. They are men raised to the highest power. The man in whom Christ dwells by faith is the man in whom the Divine ideal of human life is perfect, or is steadily becoming perfect, by the entrance into him of the perfect life of the Man Christ Jesus, through obedience and love. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The promise to believers:*—These signs shall follow them that believe, them that have the complete human life by me—Christ says, "If they drink," &c. Is that a prize? Is it wages which is offered for a certain meritorious act, which is called faith? Not so, surely! It is a consequence. It is a necessity. Safety and helpfulness. These come out of the full life of Christ in the soul of man as the inevitable fruits. Safety, so that what hurts other men shall not hurt him. Helpfulness, so that his brethren about him shall live by his life. These are the utterances of the vitality of him who is thoroughly alive. It is by life, by full, vigorous, emphatic existence that men are safe in this world, and that they save other men from death. Men everywhere are trying to be safe by stifling life; by living just as low as possible. Men everywhere are trying not to do one another harm, trying to spare each other's souls by tender petting, by guarding them against any vigorous contact with life and thought. "Not so," says the Bible. "Only by the fulness of life does safety come. Only by the power of contact with life are sick and helpless souls made whole. None but the live man saves himself or quickens the dead

to life, saves himself or saves his neighbour." It is a noble assertion. The whole Bible, from its first page to its last, is full of the assertion of the fundamental necessity of vitality; that the first thing which a man needs in order to live well, is to live. (*Ibid.*) *The safety of faith*:—Let us consider the safety which Christ offers. It is a safety not by the avoidance of deadly things, but by the neutralizing of them through a higher and stronger power. There is no such idle promise as that if a man believes in Christ a wall shall be built around his soul, so that the things out of which souls make sin cannot come to Him. The Master knew the world too well for that. His own experience on the hill of His temptation was still fresh in His memory. He knew that life meant exposure, that sin must surely beat at every one of these hearts. Nay, that the things out of which sin is made, temptation, moral trial, must enter into every heart; and so He said not, "I will lead you through secluded ways where none but sweet and healthy waters flow," but, "Where I lead you, there will be the streams of poison. Only if you have the vitality which comes by faith in Me, your life shall be stronger than the poison's death. If you drink any deadly thing it shall not harm you" . . . . Only those temptations which we encounter on the way of duty, in the path of consecration, only those has our Lord promised us that we shall conquer. He sends us out to live and work for Him. The chances of sin which we meet while that Divine design of life, the life and work for Him, is clear before us, shall not hurt us. When we forget that design, our arm withers, our immunity is gone. It is only when we are about some higher task, only when they meet us as accidents in the service of Christ, that we have a right deliberately to encounter temptation and the chance to sin, and may claim the Lord's promise of immunity. Think in how many places that law applies. Have I a right to read this sceptical book—this book in which some able, witty man has gathered all his skill against my Christian faith? It is a book of poison. Have I a right to drink it? Who can say absolutely yes or no? Who does not feel that it depends upon what sort of life the reader brings to meet the poison? If in your soul there is a passionate desire for truth, if you do really love and serve Christ, and want to know Him better, that you may love and serve him more, if this book comes as a help to that part of a study by which you shall get nearer to the heart of the truth and Him, then if you drink that deadly thing it shall not harm you. Nay, you may rise up from the reading with a faith more deep. Whatever change your faith may undergo, it shall win a profounder life. But if there is no such earnestness, no such life as this, if it is mere curiosity, mere desire to be fine and liberal, mere defiance, a mere wantonness, then the poison has it all its own way; there is no vigorous life to meet it; and its death spreads through the nature till it finds the heart. . . . And so it is everywhere with all exposure of the spiritual life. "What took you there?" "What right had you to be there?" These are the critical questions on which everything depends. If you are passing through temptation with your eye fixed on a pure, true life beyond it, temptation being only a necessary stage upon your way, so long as you keep that purpose, that resolution, that ideal, you shall be safe. If you are in temptation for temptation's sake, with no purpose beyond it, you are lost. (*Ibid.*) *The helpfulness of faith*:—Not only is the man of faith promised safety for himself, but that he shall be helpful to others too. These two things—safety and helpfulness—go together, not merely in this special promise of the Saviour, but in all life. So is the whole world bound into a whole, so does the good that comes to any man tend to diffuse itself and touch the lives of all, that these two things are true. First, that no man can be really safe, really secure that the world shall not harm and poison him, unless there is going out from him a living and life-giving influence to other men. And second, that no man is really helping other men unless there is true life in his own soul. No man can really save another unless he saves himself. It is the good man by his good deeds that gives life to the world. Always it is the living, not the dead, who give life. It is the man not who has sinned deeply, but who has known by intense sympathy what sin is, how strong, how terrible, and yet escaped it for himself,—he is the man who helps the sinners most; he is the anointed who carries on and carries round the Christ's salvation. In their deepest need the wickedest men look to the purest men they know; the deadest to the livest; first to those who they think have most escaped sin, then to those who they think have been most cleansed of sin by repentance and forgiveness. . . . Here is a man in whom I know that the promise of Christ is certainly fulfilled. He is a believer, and through his open faith the life of Christ flows into him constantly, and is his life. Full of that life, he gives it everywhere he goes.

The sick in soul touch his soul and are well again. The discouraged find new bravery; the yielding souls are clad anew with firmness. The frivolous grow serious, the mean are stung or tempted into generosity, and sinners hate their sin and crave a better life, wherever this man goes. (*Ibid.*) *The secret of the believer's helpfulness:*—The power of these life-giving lives seems to be described in these two words—testimony and transmission. I. THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY BEAR BY THE VERY FACT OF THEIR OWN ABUNDANT LIFE. They show the presence, they assert the possibility of vitality. Very often this is what souls whose spiritual life is weak and low need to have done for them. Men half alive grow to doubt of the fuller life in anybody. Men try to realize the descriptions of religion which they hear, and, falling short of them, they grow ready to believe that religion is a thing of excited imaginations, and to give up all thought of making it real in themselves. It is not only the badness in the world, it is the dreadful incredulity of good, it is the despair and lack of struggle which tells how low ebbs out the tide of spiritual life. Then comes the man in whom spiritual life is a real, deep, strong, positive thing. The first work which that man does is to bear the simple testimony of his life that life is possible. Already, just in acknowledgement of that, the sick faces begin to revive, and the sick eyes look up to him. The brave and godly boy among a group of boys just learning to be proud of godlessness and contemptuousness of piety—the man of golden principles among the sceptics of the street—the one true penitent rejoicing in a new and certain hope out of the ranks of flagrant sin—these instantly, the moment that they begin to live, begin to bear their testimony of life, and so make life about them. II. TRANSMISSION. The highest statement of the culture of a human nature and of the best attainment that is set before it, is that, as it grows better, it grows more transparent and more simple, more capable therefore of simply and truly transmitting the life and will of God which is behind it. The thought of a man, as he improves and strengthens, getting the control of his own powers, and becoming more and more a source of power over other men, this thought, which has doubtless its own degree of truth, is limited and vulgar beside the breadth and fineness of the other idea, that as a man is trained and cultured, as the various events of life create their changes in him, as tempests beat him and sunshine bathes him, as he wrestles with temptation and yields to grace, as he goes on through the spring-time, the summer, and the autumn of his life, the one highest purpose and result of it all is to beat and fuse his life into transparency, so that it can transmit the life of God. For all good is from God, and He uses our lives, all of them, to reach other men's lives with. Only the difference is this: upon a life of sin, all hard and black, God shines as the sun shines on the black, hard marble, and by reflection thence strikes on the things around, leaving the centre of the marble itself always dark. But on a life of obedience and faith, God shines as the sun shines on a block of crystal, sending its radiance through the willing and transparent mass, and warming and lighting it all into its inmost depths. (*Ibid.*) *Signs unnecessary now:*—Though the miracle-working power remained in the Church after the ascension of our Lord, Christianity was made less dependent on such external signs and tokens, and more and more on the moral and spiritual power of the Word itself. With this promise compare the still more general one of Psalm xci. Such signs as are indicated here are not needed in this age, when the Divine nature of Christianity is witnessed by such historical evidences as are afforded by the moral, the religious, the social, the political, and even the commercial development which has everywhere attended on and resulted from its progress. I can hardly conceive that occasion ever can arise for the further fulfilment of this promise. Christianity is itself a greater sign than any the apostles wrought. (*Abbott.*)

Ver. 19. **He was received up into heaven.**—*The Ascension and its effects:*—The hidden source of the Christian's spiritual life is with Christ in God. To Him he looks as his treasure—his treasure in heaven; thither does he endeavour in heart and mind to ascend; he sets his affections on things above; he seeks those things which are at the right hand of God, with Christ, to be dispensed by Him, according to His promise. The ascension was the great consummation of Christ's work. Observe in this connection—I. THE PERIOD AT WHICH HE ASCENDED: after He has spoken to the apostles. He did not leave them until His prophetical work on earth was done, and He had provided for the continued application of the benefits He had secured for mankind. II. WHENCE HE WAS RECEIVED: from the Mount of Olives. A favourite spot, and one hallowed by frequent communion with His

Father, and close to the garden where He rendered His will to God. The valley of humiliation was changed into the mount of triumph. III. By whom He was received: by the holy angels. What joy for them! They ushered Him into the Presence-chamber of Jehovah, and there He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. IV. The purpose for which He ascended. 1. To prepare a place for His people. 2. To rule and order all things for the glory of God. 3. To intercede for all who come to God by Him. 4. To send the Holy Spirit to dwell with His people and guide them into all the truth. That Blessed Spirit is the true remedy for all the wants we feel, for the coldness of our hearts towards Him, for our many departures from His will, our many shortcomings and turnings aside from Him. (*Bp. F. Barker, D.D.*) *Christ's Ascension*:—O happy parting, fit for the Saviour of mankind. O blessed Jesu, let me so far imitate Thee, as to depart hence with a blessing in my mouth; let my soul, when it is stepping over the threshold of heaven, leave behind it a legacy of peace and happiness. I. From whence did He ascend? From the Mount of Olives. He might have ascended from the valley; all the globe of earth was alike to Him; but since He was to mount upward, He would take so much advantage as that stair of ground would afford Him. Since he had made hills so much nearer to heaven, He would not neglect the benefit of His Own creation. Where we have common helps, we may not depend upon supernatural provisions, we may not strain the Divine Providence to the supply of our negligence, or the humouring of our presumption. O God, teach me to bless Thee for means, when I have them; and to trust Thee for means, when I have them not; yea, to trust Thee without means, when I have no hope of them. II. Whither did He ascend? Whither, but home into His heaven? From the mountain was He taken up; and what but heaven is above the hills? Already had He approved Himself the Lord and Commander of earth, of sea, of hell. It only remained that, as Lord of the air, He should pass through all the regions of that yielding element; and, as Lord of heaven, through all the glorious contiguations thereof. He had an everlasting right to that heaven; an undoubted possession of it ever since it was; but His human nature took not possession of it until now. O Jesu, raise Thou up my heart thither to Thee; place my affections upon Thee above, and teach me to love heaven, because Thou art there. III. How did He ascend? As in His crucifixion and resurrection, so also in His ascension, the act was His Own, the power of it none but His. The angels did attend Thee, they did not aid Thee: whence had they their strength, but from Thee? Unlike Elias, Thou needest no chariot, no carriage of angels; Thou art the Author of life and motion; they move in and from Thee. As Thou, therefore, didst move Thyself upward, so, by the same Divine power, Thou will raise us up to the participation of Thy glory. (*Bp. Joseph Hall.*) *Comfort from Christ's Ascension*:—O my soul, be Thou now, if ever, ravished with the contemplation of this comfortable and blessed farewell of thy Saviour. What a sight was this, how full of joyful assurance, of spiritual consolation! Methinks I see it still with their eyes, how Thou, my glorious Saviour, didst leisurely and insensibly rise up from Thine Olivet, taking leave of Thine acclaiming disciples, now left below Thee, with gracious eyes, with heavenly benedictions. Methinks I see how they followed Thee with eager and longing eyes, with arms lifted up, as if they had wished them winged, to have soared up after Thee. And if Elijah gave assurance to his servant Elisha, that, if he should have beheld him in that rapture, his master's spirit should be doubled upon him; what an accession of the spirit of joy and confidence must needs be to His happy disciples, in seeing Christ thus gradually rising up to His heaven! O how unwillingly did their intentive eyes let go so blessed an object! How unwelcome was that cloud that interposed itself betwixt Him and them, and, closing up itself, left only a glorious splendour behind it, as the bright track of His ascension! Of old, here below, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud; now, afar off in the sky, the cloud intercepted this heavenly glory; if distance did not rather do it than that bright meteor. Their eyes attended Him on His way so far as their beams would reach; when they could go no further, the cloud received Him. Lo, even yet that very screen, whereby He was taken off from all earthly view, was no other than glorious; how much rather do all the beholders fix their sight upon that cloud, than upon the best piece of the firmament! Never was the sun itself gazed upon with so much intention. With what long looks, with what astonished acclamations, did these transported beholders follow Thee, their ascending Saviour! As if they would have looked through that cloud, and that heaven that hid Him from them. . . . . Look not after Him, O ye

weak disciples, as so departed that ye shall see Him no more; if He be gone, yet He is not lost; those heavens that received Him shall restore Him; neither can those blessed mansions decrease His glory. Ye have seen Him ascend upon the chariot of a bright cloud; and, in the clouds of heaven, ye shall see Him descend again to His last judgment. He is gone: can it trouble you to know you have an Advocate in heaven? Strive not now so much to exercise your bodily eyes in looking after Him, as the eyes of your souls in looking for Him. If it be our sorrow to part with our Saviour, yet, to part with Him into heaven, it is comfort and felicity: if His absence could be grievous, His return shall be happy and glorious. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly: in the meantime it is not heaven that can keep Thee from me; it is not earth that can keep me from Thee: raise Thou up my soul to a life of faith with Thee; let me ever enjoy Thy conversation, whilst I expect Thy return. (*Ibid.*) *The enthroned Christ*:—How strangely calm and brief, this record of so stupendous an event. Something sublime in the contrast between the magnificence and almost inconceivable grandeur of the thing communicated, and the quiet words, so few, so sober, so wanting in all detail, in which it is told. The stupendous fact of Christ sitting at the right hand of God is the one that should fill the present for us all, even as the Cross should fill the past, and the coming for judgment should fill the future. I. THE EXALTED MAN. In His ascension Christ was but returning to His eternal Home; but He took with Him—what He had not had before in heaven—His humanity. It was the Everlasting Son of the Father, the Eternal Word, which from the beginning was with God and was God, that came down from heaven to earth, to declare the Father; but it was the Incarnate Word, the man Christ Jesus, who went back again. And He went as our Forerunner, to prepare a place for us, that where He is we also might be. II. THE RESTING SAVIOUR. Christ rests after His cross, not because He needs repose, but in token that His work is finished, and that the Father has accepted it. III. THE INTERCEDING PRIEST. There are deep mysteries connected with the thought of Christ's intercession. It does not mean that the Divine heart needs to be won to love and pity; or that in any merely outward and formal fashion He pleads with God, and softens and placates the Infinite and Eternal love of the Father in the heavens. But it means that He, our Saviour and Sacrifice, is for ever in the presence of God; presenting His Own Blood as an element in the Divine dealing with us; and securing, through His own merits and intercession, the outflow of blessings upon our heads and hearts. IV. THE EVER-ACTIVE HELPER. The "right hand of God" is the omnipotent energy of God. The ascended Christ is the ubiquitous Christ. Our Brother, the Son of Man, sits ruling all things; shall we not, then, be restful and content? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Design of Christ's Ascension*:—1. To confirm the prophecies. 2. To commence His mediatorial work in heaven. 3. To send the Holy Ghost. 4. To prepare a place for His people. He went up as our Representative, Forerunner, High Priest, and Intercessor, and as the King of Glory. (*G. S. Bowes.*) *Manner of Christ's Ascension*:—The manner of Christ's ascension into heaven may be said to have been an instance of Divine simplicity and sublimity combined, which scarcely has a parallel. While in the act of blessing His disciples (St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51), He was parted from them, and was carried up, and disappeared behind a cloud (Acts i. 9). There was no pomp; nothing could have been more simple. How can the followers of this Lord and Master rely on pomp and ceremony to spread His religion, when He, its Founder, gave no countenance to such appeals to the senses of men? Had some good men been consulted about the manner of the ascension, we can imagine the result. (*N. Adams.*) *Ascension Day, on earth and in heaven*:—I. ON EARTH. Think of the marvellous day when the disciples once more followed the Lord as far as unto Bethany, now truly on His way home. All the glimpses of the forty days had pressed it upon them that, while truly the same Jesus, He was yet drawing away from them. Still loving and tender, He is hedged about with divinity that makes a king. He bends not again to wash their feet; Mary does not touch Him, John does not lie in His bosom. Nature is losing its hold on His humanity. Suddenly He comes and goes, scarce recognized at first, then quickly hailed with rapturous confidence. They see Him no longer bearing unweariness, hunger, or the contempt of men. Jew and Roman are now out of the contest. Satan dares no more assaults. He has no sighs, no tears, no nights of prayer, no agony with bloody sweat. And now as they watch, that chiefest force of matter on which the systems stand, slips away from the particles of the form He wears, and He ascends in their sight, out of their sight, until swathed in the splendour of a cloud of glory. II. IN HEAVEN. Dare we imagine the scene? Angels unnumbered, their faces solemn

with a new awe at the great work of God; the first woman beholding at last the Seed; the first man Adam, rejoicing to see his fearful work undone and the race left free to join itself to a new Head; the patriarchs no longer pilgrims; priests no longer ministering at temple and altar; prophets finding prophecy itself looking backward on fulfilment; the heroes of the Church; the babes of Bethlehem slaughtered about His cradle—can we imagine the scene as He passed through the midst of these? Did they gaze on His form, with print of thorn and nail and spear, which mark Him for ever as the Lamb that hath been slain? Up He passes through the bowed ranks, among saints and elders and martyrs, the four mystical living ones, beyond the glassy sea, amid the spirit's seven burning flames, beneath the emerald glittering bow, to that glory whose brightness jasper and sardius cannot express, and on this highest height of the supreme throne of the ineffable God, He takes His Own place. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *The tomb and triumph:*—Whenever you think of our Lord's resurrection and ascension, remember always that the background to His triumph is a tomb. Remember that it is the triumph over suffering; a triumph of One who still bears the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet, and the wound of the spear in His side; like many a poor soul who has followed Him triumphant at last, and yet scarred and maimed in the hard battle of life. Remember for ever the adorable wounds of Christ. Remember for ever that St. John saw in the midst of the throne of God the likeness of a Lamb, as it had been slain. For so alone you will learn what our Lord's resurrection and ascension are to all who have to suffer and to toil on earth. (*C. Kingsley M.A.*) *Christ is living now:*—What good would it do to you if you were suffering from some peculiar accident to a limb, and some one came and told you of a surgeon who lived a hundred years ago, and who had been wonderfully clever in resetting the same bone after that precise kind of fracture? You might feel that he would have been able and willing to relieve you from pain, and to prevent all subsequent deformity. But if you were told of some living man who had shown the same skill, and if it were explained how it was that he had acquired his special experience, and how he had succeeded in one case after another when every other surgeon was helpless, you would say, "Now I have heard all this I will send for him at once, and put myself in his hands." This is just what men have to be persuaded to do in relation to Christ . . . to realize that He is living still, and that He is not only willing but able to give every man who asks of Him forgiveness of all past evil and strength to do better in time to come. (*R. W. Dale D.D.*) *Jesus at the right hand of God:*—John Bunyan was walking one day in a field, in great trouble of soul at the discovery of his own vileness, and not knowing how to be justified with God, when he heard, as he imagined, a voice saying to him, "Your righteousness is in heaven." He went into his house and took his Bible, thinking to find there the very words that he thus sounded in his heart. He did not discover the identical expression, but many a passage of Scripture proclaimed the same truth, and showed him that Jesus, at the right hand of God, is complete righteousness to every one that believeth. (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *The ascension of Christ:*—We cannot contemplate the characters of men who have benefited the world by the splendour of their talents or the lustre of their lives, without feeling a spirit of inquisitive solicitude to know how they finished their course, parted with their friends, and made their exit. We labour to catch the last glance of departing worth. I. THE PERIOD WHEN CHRIST ASCENDED. 1. After upbraiding His disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart. 2. After assigning to them their work. (1) The work was to "preach the gospel," not false doctrines, not human opinions, not Jewish ceremonies. (2) The sphere of their operation was "all the world." (3) Their commission was to "every creature." Hence we infer that the gospel is suited to the circumstances of all—designed for the benefit of all—and that the ministers of truth should aim at preaching it to all. 3. After comforting them by the promise of a miraculous influence with which they should be invested. II. THE MANNER. 1. Christ's ascension was accomplished by His own eternal power. 2. It was publicly witnessed by His disciples. 3. It was hailed with transport by ministering angels. St. Luke declares that "a cloud received Him;" who can tell what amazing scenes were unfolded beyond that cloud? III. HIS SUBSEQUENT SITUATION. "He sat on the right hand of God." This signifies—1. The honour and dignity to which our Saviour is exalted. 2. The rule and government with which He is invested (Eph. i. 20–22; John iii. 35; Matt. xi. 27; Rom. viii. 34). 3. The tranquility and happiness of which He is possessed. CONCLUSION: From this subject we learn—1. Christ finished the work which He

came upon earth to accomplish. 2. Christ has highly honoured human nature. 3. Christ is exalted for our sake (Heb. ix. 24). This should give us confidence in our prayers, excite our emulation, and, above all, inspire our hopes. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Our Lord's Ascension:*—I. THE FACT OF THE ASCENSION. Christ was, according to His humanity, translated by the Divine power into heaven. As God, He transferred Himself, as man, thither: to sit, thenceforward, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This signifies—1. Pre-eminence of dignity, power, favour, and felicity. 2. The solid ground, the firm possession, the durable continuance, the undisturbed rest and quiet, of His condition. 3. The nature, quality, and design of His preferment. He is our Ruler and Judge. 4. His glorification. II. CONFIRMATORY CONSIDERATIONS. 1. Ocular testimony. The apostles witnessed Christ's ascension. 2. Rational deduction. His arriving at the supreme pitch of glory, and sitting there, is deduced from the authority of His own word, and stands on the same ground as any other point of Christian faith and doctrine. 3. Ancient predictions. III. THE END AND EFFECT OF THE ASCENSION. 1. Our Lord did ascend unto, and doth reside in, heaven, at the right hand of Divine majesty and power, that as a King He may govern us, protecting us from all danger, relieving us in all want, delivering us from all evil. 2. Our Saviour did ascend, and now sits at God's right hand, that He may, in regard to us, there exercise His priestly function. 3. Our Lord tells us that it was necessary He should depart hence, and enter into this glorious state, that He might there exercise His prophetical office by imparting to us His Holy Spirit for our instruction, direction, assistance, and comfort. 4. Our Lord also tells us that He went to heaven to prepare a place there for His faithful servants. He has entered heaven as our Forerunner, our Harbinger, to dispose things there for our reception and entertainment. 5. It is an effect of our Lord's ascension and glorification, that all good Christians are with Him in a sort translated into heaven, and advanced into a glorious state, being made kings and priests to God. 6. I might add that God did thus advance our Saviour, to declare the special regard He bears to piety, righteousness, and obedience, by His so amply rewarding and highly dignifying the practice thereof. IV. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. 1. It may serve to guard us from divers errors with regard to our Lord's human nature. Our Lord did visibly, in human shape, ascend to heaven, and therefore He continues still a Man; and as such He abides in heaven. He is indeed everywhere by His Divinity present with us; He is also in His humanity present to our faith, memory, affection; He is therein also present by mysterious representation, by spiritual efficacy, by general inspection and influence on His Church; but in body, as we are absent from Him, so is He likewise separated from us; we must depart hence, that we may be with Him in the place whither He is gone to prepare for us. 2. Is Christ ascended and advanced to this glorious eminency at God's right hand? Then let us answerably behave ourselves towards Him, rendering Him the honour and worship, the fear and reverence, the service and obedience, suitable and due to His state. 3. These points afford ground and matter of great joy and comfort to us. Victory over enemies; exaltation of Him who has stooped to become one with us—our Elder Brother; the possession of a Friend in so high place and so great power, &c. 4. The consideration of these things serves to cherish and strengthen all kinds of faith and hope in us. We cannot surely distrust the accomplishment of any promises declared by Him, we cannot despair of receiving any good from Him, who is ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of Divine wisdom and power, thence viewing all things done here, thence ordering all things everywhere for the advantage of those who love Him and trust in Him. 5. These points likewise serve to excite and encourage our devotion. Having such a Mediator in heaven, so good and sure a Friend at court, what should hinder us from cheerfully addressing ourselves by Him on all occasions to God? 6. It may encourage us to all kinds of obedience, to consider what a high pitch of eternal glory and dignity our Lord has obtained in regard to His obedience, and as a pledge of like recompense designed to us if we tread in His footsteps. 7. The consideration of these points should elevate our thoughts and affections from these inferior things here below unto heavenly things (Col. iii. 1). To the Head of our body we should be joined; continually deriving sense and motion, direction and activity, from Him; where the Master of our family is, there should our minds be, constantly attentive to His pleasure, and ready to serve Him; where the city is whose denizens we are, and where our final rest must be, there should our thoughts be, careful to observe the law and orders, that we may enjoy the immunities and privileges thereof; in that country where only we have any good estate or valuable

concernment, there our mind should be, studying to secure and improve our interest therein; our resolution should be conformable to that of the holy Psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help." (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*) *Christ's ascension and co-operation*:—I. CONTEMPLATE THESE APOSTLES WITNESSING THE ASCENSION OF THEIR LORD. 1. The place from which He ascended. Mount of Olives. Thither He had been accustomed to resort after the labours and fatigues of the day; there He had often spent a whole night in meditation and prayer; and now He Himself ascends from the same place. There His disciples had forsaken Him and fled; and there He was now parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 2. The manner in which He ascended. (1) Visibly. His disciples were eye-witnesses of His majesty, as He rose higher and higher from the mountain, till the cloud covered Him, and concealed Him from their sight. (2) While He was in the act of blessing. 3. The place to which He ascended. Heaven. His own home. What rejoicings at His return! II. CONTEMPLATE THE APOSTLES GOING FORTH TO PREACH HIS GOSPEL. 1. The subject of their preaching. The gospel of Jesus Christ—the crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. 2. They communicated this gospel to mankind by preaching. (1) A Divine ordinance. (2) A speedy way of teaching. (3) A method admirably adapted for impressing the great truth of the gospel on men's hearts. 3. The extent to which they preached this gospel was universal. "Everywhere." "To every creature," was the command. III. CONTEMPLATE THE APOSTLES EXPERIENCING THEIR LORD'S CO-OPERATION WITH THEM IN THEIR LABOURS. Wherever they worked as instruments, He worked also as the efficient agent; for His power is omnipotent; and the "signs" promised were the result. 1. These Divine influences qualified the preachers of the gospel. 2. These Divine influences confirmed the truth of the gospel. 3. These Divine influences ensured the success of the gospel. A glorious conquest—a triumph over mind and heart. It was great and godlike even to plan the moral conquest of a world; but when the plan is all accomplished, when all the nations of the earth become one holy and happy family, then shall the world enjoy its millennial jubilee, and Christ the Mediator shall be Lord of all. (*J. Alexander, D.D.*) *An open way to heaven*:—When He ascended up on high, He opened and prepared a path, along which we may travel till we behold His face in righteousness. It has been said, that in the early ages an attempt was once made to build a chapel on the top of the hill from which Christ ascended into heaven; but that it was found impossible either to pave over the place where He last stood, or to erect a roof across the path through which He had ascended;—a legendary tale, no doubt, though perhaps intended to teach the important truth that the moral marks and impressions which Christ has left behind Him can never be obliterated; that the way to heaven through which He has passed can never be closed by human skill or power; and that He has set before us an open door which no man shall be able to shut. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 20. **And preached everywhere.**—*The publication of the gospel by the apostles*:—I. THE GENERAL PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL BY THE APOSTLES. Their industry in this work was almost incredible. What pains did they take! What hazard did they run! What difficulties and discouragements did they contend with! And yet their success was greater than their industry, and beyond all human expectation, as will appear from the following considerations. 1. The vast spreading of the gospel in so short a time (Rev. xiv. 6; Isa. lx. 8). In the space of about thirty years after our Lord's death, the gospel was not only diffused through the greatest part of the Roman Empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. 2. The wonderful power and efficacy of it upon the lives and manners of men (Rom. xv. 18). The change of religion led to an entire change of life. So strange an effect had the gospel upon the lives of its professors, that Tertullian challenges the Roman Senate to instance in any one who bore the title of Christian, who was condemned as a thief, or a murderer, or a sacriligious person, or who was guilty of any of those gross enormities for which so many pagans were every day punished. 3. The weakness and insignificance of the instruments employed in this great work. 4. The mighty opposition that was raised against the gospel. At its first appearance it could not be otherwise, but that it must meet with a great deal of difficulty and opposition, from the lusts and vices of men, which it so plainly and severely condemned, also from the prejudices of men brought up in a contrary religion. Moreover, the powers of the world combined their forces against it. 5. The great discouragements to the embracing the profession of it.

There was nothing to invite and engage men to it but the consideration of another world; for all the evils of this world threatened every one who took the profession of Christianity upon him. Yet, in spite of every obstacle, Christianity not only lived, but grew and prospered. Can any one of the false religions of the world pretend to have been propagated and established in such a manner, merely by their own force, and the evidence and power of truth upon the minds of men; and to have borne up and sustained themselves so long under such fierce assaults, as Christianity has done? II. THE REASON OF THE GREAT EFFICACY AND SUCCESS OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING. The power of the Holy Ghost accompanied it, both inwardly operating on the minds of men, and also convincing them by outward and visible signs. 1. Consider the nature of the Spirit's gifts, and the use and end to which they served. 2. Show how the gospel was confirmed by them. CONCLUSION: How sad that this religion, which was so powerful at first, and has Divinity so clearly stamped upon it, should yet have so little effect upon most of those who call themselves Christians! (Heb. ii. 1–4). (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *Miracles the most proper way of proving the Divine authority of any religion*:—An account of the means whereby the preaching of the apostles became so successful. Not from any mighty talent of persuasion, or extraordinary faculty of reasoning with which they were endued; not by any intrinsic evidences of truth, which the distinguishing doctrines they preached carried with them; nor by any other method purely human and natural; but by Divine power and assistance, accompanying them in every step they took, and miraculously blessing their endeavours. Miracles are fitly termed "signs," because done to signify who are appointed by God, as the messengers of His will to men. Their suitability for this purpose will appear, if we consider—I. THE COMMON SENSE AND OPINION OF MANKIND. All religions, whether true or false, have at their first setting out, endeavoured to countenance themselves by real or pretended miracles. II. THE GENERAL NATURE OF THIS SORT OF EVIDENCE. How can a man prove his Divine mission but by a miracle, *i.e.*, by doing something which all confess that none but God can do. III. SOME PECULIAR CHARACTERS AND PROPERTIES THAT BELONG TO THEM. 1. They are extremely fit to awaken men's attention. Curiosity is the first step towards conviction. When once men are possessed with a due regard for the messenger, they will be sure to listen carefully to the message he brings. 2. They are the shortest and most expeditious way of proof. Other kinds of proof were fitted only leisurely to loosen the knots, which the disputers of this world tied, in order to disturb the apostles in the execution of their ministry; miracles, like the hero's sword, divided these entanglings at a stroke, and at once made their way through them. 3. They are an argument of the most universal force and efficacy, equally reaching all capacities and understandings. Some have not leisure for philosophical research, and others have not sufficient ability to pursue it; but a miracle carries its own evidence in its face, and is patent to all. (*Bishop Atterbury.*) *Signs following the gospel*:—While the text refers immediately to facts in the infancy of our religion, it is also identified with permanent principles, and presents matter of momentous contemplation to ourselves and all generations of men. I. AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION DELIVERED. 1. Its nature. 2. Its extent. II. A CONCLUSIVE ATTESTATION, by which this communication was confirmed. 1. Miraculous agencies. 2. Spiritual changes in the human character. (See Acts ii. 41; iv. 4; ix). III. AN IMPERATIVE CLAIM, which this communication urges upon all to whom it is addressed. 1. To be believed. 2. To be promulgated (Rom. x. 14–16). (*James Parsons.*) *Divine co-operation in Christianity*:—I know not precisely what advances may be made by the intellect of an unassisted savage; but that a savage in the woods could not compose the "Principia" of Newton, is about as plain as that he could not create the world. I know not the point at which bodily strength must stop; but that a man cannot carry Atlas or Andes on his shoulders is a safe position. The question, therefore, whether the principles of human nature, under the circumstances in which it was placed at Christ's birth, will explain His religion, is one to which we are competent, and is the great question on which the whole controversy turns. Now we maintain that a great variety of facts belonging to this religion—such as the character of its Founder; its peculiar principles; the style and character of its records; its progress; the conduct, circumstances, and sufferings of its first propagators; the reception of it from the first on the ground of miraculous attestations; the prophecies which it fulfilled and which it contains; its influence on society, and other circumstances connected with it;—are utterly inexplicable by human powers and principles, but accord with, and are fully explained by, the

power and perfections of God. (*Dr. Channing.*) *Christianity, a living power*:—Miracles and the fulfilments of prophecy ought no longer to be put forward in the forefront of our plea for Christianity, but should be subordinated to the exhibition of the actual power of Christianity in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual spheres of our being. In the place of prophecy we have history—the history of eighteen centuries, during which the power of Christ's light and grace has been seen in actual operation, subduing to Him the human soul and human society, and thus evincing its unique and supernatural character. Instead of the miracles of the gospel we have in present reality what may fairly be called a moral and spiritual miracle, in the transcendent influence which Christ, at this moment, is exercising over the world. We stand face to face with an actual Christianity, which is unquestionably the most marvellous spiritual phenomenon in the world's history; and it cannot be right for us to endeavour to learn Christ by proceeding as if we could obliterate eighteen centuries, and forget that there is such a thing as a living Christianity. (*Bishop Alfred Barry.*) *The Lord working with them*:—*Spread of Christianity*:—Arnobius, a heathen philosopher who became a Christian, speaking of the power which the Christian faith exercised over the minds of men, says: "Who would not believe it, when he sees in how short a time it has conquered so great knowledge? Orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers, have thrown up their opinions, which but a little before they held, and have embraced the doctrines of the gospel!" *The gospel everywhere*:—Close the eyes for two and a half centuries, and a Roman emperor has torn the eagle from his standard to set there the cross, and the mistress of the world is at the feet of Him she crucified. Wait, and look again; a thousand years have passed—just a day with God—and the power of this Name has subdued the wildness of German forests, leaped the Channel, and raised the hewn timber of the tree of Calvary against the wild Druids' oak. And to-day, when all civilization is at its height, and the world is quivering with fresh powers and measureless hopes, there is no other name which stands for a moment beside that of the risen Lord. Nor has He won His rights unchallenged. No such battles were ever fought as those which have raged about Him. His teachings, His nature, His very existence, have been the strife of the ages. We ourselves have seen the combat; and now, thanks to the criticism which doubted and the infidelity which denied, we know with demonstration never had before, that Jesus did live on this earth, that He spoke these words in the Gospels, and that His character and His influence are merely inexplicable on the supposition of His mere manhood. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Divine power in the Church*:—We recall the story of the Book of the Gospels—Cuthbert's own book—which the monks at Lindisfarne carried with them in their wanderings. They set sail for Ireland; a storm arose; the book fell overboard, and was lost; they were driven back to the English coast. Disconsolate, they went in quest of the precious volume: for a long time they searched in vain; but at length (so says the story) a miraculous revelation was vouchsafed to them, and, following its directions, they found the book on the sands far above high-water mark, uninjured by the waves—nay, even more beautiful for the disaster. Does not this story well symbolize the power of the eternal gospel working in the Church? Through the carelessness of man, it may disappear amidst the confusion of the storms; the waves may close over it and hide it from human sight. But lost—lost for ever—it cannot be. It must reassert itself, and its glory will be the greater for the temporary eclipse which it has undergone. (*Bishop J. B. Lightfoot.*) *Vitality of Christ's religion*:—Christianity throughout eighteen centuries has shown itself possessed of the peculiar power of recovering life when apparently almost defunct—a peculiarity entirely absent in every mythology, which, when once dead, never can be restored, but remains for ever in the realm of shadows; that Christianity has a phœnix-nature, and after every historic death arises anew from the grave; and that along with the resurrection which Christianity has had in our day, has also arisen from the grave the true conception of humanity. (*Bishop Martensen.*) *With signs following—The Church's evidences*:—Where the spiritually blind are enlightened, the spiritually dead quickened, the spiritually deaf and dumb made to hear devoutly and to speak piously, the spiritually lame made to walk in the paths of righteousness and to be active in every good work, and the spiritually leprous are cleansed from sins,—there the Lord is confirming the Word with signs following; for these are signs and wonders greater than physical changes, the greater deeds that our Lord promised that His disciples would perform. These signs still follow

the preaching of the Word; and the age of miracles of grace is not past, nor shall it ever pass while time lasts. (*T. M. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Signs*:—That is, such miracles as should be the seals and testimony of the truth. These miracles were therefore—1. Signs to the apostles themselves, so that they might not despair at the greatness of the work which they were commissioned to do. 2. Signs to others, and a confirmation of the truth which the apostles taught. Hence Christ does not call them miracles, but *signs*: since the very object of the miracles which followed their teaching was to have this moral effect, and to testify to those who needed this proof, that the doctrine which they delivered was from God. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Signs*:—Three signs which follow all effectual preaching—(1) Compunction of the hearers; (2) conversion of sinners; (3) confirmation of the just. CONCLUSION: The figure which stands out from this book is Jesus. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. A man must be holy to comprehend the holiness of Jesus. Let us suppose the case of a sharp man, who has neither taste nor genius, standing before a great picture; he will point out flaw after flaw in Raphael. Place one who has neither musical appreciation, nor modesty to admit it, where he must hear Beethoven. It is an unmeaning noise, which gives him a headache. Even so, the lower the moral and spiritual life may be, the less is Jesus understood and loved. To an easy, soft-mannered, hard-hearted man of the world; to a subtle, bitter, selfish scholar, with the delicate intellectual egotism, and the fatal gift of analysis *à outrance*, Gethsemane and the cross may be a scandal or a mockery. The gospel, which seems so poor and pale when we rise from the songs of poets and the reasonings of philosophers, is a test of our spirit. Let some ambitious students in philosophy—some who have been communing for hours with the immortal masters of history, charmed with the balanced masses and adjusted perspectives of the composition, speak out their mind to-day upon this Gospel of St. Mark. They will not place it very high upon their list. But turn to it to-morrow, when the end of your toil finds you disappointed men; when sorrow visits you; when, as you put your hand upon the wall of your room, memory, like a serpent, starts out and stings you. Then you will recognize the infinite strength and infinite compassion of Jesus. Out of your weakness and misery, out of your disappointment, you will feel that here you can trust in a nobility that is never marred, and rest that tired heart of yours upon a love that never fails. . . . St. Mark is the Gospel whose emblem is the lion, whose hero is full of Divine love and Divine strength. It is the Gospel which was addressed to the Romans to free them from the misery of scepticism, from the grinding dominion of iron superhuman force unguided by a loving will. Here, brief as it is, we have, in its essential germs, all the theology of the Church. Had every other part of the New Testament perished, Christendom might have been developed from this. A man's faith does not consist of the many things which he affects to believe or finds it useful to believe (as men are said to be doing in France), but of the few things which he really believes, and with which he stands, fronting his own soul and eternity. This faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is sufficient. Hold it fast, and you shall find the power of one of our Lord's promises which is peculiar to this Gospel. If you are called upon to "handle the serpents," or "to drink the deadly things" of science and philosophy, you shall lift up the serpent as a standard of victory. The cup of poison shall not reach your heart as it reached the heart of Socrates, when the sun was going down behind the hill-tops. "It shall not hurt you." Hold fast this gospel in that which tries many who are undisturbed by speculative doubt, in conscious sinfulness, in the allurements of lust. Hold it fast in the din of voices that fill a Church distracted by party cries, and "He who has instructed His Church by the heavenly doctrine of His Evangelist St. Mark, will grant that, being not like children, carried away by every blast of vain doctrine, you shall be established in the truth of His holy gospel." (*Bishop William Alexander.*) *Encouragement of God's presence*:—"I have lately been full of perplexities about various temporal concerns. I have met with heavy afflictions; but in the mount the Lord is seen. All my hope is in God; without His power no European could possibly be converted, and that can convert any Indian. Though the superstitions of the Hindoos were a thousand times stronger than they are, and the example of Europeans a thousand times worse; though I were deserted by all, and persecuted by all, yet my hope, fixed on the Rock, will rise superior to every obstruction, and triumph over every trial. I feel happy in this, that I am engaged in the work of God, and the more I am engaged in it, the more I feel it a rich reward.

Indeed. I would rejoice in having undertaken it, even though I should perish in the attempt. (*William Carey.*) *God with His servants*:—If I go to a large factory and see a hundred straps flying in all directions, I ask where is the motive power—the engine. So you are walking with the power of God, upheld by the arm of righteousness. If one of your merchantmen should ask me to go to Philadelphia to conduct a business for him, and should say to me: "I expect you to carry on this business with your own capital," I would think it very strange. It would not be his business, but my own. That is the mischief with all Christians. They are in business for the Lord, but working with their own capital. (*Henry Varley.*) *Christians implements in the hands of God*:—It is one thing to attempt to row a ship; it is another to unfurl the sails, and send her leaping, with a fresh breeze, like a thing of life, across the big opposing waves. It is one thing for a man to try to drag a car on a railroad; it is another to fill the boiler of the locomotive with water, put in fuel, kindle a strong fire, and soon fly like the wind over mountains and plains, counting the long, loaded train a mere plaything. But these analogies, drawn from our human employment of the material forces of nature, and feeble to illustrate the difference between the man who attempts to influence and convert men, and to advance spiritual and eternal things by any philosophy of the wisest of men, or by any motives of time, and the man whose whole and sincere aim it is to be but an implement in the hand of the Almighty. Then his prayers "move the arm that moves the skies." Then his labours are not his own; but the eternal Father, the loving Redeemer, the Holy Ghost, the angels, the inspired Word, the prayers of the saints—all the infinite powers of good in heaven and earth—work through him. (*Dr. Cuyler.*)

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