THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

THE ACTS.

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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.

THE ACTS.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

I. The title of the Book.—The title "Acts of the Apostles," although not given to it by its author, is of high antiquity, being found in the oldest MSS. and versions either as it stands, or with the articles omitted ("Acts of Apostles"). The book is often quoted by Early Fathers as "Acts"; but apparently as a compendious form for a well-known title. The propriety of the designation has been often questioned. The book does not profess to record the acts of all the apostles, nor all the acts of those most prominent in the narrative, St. Peter and St. Paul. On the other hand, it gives full notices of disciples, who were not apostles. But, taking the title in its earliest form, we find in it a certain fitness. As the Gospel records acts and words of our Lord, so this book records acts of the apostles by which His last injunction and promise were fulfilled. But the Gospel is one of four, whereas this work stands alone, and is the only source from which we derive knowledge of the most momentous facts which belong to the foundations of the Christian faith. Without it the first twenty years would be a blank as regards the history of the first Christians—a blank with some rays of scattered light from the Epistles, of which the earliest was written A.D. 52. Of the events on which two great Christian festivals—Easter and Pentecost—are based, we have the record of the latter in this book alone. (*Canon Cook.*)

II. Its Authorship.—1. *Its author was the same who wrote the Gospel according to St. Luke.* (1) The literary style is the same. This is observable in the use of the Greek language, which differs materially from that found in the other books of the New Testament. It is more classical, especially in those portions where the writer speaks in his own person, or narrates events not recorded elsewhere; and where the style is less classical, it supplies another proof of curious and interesting resemblance. The writer of the Gospel inserts large portions either common to the Synoptists, or taken from written documents or oral traditions. The writer of the Acts as certainly uses documents or traditions, which he adopts without any material alteration. This is a striking peculiarity, and without any near parallel in ancient writers. It was reserved to one of our own time (M. Thierry) to give life and variety to his narrative by the insertion of long passages differing in style and local colouring from his own composition. What is not less striking is the fact that in these portions the language is full of Hebraisms and peculiar forms of expression common to the Gospel and the Acts, but found not at all, or rarely, in other books of the New Testament. The idioms peculiar to both are most numerous. To take a single instance, the word χάεις is especially significant. It does not occur at all in the first two Gospels, and in St. John it only occurs thrice (chap. i. 14–17); but in St. Luke it occurs eight times, and in the Acts seventeen; in St. Paul's Epistles it comes before us hundreds of times, being the keystone of his teaching. The verb χάεἰϑοναι is found twice in the Gospel, thrice in the Acts, often in St. Paul, and nowhere else. Another characteristic of the Gospel is the peculiar stress which the author lays on all notices of physical suffering, and his hearty sympathy with the deep tenderness which breathes in the words and acts of the Saviour, as

shown in his selection of parables and miracles. The same is observable in the Acts. The poverty and sufferings of the first Christians, contrasting with a liberality so far transcending all ordinary manifestations of charity as to have given rise to cavilling and perplexity, occupy a foremost place in the narrative. The frequent miracles of healing are described with the care natural to a physician, and in each case accompanied with words and acts expressive of liveliest sympathy. (2) The doctrinal system is the same. The Pauline character of the Gospel is a matter of general notoriety; that of the Acts is equally demonstrable—a point which will come out more distinctly when we consider the relations of the book (*Ibid*). (3) Both were written to the same person (*cf.* Luke i. 3; Acts i. 1), and the latter distinctly refers to the former. (4) Both are parts of one continuous history. The latter portion of "the former treatise" deals with an event (the Ascension) with which the Acts begins, the one narrative exactly dovetailing into the other. Moreover, the Gospel is an account of what "Jesus *began* to do and teach"—and the Acts is obviously the story of what Jesus continued to do and teach. Some expositors, not without reason, have regarded the abbreviated title of the book given by Patristic authors to be the true one—"the Acts"—*i.e.*, not so much of the apostles as of the risen and glorified Christ through the apostles. At any rate, the speeches of the apostles are on the same lines as the teaching of our Lord, and their miracles are of a similar character. The promised Spirit of Christ endowed the apostles with the requisite qualifications to perpetuate the work which Christ had begun. (*J. W. Burn.*) 2. *Its author was "the beloved physician," the companion of St. Paul.* (1) Its author was a physician. There are abundant indications of this, both in the Gospel and in the history, from the way in which he notes diseases and their cure. He describes more minutely than the other evangelists physical ailments, and in doing so employs precise and technical words. "A great fever" (Luke iv. 38) is the same expression as that used by Galen. The word denoting "blindness" (Acts xiii. 11), is used in a similar way by the old medical writers. There is, again, a correctness indicative of one versed in surgical knowledge in his account of the healing of the lame man (Acts iii. 7). Note also the technical accuracy of his account of the illness of Publius (Acts xxviii. 8). (2) This physician was the medical attendant of St. Paul. The first direct intimation of his being in Paul's company occurs (chap. xvi. 10) at Troas. Now, at this time Paul had been apparently detained in Galatia by sickness, and had just passed through that country and Phrygia. It is hardly probable that he had visited Colossa, as it lay so far out of his route, but he may, in the then uncertainty of his destination, have done so; because it is remarkable that in sending Luke's salutation to the Colossians (iv. 14) he calls him "the beloved physician." This designation might recall to their minds the relation in which Luke had stood to Paul when in their country; or, more probably, may have been an effusion of the warm heart of Paul, on recollection of the services rendered to him on that journey by his loving care. We find him in the apostle's company no further than Philippi, the object of his attendance on him having been then fulfilled. If we seek for any previous connection we have only the slightest hint in chap. xiv. 21, 22, where the "we" may be indicative of the writer's presence. Certainly, in the account of the events in that place (Acts xiii) there is remarkable particularity, and one little notice in ver. 52 looks very like the testimony of one who was left behind at Antioch. Tradition says that Luke was born at Antioch in Syria. Was he converted in Antioch in Pisidia? After the second junction with Paul and his company we find him remaining with the apostle to the end. It would not be necessary to suppose this second attachment to him to have the same occasion as the first. That which weakness of body at first made advisable, affection may have subsequently renewed. And we have every reason to believe this was the case (Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 15,

iv. 11). See also St. Luke and St. Paul in their mutual relations in the *Expositor* (vol. iv. p. 134). 3. *Other notices of St. Luke.* Though the name (Λουκᾶς, the contracted form of Λουκανός) is not a sufficient indication that he was of Greek parentage, since it was not unusual for Jews to bear Greek and Roman names, yet he is enumerated by St. Paul among those who were not of the circumcision (Col. iv. 14). Many circumstances, each small in itself, but the whole weighty, as accumulative proof, add support to this. He was evidently acquainted with classical literature. Both his books, written as they were for a Roman of distinction, commence, in accordance with classical models, with a Proœmium, and not after the manner of Hebrew writers. Again, in calling the Maltese "barbarians," he does not mean uncivilised, but makes use of a term which the Greeks used of all who did not speak the Greek language, and one which the Romans applied to all who were not citizens of Rome, and even to the Greeks themselves. Thus Juvenal calls even Herod Agrippa a barbarian. The Greek of the Gospel and the Acts is comparatively pure, and Davidson considers the former to be the work of "a critical historian." This is an indication of the superior education and position of St. Luke, or, according to some, betrays his connection with a place in which the written Greek was purer than in some parts of Asia. To this we must add the tradition that he was a proselyte. Another tradition tells us that Luke was one of the Seventy disciples, which receives some support from the circumstance that he alone has preserved an account of their mission, as though he had a personal interest in it. Nor is this invalidated by the manner in which (Luke i. 2) he seems to distinguish between himself and eye-witnesses. For the emphasis there is on "from the beginning"—*i.e.*, witnesses of the marvels which attended His birth, &c. As to the birthplace of St. Luke, Scripture says nothing. Ecclesiastical writers tell us that he was a native of Antioch in Syria; modern writers, however, assign to Philippi the honour of being his birthplace, and others the Alexandrian Troas. Hug notes that "he could not want opportunities to perfect himself in a knowledge of medicine in a scientific city like Antioch; and Renan, that he might have acquired his nautical knowledge at Philippi, or its port Neapolis. If, however, Antioch was really his birthplace, it seems likely that Philippi was his home; for the companion of Paul, who writes in Acts xvi. in the first person, must have parted from the apostle at the latter place. inasmuch as in ver. 19 the "we" ceases, and the names of Paul and Silas are introduced; and it is not until Paul reaches Philippi again (chap. xx. 5, 6) that Luke reappears. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) After the death of St. Paul the acts of his faithful companion are hopelessly obscure to us. It is, as perhaps the Evangelist wishes it to be: we only know him whilst he stands by the side of his beloved Paul: when the master departs the history of the follower becomes confusion and fable. As to his age and death there is the utmost uncertainty. It seems probable that he died in advanced life, but whether naturally or by martyrdom; whether in Bithynia or Achaia, or some other country, it is impossible to determine. That he died a martyr between A.D. 75 and A.D. 100 would seem to have the balance of suffrages in its favour. (*Abp. Thomson.*)

III. TO WHOM IT WAS WRITTEN.—To a certain Theophilus, of whom, beyond his name, we know nothing certainly. Internal evidence, however, supports the truth of the tradition that he was a Roman resident in Italy. For Luke, whilst careful in referring to the geography of countries which would be but little known to a native of Italy, and, as to the customs of Palestine, hastens over, as though details were unnecessary, points of Italian geography. Thus he adds that the hour of prayer was "the ninth hour"; that the party of the High Priest was of "the sect of the Sadducees." A Jew would not have needed to be told that Gamaliel was "a doctor of the law" &c., nor would he have been interested in knowing that Cornelius was

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"a centurion of the Italian band." Theophilus was evidently no native of Palestine, or he would not have been informed with such particularity the locality of certain cities and places, and the number of *stadia* between Emmaus and Jerusalem. He was certainly no Cretan (Acts xxvii. 8, 12), nor was he a resident in Greece, otherwise he would not have required the information given in Acts xvi. 17. A native of Antioch, too, could hardly be so ignorant of the geography of Palestine, which was so near that city. That he was not an Alexandrian is clear, otherwise the Alexandrian teachers would have appropriated his reputation to their Church. The testimony of the Alexandrian patriarch, Eutychicus, which decides in favour of an illustrious person in Rome or Italy, was something to be said for it. For as soon as Luke approaches Italy he puts down all the places as though they were known to Theophilus,—*e.g.*, Syracuse, Rhegium, Pozzuoli (on the name of which Josephus was obliged to make comments for Greek or Oriental readers), and even still less things, such as Tres Tabernæ, Via Appia, &c. (*W. Denton, M.A.*)

IV. Its Sources.—The principal inquiry relates to the first part (chaps. i.–xiii). After that the narrative follows St. Paul, from whom the incidents might be derived when the writer was not present. Here something will depend on the date when Luke was engaged in drawing up the book. I proceed on the hardly deniable inference that of the last voyage a journal was kept, probably set down during the winter months at Malta. It must then be evident that at this time the purpose of writing a second treatise was ripened in his mind. But how long had this purpose been in his mind? Was it not with this purpose, among others, that he became one of Paul's company on the return to Asia (chap. xx. 4, 5)? Whether the Gospel was written in the interval or afterwards in Palestine, it is not improbable that the Acts was at this time already designed either as a sequel to the Gospel already finished, or simultaneously as its future sequel. It is very probable that the design may have grown under his hand, suggested little by little by the Holy Spirit of God. He may have intended on leaving Philippi with Paul only to draw up a διήγησις of their travels, to serve as a record of his acts and sayings in founding the Churches of Europe and Asia. So we find him recording minutely every circumstance of this voyage, which was probably the first written portion of the book. At any time during that or subsequent travels, or during the two years at Rome, he may have filled in those portions of the narrative which occurred during his absence from Paul from the apostle's own lips. Let us now suppose the apostle in custody at Cæsarea. The narrative has been brought down to that time. The apprehension Paul's defence before the Jews; their conspiracy, his rescue and transmission to Felix, have been duly and minutely recorded—even the letter of Claudius Lysias having been obtained, probably by acquaintance with some one about Felix. An intention similar to that announced in Luke i. 3 is here evidently shown. But now Paul is laid aside for two years. What so natural as that Luke should avail himself of this important interval to obtain information that might complete his fragmentary notices. His main source of information would be the Church at Jerusalem. Then from those who had been on the spot from the first he would learn more fully about the Ascension, and the events of the day of Pentecost. In constructing this part of the Acts Luke may have used written documents. Detailed memoirs of some of the most important events may have been drawn up. If so, chap. ii. would in all probability be such a memoir. The letters (chap. xv. 23–29, xxiii. 26–30) must have been of this kind; some of the discourses, as that of Peter (chap. xi. 5–17), containing expressions unknown to Luke's style: more or less, the other speeches of Peter, containing many points of similarity to his Epistles. At the same time, from the similarity of ending of the earlier sections (*cf.* chaps. ii. 46, 47, iii. 32, iv. 42, ix. 31, xi. 13), from the occurrence of words and phrases

peculiar to St. Luke in the speeches, the inference is that such documents were not adopted until their language had been revised, where necessary, by the author himself. The very careful detail of chap. xii. must have been the result of diligent inquiry on the spot from the parties concerned. But one very important section is concerned with events which happened at Cæsarea, and derived from information obtained there. There dwelt Philip the Evangelist (chap. xxi. 8): a most important authority for the contents of chaps. vi. and viii, if not also for some events previous to chap. vi. There, too, we may well believe, still dwelt, if not Cornelius himself, yet some of those mentioned in chap. x. 27. Connected with this part of the history is one minute touch of accuracy, interesting as pointing to careful research and information of the most trustworthy kind. Of the Sidonian embassy on the occasion of the awful death of Herod Agrippa I. (chap. xii. 20), the Jewish historian knows nothing. But Luke, who had made careful inquiries on the spot, who had spent a week at Tyre (chap. xxi. 4–7), and Paul, who had friends at Sidon (chap. xxvii. 3), were better acquainted with the facts than to overlook, as Josephus did, the minute details in the general character of the festival. One or two sections in the former part of the Acts require separate consideration. Where did Luke get the report of the apology of Stephen from? Doubtless largely from Paul, who was so deeply implicated in the deacon's martyrdom, and who shows by his own reference (chap. xxii. 20) to the part taken by him, how indelibly it was fixed in his memory, and who in more than one place reproduces Stephen's thoughts and expressions. At the same time it is improbable that the Church at Jerusalem should have preserved no memorial of so important a speech as that of her first martyr. The narrative of Saul's conversion in chap. ix. can hardly fail to have been derived from himself. We now come to the inquiry, How far we have indications of the *lacunæ* in the author's personal testimony in the latter part having been filled in by that of Paul. Chaps. xvii. 16–xviii. 5 relate to a time when Paul was left alone, and here we discover traces of an unusual hand, for in vers. 16–21 we have no fewer than eleven expressions foreign to Luke's style, or nowhere else occurring, and no fewer than twenty in the speech. Now of these thirty-one expressions, five are either peculiar to, or employed principally by, Paul; and besides that we find the phrase *τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ*, so frequently used by him of his own spirit and feelings. Here we can hardly fail to trace the hand of the apostle. Again at xviii. 5, Silas and Timotheus joined Paul at Corinth. One at least of these, Timotheus, was afterwards for a considerable time in Luke's company. But on his arrival at Corinth no alteration in the style is perceptible. It remains the mixed diction of Paul and Luke: the apax-legomena are fewer, while we have some remarkable traces of Paul's hand. Further, vers. 24–28 it would be natural to suppose were furnished by Apollos, or if not by Aquila and Priscilla, to Paul on his return to Ephesus. And so it seems to have been. The general form is Luke's: the peculiarities are mostly Paul's. It yet remains to examine the speeches reported in the latter part of the Acts. (1) The discourse to the Ephesian Elders in chap. xx. 18–35 is a rich storehouse of phrases and sentiments peculiar to Paul. Very faint traces are found of Luke, while hardly a line is without unmistakeable evidences that we have the very words of Paul. (2) The apology before the Jews (chap. xxii. 1–32) was spoken in Hebrew. Did Luke then understand Hebrew, and report the speech as delivered? or was it afterwards communicated by Paul? Now—(*a*) The speech is full of Hebraisms, which leads us to infer that Paul was not the translator into Greek, but that it is the work of one who felt himself more strictly bound to a literal rendering than the speaker himself, who would be likely to give his own thoughts a freer and more Grecian dress. (*b*) While it contains several expressions occurring nowhere else but in Luke's writings, not one is found in it peculiar to Paul. Our inference then is that Luke himself has rendered this speech from

having heard it delivered; and consequently that he was acquainted with Hebrew. (3) The short apology before Felix (chap. xxiv. 10-21) contains some traces of Paul's manner, but still they are scanty, and the evidences of Luke's hand predominate. Its very compendious character makes it probable that it was drawn up by Luke from Paul's own report of the substance of what he said. (4) The important apology before Agrippa (chap. xxvi. 1-29) is full of Paul's peculiar expressions. It was spoken in Greek, and taken down nearly as spoken. Some phrases, however, occur in it which seem to belong to Luke; just enough to show the hand which has committed the speech to writing. Our conclusion therefore is—(*a*) That in all cases the diction of the speeches was more or less modified by Luke's hand. (*b*) That they are not in any case composed by him for the speaker, but were really in substance, and for the most part in very words, uttered as written. (*c*) That the differences apparent in editorial diction remarkably correspond to the alleged occasions and modes of their delivery; where Paul spoke Hebrew, hardly any traces of his own style being discernible, as also where only a short compendium of his speech is given; while on the other hand speeches manifestly reported at length, and which were spoken in Greek originally, are full of the characteristic peculiarities of Paul. (*Dean Alford.*)

V. The Date and Place of its Publication.—In one conclusion almost all critics agree, viz., that the Acts and the third Gospel are from the same pen. If then the latter is early quoted, and of this there is no doubt, this is proof also of the early existence of the former. Now from the time of St. Paul, who quotes this Gospel, and calls the quotation Scripture (1 Tim. v. 18), down to recent times, there is hardly a Christian writer who does not make use of it and name it as the source from which he is quoting: and as to the Acts, Polycarp, in his Epistle to Philippi, where Luke long abode, cites it, and it appears in the earliest list of books of acknowledged authority. Then again the number of "Acts" written in imitation of this book early in the second and some even in the first century, must be taken as an additional presumption of its early date, which the best critics fix within the years 58 to 70. Were we discussing the date of an ordinary book no objection would be raised to the earliest date. The abrupt conclusion, whilst Paul is a prisoner at Rome, does not admit of our believing that it was written after many other important events in the life of this apostle had happened. If, as some have suggested, it was written to extend and strengthen the reputation of St. Paul, the book would not have ended without recording his subsequent labours and martyrdom. That no notice is taken of anything after his arrival in Rome is sufficient indication that it was written during St. Paul's imprisonment or immediately after its close—*i.e.*, about the year A.D. 63. (*W. Denton, M.A.*)

VI. Its Genuineness and Authenticity.—This has been ever recognised in the Church. It is mentioned by Eusebius among the generally acknowledged portions of Holy Scripture. It is first directly quoted in the Epistle of Lyons and Vienne to those of Asia and Phrygia (A.D. 177); then repeatedly and expressly by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and so onwards. (*Abp. Thomson.*) Its credibility is unquestionably proved by—1. *Many undesigned coincidences between the Acts and Epistles of St. Paul and profane history.* 2. *Several particular circumstances recorded.* Thus—(1) When Paul was sent from Cæsarea to Rome he was committed to the care of Julius, officer of the Augustan Cohort. Now from Josephus we learn that the Roman garrison at Cæsarea was composed chiefly of Syrians; but there happened to be then a small body of Roman soldiers stationed there distinguished by the name of the Augustan Cohort. So—(2) Sergius Paulus (Acts xiii. 7), "the deputy," is designated by a Greek title (ἀνθυπάτος), which was

given only to those governors who were invested with proconsular dignity—*i.e.*, appointed not by the emperor but by the Senate. Now we learn that Cyprus was once prætorian and its governors appointed by the emperor, but according to Dion Cassius it was now proconsular, and he designates the governor by the same title as the Acts. (*Bp. Marsh.*)

VII. ITS CHARACTERISTICS.—1. *Its representative character.* Looking at it as a whole, what a representative book it is! What varieties of character; what miracles of friendship; what bringing together of things between which cohesion is, from our standpoint, simply impossible! We wonder how the characters ever came together, how any one book can hold them; and yet, as we wonder, we see them complement one another so as to furnish out the whole circle with perfect accuracy of outline. We belong to one another. The hand cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of thee"; nor can the ear say to the eye, or the eye to the ear, "I have no need of thee." The human race is not one man; one man is not the human race. The difficulty we have with ourselves and with one another is that of not perceiving that every one of us is needful to make up the sum total of God's meaning. The men in the Acts belong to one another. Think of Peter and Luke: Peter all fire; Luke quiet, thoughtful, contemplative, musing, taking observations and using them for historical purposes. Think of Paul and Barnabas; think of all the names that are within the record and see how wondrous is the mosaic. There are only two great leaders—"Peter and Paul." They seem to overshadow everybody; their names burn most ardently and lustrously on the whole record. That is quite true; but where would they have been but for those who supported them, held up their arms, made up their following and their companionship? If they are pinnacles, the pinnacle only expresses the solidity and massiveness of the building that is below. You see the pinnacle from afar; but that pinnacle does not exist in itself, by itself, for itself; it is the upgathering of the great thought, and represents to the farthest-off places the sublime fact that the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) 2. *Its catholic spirit.* If the Gospel of Luke is distinguished by its large-hearted and human spirit, its sequel the Acts perfectly corresponds with this characteristic; for what is in the Gospel only prophecy, indication, type and parable, is in the Acts converted into fulfilment, fact and history. If in the Gospel the Saviour recognised the gratitude of a Samaritan, and related the parable of the good Samaritan; in the Acts the apostles witnessed the joy with which the gospel was received by that people. If in the Gospel not a few of the sayings of Jesus point to the conversion of the Gentiles, and their admission into the kingdom of God, the Acts relate how the Word of God gradually reached the Gentiles, and how they became naturalised citizens of the kingdom. If the Gospel is distinguished as the human gospel, the same wide range embracing the human race is also recognised in the Acts; it was composed for a Gentile, and its largest portion is devoted to the history of the apostle of the Gentiles. Nevertheless Gentile history is not the chief object of the book: St. Luke has as much at heart the conversion of the Jews. And it is precisely the union of Jewish and Gentile Christianity, the harmony of Peter and Paul, which is the centre-point of the book. What our Lord says in chap. i. 8 is its peculiar theme. The effective testimony of the apostles anointed by the power of the Holy Ghost, from Jerusalem to the end of the earth, or the progress of the Church of Christ from the Jews to the Gentiles forms its contents. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) 3. *Its fearless candour.* Nothing is kept back; there is no desire to make men appear better than they really were; all the sin is here, all the shame, all the virtue, all the honour—everything is set down with an impartial and fearless hand.

That is one of the strongest incidental proofs of the inspiration of the whole book. This is not a series of artificial curves or carvings; the men we have to deal with are men of flesh and blood like ourselves wholly. Here is a record of selfishness: the story of Ananias and Sapphira is not kept back. "How much better," some would have said, "to omit it." As well omit the story of Adam and Eve. In every book there is an Adam and Eve, if it be a faithful portraiture of human life; in every soul a fall, an expulsion, a day of cherubic fire that asserts the sovereignty of outraged righteousness. These are not inventions, but they are representations of ourselves as we know ourselves, and therefore we can confirm the book. The accident varies, the substance is constant. Dissensions are reported: Paul and Barnabas separated; Paul withstood Peter "to the face, because he was to be blamed." Peter to be blamed! That was an honest book! There is no man-painting here; there is no attempt to get up a Christian exhibition with the motto, "Behold the perfect men!" There is a stern reality about this that compels the attention which it charms. Christianity is not represented here as to its earthly lot in any very attractive way. Who would say, after reading the Acts of the Apostles, were we to judge by the fate of its apostles and teachers, "Let us also be Christians"? There was hardly a man in the whole brotherhood that could trace his ancestry beyond yesterday. If you wanted to join an unfashionable sect, the Christian sect would have presented to you innumerable and overwhelming advantages; if you wanted to suffer, Christianity would find the opportunity. We thought that towards the last surely we should hear some better account of it; but in the last chapter Christianity is represented as the sect which is everywhere "spoken against." All of these circumstances and instances illustrate the intense honesty of the record. Human authors study probabilities. It is a canon amongst literary men that even in a romance nothing shall be put down—though it may actually have occurred—which exceeds the bounds of average probability. There is no study of parts, proportions, colours in the Acts of the Apostles; there is no poetry-making, no romance elaboration; things are put down every night as they occurred every day—there stands the record, with all blotches, blemishes, faults, all heroisms and nobilities, all endurances and glorious successes; nothing is extenuated; the whole tale is told exactly and literally as it occurred. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

4. *It is pre-eminently a Gospel of the Holy Ghost.* At every stage His action is emphatically recognised. Jesus, after His resurrection (chap. v.), had "through the Holy Ghost given commandment to the apostles," who are to be baptized with the Holy Ghost" and to "receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon them." The Holy Ghost had "spoken through the mouth of David." Then comes the wonder of Pentecost (chap. ii.), when all the disciples were "filled with the Holy Ghost," and the prophecy, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh," brought to the verge of fulfilment. Jesus has "received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." Once again (chap. iv.) all were "filled with the Holy Ghost." The sin of Ananias (chap. v.) is a "lie unto the Holy Ghost," who has been "tempted" by himself and his wife. The "Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him" is a witness that the Christ is exalted at the right hand of God. The seven who are chosen in chap. vi are "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," and Stephen is pre-eminently "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." His leading charge against priests and Scribes (chap. vii.) is that they "do always resist the Holy Ghost." Peter and John go down to Samaria (chap. viii.) that those who have been baptized by Philip "might receive the Holy Ghost"; and the sin of Simon is that he thinks this gift of God can be purchased with money. It is the Spirit that impels Philip to join himself to the Ethiopian, and carries him away after his baptism. Ananias is to lay hands on Saul of Tarsus (chap. ix.) that he may be "filled with the Holy Ghost." The Churches in their interval of rest

are "walking . . . in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." The admission of the Gentiles (chap. x.) is attested when the gift of the Holy Ghost is poured out on Cornelius and his friends, and Peter dwells on that in his address (chaps. xi. 15–17; xv. 8). Barnabas when sent to Antioch (chap. xi.) is described as "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." It is the Holy Ghost who "separates Barnabas and Saul for the work of the ministry" (chap. xiii.), and they are sent forth by Him. Saul, roused to indignation by the subtlety of Elymas, is "filled with the Holy Ghost." It is He who (chap. xv.) guides the decision of the Council, and directs (chap. xvi.) the footsteps of Paul and his companions on their mission journey. The twelve disciples of John (chap. xix.) receive the Holy Ghost when Paul lays his hands on them. He it was who witnessed (chaps. xx.; xxi.) in every city that bonds and imprisonment awaited the apostle in Jerusalem, and it was the Holy Ghost who had made the elders of Ephesus overseers of the Church of God. Well nigh the last words of the book are those which "the Holy Ghost had spoken by Esaias," and which Paul, in the power of the same Spirit, applies to the Jews of his own time (chap. xxviii. 25). (*Dean Plumptre.*) 5. *It is a continuation of the life of Christ.* The Acts is but the history of Christ in His disciples. He it is who appoints the twelve witnesses (i. 24), who, after He has received the Spirit, sends Him down on the Church (ii. 33), who adds to His Church (ii. 47), and is ever near His people, turning them away from their iniquities (iii. 26). He it is who works miracles both of healing and destruction in testimony to His apostles' preaching (iii. 6, 10, 30, ix. 34, xiii. 11, xiv. 3, xix. 13). To Stephen He reveals Himself standing at the right hand of God (vii. 55, 56). His angel speaks unto Philip (viii. 26), and it was His Spirit that caught him away (ver. 31). He appears to Saul (xix. 5, 27, xxii. 8, 26). His hand established the first Church among the Gentiles (xi. 27). His angel delivers Peter (xii. 7, 11, 17), and strikes the hostile Herod (xii. 23). He it is again who appears to Paul in the temple, and commits to him the conversion of the Gentiles (xxii. 17, 21). To Him the apostles and brethren address themselves on the occasion of the first mission to the Gentiles (xiii. 2; v. 47). To Him are the infant Churches commended (xiv. 23). His Spirit prevents the missionaries from preaching in Bithynia (xvi. 7). He calls them by the voice of the Man of Macedonia into Europe (xvi. 10). He opens the heart of Lydia (xvi. 14), comforts and encourages Paul at Corinth (xviii. 9, 10), strengthens him in prison, and informs him of his journey to Rome (xxiii. 11). These interventions of Jesus, so numerous, express, and decisive, are a sufficient warrant for our ascribing all to His influence, even in those instances when His name is not expressly mentioned. (*Baumgarten.*)

VIII. ITS SCOPE AND OBJECTS.—1. *To record the history of the Church.* Looking at the contents of the book it would be well described as the "Acts of Peter and Paul," the former occupying a prominent place in chaps. i.–v., x.–xii., xv., the latter being the central figure in chaps. vii. 58, ix., xi. 25–30, xiii.–xxvii. From another point of view a yet more appropriate title would be that of *Origines Ecclesiæ*—the history of the growth and development of the Church and of its mission work among the Gentiles. The starting-point and close of the book are in this respect significant. It begins at Jerusalem; it ends at Rome. When it opens, circumcision is required, as well as baptism; the Church is outwardly but a Jewish sect of some 120 persons. When it ends every barrier between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, and the Church has become catholic and all-embracing. To trace the stages of that expansion both locally and as affecting the teaching of the Church is the dominant purpose of the book. The "acts" of those who were not concerned in it, or played but a subordinate part, are deliberately passed over. Some paragraph of selection is clearly involved in the structure of such a book as

this, and without going beyond its four corners we may safely affirm that the main purpose of the writer was to inform a Gentile convert of Rome how the gospel had been brought to him, and how it had gained the width and freedom with which it was actually presented. (*Ibid.*) As in the Gospels we see the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying, in the Acts we have it represented—for the Church is the body of Christ—springing up and bearing fruit abundantly, spreading into all parts of the world, and enriching human nature with the gifts of Divine grace. As in the Gospels the human means are not brought into prominence in order that our attention should not be diverted from the central figure, our Incarnate Lord, so in the Acts it is not man that is foremost, but the work which by man was wrought through the power of the Holy Ghost; the "acts" which He enabled the apostle of Christ to accomplish, and which, though done by man's instrumentality, was yet done by God, for "neither is he that planteth anything . . . but God that giveth the increase." (*W. Denton, M.A.*) 2. *To vindicate and elucidate St. Paul*:—We do not dispute that St. Luke's history may have been written with an irenical purpose. St. Paul, to whom he was strongly attached, had been more perversely misrepresented and assailed than any one of the servants of Christ; and therefore he wrote to exhibit the harmony of St. Paul's Christianity with that of the earlier apostles, as well as the process by which he had been led to take a wider scope of thought and ministry, and the wise resolution with which he had rescued the Church from the trammels of Jewish restriction. The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us exactly what it is indispensable for us to know in order to understand and appreciate the epistles which follow. It is a wonderful tale, well told; and all the more satisfactory that it allows the apostles Peter and Paul to speak for themselves, and so allows us to catch their sentiments in their own words, while we seem to see their gestures and hear their tones. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*)

IX. Its Relations to the Epistles.—1. The Acts greatly help us in understanding the Epistles; the latter add much important historical information; and the agreement between the two, extending even to many minute details, strongly confirms the truth of both the Epistles and the Acts. Imagine that we had to study the Epistles without the history; it would be extremely difficult to determine anything as to the time and place of their composition, to fix their historical surroundings, and to perceive the precise adaptation. By the help of Acts xvii., xviii. we can readily locate 1 and 2 Thess. as having certainly been written at Corinth, and almost certainly in A.D. 52 or 53; and we much better understand those previous relations between the apostle and the persons addressed. We perceive that these were the first writings of the great apostle, and that they contain the germs of that great doctrine of justification by faith which he developed some years later in Gal. and Rom. By the help of Acts xix. and xx., we perceive that the second and chief group of Paul's Epistles (1 and 2 Cor., Gal., and Rom.) were all written between A.D. 57 and A.D. 58. It also becomes clear that 1 Cor. was written before leaving Ephesus, 2 Cor. in Macedonia, during the summer or fall; and Rom. during his three months' stay in Corinth. As to the third group (Phil., Philem., Col., Eph.), the Acts give us less assistance, for they were written after its history closes, while the apostle was a prisoner at Rome. Yet even here no little light is thrown on Philippians by the history of Paul's first labours at Philippi; while the fact that Paul had laboured long and successfully at Ephesus brings into more striking contrast with other Epistles the absence of affectionate salutation to individuals in the Epistle, and concurs with other circumstances to work the conviction that this was designed as a circular letter to the various cities in the district of which Ephesus was the capital. (2) The Epistles afford a valuable supplement to the history contained in the Acts. Thus the brief account of Paul's labours in Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 1–9) may be greatly enlarged by interesting recollections given in 1 Thess.; and that of his labours in Corinth (Acts xviii. 1–17), by similar recollections in 1 Cor. The bare statement in Acts

xvi. 6 that Paul went through Galatia, turns to a vivid picture of a warm-hearted Celtic reception when we compare Gal. iv. 12–15. The priority and prominence of women in the Church at Philippi (Acts xvi. 12–40) receives further pleasing illustration from the general excellence of that Church and its special generosity in contributions for Paul's support, of which we read in the Epistle. The barely mentioned three months in Greece (Acts xx. 2, 3) become warm with activity and zeal as we read the Epistle to the Romans. And so with many other points throughout the history. One exceedingly important part of Paul's history comes out in the second group of Epistles, to which only a single slight reference is made in the book of Acts (xxiv. 16). This is the great collection which Paul made among his Gentile Churches for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. This occupied much of his thought during two years of his third missionary journey. For this he directed the Galatians and the Corinthians so set apart something on every first day of the week (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2), and sent with Titus (2 Cor. viii. 6) the strongest argument and warmest appeal (2 Cor. viii. 9). But he knows that there are those who, if he himself take charge of the money, will delight in saying that nobody knows whether that money ever got to Jerusalem; so he declares (1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4) that it is to be carried by persons of their own selection. The good name of Christianity, in connection with benevolent funds, much oftener suffers through imprudence or negligence than through honesty. The apostle evidently expected this contribution to open the hearts of the Jewish Christians towards the Gentile Churches, and thus prevent a schism. The Judaisers were doing their utmost to kindle bitter feeling at Jerusalem towards Paul and his Churches. The Jews in foreign countries had long been accustomed (as they are to this day) to send money for the support of their poorer brethren at Jerusalem; and when Gentile Christians gathered this liberal contribution, nothing could be better suited to call forth the affection and confidence of the Jewish Christians. The rapid restoration of good feeling in the Southern States of America towards the North has been not a little promoted by the generosity of Northern Christians towards Southern enterprises. The later Epistles carry on the history after the conclusion of Acts. What an interesting light is thrown upon Paul's life as a prisoner at Rome, by various allusions in Phil., Philem., Col., and Eph. We learn something even of his outer life as he goes about in the Prætorian camp, chained to a soldier, and talking upon every occasion concerning Christ, until his bonds in Christ are known in all the Prætorium; or as he searches for souls in the slums of the great city, and a runaway slave from Asia Minor becomes his son in the faith; or as he joyfully receives a fresh contribution from Philippi for his support, or lovingly visits the brother who brought it, in that perilous illness which the sickly climate of Rome has inflicted upon him. Still more is the apostle's inner life brought before us in these Epistles, until we see right clearly his anxieties, his consolations, his hopes for time and for eternity. The closing group of letters to his two companions for years past reveal anew the most tender aspects of the great apostle's character, mingled with fearless courage, until at last the curtain slowly descends upon him as he sits thinking of old friends who are absent, and rejoicing in other friends whom the Lord has raised up for him, ready to be offered, and waiting for the crown of righteousness—slowly, slowly the curtain descends, till we see his face no more. (*J. A. Broadus, D.D.*)

XI. PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM ITS HISTORY.—It is said of Abel that "being dead he yet speaketh," though no word uttered by him has been recorded. So the early Church speaks to us through its works more than through any message of written language. 1. *Its spirit of devotion, and its love of public worship should be to us a holy inspiration.* On the evening of the Sabbath of the Resurrection, the disciples met in an upper room and also on the following Sabbath. After the Ascension "they were daily in the temple praising and blessing God." Nor did the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost change their habits of public worship. Peter and John still "went up at the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer." And when the number of the disciples had vastly increased, "they continuing daily with one accord in the temple." The fact that the descent of the Spirit occurred on the anniversary of the giving of the law seems to indicate the perfect union between the legal and spiritual requirements. The duty of public worship was enjoined by that law, was sanctioned by the baptism of fire, and was voiced in the notions of the early Church, saying with the apostle, "Forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together." It must not be forgotten also that this

attendance on public worship was not free from danger. In their first meetings "the door was shut for fear of the Jews." 2. *In their unity of spirit and close affection for each other, they gave a bright example of Christian duty.* This union may have been caused partly through fear of the bigoted Jews, and as being sharers of the common reproach; but the chief tie was love. Their great attachment was to their risen Master. They loved Him, and through Him they loved each other. The test of discipleship was "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." This love was manifest, not only in their union in public service, but also in their supplying each other's needs. A mutual love overcame their selfishness and their love of property. That love is farther evinced by the provision which was early made for the support of widows. This led to the selection of seven laymen to superintend this ministration, which gives us a glimpse of the relative value of the spiritual and the temporal economy of the Church. The serving of tables was necessary, but the preaching of the gospel was more essential. This ever remains God's order: The preaching of the Cross precedes the humanitarian efforts to elevate man. 3. *In the history of the early Church we mark its care in reference to organisation.* One of its first acts was to fill the place of the fallen Judas. We have also the institution of the order of deacons for serving tables. What their peculiar organisation was may be a matter of doubt; but all agree that there was an organisation, in which the members were closely united; which received members, administered the ordinances, and expelled the unworthy; which, by proper adjudication, settled difficulties, and selected its officers. To these organised Churches the writings of the apostle were sent. This organisation was not formed to interfere with great national movements; but simply to preserve its own existence, to advance its members in holiness and usefulness, and to extend amongst men the knowledge of the Lord. As, however, this organisation might need to be modified to meet the condition of various lands and coming ages, its special form is not given us in the Holy Scriptures. It has been left to men under the influence of the Holy Spirit to carry out, as seems best to them, the great principles laid down in the Word of God. 4. *Notice the example of the Christian Church in exciting, and finding proper objects for, human activity.* Duties were enjoined, not upon ministers merely, or on prominent members, but on the entire body. These members differed from each other in office and qualifications, as the head from the hand or the foot. All Christians were urged to be co-workers with God, to have the spirit of Christ, and to labour for their fellow-men. They were described as an army of soldiers fighting against the enemies of Christ. They were enjoined to "work while it is called to-day"; "to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The activity of the early Christians appeared in the midst of their persecutions, and when they were scattered abroad they went everywhere preaching the Word. 5. *We have exemplified in the early Church the power of the gospel to triumph over all circumstances.* It commenced in the age of universal corruption. Outside of Judæa idolatry reigned supreme; licentiousness prevailed; murder and suicides were frequent; the power and wealth of the State were in a few hands; the mass of the people were without means, learning, protection, and a large part was held in slavery. Yet in the midst of all these vices, without a Bible in the hands of the people, without a Sabbath, and without church edifices, the gospel made wonderful conquests. Nor were these triumphs secured by any external aid; the disciples received no assistance from the governments or established institutions. The literature, the schools, the influence of society, were against them. Yet the power of God made them conquerors. If the gospel had such power then, why not now? (*Dr. M. Simpson.*)

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THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1–12. **The former treatise have I made.**—*A true commencement must have respect to what has gone before:*—In any new beginning of study or work, it is important to have in mind what has been done before in the same line. No one can learn or do to advantage, unless he avails himself of what others have learned and done before him. Any other plan would utterly forbid progress. The world would be full of new beginnings—and nothing else. He who would study the New Testament wisely, must know what the Old Testament has disclosed. He who would get good from the Book of Acts must have in mind at the start the facts and teachings of the former treatise by the same author. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The Gospels and the Acts:*—I. THEIR RELATION. In determining this it is not enough to say that while the Gospels contain the history of the Master's ministry, the Acts record that of the apostles. Both alike narrate the work of the Lord: the Gospels what He did in Person, the Acts what He did by His chosen witnesses. This relation is marked at its outset. If the former treatise records "all that Jesus began," then the present relates what Jesus continued. His incarnation, death, &c., were only the foundation. In the Acts He rears a lofty temple on that foundation. Nor does the work cease with the abrupt conclusion of the Acts. In a city map you mark the road which leads to another city a little beyond the wall, when it breaks off. To trace it further you require another map. So our Lord's path breaks off on the map of inspiration and is continued on the map of providence. II. THEIR POINT OF UNION. The latter treatise does not begin precisely where the former ends. By design they overlap each other—both recording the Resurrection and the Ascension. Thus where a bridge of two arches spans a river, both arches lean on one pillar which rises in the middle of the flood. In the midst of the gulf which separated God and man, and in the midst of the tide of time stood Jesus—on Him rests the Old Dispensation and the New. In the end of the Gospel history we found the first hemisphere of the Divine dispensation terminating in Christ crucified and ascended. Here we find the second arch springing where the first was finished. Resting there, it rises into heaven, and stretches away into the future. We lose sight of it as we lose sight of the rainbow, in mid-heavens; but we know assuredly that it will traverse all the intervening space, and lean secure on the continent of a coming eternity. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *St. Luke a model for the Bible student:*—I. HE COLLECTED HIS FACTS WITH CARE AND DILIGENCE (Luke i. 1–3). This complete knowledge of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach suggests the importance of endeavouring to gain a more perfect knowledge of the Word of God. There is a great readiness in quoting certain texts or favourite portions, but the fulness of which St. Luke speaks is rare. The Word of God cannot be said to be unknown, but it does not "dwell richly in us in all wisdom." Hence truths are magnified into undue proportions, and important doctrines are passed over slightly, because they do not well enter into some peculiar system. II. HIS COLLECTION WAS LIMITED BY THE BOUNDARIES OF REVELATION. It did not go beyond what God made known by His Son. Here, again, we may learn the importance of not going beyond the revealed Word whenever we attempt to review God's dealings with mankind, and especially of the redemption of the world by Christ. If there be danger in a partial knowledge of God's truth, there is perhaps more in adding to the things which God

has revealed. It is this which has caused so much superstition. III. He recognised that a knowledge of "all that Jesus began to do and to teach," however comprehensive and however free from mixture, will not prove a saving knowledge unless it be CONVEYED TO THE SOUL BY THE POWER OF GOD. St. Luke describes the commandments of Jesus as given unto the apostles by the Spirit. It is possible for any man to learn these commandments. The letter of the law and the facts of the gospel are within the reach of the poorest capacity. But, in order to make the knowledge available, the Spirit of God must take of the things so learnt, and show them to the soul. "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost." It is impossible to read the Acts without seeing that the Holy Spirit was the acting Guide of all the sayings and actions of the first teachers of Christianity. Looking upon the doctrines of the gospel as a medicine to heal our spiritual sickness, we must suppose that the medicine is taken, and that it penetrates through the constitution of the sick soul. IV. IT REQUIRES STRONG CONVICTIONS OF THE TRUTHS WE BELIEVE IN ORDER TO BE DILIGENT IN THE PROPAGATION OF THEM. Our zeal for the cause of the Redeemer, our desires for the advancement of His glory, our prayers for the prevalence of His truth, will all be in proportion to the depth of our conviction that this is the Word of God. The earliest impressions are liable to be effaced by time, by the world and its cares, by the changes of our own views, by the speculative views of others, &c. We have need, therefore, of watchfulness, lest that which is within us lose its power and freshness, and we begin in the routine of duty and form to think less and less of the power of godliness. (*R. Burgess, B.D.*) *Literary histories*:—Luke was the Haydon of the sacred scribes; he sketched the perfect Man and drew in heroic size the figures and scenes of the new kingdom. Historians often become interested in a single character and turn aside to give us a monograph or biography on the object of their enthusiasm. Motley, after writing "The Rise of the Dutch Republic" and "The History of the United Netherlands," published "John Barneveld." Bancroft left his chosen field, the "History of the United States," to make us better acquainted with Abraham Lincoln. Froude has added to his "History of England" a "Life of Lord Beaconsfield." Writers of history describe the movements of an age as centring about their heroes. The records of a given period are seen to bear the stamp of a distinct personality. But Luke begins with a great character. His biography precedes his history and is the inspiration of it. There was a life which was the key to the Acts, and our writer was in touch with it. He did not gild an earthly tyrant and set him up like Nebuchadnezzar's image in the plain of Dura to fill the wastes of godless history, but he traces the way of the Church through the fiery furnace of events with a form "like a son of the gods." Guizot wrote a "History of Civilisation in Europe and in France," and gave to the world as one of his latest works "Meditations on the Christian Religion." Edwin Arnold, after following the "Light of Asia" till it led him to a dim Nirvana, came back for another guide and traced the path of the "Light of the World." Gounod composed operas in his youth, and afterward turned his attention to such serious works as the oratorios of "The Redemption" and "St. Paul." It thus not infrequently happens that in later life men are led to dwell upon and portray that great personality they have passed by in search of the world's truth; but the Bible writers all had their study fires kindled by the rays of that Sun which illuminates the past and future, before they became scribes of Divine truth. The ancient penmen were friends of God, and those of the New Testament were disciples of His Son Jesus Christ before they essayed to describe the powers, the laws, and the institutions of redemption. (*W. R. Campbell.*) *The Gospels the living picture of Christ*:—The whole value of the Gospels to Erasmus lay in the vividness with which they brought home to their readers the personal impression of Christ Himself. "Were we to have seen Him with our own eyes, we should not have so intimate a knowledge as they give us of Christ, speaking, healing, dying, rising again, as it were in our very presence. If the footprints of Christ are shown us in any place, we kneel down and adore them. Why do we not rather venerate the living and breathing picture of Him in these Books? It may be the safer course," he goes on, with characteristic irony, "to conceal the state mysteries of kings, but Christ desires His mysteries to be spread abroad as openly as was possible." (*Little's "Historical Lights."*) *The "Memorabilia" of Christ*:—Xenophon, the loving disciple of Socrates, has given an account of the last sayings of that great man, after he was imprisoned and condemned to

death; and in all ages the "Memorabilia" has been regarded as one of the most precious records which classical antiquity has sent down to us. But sublime and heroic as they were, how immeasurably do these last utterances of the Grecian stage fall below the moral grandeur and the deathless interest inspired by the last words of Jesus. The nearer we stand to the Cross, and the more we enter into the spirit of its great central character, the more do we feel the force of Rousseau's eloquent eulogium, "Socrates lived and died like a philosopher; but Jesus Christ like a God." *The pre-eminence of the doctrine of Christ incarnate:*—We have seen in mountain lands one majestic peak soaring above all the rest of the hills which cut the azure of the horizon with their noble outline, burning with hues of richest gold in the light of the morning sun; and so should the doctrine of Christ incarnate, crucified, risen, and reigning, be pre-eminent above the whole chain of fact, doctrine, and sentiment which make up the sublime landscape—the magnificent panorama—which the Christian preacher unfolds, and makes to pass in clear form and brilliant colour before the eye of his people's faith. (*Evangelical Magazine.*) **Theophilus.**—*Theophilus:*—Not an ideal person with a name expressive of his religious character. That must have been *Philotheus* (cf. 2 Tim. iii. 4). Probably a Gentile convert, not resident in the Holy Land, or he would not have needed the many explanations of places and usages. He is said by Theophylact to have been of senatorial rank; and the title prefixed in the Gospel has been thought to imply that he was a provincial governor (cf. chaps. xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3). The address here is less ceremonious, indicating that Luke's friendship had become more intimate. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) **Of all that Jesus began.**—*Teaching to be combined with doing:*—If it were not for the fact of a Christian life manifested in the holy lives of believers, Christian doctrine would command no attention beyond that of a speculative system. God begins, but never finishes. His works and His teachings are only movements in the march of infinite advance. But one thing we know is finished, and that is the redemption work of Christ, which He declared accomplished when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost; but even this gives birth to a progressive work of salvation, based upon, and springing out of, that foundation. Jesus intimated to His disciples that, through them, He would do greater works after He went to the Father than while He was on the earth, and that, as they became able to bear them, He would give them other teachings. In the Acts of the Apostles we find both of these promises being literally fulfilled. (*G. F. Pentecost.*) *Aspects of Christ on the earth:*—1. A Founder. He "began to do and teach," like an architect who draws the plan of a magnificent cathedral, and lays its foundations, then leaves it for others to finish. The Church of to-day at its best is only carrying out the purpose of its Founder. 2. A Lawgiver. Giving His commandments through the Holy Ghost to His apostles. His laws were not written on tables of stone, like those of Mount Sinai, but on the hearts of His disciples. Whoever becomes a follower of Christ pledges himself to obey His commands. 3. A Sufferer. "His Passion" is not omitted from this summary, brief as the summary is, for the death of Christ is far more important to us than was His life. His Passion brought to us our salvation. 4. A Conqueror. He was dead, He was buried, but He lived again; "He showed Himself alive after His Passion." But for the resurrection of Jesus the world would never have heard of His name. 5. A Revealer. "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Notice what was the theme of conversation during those forty days. The same subject is the object of all Christ's intercst on the earth now. He cares little for the rise and fall of empires, except as they affect the salvation of men. One soul outweighs all the politics of a continent. *The unchanged plan:*—The lines of the kingdom run before the crucifixion were not changed. Christ's assumption of authority was the same as of old. His words were those of command. He had no mistakes to rectify, nor did He withdraw any offer or retract any promise. The scenes He had passed through had not shaken His mind in its loves, its powers, or its purposes. The old commissions were renewed, but there must be a halt, not for orders or drill, but for power. Not as the heathen legionaries waited for the auguries from dead beasts, but for a descent of the Spirit from on high were these men to linger at Jerusalem. The moulds were set and the wicks were already dipped for the men who were to be the candles of the Lord, and only the spark of the Spirit was needed to light them. (*W. R. Campbell.*) *The ministry of Jesus a beginning:*—I. IT WAS A NEW THING AMONG MEN. 1. His miracles. "We have seen strange things to-day." 2. His teaching. "Never man spake as this Man." 3. His character. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" This

originality presents—(1) An example for all time. (2) An argument for the Divine origin of Christianity. II. IT WAS INTRODUCTORY TO THE WORK OF THE APOSTLES. 1. He prepared them for their work by instruction. He made them to feel that they could have no other Master. They were assured that to learn of Him was to find the truth. This relation continued during His presence, but they had to be prepared for His absence. 2. Accordingly He brought them to a conviction of His abiding supremacy in the Church. Though when with Him they in a degree lived by sight, even then faith was required; and after His departure faith was their chief directive principle. And how realising was the faith in which they carried on their work (chap. ii. 33; iv. 10). III. IT WAS INTRODUCTORY TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IN SUCCEEDING AGES. Centuries have rolled by, and Christianity has not fulfilled all the desires of its friends. Yet the name of Jesus has never ceased to be spoken, and His Holy Spirit has wrought by means of the truth however partially known. Of His living ministry we have abundant proofs in buildings, institutions, and saved souls. And provision is made for the perpetual continuance of the work of Jesus. The Gospel history furnishes—1. An inexhaustible theme. 2. An all-powerful motive. Conclusion: See here—1. How to understand the history of the Christian Church. It presents the truth of Jesus in incessant contention with error, the world, and Satan, and it points hopefully to the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, &c. 2. The magnificence of a right influence. The work which Jesus began has never ceased. Some of His followers have begun movements which have continued to bless the world ages after they have gone. If your life is short and sphere narrow you have the opportunity of beginning what may bless many. 3. The dignity of Christian effort. It is an honour to have distinguished associates, how much more to have your name in the long list headed by Jesus! (*W. Hudson.*) *The ever-active Christ*:—1. Luke's Gospel is confessedly but an imperfect sketch of an absolutely perfect life. Yet, in his Gospel, every beneficent act seems well-rounded off, every miracle seems complete, every parable seems to have received its finishing touches. And yet Luke says that his Gospel is only a narrative of what Jesus "began both to do and teach." There were greater things to follow—miracles of grace far surpassing the opening of blind eyes, the cleansing of lepers, or even the raising of the dead to life again. 2. The Acts of the Apostles contains an account of those greater works which were done in the name of Christ. In the Gospels Christ begins to do and teach; in the Acts of the Apostles He continues to do and teach; but His doing and teaching are not now restricted and limited, but assume larger and grander proportions. 3. Our Lord's beneficient activity did not cease when the last of the apostles fell asleep. Christ has been doing and teaching ever since, and never more than during the last hundred years. Christ is with us still, and He is not inactive. He is keenly alive to all that goes on in His Church. Indeed, it is the Christ in you that prompts to that noble deed, or to lay upon His altar that costly sacrifice. Apart from Christ you can do nothing. The Gospels are full of beginnings. The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles are also full of beginnings. Now, if the beginnings are so glorious, what will the endings be? If the Spirit of Christ abides in the Church, leading us into all truth, then we ought to possess a larger and richer spiritual heritage than our forefathers possessed. The Churches of the New Testament were only the beginnings of Christ's redemptive activity. His influence on the world is immeasurably greater than it was when He died upon the cross, and immeasurably greater than it was when the Books of the New Testament were written. We know that He who in the time of His humiliation began to do and teach, until "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together," and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep." Mr. Beecher somewhere speaks of "a Christ a thousand times more glorious than Jerusalem ever saw; a Christ a thousand times freer and fuller of the manifestation of love than any historical Christ; a Christ larger in every way than the Christ of the past; a Christ enwrapping every soul as the whole atmosphere of a continent broods over each particular flower; a Christ conceived of as living near, as overhanging, as thinking of each one, and as working for Him." Do we know anything of this Christ? The same Christ as we have in the Gospels, and yet not the same: for a man may know the Christ of history and yet be unsaved, but to know the risen, ascended, ever-present Christ is salvation itself. (*A. Verran.*) *The beginning of apostolicity* (I.):—1. This Book is a letter addressed to one man. God always speaks to individuals. He does not address the great seething throng. He made Adam,

called Abram, selected Mary; all through history God has called out the one person, and has started His kingdom oftentimes from very insignificant beginnings. 2. But great letters cannot be kept private: where there is anything in a letter it burns its way out. There are some letters which exercise a secret and wonderful power over the receiver, and he says the whole world must be taken into his confidence; to keep it back from others would amount to practical felony. We cannot hide gospels permanently. What is in a book and not what is said about it, determines its fate in the long run. Luke wrote a long account of Christ's ministry to Theophilus, and the whole world has Luke's narrative in its hand to-day! So Luke undertook further to write the Acts to this same man, and to-day the Acts are read in every school, perused by all students of history, and in it are the fundamentals of the most influential commonwealths. 3. Luke divides the great life into two portions—action and doctrine, miracles and truth. All Christian life admits of precisely the same division. If we do, but fail to teach, we shall be but barren puzzles. If we teach, and fail to do, we may incur the just imputation of being theorists and fanatics, or devotional sentimentalists. I. And yet JESUS CHRIST ONLY BEGAN. 1. There can be no ending in anything that God does. Though it may appear to end in itself, yet itself is related to some other and broader self, and so the continuity rolls on in ever-augmenting accretion and proportion. There are no conclusions in truth; there may be resting-places, a punctuation of statement, so that we may take time to turn it into beneficent action, but God's hand never wrote the word "finis"; though the Bible be, in point of paper and print, a measurable quantity, it opens a revelation that recedes from us like the horizon. 2. So then life becomes a new thing from this standpoint. Men talk about formulating Christian truth: you might as well attempt to formulate the light or the atmosphere. You cannot formulate quantities that are infinite. We have organised geology, botany, astronomy, why not theology? The answer is that geology, &c., represent finite and therefore measurable quantities. We can begin a theology, and in doing so we shall do well, provided that we never mistake beginnings for endings. As to verbal statements, we may never agree; the action of the mind is in advance of the action of the tongue. We know always more than we can tell. 3. So we may well be charitable. If Jesus only began, men can only do the same. No man has the whole truth. The Book itself is not a full-grown garden, it is a seed-house. We are all beginners. The old grey-haired student lifts up his wrinkled brow from the glowing page and says, "I have hardly begun it." Who, then, are we, fifty years his juniors, who should start up and say, "We have reached the goal"? Let us not account ourselves to have attained, but let us press forward, and ever say, "God hath yet more light and truth to bring forth from His Holy Word." II. Though Jesus Christ only began, HIS BEGINNINGS HAVE ALL THE FORCE AND URGENCY OF COMPLETE ENDINGS. He gave "commandments," He did not offer mere suggestions for their consideration, to adopt or reject on further inquiry. Jesus Christ was never less than royal. "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." We are then the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the Lord's freemen. We do not make the commandments, we obey them—we do not walk under the loose rule of license, we are kept within the limits of a specific moral gravitation, and we have come to know that there is no liberty without law, that life without law is chaos. III. THESE BEGINNINGS PERTAIN TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Jesus Christ had but one subject. He never talked about anything less than a kingdom that rose above all other empires and enclosed them in its infinite sovereignty. The disciples never could get away from their little "kingdom" any more than Christ could detach Himself from His great royalty. So we often find ourselves talking Christian language without the full Christian meaning. The terms are identical with those Christ used, and yet the meanings are separated by the diameter of infinity. Let us know that the larger meaning is always the right one. Yet Jesus chided the apostles very gently. He told them that they were as yet incomplete men; but "ye shall receive power," &c. They were unbaptised in soul: the symbolic water had done its initial work, but they stood there without the sacred fire, the inspiring afflatus. Into what baptism have we been baptised? We have not received the Holy Ghost if we are conducting a narrow ministry. Jesus Christ said so much when He added, "Ye shall be witnesses both in Jerusalem," &c. No power but the Holy Ghost could take a man through those regions. The man who has been baptised with water only will choose his own parish, but the man in whom is the burning of the Holy Ghost will say with Wesley, "My parish is the world." You will know whether you are

inspired or not by the vastness of your labours. If we are waiting until we be properly equipped and duly sent out, then know that we have been baptised with ice. IV. WE NOW PASS FROM THE VISIBLE MINISTRY OF CHRIST—a cloud received Him out of their sight. Nothing more. Not out of hearing, sympathy, nor helpful ministry—only out of sight. We are not out of His sight, nor out of His memory! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The beginning of apostolicity* (II.):—1. Who could have told beforehand that Christ would be the first to go? Our conception would rather have been that He would remain until the last lamb had been enfolded and the last pilgrim entered into rest. Instead of this, He Himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." 2. Being about to go, His last interview with the apostles took place. Last interviews are notably pathetic. The words that would be common on any other occasion acquire a new and significant accent. Little things that would not be noticed under ordinary circumstances, start up into unusual prominence. We should always listen as if in a last interview. "What I say unto one, I say unto all—Watch." We lose so much through inattentiveness. 3. Jesus Christ is about to go—how will He go? He cannot be allowed to die: that would be a fatal disappointment to the attention which He has strained and to the expectation He has excited. Dogs die: and if this Man die, He will contradict by one pitiful commonplace all that was phenomenal in His life. How will He go? Luke tells us that He was "taken up." In other places we learn that He "ascended." He entered within the action of another gravitation, into His own place in the heavens. It is enough: the mind is satisfied by the grand action. Were I reading this upon a poet's page, I would applaud the poet for one of the finest conceptions that ever ennobled and glorified human fancy. 4. Jesus Christ then "ascended," and in doing so He but repeated in one final act all the miracles which had made His previous ministry illustrious. From the very beginning He had been ascending, so that when He took the final movement, it was but completing that which He had been continuing for years. Our life should be an ascent! We should not be to-day where we were ten years ago. Not that we are to ascend by sharp steeps that attract the attention. There are ascents so gradual that they do not seem to be ascents; yet looked at as from the beginning to the end, we see that the gradient has evermore lifted itself up until the very next thing to do is to step into heaven! You may know how you will die by knowing how you really live. If your life is a life of faith in the Son of God marked by, at all events, the desire to be Christ-like, then you shall "ascend." All that drops away from you will be the flesh and the bones, that have been a distress to you for many a day. Your self, your liberated spirit, shall "aseend." Who ever saw fire going downward? It is in fire to go up, to seek the parent sun out of which it came. We, too, living, moving, and ever having our being in God shall not die as the dogs die, but "rise" to our fount and origin "with Christ." 5. If the final interview was pathetic to Christ, it was also pathetic to the disciples. They had their question to ask as certainly as He had His commandments to give. "Lord, wilt Thou"? &c. (1) Mark how, after His resurrection, He had become "Lord" and the Restorer of kingdoms. Everything rests upon the resurrection of Christ: "if Christ be not risen," &c. No matter what He did, taught, or appeared to be: if it was in the power of men to kill and keep Him in the grave, all His protestations were lies and His promises vanity. Hence, Luke and all the apostolic writers insist that Jesus "showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs." The inquiry, then, that was put to Christ in this instance was put to a Man who had risen. It was this—"Wilt Thou restore?" &c. There are times when everything depends upon one man, crises which sum themselves up in the judgment of one thinker: we look to him, he carries the keys, he speaks the final word, and from him we expect the policy which alone can ennoble and save the life. (2) We learn from this inquiry how long-lingering and ineradicable is the influence of first impressions. The disciples had got it into their minds very early that this Man had come to liberate the Jews and to give them back their lost kingdom. What is so long-lived as prejudice? Therefore take care what impression you make upon the young mind about the Christian Sabbath, Book, Church, idea. Who can wonder that some men can hardly open the Bible with sympathy or hopefulness, because they remember that in early days it was the task-book? Are there not those who dread going to church, because their action is associated with early impressions of gloom and dreariness? 6. Christ's answer may be read in a tone of rebuke, but it was not spoken in that tone. You cannot report a tone—hence it is possible to express the very words the speaker said and yet entirely to misrepresent him! Features can

be photographed, but not life. Jesus Christ spoke in a tone that was instructive, and followed with utterances of the largest and tenderest encouragement. "Ye shall receive power," &c. There is no gift equal to the gift of power. When a man in distress comes to you, if, instead of answering his immediate necessity, you could give him power to answer his own, you would bestow the most precious of treasures. (1) The gift of Christ to the Church is a gift of power—(*a*) Not intellectual only, though Christ has indeed sharpened every faculty of the mind, and blessed the Church with penetrating insight—but that is not the power referred to here. (*b*) Nor social power—the power usually associated with the idea of kingdom, rule, and authority. (*c*) But the power of holiness—"after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Know yourselves to be powerful by the measure of your holiness, and contrariwise know yourselves to be weak, though your mind covers the whole register of intellectual possibility. We have lost the Holy Ghost. We betake ourselves now to Church questions and not to soul inquiries. The problem of to-day is ecclesiasticism, not evangelisation. We are building structures, arranging mechanics, instead of being carried away with the whirlwind of Divine inspiration, and displaying what the world would call supreme madness in consecration of heart. A grand, or learned, or rich Church—these may be but contradictions in terms, but a holy Church, an inspired Church, would go forth "fair as the moon," &c. The world can answer our argument so as to confuse the listener, but it can have no reply to an unimpeachable purity. (2) The power which Christ gave was to be used. When He puts the staff into my hand, He means me to walk with it; when He gives me opportunities, He means me to use them. (3) This power was to be used gradually—"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem," &c. Do not begin at the end: grow little by little, but see to it that your motion is constant. It is not some dashing triumph that strikes beholders, but that subtle, quiet, imperceptible growth that proceeds night and day until a culmination is reached that surprises not by its violence but by its completeness and tenderness of its working. (4) The power was to be used enlargingly, from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth, until there was no more ground to be covered. This is our Christian mission, and nothing so enlarges and emboldens the mind as sympathy with Christ. The Christian man cannot be a small-minded man. Find a sectarian and you find no Christian; pick out a man who says the kingdom of heaven ends here, and he is a man who has stolen his position in the sanctuary. All Christians are great men, great souls; all who are crucified with Christ see all men drawn to the Cross. Christianity never bends the head downward towards little and dwindling spaces: it always says, "The whole world for Christ." If men would have their minds enlarged, ennobled, inspired, it can only be by direct fellowship with Him who is the Head of all things, who fills all things, who ascended that He might rule by a longer line and by a more comprehensive mastery. 7. Christ's last words were about Himself. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." What sublime audacity! What magnificent confidence! The Church has one Lord, one thing to say—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and went out of the world to pray for His Church and sustain His servants in all the stress of life and in all the anxiety of service. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's finished and unfinished work*:—Compare Acts xxviii. 30, 31. So begins and so ends this Book. The reference to "the former treatise" implies that this Book is to be regarded as its sequel. Is not the natural inference that the latter treatise will tell us what Jesus continued "to do and teach" after He was taken up? I think so. And thus the writer sets forth at once, for those that have eyes to see, what he means to do, and what he thinks his Book is going to be about. So, then, the name "The Acts of the Apostles," which is not coeval with the Book itself, is somewhat of a misnomer. Most of the apostles are never heard of in it. But our first text supplies a deeper reason for regarding that title as inadequate. For, if the theme of the story be what Christ did, then the Book is, not the "Acts of the Apostles," but the Acts of Jesus Christ through His servants. He, and He alone, is the Actor; and the men that appear are but the instruments in His hands. It is the unfinished record of an incomplete work. The theme is the work of Christ through the ages, of which each successive depository of His energies can do but a small portion, and must leave that portion unfinished, the Book does not so much end as stop. It is a fragment because the work of which it tells of is not yet a whole. If, then, we put these two things—the beginning and the ending of this Book—together, I think we get some thoughts about what Christ began to do and teach on earth; what He continues to do and teach in heaven; and how small and fragmentary a share in

that work each individual servant of His has. Let us look at these things briefly. 1. We have here THE SUGGESTION OF WHAT CHRIST BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH ON EARTH. Now, at first sight, the words of our text seem to be in startling contradiction to the solemn cry which rang out of the darkness upon Calvary. Jesus said, "It is finished! and gave up the ghost." Luke says He "began to do and teach." Is there any contradiction between the two? Certainly not. It is one thing to lay a foundation; it is another thing to build a house. And the work of laying the foundation must be finished before the work of building the structure upon it can be begun. It is one thing to create a force; it is another thing to apply it. It is one thing to compound a medicine; it is another thing to administer it. It is one thing to unveil a truth; it is another to unfold its successive applications, and to work it into a belief and practice in the world. The former is the work of Christ which was finished on earth; the latter is the work which is continuous throughout the ages. "He began to do and teach," not in the sense that any should come after Him and do, as the disciples of most great discoverers and thinkers have had to do: systematise, rectify, and complete the first glimpses of truth which the master had given. But whilst thus His work is complete His earthly work is also initial. And we must remember that whatever distinction my text may mean to draw between the work of Christ in the past and that in the present and the future, it does not mean to imply that when He ascended up on high, He had not completed the task for which He came. The revelation is complete, and He that professes to add anything to, or to substitute anything for, the finished teaching of Jesus Christ concerning God, and man's relation to God, and man's duty, destiny, and hopes, is a false teacher, and to follow him is fatal. In like manner that work of Christ, which in some sense is initial, is complete as redemption. "This Man has offered up one Sacrifice for sins for ever." And nothing more can He do than He has done; and nothing more can any man do than was accomplished on the Cross of Calvary as a revelation, as effecting a redemption, as lodging in the heart of humanity, and in the midst of human history, a purifying energy, sufficient to cleanse the whole black stream. Resurrection and Ascension needs no supplement, and can have no continuation, world without end. II. But we have to notice WHAT CHRIST CONTINUES TO DO AND TO TEACH AFTER HIS ASCENSION. The theme of this Book of the Acts is the continuous work of the ascended Saviour. There is nothing more remarkable than the way in which, at every turn in the narrative, all is referred to Jesus Christ Himself. For instance, to cull one or two cases in order to bring the matter more plainly before you. When the apostles determined to select another apostle to fill Judas' place, they asked Jesus Christ to show which "of these two Thou hast chosen." When Peter is called upon to explain the tongues at Pentecost, he says, "Jesus hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." When the writer would tell the reason of the large first increase to the Church, he says, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Peter and John go into the Temple to heal the lame man, and their words to him are, "Do not think that our power or holiness is any factor in your cure. The Name hath made this man whole." It is the Lord that appears to Paul and to Ananias, the one on the road to Damascus and the other the city. The same point of view is suggested by another of the characteristics of this Book, which it shares in common with all Scripture narratives, and that is the stolid indifference with which it picks up and drops men, according to the degree in which, for the moment, they are the instruments of Christ's power. As long as electricity streams on the carbon point it glows and is visible, but when the current is turned to another lamp we see no more of the bit of carbon. As long as God uses a man, the man is of interest to the writer of the Scripture. When God uses another one, they drop the first, and have no more care about him, because their theme is not men, and their doings but God's doings through men. On us, and in us, and by us, and for us, if we are His servants, Jesus Christ is working all through the ages. He is the Lord of Providence, He is the King of history. And thus He continues to teach and to work from His throne in the heavens. He continues to teach, not by the communication of new truth. That is done. But the application of the completed revelation is the work that is going on to-day and that will go on till the end of the world. Now these truths of our Lord's continuous activity in teaching and working from heaven may yield us some not unimportant lessons. What a depth and warmth and reality the thoughts give to the Christian's relation to Jesus Christ. We have to think, not only of a Christ who did something for us long ago in the past, and there an end, but of a Christ who to-day lives and reigns to do and

to teach according to our necessities. What a sweetness and sacredness such thoughts impart to all external events, which we may regard as being the operation of His love, and moved by the hands that were nailed to the cross for us, and now hold the sceptre of the universe for the blessing of mankind! The forces of good and evil in the world seem very disproportionate, but we forget too often to take Christ into account. Great men die, good men die, Jesus Christ is not dead. He lives; He is the Anchor of our hope. What a lesson of lowliness and of diligence it gives us! "Be not wise in your own conceits." You are only a tool, only a pawn in the hand of the great Player. If you have anything, it is because you get it from Him. III. Lastly, we note THE INCOMPLETENESS OF EACH MAN'S SHARE IN THE GREAT WORK. As I said, the Book which is to tell the story of Christ's continuous work from heaven must stop abruptly. There is no help for it. If it was a history of Paul, it would need to be wound up to an end; but as it is the history of Christ's working, the web is not half finished, and the shuttle stops in the middle of a cast. The Book must be incomplete because the work of which it is the record does not end until He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. So the work of each man is but a fragment of that great work. Every man inherits unfinished tasks from his predecessors, and leaves unfinished tasks to his successors. It is, as it used to be in the Middle Ages, when the men that dug the foundations or laid the first courses of some great cathedral were dead long generations before the gilded cross was set on the apex of the needlespire, and the glowing glass filled in to the painted windows. Enough for us, if we lay a stone, though it he but one stone in one of the courses of the great building. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The permanence of Christ in history*:—The mists of gathering ages wrap in slowly-thickening folds of forgetfulness all other men and events in history, and make them ghostlike and shadowy; but no distance has yet dimmed or will ever dim that human form Divine. Other names are like those stars that blaze out for a while, and then smoulder down into almost complete invisibility; but Christ is the very Light itself, that burns and is not consumed. Other landmarks sink below the horizon as the tribes of men pursue their solemn march through the centuries, but the cross on Calvary "shall stand for an ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek." (*Ibid.*) *The uniqueness of Christ's earthly ministry*:—Two facts here mark it off from every other. I. IT WAS ORIGINAL. 1. His works were original—done in His own strength. The best deeds of the holiest men are done in the strength of heaven. 2. His teaching was original, not derived from others. He was "the Truth." His doctrines emanated from Him as living streams from a fountain of life. 3. His life was original. Such a life was never lived before; so blending the weak with the strong, the fleeting with the eternal, the human with the Divine. His whole life was a new fountain in earth's desert, a new light in earth's darkness. 4. His ministry was initiatory. Luke's Gospel was the commencement of a life here developed. Christ, absent corporeally, is with us always by His Spirit. II. IT WAS POSTHUMOUS. Christ did not leave the world before He had made effective arrangements for the working out of His grand purpose. What He did He did through the Divine Spirit. It was in this might that He rose and continued for forty days. The ministry after the Passion was—1. An undoubted reality (ver. 3). (1) His appearances were themselves infallible proofs. Nothing is better attested. They took place at ten different times, and before single disciples and hundreds, and in a veritable corporiety who could be touched, and could eat and drink. (2) The witnesses of these appearances were indisposed to belief in the resurrection (John xx. 9; Luke xxiv. 11; see also the case of Thomas). Yet in spite of this they were thoroughly convinced. They proclaimed it publicly and before the very Sanhedrim. 2. Confined to the disciples. Before His death He spoke to promiscuous crowds; but now only to those between whom and Himself there was a vital spiritual connection. Henceforth He would deal with the unconverted world through them. Observe here: (1) The grand subject of His ministry was the kingdom of God. Science, philosophy, politics, were left behind for "things" of a higher type; things compared with which the greatest realities of earth are but as passing shadows; things which restore apostate spirits to God. Before His death He spoke much of His kingdom, and death had not changed His views. (2) The grand endeavour of His ministry was to prepare propagandists. (*a*) By giving them distinct impressions of the work He required them to discharge (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16). (*b*) By giving them an immovable conviction of His resurrection. (*c*)

By preparing them for the reception of their great Helper, the Holy Spirit. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Until the day in which He was taken up.**—*Jesus lives*:—We can never forget a long corridor in the Vatican Museum, exhibiting on the one side epitaphs of departed heathens, and on the other mementoes of departed Christians. Opposite to lions leaping on horses, emblems of destruction, are charming sculptures of the Good Shepherd bearing home the lost lamb, with the epitaph, "Alexander is not dead, but lives above the stars." (*J. Stoughton.*) *The ascension: its central position*:—Luke narrates the ascension twice—showing the importance of the event. The first mention is at the end of the Gospel—forming the keystone to the life of Jesus; the second at the beginning of the Acts—forming the keystone for the edifice of the Church. (*Nesselmann.*) *The Ascension of Christ*:—I. THE FACT. Seneca said: "The ascent from earth to heaven is not easy." But Seneca was an atheist, if we may believe his adversaries. The atheist will not receive the witness of men. And Jesus said: "How shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The difficulties concerning supernaturalism are all difficulties of disbelief. To the mind of the believer there appears nothing that is difficult to Jesus in His miracles. The ascension of Jesus, like the resurrection or birth of Jesus, was only natural supernaturalism. It "was a necessary consequence of the resurrection," as it was the consummation of the series of His redemptive miracles. It was natural with Him; it would have been unnatural with His disciples. The time, the place, the nature, and the witnesses of the ascension will corroborate the supernatural claim. The time was opportune. "After having lived awhile on earth; after having offered His body as a sacrifice for sin; after having been raised from the dead; after having shown Himself alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs, then He led them out as far as Bethany, and in the presence of the whole Church then collected together He was taken up into heaven." Equally interesting, fitting, and convincing was the locality of the ascension. The nature of the ascension is evidence of the fact of the ascension. Jesus simply arose from the earth to go into the heavens. He had brought His body from the grave, and it belonged no more with corruptible things. It was not subject to the conditions or limitations of the earth. To go away was all that remained to be done. There was nowhere else to go but into the heavens. The witnesses of the ascension were not deceived, and could not be deceivers. They were the friends of Jesus. It accorded with their faith to expect that, like Enoch and Elijah, He should be caught up in the air. They were overcome with their sorrow when He was crucified. But now they had returned to Jerusalem with great joy. The angels who had announced His birth and proclaimed His resurrection were present to confirm His ascension. Stephen, when permitted to answer to the accusation of blasphemy in his apology, uttered in the very article of death, said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." And among his last words were: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And John, from the isle of Patmos, saw in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks the Son of Man, whom he heard saying: "I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." So also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath sent, is a witness. His presence in the hearts of men is the greatest witness. "He shall testify of Me." If Jesus had not ascended the Holy Spirit would not be here. II. THE DOCTRINE. The ascension of Jesus was essential to the plan and work of redemption. It was necessary to relate again the work which Jesus had come to do in the earth with the world from whence He came. He had accomplished a virtual redemption. He was thenceforth to make it actual. It was prophesied that He would ascend on high, lead captivity captive, and receive gifts for men. He himself had foretold that He should go away. The ascension was the fulfilment of prophecy and the verification of His own words. Without the ascension the world could not have understood Him. It was the explanation of His character and work on the earth. Christianity was triumphant at the ascension. Sin was mastered, death was dead, and man was free. In the ascension of Jesus there was given to all believers the surety of their ascension. The heavens are now the pledge of another advent of the Son of Man. III. THE RESULTS. There were both direct and indirect results of the ascension. The ascension was the dividing point between the gospel and the apostolic histories. It concluded the one and introduced the other. The peasant becomes a prince. He is given a name which is above every name. He is returned to the honours which He had with the Father before the world was. The last act of Jesus as He ascended was to lift up His hands and bless. In the very

sight of Gethsemane and Calvary, "with malice toward none and charity for all," He went away blessing the cruel world which had received Him not, and dispensing gifts not to His friends only, but to the rebellious also. Of the great gift, in which all other gifts are included—the gift of the Holy Ghost which came on all men—we are all witnesses and partakers. The indirect influences of the ascension have been and are multifarious as the intellections and emotions of men. With the ascension the personal element of the Christ who had gone about doing good was taken from the earth, and it no longer excited malefactors to persecute Him. His disciples were exalted with Him. They were raised "into union and fellowship with a higher nature." The Father and the heavenly world were brought nearer and made dearer to the children of men. It is now the aspiration of all Christians to explore with the Son of Man the heavenly spaces. (*J. W. Hamilton.*) *The ascending Lord:*—I. THE PREPARATION OF THE WITNESSES. You cannot lay hands on any man at random, and ask him to bear testimony even to undisputed facts. He must have seen the things, and be a man of truthful spirit. What Christ did that day before their eyes gave them knowledge of the final fact which was to complete the circle of their testimony. It is the consummation of His resurrection. But what He said was needful, too. It was essential that their spiritual vision should be illumined, and so the Holy Spirit was promised to complete what their outward vision had begun. Through the mere vision they might have light: only through the spiritual baptism could they have power; but not to be warriers, but witnesses. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore, and"—not fight, not reign, but—"teach." This is ever the divinest thing that men can do, and is the work of the disciples in every age. For this the Master Himself came into the world. II. THE LIMITATION OF THE WITNESSES. "While they beheld, a cloud received Him out of their sight." 1. There was clear vision for a while, and then a mystery. So all our knowledge ends. The strength of the witnessing of the early disciples lay in this that they testified up to the limits of their knowledge, and then relapsed into utter silence. It will be well for the later witnesses to follow their example. Many an earnest witness has lost his power because there was no clear line between things known and things fancied; because the unfaltering testimony was not contrasted with the emphasis of silence, but dribbled off into vague surmisings. 2. But because a cloud hides, it need not cast a shadow upon us. The cloud which underlies the mysteries of heavenly truth is not black with thunder, nor scarred with lightning, but edged at least with the silver glory which it hides, and only laden for us with showers of peace and plenty. The cloud is the condescension of Divine love to our weak sight. As the rainbow repeats the promise of the early covenant, so the cloud tells us of hope and reminds us of our risen and returning Lord. III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE WITNESSES. They stand gazing after Him up into heaven; long enough, it is evident, to lead to the rebuke and reassurance of the two angels. While they could look at Jesus they were best fitting for their witnessing; but gazing at the cloud would only make them less strong and confident. Note—1. Their obedience. Christ had told them to go to Jerusalem and witness first where it is hardest and most perilous to do so; and where their testimony will reach the thousands of Pentecost. It is not by peering into mysteries that we gain grace to be faithful witnesses, but by unquestioning obedience to plain commands. They who are willing to do His will shall know His teaching. 2. Their fellowship. Christ had appointed them a common mission and promised a common gift. And so they stayed together till it should come. As it is in the way of obedience that we learn the truth, it is in the way of fellowship that we most often receive the richest spiritual gifts. 3. And then, of course, they prayed; not of necessity only for that which He had promised, but quite as much, perhaps, for patience to wait for it, and then for grace to use it. Obedient souls, waiting together for the promised gift of Christ, will always pray. These three things shall make you strong to be witnesses, martyrs if need be, unto Him. (*Monday Club.*) *The resurrection and ascension of Christ:*—I. THE RESURRECTION. 1. The proofs of the fact. They are said to be not only many, but of infallible certainty. (1) The number of the witnesses was very sufficient (1 Cor. xv. 5, 6). (2) They had all proper advantages and opportunity of knowing the certainty of the matter. (3) They were very unwilling to be deceived (Luke xxiv. 11). (4) They published it as soon as the thing was done. (5) The effect which their testimony had. (*a*) Upon themselves: they gave the best proofs that they firmly believed it; for they preached it at the hazard of their lives, and many sealed their testimony with their blood. (*b*) On others. Though these witnesses

were but poor illiterate fishermen, and the story which they told ungrateful to the Jews, and contemptible to the Gentiles. Yet their testimony was presently received by many thousands, and nothing could possibly give a check to it. 2. The manner and circumstances of His resurrection. (1) The time is particularly recorded—the third day; not immediately, lest any should doubt whether He had been quite dead. Therefore, when He had lain in the grave long enough to satisfy everybody that His death was real, He arose (Acts x. 40; Matt. xii. 40). (2) The ministry of angels in the affair (Matt. xxviii. 2). (3) Christ was accompanied in His resurrection by several of the saints departed (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). 3. The uses: (1) To establish our faith in Christ's doctrine and religion (Matt. xii. 39, 40). (2) To encourage our trust in Him, and our hope of salvation by Him (1 Pet. i. 21; Rom. iv. 25; 1 Thes. iv. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 16; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4). II. THE TIME OF CHRIST'S STAY IN THIS WORLD AFTER HIS RESURRECTION, AND OF WHAT HE DID DURING THAT TIME. Our Saviour's ascension was delayed so long: 1. To confirm the truth of His resurrection. When He first appeared to His disciples they were so transported that they hardly believed the thing was real (Luke xxiv. 41), and therefore, if they had not seen Him again and again, very likely it would have passed for a vision only. 2. His love to and care of His disciples detained Him with them. III. THE ASCENSION. 1. The manner and circumstances. (1) Where He ascended unto—Heaven (vers. 9, 11; Eph. iv. 10). (2) From whence He ascended—Olivet (ver. 12). (3) The manner was very honourable—as a triumphant Conqueror (Psa. lxviii. 17, 18; Eph. iv. 8). (4) The witnesses who, besides the angels, were His own disciples. There was no need of their seeing Him rise, for it was proof enough of His resurrection, that they saw Him alive; but as they could not see Him in heaven, it was more necessary that they should see Him ascending. (5) He departed with a blessing (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). 2. The ends and purposes. (1) That He might receive the due reward of His own past labours and sufferings (Phil. ii. 8, 9). (2) For the encouragement and comfort of His disciples. "Ye cannot follow Me now, but ye shall follow Me afterwards; and where I am, there shall My servant be." (3) As the Forerunner (Heb. vi. 20; John xiv. 2). (4) To appear in the presence of God for His people, and to be their Advocate with the Father. 3. Inferences. Since Christ is ascended into heaven—(1) It is an absurd thing to look for His bodily presence anywhere in this world. (2) Let us follow our dear Saviour with our frequent thoughts, and with our warmest affections. (*D. Jennings.*) *The coronation of Christ*:—Jesus's resurrection might have been regarded as a private return to a select circle, had it not been followed by the assumption of the symbols of world-wide and heavenly authority. The Czar of Russia began to reign on the death of his father, but there was an interval of two years before he was crowned. Then it was at Moscow, the ancient seat of the rulers of the realm, where representatives of the empire and the world were gathered in unwonted splendour. The coronation signifies something. It is a time for renewing old constitutions and cementing the different parts of the dominion. Christ was formally to connect the dispensation of the chosen people with that of a universal sovereignty. There were new states to be added to His rule. Instead of remaining an illustrious citizen, He receives and wields an imperial sceptre. (*W. R. Campbell.*) *Christ preceding His apostles to heaven*:—As one who precedes a mighty host, provides and prepares rest for their weariness, and food for their hunger, in some city on their line of march, and having made all things ready, is at the gates to welcome their travel-stained ranks when they arrive, and guide them to their repose; so Christ has gone before, our Forerunner, to order all things for us there. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ directs thought to heaven*:—It is said that Socrates brought men down from heaven to earth because he diverted attention from astronomy to a philosophy that considered the duties and relations of man in this life. Christ, on the other hand, exalts the thoughts and purposes of men from earth to heaven. *The last days of the Gospel period*:—The crucifixion had seemed to put an end to Jesus's ministry. But not so: the period of Gospel history was yet forty days from its end. Consider—I. HOW THEY RESEMBLED PREVIOUS DAYS. 1. In the visible presence of Jesus. 2. In the personal ministry of Jesus. No one else could have done what was required. 3. In the verbal instruction of Jesus. "The things pertaining to the kingdom of God" had been Christ's themes at the commencement (Matt. iv. 17; John iii. 3), and throughout His public life. 4. The exercise of the authority of Jesus. Long ago He had chosen them, now He gave them commandments. They were to understand that death had not broken His authority. 5. In the mysterious agency of the Holy Ghost (Matt. iii. 16; John iii. 34; Heb. ix. 14). II. HOW THEY DIFFERED. 1. He

who was now seen had been hidden in the grave. Here was a testimony to the reality of the invisible. Then He could be present with them in thought, though not to sense when He returned again to the unseen. 2. The voice now heard had been silent in death. Surely then His words must have been listened to with the deepest reverence. 3. Strange experiences had increased the fitness of the disciples to receive Christ's instructions. Their misunderstandings had been rectified, and their attachment deepened. When attention has been secured a speaker can say more in a minute than in an hour otherwise. 4. The visible presence of Jesus was not constant. To give His disciples—(1) Intervals for reflection. (2) Evidences of His permanent interest in them. III. THEIR LEADING IMPRESSION. That Jesus was alive. He still lives, and because of that we shall live also. (*W. Hudson.*)

Ver. 3. **To whom also He showed Himself alive after His Passion.**—*He rose again from the dead*:—I. THE FACT ITSELF, OR THE NOTION OF A RESURRECTION IN GENERAL. Admitting the power and providence of God, there can be nothing in it repugnant to reason, or incredible. 1. To raise a dead man to life surpasses the power of any creature; but no reason can be assigned why it should be beyond the Divine power; since the doing it involves no contradiction. He that first inspired the soul into the body, may surely be supposed capable of reuniting them. 2. Nor was it apparently in its design unworthy of God, or inconsistent with His holy will: for the ends thereof, such as were pretended by its attesters, were—(1) Important. (2) Good. (3) Reasonable. II. THE WITNESSES. 1. General considerations: (1) As to their number, it was not one or two, but many, who conspired in asserting it. (2) They were no strangers to Jesus, but persons by long conversation familiarly acquainted with Him. (3) They did aver themselves to be eye or ear-witnesses of the matter, as fully informed about it as senses could make them. (4) The chief of these witnesses, the apostles themselves, were at first so far from being credulous in this matter, that they took it for a fiction, gave no credence thereto, and were at last with difficulty persuaded of it. (5) On these grounds they boldly and concurrently aver the fact: "they spake the Word of God with boldness": and "with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Which things being weighed, it appears impossible that the attesters of this fact, supposing them in their wits and senses, could be ignorant therein, or mistaken about it. 2. The character of the witnesses. (1) They were persons who did (with denunciation of God's heavy judgments on the contrary practice) preach and press earnestly all kinds of goodness, sincerity, modesty, and equity, as main points of that religion which by this testimony they confirmed. (2) Their practice was answerable to their doctrine, being exemplary in all sorts of virtue and sincerity, whereby they did in effect conciliate much respect and authority to their words: the life they led was not the life of wicked impostors, but worthy of the divinest men; fit to carry on the best design. (3) They were persons of good sense; very wise and prudent; not in the way of worldly or fleshly wisdom, to compass projects of gain or pleasure to themselves; but endued with a wisdom far more excellent, and suitable to the characters they sustained. (4) As to their purposes in this case: profit, honour, pleasure, or any worldly advantage they could not have in view; for they willingly abandoned all those things, for the sake of this very testimony incurring loss, disgrace, and pain. (5) And all such afflictions, as they knowingly exposed themselves to them, they did endure with contentedness and joy. (6) Whence it is evident enough that the satisfaction of their conscience, and expectation of future reward from God for the discharge of their duty, was all the argument that induced them to undertake this attestation, all the reason that could support them in it; neither of which could be consistent with the resolved maintenance of a falsehood. (7) And how is it conceivable that such persons should be bewitched with so passionate an affection toward a man, who died as a malefactor, that merely for his sake, or rather a vain opinion about him, they should with such obstinacy defy all the world, with its persecutions, and the punishment of hell itself. (8) Again, we may consider these witnesses to have been persons very unlikely to devise such a plot, very unfit to undertake it, very unable to manage and carry it through. III. THEIR TESTIMONY. 1. How could such a cheat, if contrived, have so easily prospered, and obtained so wonderful a progress? 2. The matter of their testimony, and its drift, were very implausible, such as no impostors would be likely to forge, and no hearers, without great evidence of truth, be ready to admit. 3. One would indeed think that this report, had it been false, might easily have been disproved and quashed; they who were mightily concerned, and as eagerly disposed to confute it,

wanting no means of doing it. 4. As also this testimony had no human power to sustain it, so it used no sleight to convey itself into the persuasions of men: it craved no blind faith: it dared all adversaries and powers to withstand it, relying on the patronage of heaven alone. 5. Furthermore, the thing itself, had it been counterfeit, was adapted to fall of itself; the witnesses clashing together, or relenting for their crime. The advice of Gamaliel on this point had much reason in it. 6. He then who doubts the sincerity of this testimony, or rejects it as incredible, must instead of it admit stronger incredibilities. 7. To these things we may add that God Himself did signally countenance and ratify this testimony, by extraordinary powers and graces conferred on the avowers thereof, as well as by a wonderful success bestowed on them. (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *Christ risen, yet not ascended*:—There is a strong disposition to reverence that which has been connected with the great and good. If the wood of the true Cross had been preserved, few could look upon it but with the deepest interest. It is remarkable, however, that we have few relics of Christ's days; while the museums of all civilised lands are filled with well-authenticated fragments from Greece, Rome, Babylon, Egypt. God has wisely ordered this to check the tendency to superstition and idolatry. But can no good use be made of this law of our nature? Our Church has judged that there can, and she teaches us not to seek for relics, but to remember events in Christ's life, and then leads our thoughts to the instruction they convey. I. How, OR IN WHAT FORM, DID OUR LORD "SHOW HIMSELF AFTER HIS PASSION"? There was evidently some change in His body and some difference in His manner of appearing. He ate, indeed, with His disciples, yet not as one who needed food, but only to convince them of His corporeal existence. He does not seem to have lived with them familiarly as He had before done, but came to them occasionally; and the forms of expression intimate something miraculous. "He showed Himself" as one was invisibly present, but, at will revealing Himself, like the sun shining from a cloud. Then, "He vanished out of their sight." At other times He would come when "the doors were bolted." The disciples regarded Him far otherwise than in His former state. Their accustomed free intercourse was changed for the deepest reverence. All questions concerning the nature of Christ's body must remain unanswered till we know for ourselves what a spiritual and glorified body is. II. WHERE? Chiefly in Galilee. There had been the favoured scene of His earthly ministry, and there His followers were most numerous. With what intense interest must those lowly followers have flocked together when the summons was to meet their risen Lord! He offers to meet us in His sacraments, house, word, prayer, yet how carelessly we regard the summons! He has carried the same loving, compassionate spirit with Him to heaven, and we may share with His disciples in His Divine consolations, if we seek them aright. III. FOR WHAT PURPOSE. To speak "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," *i.e.*, His Church. They had been hitherto very dull, and Christ in these meetings gave them fuller instructions. It is probable that we have the substance of our Lord's conversations in the Acts and Epistles, for in these they would naturally embody and carry out their Master's directions. It is also very likely that many of the customs of the primitive Church were nothing more than our Lord's instructions reduced to practice. Hence we see the importance of appealing, for our own guidance, to primitive usage. If, for instance, we find immediately after the apostles' times, that infants were baptised, and nothing to oppose this in the New Testament, we might be strengthened in our conclusions, that this was a practice settled by our Lord Himself. How many points there are in civil law which are decided by such an appeal to established usage, and are not found in any written code! Many points, however, upon which our Lord dwelt in these interviews, are recorded. He promised to send them the Comforter, &c. IV. ITS CERTAINTY. "By many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days." Our faith and hopes rest then on infallible proofs. And the certainty of the gospel increases the guilt and danger of those who neglect it. Are you living as if you believed it true? (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) **Many infallible proofs.**—*Sense evidence given of Christ's resurrection*:—As the faith of the Church depends on the Resurrection God has given ample evidence of the fact. But He gave none other than that which appeals to the senses—the only way of proving any fact. Even our Maker could not give us better evidence without changing radically our nature. Observe how this bears on the Romish dogma of transubstantiation. The pillar on which that rests is the assumption that the senses deceive and cannot be trusted. But this assumption would leave the Resurrection incapable of proofs. Either the evidence of the senses is a valid proof of a fact or it is not. If it is

transubstantiation is false; if it is not the Resurrection is unproved. The very same evidence which proves that Christ has risen proves also that the bread and wine are not changed into Christ's body and blood. Thus the Roman apostasy cannot sustain its fundamental superstition without destroying the proof that the Redeemer has risen. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **Being seen of them forty days.**—*The forty days*:—I. FOR THE LORD. The period of—1. The Sabbath rest after the completion of His work of redemption. 2. The last care of the Shepherd for His disciples. 3. The joyful expectation of His approaching exaltation. II. FOR THE DISCIPLES. The period of—1. The last blessed intercourse with their Divine Master. 2. Quiet communion with their own heart ("Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"). 3. Earnest preparation for their apostolic mission. III. FOR US. An emblem of—1. The blessed life of faith with Christ in God, concealed from the world (Col. iii. 3). 2. The blessed work of love in the hearts of our friends in looking forward to our approaching separation. 3. The expectation of hope of our heavenly perfection. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *The forty days*:—Mark, I. HOW CAREFUL OUR SAVIOUR WAS TO HAVE THE FACT OF HIS RESURRECTION CERTIFIED TO HIS DISCIPLES BEYOND THE POSSIBILITY OF DOUBT. Strictly speaking, one meeting was enough. But proofs were multiplied, as His visits were repeated. They grew familiar with His look and aspect; heard Him talk, &c.; and after all this, they could never suppose that a vision had been imposed upon them. The positiveness with which they always spoke on this subject was an important element in their preaching, and it was their Lord's purpose to build them up in a confidence which should never be shaken. Through the "forty days" a work of education was going on the fruits of which were seen in the next forty years. II. THIS PERIOD WAS NOT ONE OF UNINTERRUPTED INTERCOURSE, but of brief meetings, followed sometimes by days, or possibly weeks, of separation. Very graciously the Lord condescended to His friends, very blessed were these seasons when they came, but there was not the companionship of former days. Now Christ stood forth in His proper character as the Divine Mediator, to whom all power was committed in heaven and earth. The apostles had to learn this truth, and act upon it. Their approaches to the Mercy-seat, while bold, were to be marked with that solemn reverence without which all worship is a mockery. III. TIME WAS GIVEN TO TEACH THE APOSTLES MUCH OF THEIR LORD'S WILL, AND TO SEND THEM FORTH WELL EQUIPPED FOR THEIR FUTURE WORK. 1. Particular directions given from time to time. They were to tarry at Jerusalem, where, judging from past experience, they would sow their seed as upon a rock, and peril their lives for nought. From that centre light was to radiate over the wide surface of this fallen world. 2. Special gifts were promised to them for their work and "power from on high." 3. Mistakes and prejudices were corrected. 4. The great truth was enforced, explained, and illustrated, that their Lord's death was the world's life. Learn—1. A lesson of patience. Think what was before Him, and how contentedly He waited for it. No hasting to His crown till all was ready. We may well suppose that there was eagerness on the part of the heavenly hosts. Their harps were ready strung, and the song was on their lips, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c. But their King has work to do in this lower world; and the march of triumph must be deferred. Let us then not only put up with our crosses, but wait patiently for the good things to come. What we sow in faith we shall reap one day; and God's harvest-time is the best. We long to see the Church advancing faster in her march of triumph, to see Christ's name more honoured among ourselves. Let us not wish less fervently, but let us wait more humbly. Centuries rolled away before the Son of God was manifested, and many more may come and go before He shall come back again in glory. Ten thousand unconscious agents in different lands are doing His work, and fulfilling His pleasure. 2. To think of Christ as the apostles thought of Him. They knew Him well before as the human Friend, but now as the Divine Redeemer. In both characters may we think of Him as ascended to His throne, and realise His presence with ourselves! You must not so degrade the Saviour as to think of Him only as the world's great Prophet, or as the perfect Pattern; nor in your attempts to exalt Him, lose sight of the truth that He carried His human nature with Him to heaven. "Such an High Priest became us," &c. (*J. Hampden Gurney, M.A.*) *The best proof of Christ's resurrection*:—The best proof of Christ's resurrection is a living Church, which itself is walking in a new life, and drawing life from Him who hath overcome death. (*Christlieb.*) *The identification of the risen Christ*:—Luke, the writer of our twofold gospel of the resurrection, was a physician, who would have been inclined and able to sift the evidences of our Lord's bodily presence and

identity among His followers. The longest and best accounts of Christ's return to earth, except those of John, are by a medical expert. Special past events were referred to by the Lord, which were familiar to the disciples, such as the baptism of John. Stanley carried a boy back up the Congo who had been taken from there when quite small. Coming into the vicinity of the dwelling place of his tribe, a canoe rowed out to meet the steamer. In the boat the lad recognised his elder brother, but the latter was sceptical, and cried, "Give me some sign that I may know you." The boy who had been away answered at once, "Do you remember the crocodile? His scar is there on your right arm." So Christ to His disciples gave many proofs. His lines of thought and speech during His forty days' residence among them were in the familiar phrase of the past, such as the "things concerning the kingdom of God." There might have been good evidences of Jesus's resurrection if He had appeared in China or under the Southern Cross or in the clearings of the Danubian forests. Had He gone there after He came from the grave, by the by the tidings would have reached the outer world of some strange and illustrious personage who manifested Himself at one place and another, just as a comet is reported in the sky. Yet we should always be grateful that the Lord showed Himself alive to those apostles "whom He had chosen." There was the possibility of verification which we so often ask for. (*W. R. Campbell.*) *The forty days:*—A host of reasons suggest themselves as to why He should at once enter into His glory. I. EARTH AT BEST COULD HAVE BEEN BUT A VERY DREARY HOME FOR HIM WHO HAD COME FROM THE PARADISE OF GOD. For Him, the high King of Glory, we could find no fit entertainment. What society was there for Him, the all-wise? Thou hast given Thy life, O Lord, O glorious Son of God. Thou canst give no more. And where upon this guilty earth is any rest for Thee now since that dreadful Cross has cast its shadow over all the land! II. THEN CHRIST HIMSELF LONGED FOR REST. He who dwelt in the bosom of the Father was an exile here. III. THEN, AGAIN, THERE WAITED FOR CHRIST HIS GREAT TRIUMPH, that to which He has looked forward during all His life-work, finding in it strength and consolation. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." IV. DELAY WOULD BE WORSE THAN UNFITTING. If His reign means the world's salvation, gifts for men, the proclaiming of the gospel with the power of the Holy Ghost, dare He linger still upon earth? No, it is not human, this delay. Not our thought nor our way is this. It is all Divine—just like our blessed Lord. This lingering for the forty days is the crowning proof of His tender regard for His little flock. He who had laid down His life for them is loath to leave them. He must tarry with them till He has made them feel that He is just the same friendly, brotherly Jesus that He has ever been, caring for them in their work, watching them with a yearning pity, stooping to kindle a fire for their warmth and to cook the fish for their meal, and then to bid them come and dine. V. Then again, THESE DAYS WERE THE NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR THE ASCENSION. A very tender and beautiful upleading of the disciples. Then with this exalted vision of their glorious Lord filling all their soul they went back to Jerusalem. Now they were able worthily to celebrate the Ascension. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Now all the familiar songs of triumphs come in to tell of the coronation of the King. Now they heard the rapturous anthem of the angels, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." So we must know Him. And thus does He seek to lead us in our weakness and dimness of faith into the knowledge of Himself. So day by day does He lead us on our way, ordering our steps that life may make more room for Him, and that He may give us Himself as our salvation and our strength. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *Forty days with Jesus:*—Men now-a-days yearn for a repetition of Pentecost without the trouble of preparing for it. The text teaches that that must be preceded by prolonged communion with Jesus. I. THIS COMMUNION GAVE THE DISCIPLES THE FULL PERSUASION THAT CHRIST WAS THE SON OF GOD. They held such a thought before, but the crucifixion had shaken it. The resurrection however restored it and the forty days intercourse confirmed it. No Pentecost without the mastering conviction that Jesus is the Son of God with power. II. Along with these great thoughts of Christ's Godhead THE INTERCOURSE BROUGHT THE MOST DELIGHTFUL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT JESUS WAS STILL THEIR BROTHER. He called them by that name, and demonstrated his Brotherhood by many infallible proofs. The realisation of this relationship by love-begetting certitude of Christ's presence is necessary to Pentecost. The Holy Spirit simply gives us power to bear witness to facts of which we are sure. III. THE CHARACTER OF THIS INTERCOURSE. 1. It was discriminating.

Christ dealt with each man as each required Peter, Thomas, John, &c. 2. It was self-discovering. Unsuspected faults were revealed and hearts were moved to self-renunciation. 3. It was educational. 4. It was encouraging. Knowing what we do of the disciples Pentecost would have been an impossibility before the forty days. So now we all need to be dealt with one by one, to know ourselves, to be humbled, taught, and inspired. IV. THE SUBJECT DWELT UPON. "The kingdom of God"—its spirituality, glory, universality, final triumph. This was the matter which they had by the Spirit's inspiration to preach. Hence they must know about it from the King. Hence Christ must fire our minds with the same thought before the Spirit can fire our hearts to proclaim it. (*J. P. Gledstone.*) *After the resurrection*:—I. JESUS HAD COME BACK FROM THE MYSTERIOUS CHANGE, BUT HE HAD FORGOTTEN NOTHING—neither the places, the dear familiar shores, the roads, the mountain paths, the lake, and the hills, the hallowed spots of His life-work. Now, as to the persons, Martha and Mary, and Peter, and the other disciples, were not only still remembered, but still loved. It will be so with us when we also come back from the mysterious regions of the grave. The present life will be something more than a dream. It will be a living reality. II. JESUS HAD COME BACK FROM THE MYSTERIOUS CHANGE, BUT HIS LOVE REMAINED THE SAME. It will be the same with us. When we have crossed to the other side, we shall still bear with us the fond remembrances of past love. The affections will not be destroyed. III. JESUS HAD COME BACK FROM THE MYSTERIOUS CHANGE, BUT HIS PHYSICAL NATURE REMAINED. And His human nature was visible, tangible, capable of taking food. Our physical powers will, in a certain manner, remain with us after death. There will be conversation and action in the same way as at present. Wherein, then, will be the change? Our human bodies will not be destroyed, but they will be changed. We may gather some particulars from the resurrection of our Lord. 1. It will be the same body fully developed. It is evident to all that our human bodies are cramped and dwarfed by circumstances. They are but elementary, imperfect organisations. If they were perfect they would not change. If they were perfect they could not deteriorate. If perfect they could not die. That they are undeveloped is observable from the capacities which they possess. How strong and mighty the body may become! What we call maturity of character is in reality only its commencement. With regard to the body, take its power of progression, limited to, say, four miles an hour—a rate which would require millions of years to reach the nearest star. The same body will have all its powers fully developed to their utmost capacity. 2. It will be the same body rendered immaterial. (*Homilist.*) *The significance of the forty days*:—The period is a significant space of time in Scripture, and is frequently allotted as a term of probation before some great event which concerned God's kingdom. For forty days and forty nights rain was sent upon the earth as the prelude to the Deluge. Before the giving of the law Moses was in the Mount forty days and forty nights; and when after the destruction of the first tables, the law was renewed again, Moses was with the Lord forty days and nights. The same space of time was spent by the spies who were sent forth to survey Canaan the type of the spiritual inheritance of the people of God. For forty days and nights Elijah journeyed before he came by Divine direction to Horeb the Mount of God. The time of probation and repentance given to Nineveh was a like space of time. When we come to the New Testament we note the same phenomenon. Forty days after His birth our Lord was presented in the Temple. Before He entered on the work of His ministry after His baptism He was forty days tempted in the wilderness. So now He abode on earth forty days before His ascension. What significancy there may be in the number we are not informed: the recurrence, however, of this space of time, usually in connection with events of extraordinary importance, would lead us to believe that there is a mystery in the number. Nor is this diminished when in parallelism with the forty days' wandering (Numb. xiv. 33, 34) Jerusalem had its forty years of trial and space for repentance after the Crucifixion; and not until that period had been accomplished was it destroyed by the Romans. For forty days during which He showed Himself alive they were obdurate, and forty years afterwards each day for a year came the destruction of the nation. (*J. Lightfoot, D.D.*) *The Epiphanies of the forty days*:—1. To Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi.; John xx.) 2. To the women who had first visited the sepulchre, by whom the disciples were summoned to meet Christ in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 1–10). 3. To Peter (Luke xxiv. 33–35; 1 Cor. xv. 5). 4. To Cleophas and another on the way to Emmaus (Mark xvi. 12; Luke xxiv. 13–32). 5. To the eleven in the absence of Thomas, at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 36–43; John xx. 19–25). 6. "Eight days afterwards" to

the disciples, Thomas being present (Mark. xvi. 14; John xx. 26–29; 1 Cor. xv. 6). 7. To certain of the disciples when fishing on the lake of Galilee (John xxi. 1–24). 8. To James (1 Cor. xv. 7). 9. To the apostles, and probably the whole body of disciples on a certain mountain in Galilee (1 Cor. xv. 6). 10. On the morning of the ascension (Luke xxiv. 43–51, and text). **Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.** I. OF THE CHURCH MILITANT—the kingdom of God on earth. 1. Its governance. 2. The means of its extension. II. OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT—the kingdom of God in heaven. 1. Its glories. 2. The means of obtaining them. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The kingdom of God*:—1. Its Founder (ver. 1). 2. Its laws (ver. 2). 3. Its privilege, the personal presence of the Holy Spirit (vers. 4, 5). 4. Its extent, the whole world (ver. 8). 5. Its King, a risen and ascended Saviour (ver. 9). 6. Its hope, a returning Christ. *The conversations of the great forty days*:—Let us reflect for a little on the characteristics of Christ's risen appearances to His disciples. I note then in the first place that they were intermittent, and not continuous—here and there, to Mary Magdalene at one time; to the disciples journeying to Emmaus, to the assembled twelve, to five hundred brethren at one, at other times. In one place in the Gospel narrative we read that our Lord replied thus to a section of His adversaries: "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven." Now we often read of angelic appearances in Holy Scripture, in the Old and New Testament alike. We read too of appearances of Old Testament saints, as of Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration. And they are all like those of our Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. They are sudden, independent of time or space or material barriers, and yet are visible and tangible though glorified. Such in Genesis was Abraham's vision of angels at the tent door, when they did eat and drink with him. I. NOW LET US HERE NOTICE THE NATURALNESS OF THIS QUERY CONCERNING THE RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM. The apostles evidently shared the national aspirations of the Jews at that time. We can scarcely realise or understand the force and naturalness of this question, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" as put by these Galilean peasants till one takes up Archbishop Laurence's translation of the book of Enoch, and sees how this eager expectation dominated every other feeling in the Jewish mind of that period, and was burned into the very secrets of their existence by the tyranny of Roman rule. They were thinking simply of such a kingdom as the book of Enoch foretold. This very point seems to us one of the special and most striking evidences for the inspiration and supernatural direction of the writers of the New Testament. Their natural, purely human, and national conception of the kingdom of God was one thing; their final, their divinely taught and inspired conception of that kingdom is quite another thing. Some persons maintain that Christianity in its doctrines, organisation, and discipline was but the outcome of natural forces working in the world at that epoch. But take this doctrine alone, "My kingdom is not of this world," announced by Christ before Pilate, and impressed upon the apostles by revelation after revelation, and experience after experience, which they only very gradually assimilated and understood. Where did it come from? How was it the outcome of natural forces? The whole tendency of Jewish thought was in the opposite direction. Nationalism of the most narrow, particular, and limited kind was the predominant idea, specially among those Galilean provincials who furnished the vast majority of the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ. How could men like them have developed the idea of the Catholic Church, boundless as the earth itself, limited by no hereditary or fleshly bonds, and trammelled by no circumstances of race, climate, or kindred? The magnificence of the idea, the grandeur of the conception, is the truest and most sufficient evidence of the divinity of its origin. If this higher knowledge, this nobler conception, this spiritualised ideal, came not from God, whence did it come? I do not think we can press this point of the catholicity and universality of the Christian idea and the Christian society too far. We cannot possibly make too much of it. There were undoubtedly Christian elements, or elements whence Christian ideas were developed, prevalent in the current Judaism of the day. But it was not among these, or such as these, that the catholic ideas of the gospel took their rise. II. IN THIS PASSAGE AGAIN THERE LIES HIDDEN THE WISEST PRACTICAL TEACHING FOR THE CHURCH OF ALL AGES. We have warnings against the folly which seeks to unravel the future and penetrate the veil of darkness by which our God in mercy shrouds the unknown. We have taught us the benefits which attend the uncertainties of our Lord's return and of the end of this present dispensation. "It is not for you to know times or seasons." 1. The wis-

dom of the Divine answer will best be seen if we take the matter thus, and suppose our Lord to have responded to the apostolic appeal fixing some definite date for the winding-up of man's probation state, and for that manifestation of the sons of God which will take place at His appearing and His kingdom. Our Lord, in fixing upon some such definite date, must have chosen one that was either near at hand or else one that was removed far off into the distant future. In either of these cases He must have defeated the great object of the Divine society which He was founding. That object was simply this, to teach men how to lead the life of God amid the children of men. The Christian religion has indeed sometimes been taunted with being an unpractical religion. But is this the case? Has Christianity proved itself unpractical? If so, what has placed Christendom at the head of civilisation? Compare Christendom and India from the simply practical point of view, and which can show the better record? 2. Our Lord's answer to His apostles was couched in words suited to develop this practical aspect of His religion. It refused to minister to mere human curiosity, and left men uncertain as to the time of His return, that they might be fruitful workers in the great field of life. And now behold what ill results would have followed had He acted otherwise! The Master in fact says, It is not well for you to know the times or seasons, because such knowledge would strike at the root of practical Christianity. Uncertainty as to the time of the end is the most healthful state for the followers of Christ. 3. There are in the New Testament, taken as a whole, two contrasted lines of prophecy concerning the second coming of Christ. If in one place the Lord Jesus speaks as if the date of His coming were fixed for His own generation and age, "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things shall be fulfilled," in the very same context He indicates that it is only after a long time that the Lord of the servants will return, to take account of their dealings with the property entrusted to them. Suppose Christ had responded to the spirit of the apostolic query, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" and fixed the precise date of His coming? He would in that case have altogether defeated the great end of His own work and labour. Suppose He had fixed it a thousand years from the time of His ascension. Then indeed the doctrine of Christ's second coming would have lost all personal and practical power over the lives of the generation of Christians then living, or who should live during the hundreds of years which were to elapse till the date appointed. The day of their death, the uncertainty of life, these would be the inspiring motives to activity and devotion felt by the early Christians; while, as a matter of fact, St. Paul never appeals to either of them, but ever appeals to the coming of Christ and His appearing to judgment as the motives to Christian zeal and diligence. But a more serious danger in any such prediction lurks behind. What would have been the result of any such precise prophecy upon the minds of the Christians who lived close to the time of its fulfilment? It would have at once defeated the great end of the Christian religion, as we have already defined it. The near approach of the great final catastrophe would have completely paralysed all exertion, and turned the members of Christ's Church into idle, useless, unpractical religionists. We all know how the near approach of any great event, how the presence of any great excitement, hinders life's daily work. 4. Again and again has history verified and amply justified the wisdom of the Master's reply, "It is not for you to know times or seasons." It was justified in apostolic experience. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is a commentary on our Lord's teaching in this passage. The language of St. Paul completely justifies our line of argument. He tells us that the spirits of the Thessalonians had been upset, the natural result of a great expectation had been experienced as we might humanly have predicted. The beginning of the second chapter of his Second Epistle proves this: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present." See here how he dwells on mental perturbation as the result of high-strung expectation; and that is bad, for mental peace, not mental disturbance, is the portion of Christ's people. III. Christ, after He had reproved the spirit of vain curiosity which strikes at the root of all practical effort, then indicates THE SOURCE OF THEIR STRENGTH AND THE SPHERE OF ITS ACTIVITY. "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *Christ's conception of His kingdom*:—His thought and teaching concerning the kingdom was manifestly different from theirs. Their idea was narrow, small, and limited to Israel after

the flesh, while His idea was large, and universally included all peoples, nations, and languages. It is always difficult for us to rise out of our own narrow limitations, and take in God's great thoughts and purposes. This narrowness of mind on our part is always obtruding itself on God's great thoughts; indeed, they are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. God's thoughts and purposes of mercy have in them a wideness like the wideness of the sea, while ours are bounded by local surroundings. As we come into a closer and more intimate fellowship with Jesus, we shall also come into a larger and more godlike view of things, both in heaven and earth. *Things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*—Now that Jesus was about to depart, it might reasonably be expected that His parting instructions would be concerning that kingdom which He was to rule as the Invisible Head, and they were to administer as the visible agents. I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS A KINGDOM. With Christ and His apostles it was never less. Christ did not come as an ecclesiastic to found a new sect, nor as a philosopher to construct a new school of thought, nor as a democratic leader to form a new social club or to draw up a new social programme. He came as a sovereign to establish a new Kingdom of Truth, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Hence the apostles felt that they had more to do than to secure a place for Christianity side by side with Judaism and Paganism—they claimed universal sovereign supremacy. Hence, again, they had no philosophy to set over against the school of Hillel or the school of Aristotle. True they reasoned, but that was only because the kingdom rested on a rational and not on a military basis, and its subjects were to be won by the force of persuasion and not by the force of arms. And hence lastly the apostles entered into no revolutionary plots, nor asked any man to rise above or turn aside from the secular occupation; but told slave and governor alike to abide in the callings wherein they were called as servants of the Lord Christ. Note 1. The grandeur of this conception. Sects, systems, programmes are all limited, and one after another pass away. Christians are citizens of a commonwealth which transcends space and outlives time. Compared with the dignity of the Christian that of the proudest autocrat is mean. Here all subjects are royal. The divine right of kings, a myth elsewhere, is a reality here. Christ "hath made us kings and priests unto God." 2. The responsibility. *Noblesse oblige:*—Kings by virtue of their office are under an obligation to live royally. Let us then walk worthy of Him who hath called us to His kingdom and glory. II. THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THIS KINGDOM. 1. The King. Christ Jesus. God and man who occupies the throne because He became obedient to the death of the Cross (Phil. ii.). 2. The means of entrance into this kingdom—the new birth (John iii.) 3. The conditions of continuance in the kingdom. (1) Loyalty to the King. (2) Love to our fellow subjects. (3) Endeavours to extend the boundaries of the realm. 4. The glorious prospects of the kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God," &c. "He shall reign from sea to sea," &c. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The unfolding of the Divine kingdom throughout the ages:*—The patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian dispensations, are evidently but the unfolding of one general plan. In the first we see the folded bud; in the second the expanded leaf; in the third the blossom and the fruit. And now, how sublime the idea of a religion thus commencing in the earliest dawn of time; holding on its way through all the revolutions of kingdoms and the vicissitudes of the race; receiving new forms, but always identical in spirit; and, finally, expanding and embracing in one great brotherhood the whole family of man! Who can doubt that such a religion was from God? (*Mark Hopkins.*)

Vers. 4–8. **And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem.**—*Last words:*—Before ascending Christ had—I. A MISCONCEPTION TO REMOVE—respecting the date and character of the Messianic Kingdom. II. A PROMISE TO BESTOW. 1. The Father made the promise. 2. Christ was to bestow it. 3. The Holy Spirit was the subject. They were to receive a baptism, copious, cleansing, consecrating, and be endowed with spiritual power. III. A COMMISSION TO ENTRUST. 1. Its nature—"witnesses unto Me." 2. Its sphere ever widening till it reached the uttermost part of the earth. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *The Lord's last command to His disciples:*—I. THE COMMAND WAS OF A TRYING NATURE. "Not to depart from Jerusalem." This would—1. Recall painful sympathies—the agony and crucifixion; the rejection by the Jews. 2. Suggest personal unfaithfulness in the denial by Peter, the defection by all. 3. Bring the fear of man. The Jerusalemites had slain the Master; what might the

servants expect? Why did Christ give such hard orders? Discipline was needed, and Christ's own sovereignty must be asserted and accepted. II. A GRACIOUS PROMISE ACCOMPANIED THIS TRYING COMMAND. If the command set forth the bitter severity of law, the promise had the sweet gentleness of the gospel. Thus God gives His servants mingled portions. Duty and privilege go together. Of the promise, observe—1. It was of ancient date (Isa. xliv. 3; Joel ii. 28). 2. The Lord's recent utterance of it had made its terms familiar, "Which ye have heard of Me" (Luke xxiv. 49). 3. It was the promise of the greatest possible good. When the Messiah had done, the next best thing was the gift of the Holy Ghost. III. THE MEANING OF THIS PROMISE COULD BE FULLY APPREHENDED ONLY BY EXPERIENCE. They had heard the terms, and some of them had seen the "form of a dove" at Christ's baptism, but neither would make the promise clear. They must wait for a new blessing. It is so still. Experience reveals what must else be for ever unexplained. Of what, then, were the disciples to have experience? 1. Of the utmost possible nearness to God. The Incarnation had brought God near; but the Spirit was to unite the believer to God, and make Him a living temple. 2. Of an abundance of blessing. They were to have that which baptism represents—purity, refreshment, health. 3. Of a deep acquaintance with Divine truth. Christ had promised that the Spirit should bring to their remembrance what He had said. IV. THE COMMAND AND PROMISE WERE A TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP. 1. Patience was exercised by remaining at Jerusalem. There are times and places in which witnessing for Christ is easy. Such a place was not Jerusalem. Disciples prove their fidelity by abiding in the way of duty in spite of hardship. 2. Faith was tried by uncertainty of time "not many days hence." 3. But past experience encouraged confidence and perseverance. Some of Christ's promises had been already fulfilled, and in some cases beyond all expectation. Conclusion: See here—1. The gentleness of the Lord's discipline. 2. The condition on which He fulfils His promises. (*W. Hudson.*) *The Saviour's last charge:*—There attaches a deep interest to this commandment of our Lord, from whatever point of view it is regarded. Tender associations cluster and cling about it. I. A GRAVE CHARGE. "He commanded," &c. Revised version, "charged." The gravity of the charge is seen—1. In what it was He asked them to do. 2. In the issues of it. What was it they were to wait for? The great promise. Generally this applied to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. It was a promise. It was the promise of the Father. All that the Church needs is embraced in this promise. If a promise be of the Father, we may be sure it is inviolable, and the thing it indicates invaluable. How differently we are inclined to think of matters from the view God takes of them. Our first thought is, probably, "Why not strike iron while it is hot, and follow up just now, while the fame of Jesus is ringing out its praises, with the preaching of the truths for which He laid down His life?" God says "tarry" till ye be endued with power from on high. "My thoughts, not your thoughts," &c. II. AN INSPIRED ATTITUDE. "To wait." This meant three things—1. A looking for something under a profound conviction of its necessity. 2. A pleading for the object in prayer; and this they were doing for ten whole days. Show what prayer-meetings should be, and their place in the success of the Church. 3. The attitude of patient expectation, of prospective sufficiency. They took hold of God in prayer and waited round about Him until He should satisfy their longings and fill them with the glory of His praise. III. A SPECIFIC COMMANDMENT. They were to wait at Jerusalem. This appointed place no haphazard, but a design of the infinite mind. Recall a few things of Jerusalem to see this. 1. It was the city of solemnities. Here Jews gathered—feasts and fasts held. Here stood the Temple, there it fell—there was to begin the building of a new and better temple that should stand for ever. 2. The city of sublime figure. "Thou art comely, O my love, as Jerusalem." "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget its cunning." "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion," &c. 3. It was the concentration of all prophecy. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." 4. How full it was of historic associations. City of Melchizedek, place of Abraham's offering, and the metropolis of David's kingdom, &c. 5. It was the place of danger. Here met all the rage and malice, envy and hatred of the time-honoured Scribes and Pharisees. Then why tarry here? To honour the people whose ancestors were worthy soldiers of the faith; to preach mercy and forgiveness where was found the most sin. (*W. Halls.*) *The gospel first tested at Jerusalem:*—At the village near which I reside, there is a

foundry for casting cannon. After cannon are cast they are tested by the founders. They first put in a single charge. If the cannon can bear that they put in the double charge. If the cannon can bear that without bursting, then they are pronounced fit for the field of battle, or for the deck of a man-of-war. The castors act wisely, for should there be one flaw it is better that it should be detected in the foundry-yard than when in the act of being fired. Now the gospel was a new and untried instrument. It had to be tested, and where better than at Jerusalem? If it could stand the test there it could stand it anywhere. Peter fired the first gun, and three thousand were converted in one day. Moreover a great multitude of the priests were obedient unto Christ. The apostles could not but have faith in the power of the gospel when they saw the men who mocked and crucified Christ, and gloried in what they did, exclaiming, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (*Williams of Wern.*) **But wait for the promise of the Father.**—*The promise of the Father*:—1. The great promise of the Father was, that He would send His Spirit into the hearts of men. 2. The promise is worth waiting for. Tarry ye, &c. 3. The fulfilment of the promise always brings power with it, and will make witnesses for Christ of all those who receive it. 4. When the promise is to be claimed, let no ambitious desires turn one away from receiving its baptism. 5. The Father, in His own good time, will fulfil His declarations concerning the universal sway of His kingdom. (*S. S. Times.*) *The promise of the Spirit*:—The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of religion. The Father elects, the Son redeems, the Spirit sanctifies. The Son came in execution of the covenant of redemption, and having fulfilled its conditions, was entitled to its promises. One of these was the gift of the Spirit (chap. ii. 33), which Christ again and again repromised. I. THE HOLY GHOST IS SECURED FOR THE CHURCH ONLY BY THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST. II. CHRIST IS THE IMMEDIATE GIVER OF THE HOLY GHOST. He sends Him to whom He pleases, and bestows through Him what blessings He pleases. Therefore men must seek the Spirit specially from Christ as our Mediator. III. ELECTION BY THE FATHER, AND REDEMPTION BY THE SON AVAIL ONLY IN VIRTUE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK. Until the Spirit is received, the elect do not differ from the non-elect, the redeemed from the unredeemed. Hence our obligations to the several persons of the Trinity are the same. And as the Son acted voluntarily in redeeming those whom the Father chose, the Spirit is voluntary in applying the redemption purchased by the Son. IV. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT is —1. To renew or quicken those dead in sins. 2. To illuminate. To reveal the glory of Christ, the holiness of God, the justice and extent of the law, the evil of sin, the certainty of judgment, the truth and authority of the Word of God. 3. To work repentance and faith, *i.e.*, turning from sin to God. 4. To guide in the knowledge of truth and duty. 5. To qualify for special duties and offices. 6. To sanctify. 7. To comfort. 8. To glorify soul and body. V. THE DEPENDENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH ON THE SPIRIT IS ABSOLUTE. Nothing can be experienced or done but by Him. Analogous to the dependence of the creatures on the Creator for—1. Existence. 2. Faculties. 3. Activity. 4. Results or successes. But not in any one of these is our agency superseded; in all the need of effort is the same. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Our need of the Holy Spirit*:—What the light is to the mariner's compass, or the wind to the sail of the ship, or the oil to the lamp, or the sap to the tree, rising up softly and diffusing its life to the farthest leaf of the remotest branch, that the Spirit is to the Christian in every-day life. I should as soon attempt to raise flowers if there were no atmosphere, or produce fruits if there were neither light nor heat, as to attempt to regenerate men without the Holy Ghost. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The power of the Holy Spirit*:—1. A promised power, "the promise of the Father." 2. A coming power, "not many days hence." 3. A power in testimony, "Ye shall be witnesses." 4. An abiding power, to remain until "the uttermost part of the earth" shall have heard the gospel. *The ascension of Christ*:—It will be interesting to note the reasons why Jesus did not ascend into heaven immediately after His resurrection from the dead, but remained forty days longer on earth. 1. He wished His disciples to know beyond all peradventure that He was not dead, but living, and alive for evermore. To this end "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs." Whatever His disciples may have thought of Him previously, they must henceforth know Him as the Conqueror of death and hell. As to His Divine character and work, they could no longer cherish a shadow of doubt. 2. He desired to teach His disciples some things which hitherto they had been unable to receive. In particular He wanted them to understand about His kingdom, to which they had

previously attached all sorts of carnal notions. So it is written, "He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." 3. During these forty days He planned the campaign which is to result in the conquest of all nations to the glory of His name. We cannot place too strong an emphasis on the parting injunctions here delivered to the disciples—and to us—by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I. "HE COMMANDED THEM THAT THEY SHOULD NOT DEPART FROM JERUSALEM, BUT WAIT." This was not an easy thing for them to do. Flushed with the memory of the glorious things which the Master had been revealing to them, they were doubtless in a mood to go everywhere proclaiming His kingdom. But return to Jerusalem, said He, "and wait." There were good reasons for this requirement. 1. It was proper that Jerusalem should be geographically the point of departure for the new order of things. "Salvation is of the Jews." "Go ye everywhere, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is the metropolis of redemption (Micah iv. 2). It begins in Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, and proceeds to Rome, the capital of the world. 2. The disciples needed a season of mutual conference and prayer. To hasten to their work fitfully and each for himself would be to court despondency and failure. 3. They were to "wait" for a special preparation. They were not yet ready for their work. It pays to be well prepared for anything, most of all for the work of the kingdom of Christ. II. OUR LORD IN THIS LAST INTERVIEW WITH HIS DISCIPLES GAVE THEM, WITH RENEWED EMPHASIS, THE GLORIOUS PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST. This was "the promise of the Father" (John xiv. 16; also xv. 26). The man who imagines that he can set about the affairs of the kingdom of righteousness in strength of his own will make a lamentable failure of it. Let him tarry at Jerusalem until he has received the promise of the Father. When the fire descends upon him, and he is endued with power from on high, nothing will seem impossible to him. III. In this last conference of Jesus with His disciples HE DISCLOSED TO THEM THE PLAN OF FUTURE OPERATIONS. Had the attention of a passer-by been directed to the six-score or thereabouts who were gathered on Olivet on this occasion with the remark that these few working people—this feeble folk like the conies—were being organised for universal conquest, he would have pronounced it the wildest scheme that was ever heard of. Jesus not only gave the disciples to understand that He Himself was, through the influence of His ever-present Spirit, to take charge of the propaganda, but He issued clear and specific directions as to how it should be carried on. 1. For reasons already noted, they were to make Jerusalem their starting-point. 2. They were to wait for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This was to mark their initiation into the dispensation of the Spirit, or new order of things. 3. They were to proceed in their work with a clear understanding of the fact that their only power was from God. 4. The followers of Christ were to be "witnesses unto Him." Words in due season, spoken from the pulpit or anywhere else, are like apples of gold shining through the meshes of a silver basket; but a Christlike life is like a lighthouse on a rocky coast: multitudes are saved by it. All lives, indeed, are testimonies; every man on earth is lending his influence in behalf of truth or falsehood, for Christ or against Him. Character will out. Our creed is the thing we live by. 5. This witnessing must be universal. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Observe, the disciples are not made responsible for the conversion of the world, but only for its evangelisation. They are to see that the story of redemption is told everywhere; and God Himself will do the rest. IV. THEN COMETH THE END. "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The consummation of the Divine plan for the deliverance of our sinful race is to be signalised by the second coming of Christ. 1. When? "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has put in His own power." This ought to be enough. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The appointed time is a state secret, and we cannot guess within a thousand years of it. 2. How? "In like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." In like manner His re-coming is to be a real personal advent. 3. What then? It behoves us to watch. Not to watch as do certain wiseacres, who lean indolently out of their windows with eyes towards the east, but as the Lord's faithful workmen, who have much to do and know that the husbandman may return at any moment. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Waiting for the promise of the Father*:—I. WHAT THE DISCIPLES WERE COMMANDED TO WAIT FOR—"the promise of the Father," *i.e.*, the fulfilment of the promise. 1. Not that the Spirit of God had been absent at any time from the Church. There could be no Church without Him. We find David

praying, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," &c. Now that Christ had finished the work of redemption, the Holy Ghost was to be given on a scale so new that we are told "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." 2. "Which ye have heard of Me" sends us back to the promises in John xiv.-xvi. 3. But why did Christ call this emphatically, "*the* promise," as if there had never been another." Because—(1) Of the large place which the promise occupied in the Old Testament, the Father's word (Prov. i. 23; Isa. xxxii. 15, xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 27, xxxvii. 9; Joel ii. 28; Zech. xii. 10). (2) Of the all-comprehensive character, of the promise—as inclusive in fact, of all the Father's promises. "If ye then, being evil . . . how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit"—comprehensive of all good gifts together—all that the Church needs for the work of the ministry, ordinary and extraordinary, all that the individual soul requires—life from the dead. Union to Christ by faith, justification, holiness, prayer, grace, glory. (3) Of the Father's peculiar delight in this promise, that it is a promise specially dear to the Father's heart, so lending a new emphasis of encouragement to the words of Jesus, "If ye, being evil," &c. II. THE IMPORT OF THE WAITING FOR THE PROMISE. 1. Looking for it under a profound conviction of its absolute necessity, and its full sufficiency. Once and again Christ had taught this when, after they had toiled all night and taken nothing, immediately on the putting forth of His power, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and when He said to them, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father," "He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." They were to wait at Jerusalem somewhat in the Spirit of God's prophet, when the Lord set him down in the midst of the valley of dry bones. 2. Pleading for it with the Lord in prayer. The best comment on this is the actual waiting (vers. 12-14). And in the same attitude we find them, at the opening of the second chapter. It evidently never entered their minds that, having the promise, they might abide its fulfilment in listless indolence. They had drunk into the spirit of those words, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." None of those disciples said, "Oh, it's only a prayer-meeting!" Assuredly, if there were addresses at these meetings, yet the business was prayer. I doubt not that the drift of any exhortations would simply be, to call up examples of "the promise of the Father," and to impress the more deeply on every heart its glorious certainty—its urgent necessity—its all-comprehensive preciousness and sufficiency. The scope of them all would be, "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." What definiteness of aim would characterise these prayers! How would they exemplify the words of Jesus, "If two of you shall agree on earth," &c. 3. Intense longing desire and patient believing expectation. The term "wait" signifies to wait round about a thing, as in anxious expectation. "They continued"—"stedfastly persisted with one accord in prayer and supplication." Agreed together as touching that which they should ask, how would they "fill their mouths with arguments," drawn from their own utter insufficiency, from the world's ungodliness and misery, from Jehovah's power, and grace, and faithfulness to His own pre-eminent promise in Christ! "Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens," would be their spirit, if not their language, "that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!" They had only the naked promise; but it was enough. If, in respect of longing desire, they were as when Elijah said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea"—in respect of patient believing expectation, they were as when the servant went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing," and Elijah said, "Go again seven times." III. THE COMMANDMENT TO WAIT. This was quite as express as the promise—the means no less necessary than the end. To whom was it given? It is very clear that the apostles did not regard it as belonging exclusively to them. We find associated with them the private members of the Church. Did it then belong exclusively to the disciples of that age? This question turns on a very simple issue. If the transactions of the Pentecostal period exhausted the riches of "the promise of the Father"; or if the Church and the World now no longer stand in need of them, then, doubtless, the commandment must have ceased. But if only the first-fruits of the promise were reaped in the apostolic age, if darkness yet to a mournful extent covers the earth, if the dispensation of the covenant of grace under which we live is termed expressly "the ministration of the Spirit," if that word abides the inheritance of the Church, "I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh," with numberless words like these, "The

earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"—then it can admit of no doubt that the commandment belongs to us at this hour. Then we, no less than the apostles, are not warranted only, but commanded "to wait for the promise of the Father." Then it is ours to meditate on all that that expression implies; to plead for it with longing desire and patient believing expectation in secret, in the family, in the social meeting, in the public assembly. (*C. J. Brown, D.D.*) *Waiting upon God in His ordinances*:—It is usual for ships to ride a long time in a roadstead, when they might be in the haven; and wherefore do they so? but that they may be in the wind's way, to take the first opportunity that shall be offered for their intended voyage. Even thus should all good Christians do, anchor, as it were, in the house of God, even then when they seem to be becalmed, that they cannot stir and move themselves about holy duties as they were wont to do; yet, even then, ride it out, hearken what God will say to their souls, wait upon Him in the use of means; not in an Anabaptistical phrensy, refusing to attend upon duty till the Spirit move them; but look up unto God for life, and seek it from Him in their attendance upon His holy ordinances. *The disciples waiting at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father*:—Conversion to the individual and revival to the Church, is God's great end in the dispensation of grace. The means are the manifestation of Jesus Christ, through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Hence the personal reception of the truth and the personal presence of the Spirit are alike essential. Hence in every case the first and most promising symptom is increasing thirst for the Word, with increasing dependence on the Spirit. Where the Word of God is set aside or undervalued, whatever else is substituted in its place, there will be no depth or reality in spiritual exercises. There may be abundance of bustling activity about the things of God, but, apart from the Holy Ghost, there will be no real conversion or revival. You may have Herod, hearing gladly and doing many things, but retaining his besetting sin—Simon Magus, asking in his terrors an apostle's prayers, but persisting in the way to heresy and perdition—Felix, trembling, but stifling conviction. These disciples were waiting in—I. DEVOUT EXPECTANCY. They had been commanded to wait; and expectation is essential to a patient waiting upon God. It is far easier to do much than to wait long. The disciples' hearts must have burned to go out upon the world with unhesitating confidence in their miraculous powers, and in the strength of their marvellous message. But they had learned, amid recent events, a lesson of self-distrust. So, day after day, they waited on in silence, though charged with a message fitted to convert the world. "He that believeth shall not make haste." He will judge nothing, do nothing before the time. Till in the Spirit Himself, He will not attempt to force the Spirit's work. Such a state of expectancy is essential to a patient continuance in well-doing. Without expectation there will be no truth, no prevailing power in prayer. Thus it is that, because men have ceased to expect the outpouring of the Spirit, the heavens have become as brass. Because they see no cloud above their head, they will not climb the mountain-top to watch the little cloud that faintly fringes the horizon. They expect nothing, wait for nothing, and that is all they get. For the law of God is, according to thy faith, so shall it be unto thee. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He will give thee all the desires of thine heart. Plead the Father's promise, and be assured of the Father's performance. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off. II. EARNEST DESIRE. It is in the heart of the believer, in the bosom of the Church, that the promise of the Father first takes effect, and the first symptom of it generally is the panting of the soul after God—the longing of God's weary heritage for a season of refreshing and revival. And such a season awakening new desires, communicates a new impulse to the entire body of Christ. In her deadness it comes and tells of reviving life, in her weakness of returning power, in her hopelessness of opening prospects of success. Thus we cannot but long for the outpouring of the Spirit in Pentecostal fulness. In His absence we can work no deliverance, communicate no life, have no comfort, enlargement, nor refreshing fellowship with God. III. EARNEST AND UNITED PRAYER (ver. 14). Prayer is the spontaneous offspring of expectation and desire. It is hope's utterance before God. It is faith recognising God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and asking whatever it wants. Give faith a promise, and immediately it will transform it into a prayer. Hence, wherever faith exists the special promise of the Father becomes the object of special prayer. As promised, it is expected; as good, it is desired; as freely given, it is frankly asked. Secret prayer is the life of the individual; social prayer, of the community; congregational

prayer, of the Church. The soul that lives in the neglect of secret prayer is dead. Family prayer is no substitute—cannot, indeed, exist without close personal intercourse with God. And as for social meetings for prayer to be of any avail, they must be inspired by a life derived in secret communion from Jesus. What meetings ye might have, though but two or three of you together, were each to bring the life, the fervour, the heaven-breathing spirituality of soul, just come down from meeting alone with God upon the mount. These are the united prayers that have power with God. For so soon as the people of God in any neighbourhood are baptised with the spirit of prayer, they will come to know each other by a secret sympathy. The Father rejoices over such meetings, for it opens up to Him a channel for pouring down the streams of life, for meeting their largest desires with a still larger outpouring of His Spirit; and Jesus, how He rejoices! for He knows what blessings they will get; and the Spirit Himself rejoices, for He is ever on the wing to hasten down and join such companies. IV. SECLUSION FROM UNNECESSARY INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD. There are, indeed, duties which we owe in the various relations of society from which it is not the will of God to call us away. With all this, however, there must be habitual separation unto God. The Holy Dove will not come to us in the crowd. It is when the doors are closed and the world is shut out that Jesus comes with power upon His lips, and love in every tone of His voice, and breathes on us and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost." V. THE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER (ver. 12–14, ii. 1). 1. The Lord loves to see His family dwelling together in unity. Parents, can you not understand our Father's feeling in this? If, then, ye being evil, &c. God is doubtless to be found wherever there is a humble and believing heart, but nowhere surely in such manifested love as in the bosom of His loving family, met together to wait for the promise of their Father (Song i. 7, 8; Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12). 2. It is our strength and safety to walk together through the wilderness, to keep together on the battlefield. (*W. Cousin.*) *The Spirit essential to the establishment of the Christian Church*:—In the Old Testament the doctrine of the Spirit had been revealed in its great outlines. In the Gospels the subject is more fully treated in connection with the person and history of Christ. In the Acts there is a great advance, for full and distinct testimony is borne to Him in sixteen out of its twenty-eight chapters. His path in the Scriptures, like that of the sun, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." In the text He is called "the promise of the Father." To Him the attention and hope of the Church had been long directed as the largest gift of a Father's love. The Old Testament writers had taught believers to look forward to Him as the consummation of their hope, and for Him the disciples were now bidden to wait. This command was—I. SEASONABLE. 1. The circumstances of the disciples were peculiarly trying. They had scarcely recovered from the shock of their Lord's death. His presence was now very occasional, and was about to terminate. In their discouragement they needed to have their hopes assured. 2. Besides on what a stupendous enterprise they were about to be engaged. Moses trembled to undertake His mission. Jonah fled when commanded to go to Nineveh. Jeremiah excused himself by saying, "I am a child." What, then, must the apostles have felt? (1) They were to be the founders of a new dispensation, against which the prejudices of their countrymen and the enmity of mankind would be aroused. (2) One feature of this dispensation, creating the utmost difficulty with Jew and heathen, was its spirituality. Gorgeous economies were to be supplanted by that which had no attraction for the carnal eye. (3) Their one business, which as exclusive Jews must have been very repugnant, was to bring the whole world under the power of this dispensation. How seasonable then the command. We read in Revelation, that before a mighty work was to be done in the earth, "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." In like manner our Lord claimed the attention of His disciples. Their minds were brought into the most desirable attitude. They were made to feel that they and their cause were in God's hands, and were drawn to constant prayer. They obeyed His word, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart." II. NECESSARY. Without this promise they were entirely disqualified. 1. They were few. 2. They were destitute of those outward qualifications of station and influence, which are generally thought to promise success. 3. They laboured under its greatest mental and moral disqualifications. They were —(1) Slow to learn the truth. (2) Timid in the extreme. (3) Worldly in their ambition. (4) Contentious in their intercourse. All this considered, no wonder they had been hitherto unsuccessful. They little understood their ministry, had

not much heart in it, and wanted unity. How fitting, then, that they should have to "wait for the promise"! III. EFFECTUAL. The command had a mighty influence. They did wait, and engaged in exercises becoming such a period. Already there were indications of what would be done for them by the Spirit. But the earnest was small compared with the realisation of the promise. 1. The slow of understanding were made quick of apprehension. 2. The cowardly were made bold. 3. The earthly were made heavenly minded. 4. Their only rivalry now was who should bear to do most for the common cause. 5. The effects were such as might be excepted. Their "word was with power." "Mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." IV. INSTRUCTIVE. The great lessons are as applicable to us as to them. 1. Without the Spirit we are disqualified for the work of God. 2. We should engage in every special work only in His strength. It is not enough that we have the Spirit. We need to be enriched afresh by His grace. 3. Hence He must be diligently sought. Conclusion: 1. How inexcusable we are if we do not obtain "the promise of the Father." "Ask and ye shall receive." 2. How great the influence which this doctrine should exercise over us. How pure, heavenly, and energetic we ought to be. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The need of waiting*:—No wise man or woman will enter hastily upon any great work. In proportion to the greatness of the work is the amount of thought, care, and training necessary for its successful accomplishment. History will teach us that those enterprises have usually been most successfully accomplished for which the workers have been most carefully trained. We know that the higher the class of work the more skill is required in the worker, great delicacy is required in the treatment of the raw material; time and care and skill must be used in its manipulation, otherwise no high degree of perfection can be looked for in the fabric to be produced. We often find that nothing is easier than to spoil or damage that which we are trying to improve or refine. And the more we study the matter the more shall we be convinced that what the world terms ability or power—in other words, the possession of skill—is not so often an innate gift, as a faculty gained by much study and practice. These truths are, if we may use the expression, true in the highest degree with regard to Church workers and all kinds of Church work. The material upon which they work, and with which they work, is the most delicate and the most easily spoiled in the whole world; for that material is the heart, will, mind, conscience, character of man. The fabric they are endeavouring—by the aid of God's Holy Spirit—to produce is human nature refined, purified, ennobled, brought by long and careful training into Christlikeness, continually made more and more to approach and resemble the perfect Example, Type, and Pattern of the Divine humanity. But ere the active, aggressive missionary work to which the apostle had been called, commences, there is to be a solemn period of pause, during which they may at once meditate upon the experiences of the past and fit themselves to receive the promised gift. Through haste we often fail together, and preserve the results of experiences through which we have passed; through haste we also often fail from want of preparation to use aright an opportunity when it presents itself to us. The loss is then double, for it is the loss both of harvest and of seed-time. We forget to reap; we are not able to sow. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) **John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.** *True baptism*:—Last words of our Lord Dispensation of John: baptised with water, not in. I. JOHN'S USE OF WATER. Baptism. 1. A sign of universal pollution, from the womb. Repentance. 2. Acknowledgment of guilt, and need of pardon. 3. Acknowledgment of corruption, and need of holiness. 4. Profession of thirst after refreshing comfort. 5. Profession of helplessness. None baptised themselves. 6. Profession of cleansing the outside. II. INSUFFICIENCY OF JOHN'S BAPTISM. 1. Material water cannot cleanse the soul. 2. It is not saving, witness Simon Magus. "You shall be baptised," &c. 3. The water flows off, dries up; the effect superficial. 4. The testimony of John himself: "I indeed." 5. The declaration of Christ in the text. III. GENERAL NECESSITY OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST. 1. All tainted with original sin, must be born again. 2. All guilty, must be pardoned (chap. ii. and x.). 3. All unholy, must be sanctified. Catechism (Rom. viii.). 4. The corruption is spiritual and deep. Fire refines. 5. All are miserable, and need the Comforter and kingdom. 6. All helpless and Christless till then. "If any man," &c. 7. All are unfit for heaven and bliss, without love, melting—uniting. 8. Particular necessity for ministers: To preach the Word with power. To bear up under troubles and persecutions. To be directed into all truth, and to testify of Jesus, though not to work miracles and speak with tongues.

IV. THE SEASON. "Not many days hence." When prepared with prayer and faith, united, in one accord and tried. The day is not fixed, that we may expect daily and yet not faint. Application—1. Unconverted. Rest in no baptism, but that of the Holy Ghost and fire. Water baptism will condemn you alone. 2. John's disciples. Promised, the thing promised, the time. Oh, continue praying with one accord! 3. Believers. You want fresh baptism, till the Holy Ghost, which is grace, fill your soul. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *The baptism of the Holy Ghost*:—The same shower blesses various lands in different degrees, according to their respective susceptibilities. It makes the grass to spring up in the mead, the grain to vegetate in the field, the shrub to grow on the plain, and the flowers to blossom in the garden; and these are garnished with every hue of loveliness—the lily and the violet, the rose and the daisy: all these work by the same Spirit who renews the face of the earth. The influences of the Holy Spirit, descending on the moral soil, produce "blessing in variety"—convictions in the guilty, illumination in the ignorant, holiness in the defiled, strength in the feeble, and comfort in the distressed. As the Spirit of holiness, He imparts a pure taste; as the Spirit of glory, He throws a radiance over the character; as the Spirit of life, He revives religion; as the Spirit of truth, He gives transparency to the conduct; as the Spirit of prayer, He melts the soul into devotion; and, as the Spirit of grace, He imbues with benevolence, and covers the face of the earth with the works of faith and labours of love. (*T. W. Jenkyn, D.D.*) *No better for the baptism of fire*:—In some parts of the world there are certain boiling springs, called geysers. Their peculiarity is, that at irregular intervals they send up spurts of boiling water, and then are silent for a considerable time. Travellers will tell you that at the time when they are silent you would find it very difficult to believe that water would ever issue out of such an orifice at all. There was a revival some years ago, was there not? The gracious rain came down upon God's inheritance. How earnest you were—how active! But the revival passed away, and your warmth and fervour and energy passed away with it, and those who look on you find it very difficult to believe that you have ever been zealous in God's service at all. (*W. M. Punshon.*) *A witnessing Church—a Church baptised with the Holy Ghost*:—1. The last interview with a dear friend, and his last words, are wont to be embalmed in fragrant remembrance. 2. A comparison is made between the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and John's baptism. Such as truly turned from sin to God were prepared as a dwelling for the Spirit. Repentance from dead works went before—the new unction from above came after. 3. Notice also the time—"not many days hence." God is sovereign in fixing a fulness of time, and we may not ask why that time was appointed. But on our part it is necessary to know our want of the Spirit, and to feel it, that we may welcome Him with the more delight to testify of Jesus. Often, alas! have we returned with nothing but the toil for our pains, because we did not wait to pray down the Spirit. In opening up the doctrine, consider—I. THE BAPTISM. 1. Its nature. That more is meant than renewal is plain from this, that the disciples were already in Christ. This baptism is the great promise of New Testament times. Before Pentecost, God's children were not wholly exempt from the spirit of bondage; but in the days of the apostles the saints in general seem to have enjoyed the promise of the Spirit through faith. The Holy Ghost is the first fruits of glory. Are we baptised with the Holy Ghost? Then—(1) Not only condemnation ceases, but refreshing from the presence of the Lord is realised. (2) Then, forgiven much, we love much, and give ourselves to Him who gave Himself for us. (3) It is the nature of fire to send forth light; and when the Spirit comes, truth is shed abroad upon our hearts. (4) Fire warms, and the Spirit kindles our cold souls into a flame of love to God and man. (5) The approach of this genial spring to the barren winter of our hearts, opens the blossoms of new life, of humility, and godliness. (6) It is the nature of fire to spread abroad. And when the Spirit comes the words of Jesus spread like a conflagration from mouth to mouth. 2. Its marks. (1) The unction of heavenly knowledge, whereby we know all things—for no sooner did the Spirit come upon them than they who, a few days before, Christ reproved as slow of understanding, came, in the twinkling of an eye, to a clear, vivid understanding of the things of God. (2) Self-denied humility: for however envy and a proud thirst for honour held possession of their minds before, they now discover a single eye to the Redeemer's glory. If we are filled with self-complacency, as if we stood in need of nothing—if we cannot bear to be wholly laid in the dust, we have not seen the Spirit, neither known Him. (3) Boldness. For however timid before, the disciples no sooner receive the Spirit than they

come forth like different men, to speak the Word without fear. If we can sit in easy fellowship with sinners, not seeking to save souls, not daring to encounter the adversary face to face, we show that we are not baptised as with fire! (4) Decision. For however the disciples might be diverted from prayer and the work of Christ before, no sooner did the Spirit come than they gave themselves wholly to these things. How can we, then, have received the heavenly baptism, if we are without the habit of religion, if our efforts are but fitful, if we neglect present duty, and yet cherish the romantic hope of future service in a post which God has not required us to fill? 3. How shall we obtain this baptism, and on what occasions is it given? Such as already enjoy the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins may obtain supplies of the Spirit a thousand-fold greater than any they have ever known. Are we faithful in a little? God's rule is, To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. This heavenly unction is conferred—(1) When we keep the Lord's word, and show a humble, penitent compliance with His will. Behold this in the disciples who were enjoined to tarry in Jerusalem till the Spirit came—who were neither to return home to Galilee, nor to distract their minds with worldly cares. (2) When some heavy trial, some arduous duty, is laid on us for the sake of Christ. Witness John in the spirit amid the wilds of Patmos, or Paul glowing with the love of Christ, and singing praises in the inner prison. (3) When we are unceasing in the prayer of faith. Ten days had the disciples continued, when, of a sudden, the Spirit came. The prayer which brings down the Holy Ghost is not that which ceases if not heard at once, that is content to stop with praying out some little enjoyment of God's presence. Every day would be a Pentecost if we prayed like a Cornelius—if we heard the Word like the three thousand, and prized it like the eunuch. II. A CHURCH IS ONLY SO FAR A WITNESSING CHURCH AS IT IS THUS BAPTISED WITH THE HOLY GHOST. "After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you . . . ye shall be witnesses unto Me." 1. The Redeemer does not send skilful orators, but witnesses, such as have seen with spiritual eyes and heard with spiritual ears. A witness must know what He testifies; he believes and therefore speaks. Many have nothing they can testify. Can he be a witness of the Cross of Christ who does not daily look to it for pardon? Can he be a witness of the Lord's abiding with His people who knows not in his heart a daily intercourse with Jesus—who has not the witness of the Spirit that he is a child of God? 2. Christ makes it plain that a new unction must visit His followers before the blessing spreads to the impenitent. A Church cannot long continue to display a living testimony, unless this baptism is repeatedly renewed; and to hold forth, like many declining Churches of the Reformation, a form of sound words, when the Spirit is sinned away, is but like a removed sign-post carried down a swollen river. For it is not protests, or creeds, or formularies, but living souls under the baptism of the Spirit, that makes a witnessing Church. (*G. Smeaton, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–8. **Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**—*Before the Ascension:*—I. THE QUESTION OF THE APOSTLES. 1. The great awe produced by the first appearances of the risen Christ has worn off during the forty days. He and His are engaged in familiar converse as in days of old. 2. The apostles are not backward to ask a question; and it reveals their old notions of Messianic dominion still indulged. They still think of the restoration of "the kingdom to Israel." 3. But their expectations are now high and eager. (1) They feel the power of God's kingdom in their hearts. (2) They have been told of the "promise of the Father" (ver. 4), of a "baptism of the Holy Ghost." (3) They expect now, "at this time," a glorious manifestation of "the kingdom." (*a*) How prone we are to mistake God's times and God's ways, which are not as ours (Isa. lv. 8, 9). (*b*) How anxious we are to hurry on God's dispensations; not considering the Divine slowness (1 Pet. iii. 9), which waits for our salvation, though we are so impatient for manifestations of great results in the work of His kingdom. Apply this to missionary efforts. (*c*) How careful we ought to be, not, as it were, to suggest or dictate to Him the how or the when, since "He doeth all things well." II. THE ANSWER OF OUR LORD WAS—1. A concealment (ver. 7). It is not for the apostles to pry into the "secret things" of God. These are "put in His own power," and even Jesus, as Son of Man, may not possess them (Mark xiii. 32). Learn—(1) Ascension-tide and the Second Advent are closely connected in many points. The moment Jesus had gone, the minds of the apostles were to be fixed on His return (ver. 11). He was then to them what He has been to Christians in all ages, ὁ ἐρχόμενος. (2) We

stand at the threshold of the Second Advent, as they did at that of the Ascension. Our curiosity in religious things often centres on it. And of it Jesus answers just as He did to the apostles (Matt. xxiv. 36). (3) The fact is certain, the time is concealed from us. 2. A revelation (ver. 8), in which Jesus gives—(1) A reminder of His departure, because the Holy Ghost was not to come until He had gone. (2) A promise of spiritual strength. A certain "power" was to be given them. (3) A prediction of the spread of the gospel, by a set progress in a definite order, beginning at Jerusalem, ending only at the compass of the globe. Learn: 1. There are certain things put in man's "power," just as there are some kept in God's. 2. These are, chiefly, to know the mind and will of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, which He has promised, and which He gives. 3. In receiving the Holy Ghost, we "receive power," not only to know, but to do God's will (see Deut. xxix. 29). Spiritual knowledge and strength are that we may work, not speculate. 4. We are to be "witnesses" of the ascended Jesus—(1) By our own heavenly lives (Col. iii. 1, 2); (2) by our realisation of His mediatorial work (Heb. vii. 23); (3) by our co-operation in all efforts for the making ready of His way to return and take to Him His great power and reign. (*T. H. Barnett.*) *The disciples' question*:—I. AUTHORISED as a question of—1. Strong faith which expects the kingdom. 2. Tender love which wishes the salvation of the world. 3. Holy grief which feels for the miseries of the times. II. UNAUTHORISED as a question of—1. Carnal impatience which wishes to see the Kingdom of God coming with external show. 2. Spiritual curiosity which will pry into what the Father has reserved for Himself. 3. Pious indolence which, with folded hands, looks at the clouds instead of working for the Kingdom of God in the calling entrusted to it. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *Christ's last words to His disciples*:—Frequent were the interviews which Christ had with them previous to His death; ten times He was with them after His resurrection; but here is the final interview. The best things on earth must come to a close. The Divine drama is now over. These are words of —I. CORRECTION. The old prejudice came up—the making of Jerusalem imperial mistress of the world. This had been the brilliant dream of their race for ages. 1. The question indicated the working of several wrong elements. (1) Materialism. It was asked in spite of the spirituality of their Master's teaching. The empire of truth and love which Christ came to establish, compared with which all earthly kingdoms were passing shadows, had not yet penetrated them with its transcendent glory. (2) Prejudice. Such temporal dominion they had been taught in their childhood to anticipate. The idea was reached not by conviction but tradition; and without examination it had been allowed to grow with their growth. Christ's teaching which bore directly against it had failed to shatter it. (3) Ambition. Probably they expected to be leading ministers. (4) Curiosity. They were prying into that which lay out of their province, and should have directed their inquisitiveness not to kingdoms, but to duties. 2. Christ corrects this morally mistaken state of mind. He does not say that there shall be no restoration; He leaves that with the enlightening Spirit about to descend. His words served—(1) To check the spirit of idle curiosity concerning the future. Let the future alone; that is to reveal itself in history, and is not to be ascertained by human inquiry. Your duty is with the present, out of which the future grows. Would that modern prophet-mongers would listen to this. (2) As a ground for unbounded trust, "The Father hath put in His own authority." All futurities are in a Father's hands, and are hidden out of love. Were the veil to be withdrawn, our social arrangements would be shattered, our free agency destroyed, our powers of action paralysed. II. ENCOURAGEMENT. "But ye shall receive power." 1. Miraculous. 2. Moral—the power that made them brave, faithful, magnanimous, self-sacrificing, successful—the greater of the two. This encouragement was opportune coming as it did after His caustic rebuke. The power promised transcends the political power of kingdoms. It is a power to change the heart of kings, to regulate the springs of empire, to mould the governments of the world. The old theocratic kingdom of Israel was but a faint type of Christ's. III. DIRECTION. "Ye shall be witnesses." 1. The nature of their ministry—"witnesses." Hence their preaching at first was little more than a honest and fervent declaration of facts (chaps. ii. 22–36; iii. 12–33; iv. 8–12; v. 29–32). These men left all the theorising for weaker but more pretentious men of later ages. 2. Its universality and its philanthropy embraces the world. 3. Its method. "Beginning," &c. This they followed (chaps. ii., viii.; Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6–23). In this method we see—(1) Unexampled mercy. Offering the gospel to His greatest enemies. (2) Consummate policy. IV. BENEDICTION (see Luke xxiv.

50). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ's last instruction to His apostles*:—I. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES disclosed—1. Their ignorance. 2. Their belief that there was a kingdom of God. They could not forget the Theocracy, nor lose the conviction that it would be restored. Why, then, not now, and by the King? 3. Their benevolence and patriotism. 4. Their inquisitiveness and impatience. II. THE ANSWER OF THE MASTER suggests—1. That He can bear the inevitable ignorance of the good. 2. That His followers should check vain curiosity. 3. That there are times and seasons, eras and epochs, in the development of the affairs of the kingdom of God. The meaning of this is plain now, to a degree impossible then. Pentecost, the death of Stephen, the conversion of Saul, were "times." The apostolic age, with its wonderful diffusion of the gospel, was a "season." This age with its revivals, scientific spirit, and scepticism is also a "season." Other times and seasons have yet to follow. How wonderful the wisdom which could plan them, and the authority which can put and hold them under full control. 4. That the pre-vision of these times and seasons is withheld from man. The wonders of Pentecost had to be waited for and felt and seen before their nature could be known. So with other epochs. (*W. Hudson.*) **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.**—*Times and seasons*:—I. THE FAITH OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES, IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR THE WORLD. That faith was founded on the predictions of the Old Testament and of our Lord. Patriotism and philanthropy inspired them to hope for great things for their countrymen; but piety lifted them into the faith that a new kingdom would be set up and Jesus be all in all. The Christian Church has never lost faith in the dawn of a better day for the world, and has laboured and prayed for it. We show ourselves unworthy of the apostles—in whose steps we profess to tread—if we do not "attempt great things for God, and expect great things from God." Christ has promised a golden age, and though earth and heaven pass away, His words shall not pass away; "The kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our God," &c. II. THE ERROR OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES, IN ALLOWING THEIR FAITH IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE TO LEAD THEM INTO PRESUMPTUOUS CURIOSITY. The disciples sought to be endowed with the faculty of pre-vision, but such an endowment was denied them. The old prophets were inspired to make known coming events, but the day and hour were hidden; and the apostles, no more than the prophets, could know when the events predicted concerning Israel and the world would occur. The error of the apostles has been repeated down to the present day. But age after age "would-be prophets" have had to revise their dates, and shift their scenes, and own, with shame that they had ventured out of their depth. The "second coming of Christ" and the "end of the world," they are events about which even the angels in heaven do not know; the Father has them in His own hands, and they are safe there, and sure to be brought about in His own good time and way. III. THE DUTY OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES IN RELATION TO THEIR FAITH IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR THE WORLD AS SHOWN BY THE REPLY OF THEIR MASTER TO THE QUESTIONING OF THEIR PRESUMPTUOUS CURIOSITY. Their duty was to be "witnesses," to speak of what they had seen and heard, and not of what was hidden from them. It must have been a great joy to them to know that the future was in the hands of the Father, who is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. And it ought to calm and cheer us that the times and seasons are not in the hands of a demon or an angel; and not in the clumsy and capricious hands of men, but in the hands of Him who can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and cause all things to work together for good. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Times and seasons not to be known by the best of men*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED in the text. That there are times and seasons which God hath appropriated to Himself, both to order and to dispose them. 1. The times and seasons of the world in general. As God first made it, so He governs it. He set a time for the beginning and for the ending of it. And He orders all its affairs (Acts xvii. 24, 26, 31). 2. The times and seasons of States in particular. These are also appointed by God. He gives them being and continuance (Job xii. 23; Deut. xxxii. 8; Dan. ii. 20, 21; iv. 17, 25, 32). And when He has once written vanity upon them they come to nothing. 3. The times and seasons of individuals (Psa. xxxi. 15, xxxix. 4; Job xiv. 5). All men's times are put in God's own power, in regard of their space and quality, whether prosperous or afflicted. All this is to show us what great cause we have to wait upon God upon all occasions. He who is the Lord of our times should have the command of our services. II. WHAT IS EXPRESSED. That it is not for you to know these times and seasons. 1. It is not your business. For the right understanding of this we must be mindful of the context. It is not said, it is not for you to know

any times or seasons but those "which the Father hath put in His own power." Consider—(1) How far it is proper for us to know the times and seasons. (*a*) Take it in a natural sense. It is proper for us to know the times and seasons of day and night, seedtime and harvest, winter and summer, and the like. These, it is true, God hath put in His own power, but they are not such as He hath kept to Himself, and accordingly we may take notice of them, for the improving of the opportunities of them. (*b*) Take it in a civil sense—the times for buying and selling, war and peace (Eccles. iii. 8). (*c*) Take it in a spiritual sense—the seasons of grace, the opportunities of salvation, the times of improvement (Luke xix. 43; Jer. viii. 7; so Eccles. ix. 12; 1 Chron. xii. 32). To speak distinctly on this point, it concerns all men to know the sins and the miscarriages of the times (2 Pet. iii. 17). The judgments and calamities of the times (Prov. xxviii. 5; Isa. xxvi. 11). The duties and engagement of the times (Rom. xii. 11). (2) The sense in which it is impertinent. The change of affairs in States, the end and consummation of the world, &c.: such times and seasons as these it is not for you to know (Deut. xxx. 20). 2. It is not profitable for you. It might please, as a matter of speculation, and so there are divers that busy themselves about it, but it cannot profit to edification. Nay, it is rather prejudicial and inconvenient: partly as it perplexes, and partly as it takes men off from their duty. 3. It is not within your reach. The Father hath put them in His own power, and so out of ours (Mark xiii. 32). It is not for you, that is, for you—(1) As men, by the strength and power of reason (Eccles. vii. 27). (2) As Christians, by supernatural illumination. There are many things which are not known by the light of nature, which yet are known by the light of the Spirit; but this is not known by either (1 John ii. 20, 27). Refers to things necessary to salvation, whereof this is none. (3) As apostles, by Divine inspiration, or extraordinary revelation. As Christians have knowledge of more things than ordinary men, so apostles had knowledge of more things than ordinary Christians; and yet for all that they had not the knowledge of this. Consider this point—(*a*) As it meets with men's vain curiosity and affectation. There are many who trouble both their own and other men's heads with such questions. But this answer of our Saviour puts them off from such scrutinies; for if it be not for you to know, then it is not for you to inquire. There are many things which are necessary—the deceitfulness of our hearts, the depths of Satan, the will of the Lord. Therefore seek to know these. (*b*) As with men's curiosity in inquiring, so with their presumption in resolving. It is not for you to know it, therefore it is not for you to determine it. There are a great many persons who not only make a search into this mystery, but also positively fix it. Conclusion: It is not for you to know, but —1. It is for you to believe; not to know the time, but to believe the thing; to believe that this day will come, though we know not when it will come (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4). 2. It is for you to expect; not to know when it will be, but to wait for it; to be always upon our watch and in readiness against the coming of our Master (Job xiv. 14; 2 Pet. iii. 11–14). 3. It is for you to pray; not to know when it will be, but to pray that it may be; and to desire that it may be as soon as may be (Rev. xxii. 17; Cant. viii. 14). 4. It is not for you to know the times and seasons which God hath put in His own power, but it is for you to know the times and seasons which God hath put in yours. The times and seasons of affliction and correction, to be troubled for them; and the times and seasons of mercy and deliverance, to be thankful for them. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Times misinterpreted:*—If not for them, then for whom? Yet every age has had those who profess to be in the secret. They were in the Thessalonian Church, and Paul had to warn the disciples there to be on their guard against them. When Gallus renewed the persecution carried on by Decius Cyprian thought the judgment close at hand, and Milner remarks on this, "God hath made the present so much the exclusive object of our duty that He will scarce suffer His wisest and best servants to gain reputation for skill and foresight by any conjectures concerning the times and seasons which He hath reserved," &c. More than a generation ago an Edinburgh reviewer was not speaking without cause when he said of men who could see in the Apocalypse the current condition of Europe, and who told a British statesman to adopt that book for a political manual, that they were carrying on madness "upon too sublime a scale for our interference. We were brought up in the humble creed of looking at the prophecies chiefly in connection not with the future, but with the past; where a cautious divinity, looking backward, might shadow out marks of anticipation and promise, and lead our faith by marks of Divine foreknowledge, to an apparent accomplishment of the Divine will. But to use them as this year's almanack; to put the millennium backwards

and forwards, according as the facts of the last twelvemonth have falsified the predictions of the last edition; to jeopardise the State rather than tolerate a policy which might spoil a favourite criticism on some ambiguous text is to turn the apocalyptic eagle into the cuckoo of the spring." Horace Smith had his fling at "Dr. C., who one month writes a book to expound the Apocalypse, and next month Another to refute his own argument." The thoughtful and erudite author of "Small Books on Great Subjects" professes an ever-increasing disinclination to the study of prophecy, further than in its great features, remarking that man is not formed for the knowledge of futurity, and that it is seldom that he knows how to make use of it, being too apt to put himself in the place of God, and instead of looking on the affairs of the world as a course of things directed to the final amelioration of the human race, to denounce this or that measure or man as impious, this or that event as a judgment on evildoers. Wycliffe and Luther both expected the judgment in their century, Napier at the close of the nineteenth, and Sir David Lindsay at the close of the twentieth. These ventures serve to bring to nought the wisdom of the wise, and to show what false steps may be confidently taken in a darkness that is not felt; for if felt it would crave warier walking. (*J. Jacox, B.A.*) *The benefits to character of ignorance of the future*:—I. MAN'S IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE. One department of knowledge God has in part spread before us, and is leading us continually further into His deeper counsels. The laws of nature, when we have once gathered them from the examination of the past, become our almost certain guides for the future. But even here all things are not naked and open. The phenomena of the atmosphere cannot be predicted with unerring accuracy, and the earth still contains many secrets which may never be reached. There is, however, another department, where knowledge cannot be reduced to simple laws, and where the future is hidden. This is the department in which the agencies of God and man meet, where the plan of the great Ruler and the plans of countless finite beings run across one another. So many agents and interactions create a confusion and complication which none but infinite skill can disentangle, the results of which only God can foresee. In illustration of this, note —1. That we find in our own experience, that the times and seasons of human life God has put in His own power. All of us can testify that an unexpected future has been unrolling itself. We make new acquaintances, and they affect our condition and prospects. Our plans are ever interrupted by events wholly unforeseen. Disease, misfortune, prosperity, and joy are as much hid from us as if the lot determined them. 2. The strange mistakes of the most practised men, as they stand on the threshold of great events. There are vast revolutions which alter the course of the world, and must have had deep foundations in the past; yet the statesmen and philosophers of the time are slumbering without anxiety on the sides of the volcano. Nay, if some one, confident in the sway of general law, assured that the Divine government will have its way, ventures to predict in vague terms a coming disaster, the men of his time laugh at him. But the storm has come, and has left desolations which the predicter himself did not anticipate. Thus how little did the Senatorial party augur, when they required Cæsar to resign his command, that they were urging on measures which would destroy the power of the aristocracy, change Rome into an empire, and bring on a revolution in society, law, and government! How little did Caiaphas or Pilate dream of the power that would go forth from that submissive man who lay under their hand! How little did Leo X. and the leading Italians imagine that Martin Luther would make an era, and start a movement that would never stop! Who thought a little before the French revolution, unless some dreamer regarded as wild, that all the thrones of Europe would be shaken, or that a man of Corsica would hold half the continent under his foot? "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." 3. The prophets and apostles were kept to a great degree in ignorance of the future, so that the times and seasons were not brought within their view. Some persons imagine that a prophet acquired a telescopic sight which penetrated all the details of the future. But Paul says, "We prophesy in part," *i.e.*, imperfectly. II. THE MORAL USES WHICH THIS ARRANGEMENT IS INTENDED TO SERVE. 1. In the province of individual effort uncertainty as to the future, united with probability of success, taxes the energies of man and develops his character in a desirable way. (1) The man who is certain of future good feels no impulse to secure it by his own exertions. The man who is uncertain has every motive to prevent ill-success, and will avail himself of all helps and guard against those faults which can obstruct his way. Thus are we hardened, made wary and careful; and the virtues of prudence, forethought, diligence,

vigilance, courage, &c., are cherished in our souls. (2) But how does this law act in respect to our spiritual and eternal interests? It is plain that entire inability to estimate the course of our future life would cut off motive, and entire certainty might plunge us into despair if the foreseen end were evil, and into carelessness if it were good. But now we have the highest motives to exertion—a probability of success, if our efforts are commensurate to the greatness of the issue, and a certainty of failure if we let earthly things take the control of our lives. (3) As for the interests of the kingdom of God—as long as the law is that nothing is brought to pass but by the co-operation of God and man, that nothing but ultimate success and no immediate, sudden triumph is held out; it is plain that all this is most favourable to strenuous exertion. 2. It is well that we cannot foresee the mass of difficulties which may discourage us, and that all our trials do not press on us at once. Suppose that ignorance were exchanged for certainty; is it not evident that the mass of them would seem too great for human strength to move? Ignorance, then, is a great blessing, and without it we should not have courage to undertake anything good and great. We now encounter our toils and anxieties one by one; we conquer them in detail, and sweet hope lives through all the efforts. (1) If a successful inventor could have taken one clear, full look of his long, dreary conflict with difficulties, would he not have fled from such a career? and thus is not the world indebted for much of its progress, for many improvements in science and art, to man's ignorance of the future? (2) Before a victorious war, if we had foreseen its length, its costliness in money and life; if the soldiers could have foreseen their hardships, wounds, defeats, is it not more than probable that the majority would have shrunk from the contest, although certain of ultimate success? Of how many public and private efforts the same thing can be said. (3) So also, when a man has devoted himself to the work of preaching Christ's gospel, it is best for him to live in ignorance of the future. The apostles saw trials, &c., before them, but it was a mercy that they did not see the slow rate at which Christian truth has moved, the days of Mohammed, of papal darkness, of a divided, distracted Church. (4) Who of us is not painfully conscious of fruitless struggles against sins, of a slow and fitful progress, of frequent declensions, &c. Now if all this had been foreseen, who could have collected courage enough to endure so much for the attainment of so little? 3. Man's ignorance of the future aids the spirit of piety. (1) It helps us to realise that God has a plan for us and for the world. (2) It suggests to us our dependence and awakens our faith. Conclusion: 1. According to analogy, prophecy will never shed more than a dim, uncertain light upon the future before its fulfilment. Christ gave no satisfaction here, and when Peter asked what should befall John, he received but an ambiguous answer—"If I will that he tarry," &c. And so Paul went to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there, &c. And the history of interpretation shows that thus far the Church has made little progress in applying prophecies to particular events. 2. He who gains character out of the uncertainties of life is a great gainer. He has learned in the dark not only those qualities of character which make him a good actor in these earthly scenes and which generally insure success; but he has learned also how to depend on God, to trust in His providence, and to secure His co-operation. He is thus fitted for eternal life, for its employment, for its revelations. (*T. D. Woolsey, D.D.*) *Limitation of human knowledge*:—Dr. Ludlow, my professor in the Theological Seminary, taught me a lesson I have never forgotten. While putting a variety of questions to him that were perplexing, he turned upon me somewhat in sternness, but more in love, and said, "Mr. Talmage, you will have to let God know some things that you don't." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *God's plans are in His own keeping*:—You cannot set the world right, or the times, but you can do something for the truth; and all you can do will certainly tell if the work you do is for the Master, who gives you your share, and so the burden of responsibility is lifted off. This assurance makes peace, satisfaction, and repose possible even in the partial work done upon earth. Go to the man who is carving a stone for a building; ask him where is that stone going, to what part of the temple, and how is he going to get it into place, and what does he do? He points you to the builder's plans. This is only one stone of many. So, when men shall ask where and how is your little achievement going into God's plan, point them to your Master, who keeps the plans, and then go on doing your little service as faithfully as if the whole temple were yours to build. (*Phillips Brooks.*) *God has His own plans*:—At this time, all over the trees, and throughout the grass, is deposited the condensed moisture of the air; and silent dewdrops are on every flower and every leaf. If you go and

look at them in the darkness of to-night, there is no form or comeliness in them; but by and by God will have wheeled the sun in its circuit so that it shall look over the horizon; and the moment its light strikes these hidden drops, small and scattered, every one shall glow as if it were a diamond, and all nature shall be lighted up with myriad fires, each reflecting something of the Divine glory. God has His own plans. He never told us in full what they are. We know this, however: that we are fragmentary in our lives; that it takes many to make the one idea of God; that the work of past generations is hinged upon this, and that the work of this generation is hinged upon that of generations to come; and that God sits in sublimity of counsel, putting part with part, so that when we see the connected whole, the things that now seem most insignificant will shine out in wonderful beauty and magnificence. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Human knowledge limited:*—There are things in every life which we cannot understand now—troubles, disappointments, sickness, poverty, death—but the time will come when all will be plain. I suppose no one at the beginning knows the full meaning of his life, or for what some of his experiences are training him. Robert Raikes had no vision of the millions studying in Sunday schools every Sunday; he only saw his present work and duty. John Bunyan, shut up in prison for the best twelve years of his life, while longing to preach the gospel, and thousands were eager to hear him, had no conception that "Pilgrim's Progress" would enable him to preach to millions instead of thousands, and for centuries instead of years. So we, in our feeble beginnings, our narrow circumstances, our trials and disappointments, may know that if we are faithful we shall understand hereafter the meaning of all, and rejoice in the way God has led us. (*F. N. Peloubet.*) *God's decisions unknown:*—I remember once sailing over the crystal waters of Lake Superior. We had come out of the muddy waters of Lake Huron during the night, and early in the morning I came on deck, and looking over the prow, started back in instinctive terror, for, looking down into the clear waters of that lake, it seemed to me as though our keel was just going to strike on the sharp-pointed rocks below; but I was looking through fifty or sixty feet of clear water at the great rock bed of the lake over which we were sailing. Now we endeavour in vain to fathom God's judgments. As by a great deep they are hidden from us. But by and by, through the mystery we shall see and shall understand. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *Ensnared by inquisitiveness:*—How actively inquisitive are some people: and into what strange predicaments does this their strong propensity land them! They remind us of the crested anolis (*Xiphosûrus vêlifer*), a species of the lizard tribe. It is a timid yet restlessly inquisitive animal; for although it hides itself with instinctive caution on hearing the approach of a footstep, it is of so curious a nature that it must needs poke its head out of its hiding-place, and so betray itself in spite of its timidity. So absorbed, indeed, is the anolis in gratifying its curiosity, that it will allow itself to be captured in a noose, and often falls a victim to the rude and inartificial snares made by children. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *The sufficiency of human knowledge:*—Here on earth we are as soldiers fighting in a foreign land, which understand not the plan of the campaign, and have no need to understand it, seeing well what is at our hand to be done. Let us do it like soldiers, with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Behind us, behind each one of us, lie six thousand years of human effort, human conquest: before us is the boundless Time, with its as yet uncreated and unconquered continents and Eldorados, which even we have to conquer, to create; and from the bosom of Eternity shine for us celestial guiding stars. (*T. Carlyle.*) *Mysteries in nature:*—Do not understand me at all as saying that there is no mystery about the planets' motions. There is just the one single mystery—gravitation; and it is a very profound one. How it is that an atom of matter can attract another atom, no matter how great the distance, no matter what intervening substance there may be—how it will act upon it, or, at least, behave as if it acted upon it, I do not know, I cannot tell. Whether they are pushed together by means of an intervening ether, or what is the action, I cannot understand. It stands with me along with the fact that when I will that my arm shall rise, it rises. It is inscrutable. All the explanations that have been given of it seem to me merely to darken counsel with words and no understanding. They do not remove the difficulty at all. If I were to say what I really believe, it would be that the motions of the spheres of the material universe stand in some such relation to Him in Whom all things exist—the ever-present and omnipotent God—as the motions of my body do to my will; I do not know how, and never expect to know.

(*Prof. C. A. Young.*) *Prophecy: purpose of:*—I am profoundly affected by the grandeur of prophecy. God unveils the frescoed wall of the future, not so much that we may count the figures, and measure the robes, and analyse the pigments; but that, gazing upon it, our imaginations may be enkindled, and hope be inspired, to bear us through the dismal barrenness of the present. Prophecy was not addressed to the reason, nor to the statistical faculty, but to the imagination; and I should as soon think of measuring love by the scales of commerce, or of admiring flowers by the rule of feet and inches, or of applying arithmetic to taste and enthusiasm, as calculations and figures to these grand evanishing signals which God waves in the future only to tell the world which way it is to march. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Prophecy: fantastic interpretation of:*—All along the Oker Thal, in the Hartz, there are huge rocks towering up among the fir-clad hills, to which the peasants have appended names according as they fancy them to bear resemblance to chairs, horses, cobblers, or cocked hats. The likeness in most cases is such as only fancy can make out when she is in her most vigorous mood; nevertheless this rock must needs be called a man, and that a church, and there has no doubt been many a quarrel between rival observers who have discovered each a different image in the one pile of rock; yet the stones are not churches, chairs, or cobblers, and the whole business is childish and nonsensical. Interpreters of prophecy during the last few centuries have been most of them in the same position; one of them sees in the sublimities of the Revelation the form of Louis Napoleon, where two or three hundred years ago half Christendom saw the Pope, and the other half Martin Luther. The other day one of the seers saw Sebastopol in the prophecies, and now another detects the Suez Canal, and we feel pretty sure that the Council at Rome will soon be spied out in Daniel or Ezekiel. The fact is, when fancy is their guide men wander in a maze. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Speculations versus duty:*—While a minister was riding in a railway carriage he was saluted by a member of an exceedingly litigious and speculative sect. "Pray, sir," said the sectary, "what is your opinion of the seven trumpets?" "I am not sure," said the preacher, "that I understand your question; but I hope you will comprehend mine. What think you of the fact that your seven children are growing up without God and without hope? You have a Bible-reading in your house for your neighbours, but no family prayer for your children." The nail was fastened in a sure place; enough candour of mind remained in the professor to enable him to profit by the timely rebuke. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 8. **But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.**—*The gift of power:*—At first sight this promise seems to be Christ's response to a universal craving. There is nothing which so awakens man's ambition as power. It is sweeter to him than bread to the hungry, or home to the wanderer, or sunrise to the benighted; of all the Divine attributes this is the one he most intensely and incessantly covets. The old classic fable of Prometheus, who made a figure and shaped it after the beauty of a man, and then animated it with fire which he had dared to steal from heaven, is only the thinly-veiled record of man's fierce ambition to create. Powerless to create, he seeks control. He has summoned almost every known element and force in nature to his service, and compelled them to do for him what he cannot do for himself. He has blasted the rock unshaken by the ages, and hurled its ponderous masses into the air as easily as a child throws up its tennis ball. He has tunnelled the mountain and bridged the river to make way for his flying locomotive. He has engirdled the earth with a belt of wire, and through it swifter than thought flashed his messages from pole to pole. From the masterful schoolboy to the statesman on the topmost ladder, and the monarch of a hundred isles, this passion for power is all pervading. The very apostles, to whom these words were addressed, were in this, as in other respects, "men of like passions with ourselves." Observe, this love of power may be as legitimate as it is natural. Its quality is determined by its motive. Still power may be beneficent as well as baneful. Now, mark the power with which Christ promises to endow His disciples. 1. Not physical power. Not like that possessed by Samson when he carried upon his back the gates of Gaza, or with the jaw-bone of an ass slew the Philistines heaps upon heaps. It had nothing at all to do with bone, and muscle, and sinew. Men have sometimes forgotten this. They once thought that they could resist the spread of the gospel by physical means. The very efforts which men have employed to suppress the truth have been made the means of exalting it to supremacy. Just as the blast which rocks the giant oak makes it strike its roots deeper and wider in the

earth; or, just as the tempest which beats down the tree carries its winged seeds over land and sea to distant continents, there to take root and become trees themselves, so persecution has this twofold tendency—it makes the persecuted cling closer than ever to the truth for which they are assailed, and prompts them to spread it more widely abroad than ever. On the other hand, brute force can no more help the gospel than hinder it. Persecution never made saints yet. If you want to infuse new life into a tree you do not smite it with an axe, but expose it to the genial breath of spring. The weapons of their warfare were not to be carnal. 2. Nor was it the power of logic. The disciples were to convert souls, and mere argument cannot do this. You have all seen sheet lightnings; they flash, they dazzle, but they do not kill. And arguments, after all, are only sheet lightnings, dazzling, enlightening, but seldom or never killing in the sense in which Paul says he was killed. 3. Nor was it the power of eloquence, though that is not to be despised. Oh, yes! there is a tremendous power in words. They breathe, they burn, they fly about the world charged with electric fire and force; but there is one thing they cannot do—they cannot regenerate a soul. You may electrify a corpse. By bringing it into contact with a battery you may make it imitate the living; but it is after all only the semblance, not the reality of life. 4. It was spiritual power—the power of the Holy Ghost. "We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us." In other words, it was the power of a living union with a living God. Need I say that this promise of Christ is as much ours as it was the apostles'? It has been fulfilled, but not exhausted. There is an essential difference between the two. "A postage stamp once used can be used no longer; but it is not so with a bank note. The note may be old and torn, stained and soiled; it may have been cut in halves and pasted together again. It does not matter; whoever holds it can present it and demand its equivalent in sterling gold. So is it with a Divine promise. It may pass from lip to lip, and from age to age, and be fulfilled a thousand times; still you may present it and plead it before God in the assurance of success." The light of the sun may fail, the waters of the ocean may be dried up, but the riches of Christ's fulness are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And we need this promised power as much as the apostles did. Nothing else can supply its place. It is to the Church what steam is to the machinery. Suppose you are examining the propelling powers of the *Majestic* or the *Teutonic*—the two most magnificent specimens of naval architecture the world has ever seen. You look down into the engine-room on the polished levers, and cranks, and shafts, and the innumerable wheels made to revolve there; and you go home amazed at the inventive power which they represent. And yet in reality you have seen no power. There must be put into that machinery a power, a hidden power, and then, and not till then, will those wheels revolve majestically, and the vessel speed over the water lightly and swiftly as a bird with outspread wings. Who amongst us dare assert that the Church's successes are equal to her opportunities? Why, then, is it we are making so little impression on the world? Is it not because we are too much under its influence? The fabled giant Antæus was invincible so long as he was in direct communication with his mother earth. Overthrown by the wrestler, the moment he touched the ground out of which he was born his strength revived. Hercules discovered the secret of his invigoration, and, lifting him from the earth, crushed him in the air. We are in the same danger from the world, and to escape it we must get nearer to the source of our spiritual strength. Away from Christ she is like an army without ammunition and cut off from its base of operations. Near to Him she will breathe the air, and walk in the light, and wield the might of heaven. She shall receive power—power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. And does not the Church need more power to deal with the manifold evils and enemies by which she is surrounded? There is scepticism. We live in an age of doubt—doubt all the more dangerous because it is courteous rather than coarse. Well, then, another evil with which, as Churches, we have to contend is indifference to spiritual truth. Men are absorbed in material pursuits and enjoyments. It is sometimes argued that the Church is trying to do too much; that she is unequal to the work she is undertaking; that Christian service is already so overgrown that, like a man with a large frame and a feeble heart, we are staggering under the weight of the tasks we have undertaken; that the spiritual power of the Church is unequal to the vast and varied machinery it has to keep in motion. This is, doubtless, true when the resources which the Church possess in itself are alone considered; but add Christ to them, and then the disproportion is turned the other way. "All power"—power of every kind and without limit—is given unto Him.

There cannot be too much work when there is so much Divine power to sustain it. When the tide is out the estuary seems far too wide for the tiny stream which crawls through the centre; but when the tide comes in the whole expanse is covered and the water rushes right up to the greensward. Brethren, do we desire this power? Then let us ask for it. Remember that it has its source outside the Church and human life altogether. "Ye shall receive power"—receive it as a gift; not generate it from within; not attain it by straining present powers or enlarging present capacity. Sometimes we forget this, and talk about getting up a revival. You might as well talk about getting up a thunder shower. Having this power, let us use it. The disciples received it that they might be "witnesses unto Christ." Divinely bestowed power always brings responsibility; it is always given for use. Keep any of God's gifts for your own selfish purposes, and they will speedily get the canker and the rot. (*J. Le Huray.*) *The Lord's last promise to the apostles*:—Christ's last words are a promise and declare the vocation of all Christians of every station and class. They are all called to testify to Christ, but they are not all equally qualified for the duty. The text shows—I. THAT THERE IS A CONDITION OF ATTACHMENT TO CHRIST IN WHICH DUE FITNESS FOR THIS VOCATION DOES NOT EXIST. The apostles were in this condition. They had personal acquaintance with Christ, believed in Him, had knowledge of the facts, and had natural ability. Still these did not confer the testifying "power." So with many Christians now. They know, believe, desire, are eloquent, &c., but lack the mystic energy in the absence of which sermons fail to convert. II. THAT DUE FITNESS FOR THE GREAT VOCATION COMES BY A DIVINE BESTOWAL. "After that the Holy Ghost is come." The bestowal came in a miraculous manner but in answer to prayer. Thereupon the apostles were constrained to do what the Lord had commanded. So nowadays. When God has given special ability, and adds an influence which constrains to its exercise, no wonder that striking results follow. III. THAT THIS POWER SHOULD BE EXERCISED WHEN AND WHERE IT IS RECEIVED. They were to wait at Jerusalem until they received a Divine gift, and there employ it. Had they been permitted to seek their own pleasure they would have chosen another place. So we must begin where and when God blesses us, however disagreeable the effort may be. IV. THE MANNER OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL. Here we have a plan of the Acts of the Apostles. 1. Jerusalem (chaps. iii. 1–vi. 7). 2. All Judæa (vi. 8–viii. 3). 3. Samaria, which had long been "White unto harvest" (viii. 4–40). 4. The uttermost part of the earth (ix. to close). This view suggests the importance of evangelising cities. If Paris were made Christian how great would be the blessing to Europe; if London how easy the conversion of the world. (*W. Hudson.*) *The call to apostleship*:—This verse is of interest as involving the condition of all success, which in every line of occupation is made out of power converged upon an object. Means in our hand, an end in our eye, resources and purposes, are the alpha and omega of success. Our failures, therefore, are due sometimes to our attempting too much, but our saddest failures are due to the indecision of our aim. Men, especially in the higher relations of life, are unproductive, not because they are feeble, but because they are purposeless. A purpose lying athwart the track of a man's energies is what a burning glass is lying across the path of the sunbeam, a means of tension and the pledge of result. At this solemn moment, then, in which Christ turns over mankind into the hands of the eleven, His last service is to tell them of the power which shall be wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, and what they shall do with it. Christ had spent three years and a half in making Himself the most real of all real things, and now as He ascends He says, "What is real to you, go out into the midst of men and make real to them; and so soon as the power of the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto Me," &c. On this basis there are some things proper to be addressed to—I. CHRISTIANS AS INDIVIDUALS. The science of mechanics is reducible to statics which concerns itself with forces in equilibrium, and dynamics which treats of forces in motion. One gives us physical condition; the other physical agency. The New Testament is an inspired treatise on spiritual mechanics, and expounds the doctrines of spiritual statics and dynamics, and exhibits to us Christianity as a splendid equilibrium of the soul, and as an energy that upsets equilibrium. The trouble with a great many of our Christians is that they never get beyond the statics. They stop with Christianity as an inward composure. They do not reach the point of seizing Christ's peace, and hurling it in all its holy equipoise into the midst of unholy men to their unutterable discomposure. They stop with reading the Four Gospels of condition without going on to read the fifth Gospel of "Acts." And if we have not the serenity of spirit which the apostles had,

and the same passionate ambition to make Christ a reality in the minds and hearts of those about us, it is not because we are not their equals, but because we have not let Christ become as real to us. If they had stopped with being disciples, then we should have said that Christianity meant nothing but discipleship. But inasmuch as they went on from being absorbent disciples to radiant apostles, then Christianity means purpose as much as power; making others Christians as much as being Christians ourselves. These things when prayerfully considered will create a deep sense of individual responsibility. The anointing of the Holy Ghost sets each one of us in the line of the true apostolic succession; and, as after the ascension of Christ mankind lay in the hands of the original apostles for them to convert, so to-day the conversion of the world pertains to us as their spiritual successors. If each Christian were to make one convert each year, within eight years the whole population of the globe would be at the foot of the Cross! II. CHRISTIANS IN THE ASSOCIATE RELATION OF A CHURCH. Individual Christianity means individual apostleship. What advantage does Christianity gain by being organised? 1. Negatively. A church does not exist, properly—(1) for the sake of its sanctuary ministrations. Supposing that after the ascension the apostles had made the Church to consist as a permanency, in praying and singing and preaching to each other once a week? But there are churches where spiritual laziness is induced by excess of sanctuary nourishment, and who do not bestir themselves sufficiently to prevent even the bread of life from working within them as a slow and subtle poison. There are churches that have had the gospel preached to them for fifty years, and yet have not begun to produce such a flame as was kindled within fifteen days after the Lord's ascension. (2) For the sake of sustaining its weaker members. Of course there is a great deal that it ought to do in that direction. Christ said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." But a large number of those who now apply for admission to the Church want, not to strengthen the brethren, but to have the brethren strengthen them. When an army is quartered in the enemy's country, the safest place is inside of the camp; but a regiment recruited for the purpose of having its members protect each other is a poor addendum to the fighting resources of the brigade. We learn heroism in the face of danger; children learn to swim by being thrown into the water; and the original Church never flinched after once it had taken up its position in the open field. (3) For the sake of its denomination. Denomination is harness worn by us for the purpose of dragging the chariot of the gospel. It may chafe some—all harness is liable to—but it is a necessity. Still the harness exists for the sake of the chariot, and not the chariot for the sake of the harness; and he serves his denomination best who serves the Church of Christ best. 2. Positively. By indicating what the Church does not exist for, we have already implied the object for which it does exist. A Church, as an efficiency of God for the conversion of men, is the interweaving of the individual strands of strength fused into a solid bolt of force and hurled at the adversaries of the Lord; and no desultory skirmishing of individual Christians will begin to take the place of the grand concentrated bombardment of a confederate Church. We regularly proceed upon that principle in the achievement of large secular results. We organise for purposes of government, warfare, improvement, revolution, and discovery. Why not for Christ? (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Power*:—I. THE PREPARATION FOR POWER (vers. 1–3). 1. The training which they had received. They were with Jesus when He "began both to do and to teach." 2. The facts that made their faith in Him unwavering, courageous, conquering—"He also showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs," &c. Faith in a risen Christ gave to their preaching a tremendous power. 3. Special instruction "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." Samples of this speaking may be found in Luke xxiv. 25–28, 45–49. II. THE BAPTISM OF POWER (vers. 4, 5). 1. This was the baptism that long had been promised. It was "the promise of the Father" (Isa. xliv. 3; Joel ii. 28, &c.) 2. This was that which had been promised by Christ, when He said it was "expedient that He should go away" (John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7–15). 3. This was to be unlike the baptism of John. Water was the symbol—this the reality. 4. For this baptism the apostles were to wait. The ship can afford to wait for its sails, the army for its general, the traveller for his compass. Why at Jerusalem? (Isa. ii. 1–4; Micah iv. 1–3). III. THE SOURCE OF POWER (vers. 6–8). 1. The false idea. "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" The old thought of a temporal kingdom still uppermost! 2. The true idea. "But ye shall receive power," not temporal such as they had coveted, but spiritual and supernatural. That power is worth coveting and waiting for. IV.

THE RESULT OF POWER (ver. 8). "Ye shall be My witnesses." There is no successful witnessing for Christ without this power. Christ's disciples are all-powerful with it. V. ASCENDING TO POWER (vers. 9–11). 1. The ascension. The reception of power by the disciples depended upon His ascension (Luke xxiv. 49; see also Acts ii. 33; John xvi. 7). 2. The return. "Shall so come," &c. No need, however, to stand idly gazing into heaven. Before He went, Christ gave "to each one his work" (Mark xiii. 34). Three watchwords He has given—watch, pray, work. The harvest is hastened by cultivation—not by counting the days from the time the seed was sown. VI. PRAYING FOR POWER (vers. 12–14). The disciples had the promise of power, "not many days hence," but they did not wait in idleness for it to be fulfilled. The promise is ours to-day as much as then it was the disciples'. Praying, as they did, a Pentecost may come to us as certainly and as bounteously as it came to them. (*S. S. Times.*) *Power:*—The Church to-day has many things, but she lacks one thing—power. Peter bade the lame man rise and walk. To-day, Christian men say, "Gold and silver have I; such as I have give I thee." We buy crutches for cripples, and write apologetics for Christianity. Peter gave strength, and the man was an argument no one could answer. I. WE FEEL THIS WANT OF POWER IN OUR OWN LIVES; we lack grip when we seize a great subject, or a sinning soul. This consciousness of weakness palsies action, compels compromise, cautions delay. Paul lived, yet no longer he but Christ in him. We live, but not Christ. When the heart is weak in its action, the members suffer, lack warmth and vigour; all we come in contact with, home, business, city, nation, feel our lack of power; children grow up uncontrolled, business leans to the side of dishonesty, government is corrupt. The type of Christianity of to-day is that of the disciples before Pentecost—"in the temple praising and blessing God," and intellectually busy about times and seasons. In the business world everything is quiet; men say manufacturing has been overdone; the mills have glutted the markets. So in the religious world, some tell us the market is overstocked with creeds and denominations; there is no call for religion. That is not true; the needs are as many and as real as ever. The Church is like a great mill by the river side—machinery, raw material, market all right, but the water-courses are dry—the power is wanting. On the other hand, it is the business of Christianity to make a market, not wait for one. The Shepherd sought the lost sheep. Salt and light are to be aggressive, making a market. Plant a post; you wouldn't suppose there is anything in the soil to furnish a market, a mass-meeting of posts would decide there is no call for us here. Take up the post and plant a tree; what a commotion there is below the surface; the rootlets push out in every direction and lay hold of the properties of the soil; above the soil buds broaden into leaves, the air is broken into currents and eddies, beasts of the field gather under the helpful shadows, birds are able to find building sites. The tree finds a market in earth and air and animals. A measure of meal finds no market; a handful of leaven makes one. We are not simply to be stirred up and mixed with the world, as lifeless and dry as others, but are to carry leavening power with us. An iron post placed in a public park does not disperse darkness. String the electric wire across it, fix the carbon points, now it is a fountain of light. "Ye are the light of the world." Light compels recognition, all hail it, it meets a need. The first sign of power in the tree is life in itself, in the post, of light on itself; the first proof of power in a disciple is power over himself. From this nerve-centre of self the power thrills along the family, and business and body politic. The word power, *dunamis*, carries the thought; from the word comes dynamics, the science of moving forces. Another word comes in here too—dynamite. A glance at the family of words will show us what is bound up in the promise. In a Wesleyan chapel a mighty revival was in progress. A visitor scandalised by the excitement rebuked the zealous Wesleyans, saying, "This is all wrong. When Solomon built his temple there was heard neither the sound of hammer, nor saw, nor chisel. You make too much noise here." The preacher made reply, "Oh, but we ain't building, we are blasting." The preacher was right; he was using dynamite, destroying the kingdom of darkness. Oh for the promised dynamite of the Holy Spirit! II. THIS POWER HAS ITS SOURCE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH AND HUMAN LIFE. "Ye shall receive power"; not generate it, nor attain to it by straining present powers, or enlarging present capacities. We cannot whip ourselves into a state of power, as though we were eggs, strike the fire from ourselves by any flint and steel arrangement, lift ourselves into it by force of will, educate ourselves into it by culture of heart or head. III. THE CONDITIONS OF REALISING THE POWER. The great discovery of modern science is law. By the study of phenomena we learn the law, by

obeying the law we control phenomena. Studying the appearance of the Spirit, the conditions of the appearance, we can learn the law of His appearing; conforming to the law thus learned we can receive the power. There are two instances of His appearing of special interest; 1. When Christ received the Holy Ghost. Christ stands unique in His power. His thoughts give life to every language embodying them; His teachings transform every character embracing them. All this is true of Him after the Spirit came upon Him, not before. John Baptist knew Him not until he saw the Spirit descending. Two simple facts give us the key: Obedience and prayer. When John rebuked Him, He replied, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." "Jesus also being baptised and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended." 2. In the case of the disciples we read that Christ commanded, "Tarry ye in Jerusalem," and they obeyed; and "all continued in prayer and supplication." Then when Pentecost came they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Here we touch a law of nature as well as of spiritual power. He who obeys known law and communes with nature, masters her secrets. In the home the obedient, sympathetic child has power given it by the parents. In your stores the clerk who obeys and communes with you is the one to whom you give power. To the obedient and prayerful now as truly as then, will the Holy Ghost be given, and after that power will come. IV. WHEN THE POWER COMES IT MUST USE US. Christ is driven into the desert, and the disciples are scattered, sown broadcast in the waiting world-field of thought and action. Simon Magus offered money for Peter's power. We cannot control this power; it must control us. (*O. P. Gifford.*) *The might of the gospel:*—The gospel is a mighty engine, but only mighty when God has the working of it. (*T. Adams.*) *Christianity diffused by the apostles:*—How wonderful is God, in that He can accomplish great ends by insignificant means! Christianity, for example, diffused through the instrumentality of twelve legion of angels, would have been immeasurably inferior as a trophy of omnipotence, to Christianity diffused through the instrumentality of twelve apostles. When I survey the heavens, with their glorious troop of stars, and am told that the Almighty employs to His own majestic ends the glittering hosts, as they pursue their everlasting march, I experience no surprise; I seem to feel as though the spangled firmament were worthy of being employed by the Creator; and I expect a magnificent consummation from so magnificent an instrumentality. But show me a tiny insect, just floating in the breeze, and tell me that, by and through that insect, God will carry forward the largest and most stupendous of His purposes, and I am indeed filled with amazement; I cannot sufficiently admire a Being who, through that which I could crush with a breath, advances what I cannot measure with thought. (*H. Melvill.*) *Power indescribable but appreciable:*—All power is indescribable, but at the same time appreciable. What it is, where it is, how it came, where it goes, its measure, movement, nature, form, or essence, no human skill can discover. We may ask the sunbeam which has such power to fly and to illuminate, the lightning which has such power to scathe, the dew-drop that has power to refresh, the magnet, the fire, the steam, the eye that can see, the ear that can hear, the nerve that can convey the messages of will, we may ask all the agents we see exerting power to render us an account each of its own power, and all will be dumb. Not the cannon ball on its flight, or the lion in his triumph, not the tempest or the sea, not even pestilence itself, can tell us what is power. If we ask Death who has put all things under his feet, even he has no reply; and after we have passed the question, "What is power?" round a mute universe, we must say, "God has spoken once, yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." Yet power, in itself so hidden and indescribable, is ever manifest by its effects. An effect demonstrates the presence of a power. Where gunpowder explodes, there must have been fire; where water shoots up through the atmosphere in steam, there must have been heat; where iron moves without mechanical force, a magnet must be; and the absence of the effect is conclusive evidence of the absence of the power from which the effect would have followed. The intellect at once recognises the presence of intellectual power. The feelings, also, faithfully tell whenever an emotional power is brought to bear upon them; and no less surely does the conscience of a man feel when a moral power comes acting upon it. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Power not in mechanism but in fire:*—Suppose we saw an army sitting down before a granite fort, and they told us that they intended to batter it down: we might ask them, "How?" They point to a cannon-ball. Well, but there is no power in that; it is heavy, but not more than perhaps a hundred weight: if all the men in the army hurled it against the fort, they would make no impression. They say,

"No; but look at the cannon." Well, there is no power in that. A boy may ride upon it, a bird may perch in its mouth; it is a machine and nothing more. "But look at the powder." Well, there is no power in that; a child may spill it, a sparrow may peck it. Yet this powerless powder, and powerless ball, are put into the powerless cannon; one spark of fire enters; and then, in the twinkling of an eye, that powder is a flash of lightning, and that ball a thunderbolt. (*Ibid.*) *Prayer the means of obtaining spiritual power*:—When John in the Apocalypse saw the Lamb on the throne, before that throne were the seven lamps of fire burning, "which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth"; and it is only by waiting before that throne of grace that we become imbued with the holy fire. When a lecturer on electricity wants to show an example of a human body surcharged with his fire, he places a person on a stool with glass legs. The glass serves to isolate him from the earth, because it will not conduct the electric fluid; were it not for this, however much might be poured into his frame, it would be carried away by the earth; but, when thus isolated from it, he retains all that enters him. You see no fire, you hear no fire; but you are told that it is pouring into him. Presently you are challenged to the proof—asked to come near, and hold your hand close to his person; when you do so, a spark of fire shoots out towards you. If thou, then, wouldst have thy soul surcharged with the fire of God, so that those who come nigh to thee shall feel some mysterious influence proceeding out from thee, thou must draw nigh to the source of that fire, to the throne of God and of the Lamb, and shut thyself out from the world. As this is the only way for an individual to obtain spiritual power, so is it the only way for churches. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual power recognised*:—Often when I have had doubts suggested by the infidel I have been able to fling them to the winds with utter scorn because I am distinctly conscious of a power working upon me when I am speaking in the name of the Lord, infinitely transcending any personal power of fluency, and far surpassing any energy derived from excitement such as I have felt when delivering a secular lecture or making a speech—so utterly distinct from such power that I am quite certain it is not of the same order or class as the enthusiasm of the politician or the glow of the orator. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Natural gift no substitute for spiritual power*:—No natural gift can suffice, and when any men have the power of God, failure is impossible. Yet do not let us suppose there is no room for gifts. If some people make the Cross of Christ of none effect through wisdom of words, others make it of none effect through lack of wisdom. There are some persons who put dulness for piety. Of the wise man we read that he "sought to find out acceptable words"—"words of delight," as it is literally. And of a greater than Solomon it is recorded that the people heard him gladly. Christianity invites and consecrates every gift of God and every grace and art of which man is capable. There is room for money, enterprise, methods, learning, and genius. All gifts are good when they are lost in the great purpose of the gospel; but any gifts are perilous, just in proportion as preacher or people are conscious of them. In a sham fight everybody admires the uniforms, the music, the horses, the precision of the march. But in a real fight there is a desperate earnestness that cannot stay to admire anything—that just girds itself up for death or victory. If there be the intensity, the downright earnestness, the baptism of fire, which longs to make Christ the conqueror, then the more gifts the better. But if that baptism be lacking, gifts are a peril and a snare. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *The reception of spiritual power*:—I was in the train some time ago, and was thinking of this higher life, and it seemed so bright and beautiful—like a star far above me—and my eye fell on the word "receive," and I saw it was not my climbing up but the Lord coming down. It was early spring, and as we stopped at a station it was raining, and I noticed a little cottage where an old woman had put out a pitcher to catch the water, and it was filled to the brim; I said to myself, "My poor heart can never make a garden for my Lord, but at least He can take my broken pitcher of a heart and fill it abundantly." "Ye shall receive power." Do you see that this is His purpose? Then surrender yourself. (*Ibid.*) *The pleasure of realised power*:—There are few things more pleasant than to work with power. A little child balancing itself upon its tiny feet and running alone, a schoolboy making the treasures of knowledge his own, a lad learning a trade easily and yet accurately, a tradesman conducting an extensive concern with complete system and perfect order, an artist colouring canvas or chiselling marble, a man of letters writing books that shall never die, a man of science unlocking the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, an orator taking captive by his words the eyes, ears, thoughts, and souls of a multitude of hearers, diplomatists and politicians arousing and hushing the voice of the

people and turning the hearts of princes whither they will, the commander leading a fleet or an army to victory, are illustrations of working power, upon which we cannot look without interest, and of which we cannot speak without excitement. And as more power is needed to deliver than to direct, to redeem than to sustain, we look with greater interest upon the physician healing sickness, and upon the surgeon removing diseased flesh or bone. It is a glorious sight, power employed to save! A fireman entering a burning dwelling and plucking the sleeping inmates from the flames, even the water-dog snatching a child from a watery grave, are great and glorious illustrations of power put forth for salvation—but a greater than these, a greater than all, is here. (*S. Martin.*) *Power from on high:*—Let us look upon the subject—I. ON ITS NEGATIVE SIDE. It is not—1. Physical power. Current literature speaks of "muscular Christianity"; but that is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Subsequently, men thought they could assist the gospel by bringing it into alliance with political organisations. But no. Persecutions never made saints yet. The axe can never infuse new life into the tree. But the spring can. 2. Miraculous power. They were already endued with this. But this cannot save men. Men saw Jesus performing miracles, and still remained in their unbelief. 3. The power of eloquence. I have seen, under powerful sermons, stout-hearted sinners weep and pray, but when the electric current which flowed from the preacher subsided, they fell back to their former torpor. Many so-called revivals are but electric shocks disturbing the dead, but leaving them dead notwithstanding. Eloquence, like the wind, moves the sea from without, but that which saves must move it from its own depths. Eloquence works upon the soul; that which saves must work in the soul. One can compose a sermon in which the most critical hearer cannot detect a flaw: but he will forget it in half an hour. It is so refined that it shoots right through the soul instead of entering into it and remaining there. Polish is commendable up to the point of showing instead of concealing the material underneath. I never like to see an article of furniture so highly polished that I cannot say of what timber it is made. 4. The power of logic. Conquer a man in argument, and, as a rule, you only confirm him in his error. I saw a picture entitled, "Conquered but not Subdued." The young lad was evidently conquered by his mother. There he stood, with his face half-turned towards the wall: but there was determination in the mouth, defiance in the eye, anger in the nostrils. Drive a sinner in argument to a corner, so that he cannot move, yet he can sink, and sink he will to his own hell. Sheet-lightnings dazzle, but never kill. And arguments after all are only sheet-lightnings. 5. The power of thought. The Bible does not claim superiority on account of its ideas, although it contains the sublimest. You may be the best Biblical scholar in the land, and be at last a castaway. The history of preaching abundantly proves this. Read the sermon by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and it will not astonish you with the profundity of its thoughts. The sermons on the Mount and on Mars' hill stand higher on the intellectual side; and yet they made but few converts. Look again from the pulpit to books. Take the "Analogy" by Butler; no book perhaps displays more intellectual power; yet who can point to it as the means of bringing him to Jesus? But read the "Dairyman's Daughter," or the "Anxious Inquirer," without a millionth part of its mental power; but there are thousands who trace their conversion to these books. I do not wish to cast discredit on any of these excellences. They are very valuable in their own places. If a man is possessed of them he can do nothing better than consecrate them on the altar of Christianity. But if man is to be saved, a new power must come to the field. II. ON ITS POSITIVE SIDE. In the Gospel it is called "power from on high." 1. The great want of the world was a power to uplift it out of its state of degradation and sin. Previous to Pentecost the world was sinking lower and lower in the scale of morals. But since humanity has been gradually ascending. Physically we know that this earth is subject to the attraction of other planets. The same fact holds true spiritually. There is a power working mightily in the children of disobedience, and the source of it is in darker regions than our own. But another power has come to the field, a power from on high; the contest must be long and terrible; but the higher power is gradually winning, and will deliver the world from the grasp of evil. Here it is called "the power of the Holy Ghost." We often picture God as looking down pitifully upon us from His heaven. But we are also taught that the great God has descended upon men, and thrown into their hearts the infinite impulse of His own eternal nature. The disciples, as we see them in the Gospel, are cowards; in the Acts they are heroes. The Christian life is Divine. Christianity is not a remembrance of the supernatural in the past, but its perpetua-

tion throughout all ages. Every true ministry is heavy with supernatural influences. We do not perform miracles, but if our ministry is not a continuation of the supernatural in the realm of matter, it is a continuation of it in the realm of mind; and of the two, the latter is the higher kind. Luke tells us that in his Gospel he narrated what Jesus *began* both to do and to teach; here he goes on to tell what Jesus continued to do and to teach through men; and Church history continues the tale. "The works that I do ye also shall do," &c. 2. What was the effect of this Divine baptism on the disciples? (1) It made them pre-eminently spiritual. Spirituality should be the distinctive badge of every Christian, and especially of the ambassadors of Christ. "A bishop must be blameless." All well and good if he is learned and eloquent, but he must be blameless. (2) It filled them with Divine enthusiasm, with "fire." The Bible speaks much about this fire. Jeremiah had a message, but having been insulted and incarcerated, he made up his mind not to open his mouth again. "I said I will not make mention of Him, or speak any more in His name." Well, how did he fare? "His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and could not stay." It was hard to speak—it was harder to be silent. It is difficult enough to stand up here and preach; it would be more difficult to sit down there and be mute. The apostles evinced such fervour that many supposed they were under the power of strong drink. No, says Peter, it is the Holy Ghost working in us. "The love of Christ constraineth us," says St. Paul. Some dared to brand him as a fanatic. "Whether we be beside ourselves," said he, "it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause." The secret of Baxter's power was his unbounded enthusiasm. His biographer says he would have set the world on fire while another was lighting a match. It is the fire of the Holy Ghost that will make men eloquent. A preacher in his study ought to gather his thoughts, to collect his materials; and ascending the pulpit, he ought to set them all ablaze with fire from off the altar. Having built the altar, digged the trenches, slain the sacrifice, he should join Elijah and cry, "O God, send the fire, send the fire!" 3. What is the effect upon the congregation? Many are turned to God. On the consecration of the Temple of Solomon, the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; much less could the people stand to criticise the work of art, or to admire the amount and richness of the gold. In the same manner the power from on high hides everything but itself. Many a critic went to hear Whitefield with hostile intentions; but in less than five minutes they had totally forgotten their sinister art. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Power from on high*:—I. THE BEING TO BE MANIFESTED. 1. The Holy Spirit is represented as having all the attributes of Deity, distinct from, yet united with, the Father and the Son. This is not sufficiently dwelt upon. In the apostolic age there were those who did not "so much as know whether there were any Holy Ghost." This is not your case, but it is needful to remind you lest you should withhold from Him His proper homage. That He is God is matter of explicit revelation—not in the Arian or Sabellian sense—not an illumination but an essence, not an influence but a Person. And to the blasphemers who deny His Divinity we hurl the thunderbolt, "Ananias, why hath Satan put it into thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied," &c. 2. It is to the Spirit, thus Divine, that belongs the right of induction to the holy ministry; and however men may place their pretentions or trace their geneaology they are intruders without the call and unction of the Spirit. 3. As the Spirit is thus the originating source, so is His perpetuating grace the means of success in the ministry. This is everywhere asserted in the prophets. "Not by might," &c. II. THE RESULT OF HIS MANIFESTATION. "Ye shall receive power." 1. The power of God is the attribute which is earliest to impress the mind. It is impossible to send the thought out into the universe without discovering its manifestations. It lurks in the minutest and is exhibited in the mightiest phenomena. 2. And as it is the earliest, so it is the attribute of which men are most keenly coveteous. The fable of Prometheus, who made the figure of a man, and then animated it with the fire which he had dared to steal from heaven, is only a thinly veiled record of man's fierce ambition to create. Man, the master-mind, would stand in the midst of the elements and say, "Ye are vassals: work for me." And if from the world of nature you pass up into the world of mind you find the same coveteousness from the child-dictator of the nursery to the monarch of a hundred isles. Now as the apostles were men of like passions with ourselves they were under the influence of this desire. There was an effort to reserve seats on either side of the Redeemer in His kingdom for the sons of Zebedee. And here was asked, "Lord, wilt Thou," &c. Now this love of power, as it is an

instinct, is not criminal. The God who implanted it had wise purposes in view. The gospel does not annihilate a solitary passion, only it directs those which were vehicles of rebellion into instruments of blessing. The Saviour therefore here rebukes unhallowed curiosity, but answers prayer. "Ye shall receive power," that is what you want and ye shall have it. When Pentecost came they saw how infinitely superior to all royalties was the kingdom they were to establish. Without this power the most perfect organisation and the most exquisite appliances are valueless. But give us this and the stammerer shall be an Apollos, and the stripling with the sling and stone shall be as an angel of the Lord. III. THE DESIGN OF THIS MANIFESTATION. 1. That the Church may testify to the world. Power Divinely given is to be used for Divine ends. God imprisons no force in aimless bondage. There is power in the lightning, but it is not to dazzle but to purify. There is power in the frantic breaker, and in the careering cloud; but they are all true and loyal servants in the vast palace in which the King of the universe has lodged His favourite creature man. And as in the physical so in the moral sphere. God's gifts are not given to be hoarded, despised, or abused. Every endowment of mind—the athletic reason, the lordly will, the creative fancy, the eloquent utterance, every communication of grace, and every attainment of privilege are all conferred upon as individually to minister as the rest of the universe ministers. 2. We are witnesses for Jesus. A crucified, risen, and exalted Christ will charm the heart of the nineteenth as it charmed the heart of the first century; and though scoffers deride it, cowards hesitate about it, and traitors betray it; it is the only testimony which the Holy Ghost will endorse with power. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *Power from on high*:—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HIS DESCENT ON THE APOSTLES AND THE CHURCH. He was given as a Spirit of—1. Knowledge and understanding. Witness the change in the apostle's views of Christ's Messiahship and death before and after. So now truth like a transparent dial becomes illuminated. The eunuch was perplexed till Philip joined him. Compare one frequent expression, "I see." 2. Faith. A great difference between knowing and believing. A man may come and see, but go away without faith. Not so at Pentecost. Noah did not stand outside to admire the ark. He entered in and was safe. 3. Holiness and prayer. Holiness is separateness from the world to God. More than ever at Pentecost the disciples proved this. So now men are holy in proportion as they are endured with the Holy Spirit; and in proportion to their holiness will be their power in prayer. 4. Courage. The boldness of Peter was conspicuous. And now the Spirit works such conviction that the most timid become the most brave. II. THE EXPERIENCES OF POWER ANSWERING TO THEIR CHARACTERISTICS. The power of—1. Witness for the truth. A sense of their sincerity was inspired in the hearers. "We believe and therefore speak." 2. Steadfastness in Christian life notwithstanding human or Satanic opposition. They were proof against tempting bribes, seductive philosophy, fierce persecution. 3. Great example. Men could hate, but could not charge them with inconsistencies. On them was imprinted the likeness of their Master. 4. Untiring zeal. (*G. McMichael, B.A.*) *Spiritual power for missionary work*:—The Holy Ghost is the source of all—I. SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION. The Bible, written by holy men moved by the Holy Ghost, is our only standard of revealed truth; but even the Bible is not enough. The spirit of scepticism is abroad, and men hardly know what or what not to believe. Hence the feeble faith and the shallow conviction and extreme worldliness of the Church. But the missionary, as a teacher of a religion Divine in it origin, requires absolutely the power of clear vision and deep conviction. Doubt to him is paralysis, so it is to every teacher, or work becomes a fruitless, burdensome task. Nor can there be any development of a noble, manly Christian character without Divinely illumined, soul-transforming apprehension of truth. How, then, is the Church to protect herself against a noxious intellectual atmosphere, and obtain a clear vision of Divine things? There can be but one answer. The Spirit that guided holy men of old in recording Divine truths is the same Spirit that reveals to the reader their deep significance. The fully illuminated soul is beyond the reach of doubt, for the Spirit so shows the things of Christ that the inward eye beholds them with open vision. II. HOLINESS. This is a mighty and indispensable power. The ideal Christian of the New Testament is a "saint," and so long as that ideal is not embodied in the lives of Christians, the progress of the gospel must be slow and unsatisfactory. The world must be convinced that Christianity is a practical reality, and not a mere system of belief before it will bow to its authority. Books on evidences are useful in their way. But few will read them or be convinced by them. The one argument that will

command attention is the holy life, not of ancient, but of modern saints (Isa. lxii. 1–3). How long are we to wait for this? There is no reason why we should wait at all. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all holiness. III. SPIRITUAL UNITY. This also is indispensable to evangelisation—not uniformity, but such unity in variety that we see in the works of God. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." What does it matter to the Chinese whether I am an Independent and my brother is an Episcopalian, if we manifest the same Christ-like spirit? But this is only produced by the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more disastrous to missionary and every form of Christian work than the want of unity. Before Pentecost the apostles had their childish rivalries and jealousies; but the baptism of fire burned all that out of them. IV. SPIRITUAL JOY. There are different kinds of joy. 1. Natural. It may be ethical, inspired by an approving conscience; or intellectual, springing from the consciousness of superior gifts and culture; or animal, flowing from a fulness of bodily health or animal spirits; or the joy of harvest, the result of success in worldly pursuits. 2. The unnatural, which consists in the exhilaration produced by stimulants. 3. The spiritual—the joy of conscious pardon, deliverance from sin, fulness of spiritual life, which flows from the Holy Ghost. Without this work is a burden. An unspiritual missionary must be a joyless missionary, and a joyless missionary is a pitiable object. V. THE POWER OF DEALING WITH SOULS. Some men are richly endowed with this. They may or may not be profound thinkers or eloquent speakers, but when they speak their hearers feel a supernatural power grappling with them. VI. PRAYER. (*Griffith John.*) *The old gospel preached with new spiritual power*:—When I was preaching at Farwell Hall, Chicago, I never worked harder to prepare my sermons than I did then. I preached and preached; but it was beating against the air. A good woman used to say, "Mr. Moody, you don't seem to have power in your preaching." Oh, my desire was that I might have a fresh anointing! I requested this woman and a few others to come and pray with me every Friday at four o'clock. Oh, how piteously I prayed that God might fill the empty vessel! After the fire in Chicago, I was in New York, and going into the Bank on Wall Street, it seemed as if I felt a strange and mighty power coming over me. I went up to the hotel, and there in my room I wept before God, and cried, "Oh, my God, stay Thy hand!" He gave me such fulness that it seemed more than I could contain. May God forgive me if I should seem to speak in a boastful way; but I do not know that I have preached a sermon since but God has given me some soul. I seem a wonder to you, but I am a greater wonder to myself. These are the same sermons I preached in Chicago word for word. They are not new sermons; it is not a new gospel; but the old gospel with the Holy Ghost of power. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The Holy Ghost awakens ability as well as communicates a power*:—The gifts of the Holy Ghost are powers, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost is a source of power. I see a man hungry, and I give him money: that money is a power to buy bread; but the hungry man is destitude through lack of ability to earn his bread. I devote myself to that man, awaken a spirit of self-dependence and self-respect, arouse his dormant energies, quicken his whole nature, and lead him into a path of honest industry, and now I have given him not a power, but power. An ignorant man applies to me for enlightenment on some particular subject; I answer his questions, and the knowledge I have given him is a power, but I awaken a thirst for all knowledge in that man, and I lead him to fountains of information, and now I have endowed him not with a power, but with power. I see a man timid and feeble in his whole nature, I draw near to him, I quiet his fears, awaken hope and inspire him with courage, and he becomes, under my influence, sanguine and brave. To this man I give no powers or a power, but power. And thus, while the Holy Ghost, by endowing men with knowledge, wisdom, ability to work miracles and to speak with tongues, bestows particular powers, by entering into fellowship with them He communicates vital energy and general ability. Hitherto the Holy Spirit had not entered into full fellowship with the spirits of men, but now He is to dwell with all Christ's disciples. Now if he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, if as iron sharpeneth iron so doth the countenance of a man his friend, what must be the effects to Christ's witnesses of communion with the Holy Ghost! (*S. Martin.*) *Divine power to be carefully transmitted*:—Here at one end is the great fountain ever brimming. Draw from it ever so much, it sinks not one hair's-breadth in its pure basin. Here, on the other side, is an intermittent flow, sometimes in scanty driblets, sometimes in painful drops, sometimes more full and free, on the pastures of the wilderness. Wherefore these jerks and spasms? It must be something stopping the pipe. Yes, of course. God's

might is ever the same, but our capacity of receiving and transmitting that might varies, and with it varies the energy with which that unchanging power is exerted ni the world. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Power in excess of organisation*:—Machinery saves manual toil, and multiplies force. But we may have too heavy machinery for what engineers call the boiler power—too many wheels and shafts for the steam we have to drive them with. What we want is not less organisation or other sorts of it, but more force. *Latent power in the Church*:—It is impossible to overestimate, or rather to estimate, the power that lies latent in our Churches. We talk of the power latent in steam—latent till Watt evoked its spirit from the waters, and set the giant to turn the iron arms of machinery. We talk of the power that was latent in the skies till science climbed their heights, and seizing the spirit of the thunder, chained it to our service—abolishing distance, outstripping the wings of time, and flashing our thoughts across rolling seas to distant continents. Yet what are these to the moral power that lies asleep in the congregations of our country and of the Christian world? And why latent? Because men and women neither appreciate their individual influence, nor estimate aright their own individual responsibilities. They cannot do everything; therefore they do nothing. They cannot blaze like a star, and, therefore, they won't shine like a glow-worm; and so they are content that the few work, and that the many look on. Not thus the woods are clothed in green, but by every little leaf expanding its own form. Not thus are fields covered with golden corn, but by every stalk of grain ripening its own head. Not thus does the coral reef rise from the depths of ocean, but by every little insect building its own rocky cell. (*T. Guthrie.*) **And ye shall be witnesses unto Me.**—*Witnesses*:—Our Lord did not cut short the apostles' speculations to stop there; he gathered up the broken ends of their energy and fastened them to our immediate work. If the planets were to stand still, they would be drawn into the central fire and consumed. It is necessary to their well-being that they should be flung with all their force on a path of activity. So, unless Christians are thrown out into a course of vigorous action, they will be drawn into an orbit so narrow that action will be no longer possible. I. THE QUALIFICATION FOR THIS SERVICE. 1. Although the apostles were saved, they were not fit to work any deliverance in the earth by their own wisdom or strength. Their demand for fire might have consumed the adversaries, but it could not have converted them. Wanting the Spirit even they were inclined to persecute, and for the same reason their self-styled successors have persecuted in all subsequent times. 2. The Spirit is like the air. We could not live without air—the sun would not warm us but for it. The sun's heat sustains life; but the atmosphere communicates that heat. The earth, again, is dependent for its supply of water on the air, which obtains it from the ocean and pours it on the land. So the disciples in every age obtain grace from the Lord through the ministry of the Spirit. II. THE NATURE OF THIS SERVICE. 1. Whom Christ saves from sin He employs in the world. The liberated captive is sent to fight against his former master. Christians have need of Christ and Christ has need of them. The simple fact that they are on earth not in heaven is proof that there is something for them to do here, and if they are not doing it they are either no Christians, or Christians that grieve Christ. A broken limb hurts more than a severed one, and Christ is hurt by those members of His who do not witness for Him. 2. This is an honourable but difficult function. In the case of a witness the real strain comes in cross-examination. You are set down in the market-place having lately worshipped in the house of prayer. Those whom you meet know this, so that there is no need for you to preach. The cross-examination takes place here. It is not now, what do you believe? but is your life consistent? The cross-examiner generally begins on some apparently indifferent theme, but the questions are so linked to the main subject that if, in answering them, anything escapes which clashes with the original evidence the good confession of the witness is thereby destroyed. Over-reaching, unfairness, unkindness to dependents, untruth, evil-speaking, expose the Christian profession to scorn. III. THE SPHERE. "Beginning at Jerusalem." 1. The charity that will convert is one that begins at home, but does not end there. If it essay to reach the heathen by leaping over many ranks of unslain enemies in our own hearts, and of blasphemers in our own streets, it will never reach its mark, or reach it with a force already spent. The gospel is like a fire; it must be out; but like light and heat it cannot reach the distant circumference without passing through the intermediate space and kindling all that it touches on its way. Unless our love greatly disturb a godless neighbourhood at home, it will not set on fire a distant continent. 2. Besides, while a great mass of our home community remain

unchristian, specimens of our population, cast up in foreign lands like drift-wood, will counteract missionary effort. A preacher with the pure gospel will not influence much the native mind if followed by a fellow-countryman with poisoned rum. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Necessary variety among the apostles*:—Because Christ Himself was so truly and deeply the Wonderful, it was necessary that His witnesses, who were also to be the future organs of His Spirit, should be men of broadly varied nature—not copies one of another, like images of clay cast in kindred mould, but differing in mental constitution, experience, spiritual affinities, and faculty of vision. No single man could take in His whole image, or apprehend, in its completeness, unity, and infinite reaches of application, the truth revealed in Him; and therefore the "chosen witnesses" were many and many-natured. And further, as no single flower can show forth all that is in the sun—as it takes the whole bloom of the year to do so, from the first snowdrop that pierces the dark earth to the latest flower of autumn—so He needed them all for the adequate forthtelling of His holy personality. (*J. Culross.*) *Witnesses for Christ*:—I. ALL CHRISTIANS ARE APPOINTED TO BE CHRIST'S WITNESSES. These words were spoken to the Church, not merely to eleven members of it. You are all subpœnaed to appear, and must all be ready when you are wanted to depose. II. CHRISTIANS ARE MADE CHRIST'S WITNESSES BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. Any poor weakling might say, "I a witness! I cannot speak, I am a child!" or like the poor woman, "I could die for Christ, but I cannot speak for Him." He might say, "I shall be puzzled, contradict myself, not hold out all through the cruel cross-examination; besides, I am nobody, who will take notice what I say?" But our loving Master, to still this trepidation, has left to each witness, the promise of necessary power. But power is of various kinds, and this is not of the kind that you, perhaps, think necessary. There is physical power, the power of knowledge, and the power of wealth, and rank; these would, you think, help to make you influential witnesses. But its most influential witnesses have been totally without these. Instead, He gives the power of faith, love, prayer, courage, all powers in one, in the gift of the Holy Ghost. Let me but have the Holy Ghost helping me to realise the life of Christ in my life, and I am unconquerable, for who can resist God? III. ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CHRIST'S WITNESSES TO TELL WHAT THEY PERSONALLY KNOW ABOUT HIM. Your mission is to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." If you only tell what another man knows, and so merely circulate second-hand impressions, you may stand down, for these things are not evidence. Not as echoes, reflectors, copying machines, are you worth anything, but simply as yourselves. The first disciples had to give out from their own personal knowledge information of those facts respecting Christ on which all the saving value of the Cross depends, and the truth of their testimony has passed successfully through the test of the most subtle and searching cross-examination. No more evidence is wanted as to these facts; but we, the successors of these same witnesses, being under the same law, have, on the same principle, to tell all the truth that we personally know of "this same Jesus." The world says in a thousand ways to each one of us: "What has He done for you?" "Do you know Him?" Yes. "Is He real?" Yes. "Where does He live?" With me. "When did you speak to Him last?" Just now. "When did you meet Him first?" Many a long year ago. Oh! "I know whom I have believed," and He knows me. One of the later Puritans was one day catechising a row of young disciples. When they had answered the question on "Effectual Calling," he said, "Stop; can any one say this, using the personal pronoun all through?" Then with sobbing, broken breath, a man stood up and said: "Effectual calling is the work of God's own Spirit, whereby convincing me of my sin and misery, enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing my will, He doth enable and persuade me to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to me in the gospel." Let but each Christian personally, and from his heart say the same, then "One will chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight," and one single congregation would have in it the life to shake London. IV. WE ARE WITNESSES FOR THE PURPOSE OF REPEATING THE WORDS WHICH WE BELIEVE CHRIST HAS SPOKEN. The witness does not make the message any more than the telegraphic wire makes the telegram; all he has to do is to transmit it in its integrity. V. WE ARE TO BE CHRIST'S WITNESSES, NOT ONLY BY WHAT WE SAY, BUT BY WHAT WE ARE. What are you? If you are only a ceremony, or an insipid imitation, or a manufactured article; if some man of the world with whom you do business can show some excuse for saying of you, "That a Christian! it needs no Christ to make a Christian like that,—I could make as good a Christian

myself, any day!" then, whatever you are, you are of no use to a "Christian Evidence Society." A good farm is the best witness to a farmer; a good painting to an artist; a good book to the author; cures are the best witnesses to doctors; and Christ's cures, His miracles wrought in souls, are His most effective witnesses. It is but fair and reasonable to expect that His people should bear this kind of witness. VI. CHRISTIANS ARE TO WITNESS BY VERBALLY PREACHING THE GOSPEL. Preach in the house, in the nursery, in the schoolroom: all who can. Preach as Brownlow North was said to preach, like one who had just escaped from a sacked and burning city, his ear still stung with the yell of the dying and the roar of the flame; his heart full of gratitude at the thought of his own wonderful escape. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *The Church's work and power*:—I. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. "Ye shall be My witnesses." A witness is one who knows, and who is summoned to tell what he knows. The first preachers of the gospel had personal knowledge of all the facts to which they were called to bear witness. They had been with Christ from the beginning, and so could witness to His life, His death, His resurrection and ascension. That was their business, and, with certain modifications in form, it is ours to-day. All the truth that we personally know of "this same Jesus" we are under an obligation to tell. 1. What, then, is the manner of testimony that devolves upon us? In the first place, we are to witness by our lives. On this living witness Christ depends in a very serious and important way. Professing Christians are, in fact, the only Bible that the majority of unconverted people read. You see, then, how much depends upon the testimony of our lives. Let Christ Himself be seen in them—let them exhibit the magnetic power of the Cross—let them manifest His spirit, His love, His deep compassion for men in their misery, and His readiness to help and save them, and through them, without word or deed, prejudice will be melted down, hatred will be subdued, and men and women will be won to light and love. 2. Let me now call attention to another department of testimony which belongs to every one of us—the witness of personal experience. "You call yourself a Christian. What is Christ to you? Is He to you a real Saviour, Brother, Helper, and Comforter?" You need no eloquence, no genius, no intellectual grasp of the doctrinal side of Christian truth, to go to a brother and say, "I have found Christ to be the Bread of Life to my soul, will you not help yourself?" You need nothing, except honesty and experience. If you have these, go and bear witness. And then, still further, let me remind you that if, having the facts to attest, you can go, you ought to go. You are under an obligation to make known to others what Christ has done for your soul. You have received His grace that you may share it with others, and not that you may go by yourselves into a solitary heaven. II. THE POWER WHICH THE WITNESSES NEED FOR THEIR WORK. They need such power as is received in splendid measure, when the heart is opened widely to receive the Holy Spirit, when His presence is prized and enjoyed, and duty's commands are joyfully fulfilled. The apostles needed this power. No doubt they were new creatures in Christ. They loved and served Him. But if you consider the mistakes that they made regarding Christ's kingdom, their prejudices, their fears, the shock which they had received, and the panic into which they had been thrown by Christ's death, you will admit that they were not fit, as they afterwards were, to found the Church. "Ye shall receive power," and power did they receive. For, mark that strong unwavering faith which lifted them out of the dark valley of speculation and doubt, and so laid hold of the truth to which they were testifying that it possessed their souls and controlled their lives. Mark that growing love to Christ which kindled the flame of holy devotion in their hearts, and made them forget themselves in their daily efforts to exalt and honour Him. Mark their enthusiasm for Him and His cause, their splendid courage, their loyalty to truth, and that singleness of purpose which governed all their thoughts and actions. The power which the first witnesses needed is just the power we need to-day. Is it possible to deny this? Many hard things are said against the Christianity of the present day, with which I have no sympathy, but I fear this much must be granted, that it is sadly lacking in power. Its vital truths are accepted by many who do not practise what they profess to believe. Men go over the points of their faith, and having assured themselves that they are sound, they never trouble themselves with the question, "What does it all come to in the matter of character?" They believe only in a kind of way, for men believe truly only what they practise. Is it not a sad fact that there is so much of that Christianity among us that does not shine with the beauty of holiness—that never attempts a great achievement, that has no emotions to express, and that allows

men and women to live without caring a broken straw for the soul of anybody? If it is—and you know it it—do we not need a baptism of the Holy Spirit? Let Him enter our hearts as the Spirit of power, and then shall we not only bear witness for our exalted Lord, but be His witnesses. We shall be what every Christian is meant to be—the strongest argument for Christ that exists. By being what Christ was, and by doing what Christ did, we shall bear witness to the fact that He lives and reigns in the hearts of men and women whom He has redeemed by His blood. (*Jas. Cameron, M.A.*) *Witnesses for Christ*:—I. OUR LORD HIMSELF IS THE GLORIOUS REALITY TO WHICH HIS SERVANTS ARE TO BEAR THEIR WITNESS. Witnesses unto Me! "Others might witness to My miracles, they were wrought in the face of day; others might repeat My discourses, 'spoken in the temple,' and you, in witnessing to Me, will witness to them likewise; but they are but the rays which proceed from Myself, and it is to this and to all that this implies, that I bid you witness." Contrast this with what we should expect from a great man. We should expect him to tell us that his endowments or achievements were the unmerited gift of heaven. If he should claim honour for himself, then our good opinion would be outraged, and we should proclaim him unworthy of His greatness. Our Lord defies this rule and the conscience of mankind justifies Him in defying it. He who could say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "I and the Father are one," could truly feel that it was impossible for Him to eclipse any higher greatness by drawing attention to Himself. His words and works were His own. As God, He was the author of the gifts which He received as Man. And therefore He thought it not robbery to draw the eyes of men away from the miracles and words to Himself, who gave their greatness to both. II. HOW CAN WE BEAR WITNESS TO A PERSON? We can witness to that which we know, a miracle or sermon; but how can we know so impalpable a thing as a person? especially how can we witness to a superhuman person? 1. But let me ask, can we be witnesses to each other? Yes, for we can know each other. Not merely the form and colour of the body or features, but that which gives to features and to form their interest, the soul. We cannot, indeed, see the soul with the eye of the body. But with the eye of the mind we can see it, and form a very clear conception of it, which we call "character." (1) When a man speaks, we read in his language, in its very accent, the movement of an undying spirit, the strength or weakness of an understanding, the warmth of a heart, the vigour or feebleness of a will. (2) And as through language the soul speaks to the ear of man, so by action the soul addresses itself to the eye of man. When a man acts, specially under circumstances of responsibility or of difficulty, then his true passions, capacities, littlenesses, greatness, come to the surface. (3) Once more, the soul is too active and imperious a tenant not to leave its mark upon the texture of the body, which it has inhabited for a term of years. Every human face, not less by its reserves than by its disclosures, records the play of thought and passion within a subtle immaterial spirit. Fear, joy, pride, lust, rage, sadness, shame, love, patience, each by reiterated throbs leaves its mark upon the flesh, till at length the soul has moulded the ductile matter, so that it shall truly portray its tale of baseness or of beauty. 2. Now in Jesus Christ, God made use of this provision to enter into communion with His creatures. Reason may discover God's existence and attributes, and under favourable conditions may attain to a cold and partial appreciation of His glory. But to reason, unaided by Revelation outside the soul, and by grace within it, God must ever seem abstract and remote. Therefore, that He might embrace His fallen creatures with a revelation of His beauty, the Most High robed Himself in a human body and a human soul. The thoughtful Gentile might have learnt something concerning Him in the natural world; the devout Jew might have read more of His true character in the Mosaic law; but a living personal revelation of what He is was reserved for the faith of Christendom. There are strangers, alas! to our faith, who yet confess that in the Gospels they encounter a form of unapproached grace and power. In the last age infidel writers like Diderot and Rousseau challenged the sceptics of the time, in language which has since become classical, to match, if they could, the moral beauty of the gospel. For in the gospel we meet with one who in His pre-eminent humanity is perfectly one with us, yet also most mysteriously distinct. So rare and refined is His type of manhood, He escapes the peculiarities of either sex. He is tied to no one form of human existence, yet adapt that Himself to all. He is born in extreme poverty, yet He has no grudge against wealth: He is claimed as their representative, by Greek and Roman, and African and Teuton, no less truly than by the children of His people. No class professional, or national prejudice has left its taint upon that

ideal Form, so as to make it less than representative of pure humanity. Yet, so far is He from being a cold, passionless statue, divested of all interests, strictly human, that there is a warmth and vividness in His character which none who have truly love or wept can fail to understand and to embrace. He hates evil, and denounces it; but He is never betrayed into an unbalanced statement; Herod does not make Him a revolutionist, nor the Pharisees an Antinomian. His triumphs cannot disturb, and His humiliations do but enhance the serene, self-possession of His soul. Well might we surmise that such a character as this was more than human. We know ourselves too well to suppose that human nature would conceive the full idea, much less that it could create the reality. Even to the Roman officer the truth revealed itself. "Truly this was the Son of God." Nay, Jesus Himself used language which no intimacy between God and holy souls would warrant if it were not literally true. Either we must resign that vision of beauty which we meet in the character of Jesus as an untrustworthy phantom, since it is dashed with a pretension involving at once falsehood and blasphemy, or we must confess that Jesus is Divine. Jesus is God; and in His acts, words, and very physiognomy the Apostles came face to face with the Perfect Being of beings. He had taken our nature as an instrument through which to act upon us, but also as an interpreter who should translate His own matchless perfections into audible words and visible actions (1 John i. 1–3). An enthusiasm, of which the object is merely human, must pass away, since its object is necessarily transient and imperfect. As you sit with the ashes of Wellington beneath your feet, you little dream of the warmth with which Englishmen named their great general on the morrow of Waterloo. One only has succeeded in creating an impression, which is as fresh in the hearts and thoughts of His true disciples at this moment as it was eighteen centuries ago; and as we listen to His words, and watch His actions, and almost seem to gaze on His face, irradiated with superhuman beauty in the pages of the Gospels we feel that He, as none other, had a right to say to unborn generations, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." III. Is THERE ANYTHING IN OUR CONDUCT, OR OUR WORDS, THAT REALLY BEARS WITNESS TO THE SAVIOUR? Or are we living, speaking, feeling, acting, thinking, much as we might have done if He had never brightened our existence. Or are we bearing Him what our conscience tells us is a partial witness; a witness of language but not of conduct; a witness which attests those features of His work and doctrine which we prefer, rather than all that we know or might know about Him? This witness is the debt which all Christians owe to Christ. No class, or sex, or disposition, or age, or race can claim exemption. We cannot delegate it to our clergy. It is not merely that we are bound to witness to Him. If we are living Christian lives, we cannot help doing so. Be Christians indeed, and you will forthwith witness for Jesus—you who are at the summits of society, and you who are at its base; you who teach, and you who learn; you who command, and you who obey. In the lower and feeble sense they who practise the natural virtues, witness to Him, who is the source of all goodness. And thus courage under difficulties, and temperance amid self-indulgent livers, and justice truly observed between man and man, are forms of witness. They bear this witness who are in power, and who, renouncing selfish purposes, aim at the good of others. They too bear it, who have wealth, and who spend it not in perishing baubles, but in relieving bodily or spiritual suffering. But they, especially, who know our Lord in His pardoning mercy will hardly be content with a silent witness. For the disease which He heals is universal, and the efficacy of His cure is undoubted. The redemptive love of Jesus, like the sun in the heavens, is the inheritance of all who will come to have a share in it, and, as with the heart that love is believed in unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession of it is made unto salvation. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ's witnesses:*—I. OUR FUNCTION AS WITNESSES FOR CHRIST. In our courts of law a witness is pledged under oath to "speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and in our capacity of witnesses a similar obligation rests upon us. Our duty is to bear witness to what we know, and to all that we know of the facts of the gospel, as contained in God's Word, and which we have verified by such means of verification as the nature of the case admits of—objective or subjective, as the case may be, external or internal evidence, which observation or experience supplies. With fancies, conjectures, speculations, or even matters of hearsay which we have not verified, we have as witnesses nothing to do. Our duty is to "speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." The effect of our testimony depends greatly on the certainty with which it is borne. We must

speak with the accent of conviction if men are to be convinced and converted and saved. II. THE SPHERE IN WHICH WE ARE TO PERFORM OUR FUNCTIONS: "both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." According to this it is manifest that whatever may be our testimony, there is no country, or province, or city, or locality in which it can possibly be borne, from which it can be intentionally withheld, or by arrangement, or compact, even temporarily suppressed. We may, of course, use discretion as to the localities in which it should first be borne. Being unable to enter every field at once, we may, as wise men, give our first and chief attention to that in which as a whole it is most required. But we cannot, in loyalty to our Lord, consent that men, in any locality, should either arbitrarily or to suit the convenience of parties be left in ignorance of it. III. THE TESTIMONY WE HAVE TO BEAR. This consists of all that the Lord hath made known to us—the things we have seen and heard and verified. The most important part of our testimony is not that on which we differ from our fellow-Christians, but that which relates to the Divine feelings towards sinful men; and to that we ought to give the first and most prominent place. There is a fulness of meaning in the gospel which we have not unfolded yet—a note of music in it more capable of charming the ear than has ever yet been heard — a power to thrill the hearts of men such as has never yet been felt. IV. THE ENDOWMENT WHICH FITS US FOR OUR WORK. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." It is by the light the Divine Spirit supplies that we know what part of our testimony is most required. It is the firm conviction He imparts that gives authority and persuasiveness to our word. The whirlwind spreads devastation, the thunder shakes the sphere, the earthquake convulses and overthrows; but it is through the still small voice that the power of God enters the soul of the derelict prophet, and produces a mighty and beneficent revolution. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) *The witness-bearing injured by inconsistencies:*—A train is said to have been stopped by flies in the grease-boxes of the carriage-wheels. The analogy is perfect; a man, in all other respects fitted to be useful, may by some small defect be exceedingly hindered, or even rendered utterly useless. It is a terrible thing when the healing balm loses its efficacy through the blunderer who administers it. You all know the injurious effects frequently produced upon water flowing along leaden pipes; even so the gospel itself, in flowing through men who are spiritually unhealthy, may be debased until it grows injurious to their hearers. We may be great quoters of elegant poetry, and mighty retailers of second-hand wind-bags; but we shall be like Nero of old, fiddling while Rome was burning, and sending vessels to Alexandria to fetch sand for the arena while the populace starved for want of corn. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Noble witnesses for Christ:*—Two brave boys in Armenia, at Hoghe, near the supposed site of the old Garden of Eden, attended the Mission School there, and became Christians. Being anxious for the conversion of others, they organised with other converts what they called a "Home Missionary Society." All who were members went from house to house to read the Bible to the people, and tell them of the way of salvation. These two boys, though only fourteen years old, said "Why should we labour in our own village merely? Why not go on a foreign mission?" So taking their Testaments, they started one Sabbath morning for the village of Ghoorbet Mezereh, about two miles distant, to preach. On entering the village they met a company of Mohammedan Turks, who decided to try the courage of these Christians, and said to them, "Well, boys, who is Jesus?" "He is a prophet of God," they replied. But when they were returning home, they were both troubled because they felt they should have confessed Him to be the Son of God. So kneeling down, they asked the Lord Jesus for courage to confess Him, and they went back to do so. On re-entering the village they found the Turks still assembled, and they asked, "Boys, why have you come back?" "We have come back," they replied, "to confess our Saviour. We told you He is a prophet of God. He is so, and more; He is the Son of God, and the only Saviour of men." The followers of the false prophet respected their courage, and were not displeased; and the boys returned home with light hearts. *Christianity a living witness:*—Christianity in the books is like seed in the granary, dry and all but dead. It is not written but living characters that are to convert the infidel. (*D. Thomas.*) *Religion an effective witness:*—Lord Peterborough, speaking on one occasion of the celebrated Fénelon, observed: "He is a delicate creature. I was forced to get away from him as fast as I could, else he would have made me pious." Would to God that all of us had such an influence over godless men! Some one has said

that it is not so much the words as it is the "*Acts* of the Apostles" that convince us of the truth of the gospel. *The life the best sermon:*—I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they shine. A lighthouse sounds no drums; it beats no gong; and yet far over the waters its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Experimental witness-bearing:*—"A report of a report is a cold thing and of small value; but a report of what we have witnessed and experienced ourselves comes warmly upon men's hearts." So a mere formal description of faith and its blessings falls flat on the ear; but when a sincere believer tells of his own experience of the Lord's faithfulness, it has a great charm about it. We like to hear the narrative of a journey from the traveller himself. In a court of law they will have no hearsay evidence. Tell us, says the judge, not what your neighbour said, but what you saw yourself. Personal evidence of the power of grace has a wonderfully convincing force upon the conscience. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me," is better argument than all the Butler's Analogies that will ever be written, good as they are in their place. *The witness of a good life:*—Faith that is lived is what gives efficacy to faith professed. Rev. Dr. Deems is accustomed to relate some feeling incident before the first hymn in church, on Sunday morning. Recently he told this: "A Christian man one day said to a friend, 'Under whose preaching were you converted?' 'Nobody's,' was the answer; 'it was under my aunt's 'practising.'" He then made an earnest appeal to aunts to examine their characters and lives, to see if these contained converting power. *Witnessing for Christ:*—Witness Christ, means nothing if it be not a witness to righteousness of life. It was the glorious function of ancient Israel to be a witness to righteousness. She was incomparably less brilliant than Greece; she was feebleness itself compared with Rome; she was a lamb in the midst of wolves compared with the fierce nations of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, pressing round her on every side. Why was she nevertheless greater and more enduring than the mightiest of them? It was by virtue of her conduct. And the Church has borne this witness for righteousness before kings and not been ashamed. As Nathan witnessed before David, and John before Herod, so did Paul before Felix, and Athanasius before Constantine, and Ambrose when he drove Theodosius back from the Cathedral-gates of Milan because he came with his hand red from the massacre of Thessalonica. So did Savonarola when he refused to absolve Lorenzo de Medici on his death-bed unless he set Florence free; so did John Huss when he called up the burning hue of shame upon the cheek of the perjured Sigismund; so did Luther when he faced kings and cardinals at Worms; so did Massillon when he made Louis XIV. wince before his warnings; so did Kerr when he rejected the command of Charles II. to receive Nell Gwynne at Winchester; so did the London clergy when they refused to read in their churches the treacherous edict of James II.; so did the Court chaplain when he openly rebuked Frederick William I. on his death-bed. No age can do without the Church's witness for righteousness; certainly not in ours, and the Church will fail of her duty in her witness for Christ if she do not rebuke the startling inadequacy of charity, the selfish accumulation of wealth, the ostentatious luxury of fashion, the heartless indifference of middle-class prosperity, the fulsome development of puffery, the widespread of gambling, the adulterations of manufacturers, the scandalmongering of society, the intrigues of religious parties, the curse of drink. Oh, let the Church denounce these works of the world, the flesh, and the devil in no timid half utterance: let her not fight with graceful sham blows which only beat the air! are there no owners of rotting houses to be branded with the infamy they deserve? Are there no sweaters' dens to be purified, and the owners of them taught what a curse are ill-gotten riches? Are there no reeking hells of vice to be torn out of the greedy hands of rich oppressors? Salt is good; but if the salt hath lost its savour, &c. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Witnessing for Christ:*—While Colonel Wilayat, an English officer who used to preach at Delhi, was speaking, a number of Sepoys on horseback rode up to his house, and knowing him to be a Christian, said, "Repeat the Mohammedan creed, or we will shoot you." But he would not deny his Lord. "Tell us what you are" said one. "I am a Christian, and a Christian I will live and die." They dragged him along the ground, beating him about the head and face with their shoes. Not being soldiers, they had no swords. "Now preach Christ to us," some one cried out in mocking tones. Others said, "Turn to Mohammed, and we will let you go." "No, I never

never will!" the faithful martyr cried; "my Saviour took up His Cross and went to God, and I will lay down my life and go to Him." The scorching rays of the sun were beating on the poor sufferer's head. With a laugh one of the wretches exclaimed, "I suppose you would like some water." "I do not want water," replied the martyr. "When my Saviour was dying He had nothing but vinegar mingled with gall. But do not keep me in this pain. If you mean to kill me, do so at once." Another Sepoy coming up, lifted his sword; the martyr called aloud, "Jesus, receive my spirit!" and with one stroke his head was nearly cut off. *Witnessing for Christ*:—It became the most sacred duty of a new convert (among the early Christians) to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful Deity. (*T. Gibbon.*) *Christian witness*:—The sweet gospel singer, Mr. Peter Bilhorn, of Chicago, who was at one time a well-known saloon concert singer, was passing by a gospel service a few years ago. When he came opposite to the gathering of Christians, the testimony of a young man, "Christ saves the worst of sinners," fastened itself on his heart, and led him to Christ. He never saw the young man afterward—never has been able to find him, but his words so came home to him that he changed his course, and is now devoting his life to God's service. Oh! the power of a life that is not ashamed to make Christ known to the world! How beautiful the feet of them that never tire of witnessing before the world the riches of eternal life in Christ Jesus! What glory awaits the soul that daily walks so near to Christ that others see Christ through him! *The witness of the Church, its importance*:—Christ was about to be seen no more among men. What memorial had He left? The kings of Egypt built mighty pyramids to immortalise their fame. Those of Assyria have left on chiselled column and even on the bold sides of their native cliffs the hieroglyphics that should commemorate their wonderful deeds. The Roman emperors have bequeathed to us triumphal arches which even now bring before us the splendour of their victories. But Christ left no such memorial. He did not commit a single line to writing. His only record in Scripture is the one He traced with His finger upon the sand. He left no parchment, pillar, pyramid, arch, or temple. On that farewell day He was without the slightest trace of a record, except that written on the heart of His disciples. Whatever impression therefore He was to make upon the world depended on the courage and fidelity of these men. If they had given one uncertain sound, oblivion would have settled like a pall upon Gethsemane, Calvary, and Olivet. They were the one living link between Christ and the world He came to save. And it is so still. Christ is not here. We have, it is true, the printed witness of the apostles; but the world does not get its ideas of Christ and Christianity from that, but from the living testimony of professing Christians. How important then the function of the humblest! He is Christ's representative and memorial before men. (*H. Pedley, M.A.*) *Our vocation*:—I. WITH ITS GLORY—Witnesses of the exalted King. II. WITH ITS LOVELINESS—Witnesses nothing of and for ourselves. III. WITH ITS SUFFERINGS—Witnesses of the Lord in a hostile world. IV. WITH ITS PROMISES—Strength from above. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) **Both in Jerusalem.**—*Witnessing in Jerusalem*:—A difficult service was to be performed in Jerusalem that day. Had it been desired to find a man in London who would go down to Whitehall a few weeks after Charles was beheaded, and, addressing Cromwell's soldiers, endeavour to persuade them that he whom they had executed was not only a king and a good one, but a prophet of God, and that, therefore, they had been guilty of more than regicide—of sacrilege: although England had brave men then, it may be questioned whether any one could have been found to bear such a message to that audience. The service which had then to be performed in Jerusalem was similar to this. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Our sphere*:—There is also for us a "Jerusalem," a "Judæa," a "Samaria," if not an "uttermost part of the earth"—some well-dressed city with its ragged fringe of want and wickedness, some country district with its neglected families, some sophisticated brain that has gone astray from the old standards at home of the faith and set up its Gerizim rivalry—some that you can minister to by your charity, and win back by your witnessing, if that witnessing is only as zealous as Peter's and as patient as Paul's, and as loving as John's. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Apostolic missions: their order*:—Jerusalem, the place of the reception of the Spirit, was also to be the place where the witness of the Spirit commences; and in the land of promise was the promise, the fulness of spiritual blessing to find its first native soil. Samaria, the mission field white for

harvest (John iv. 35), our Lord mentions as the middle station between Judæa and the land of the Gentiles; and the end of the earth was Rome, for there all nations were united in the capital of the world. We shall find that the order of the history perfectly corresponds with the order of testimony. Jerusalem (chaps. i.–vii.); Judæa (ix.–xii.); Samaria (viii.); the world (xiii. to end). (*R. Besser, D.D.*) *Apostolic missions: their evidential value*:—How came these humble and hated persons, these slaves and artisans, these unlearned and ignorant men to get the start of the majestic world, and bear the palm alone? How came it that the greatest, the most advanced, the splendid and prominent races of the whole world have, one after another, embraced Christianity? How comes it that at this very moment one out of every four of the one hundred thousand millions of human beings is a professing Christian? *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.* Is the world so silly, is all its best intellect so anile, is the genius of humanity so wretched a fool as to be duped by a mere fraud and illusion preached by wandering beggars, blindly to embrace with all its heart, to enshrine in its stateliest temples, to enrich with its most splendid offerings, to set forth in its most brilliant hues of imagination and intellect, a faith so intrinsically feeble that after nineteen centuries of beneficent victory it can only tumble down like a pack of cards at the touch of any smart declaimer who chooses to say it is a lie? Because it was a truth and no lie. We have been well reminded that the babes and striplings of the world prevailed over the serried army of emperors, aristocracies, statesmen, institutions. Is this solemn voice of the ages, is this cogent mass of human testimony to go for nothing? Is it nothing that Christianity has prevailed over the banded union of the powers of evil, and that even in spite of the corruptions which have gathered round it; in spite of the crimes, negligences, and ignorances of its own professing followers that it should still triumph and prevail. I say that if Christianity be a lie, then everything and all human life is a lie, and "the pillared firmament is rottenness, and the earth's base built on stubble." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Missionary work commanded*:—During the American war, a regiment received orders to plant some heavy guns on the top of a steep hill. The soldiers dragged them to the base of the hill, but were unable to get them farther. An officer, learning the state of affairs, cried, "Men! it must be done! I have the orders in my pocket." So the Church has orders to disciple the world. *Love first to fall on objects near and then to diffuse itself*:—As radii in a cirele are closest near the centre, and towards the circumference lie more widely apart, the affections of a human heart do and should fall thickest on those who are nearest. Expressly on this principle the Christian mission was instituted at first. Love in the heart of the first disciples was recognised, by Him who kindled it, to be of the nature of fire or light. He did not expect it to fall on distant places without first passing through intermediate space. From Jerusalem, at His command and under the Spirit's ministry, it radiated through Judæa, and from Judæa to Samaria, and thence to the ends of the earth. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The Church engaged in the renovation of the world*:—The Church must grope her way into the alleys and courts and purlieus of the city, and up the broken staircase, and into the bar-room, and beside the loathsome sufferer. She must go down into the pit with the miner; into the forecastle with the sailor; into the tent with the soldier; into the shop with the mechanic; into the factory with the operative; into the field with the farmer, into the counting-room with the merchant. Like the air, the Church must press equally on all surfaces of society; like the sea, flow into every nook of the shore-line of humanity, and like the sun, shine on things foul and low, as well as fair and high; for she was organised, commissioned, and equipped for the moral renovation of the world. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *Kingdom of Christ: more permanent than earthly kingdoms*:—I shall soon be in my grave. Such is the fate of great men. So it was with the Cæsars and Alexander. And I, too, am forgotten; and the Marengo conqueror and emperor is a college theme. My exploits are tasks given to pupils by their tutor, who sit in judgment over me. I die before my time; and my dead body, too, must return to the earth, and become food for worms. Behold the destiny now at hand of him who has been called the great Napoleon! What an abyss between my great misery and the eternal reign of Christ, who is proclaimed, loved, and adored, and whose kingdom is extending over all the earth! (*Napoleon I.*) *Evangelism a law of self-preservation*:—Evangelism is not merely a work of love. It is the sheer law of self-preservation. The heathenism which is creeping along the fences of society is scattering its seeds on both sides. As we love our neighbour, we must try to do him good; but if we love only ourselves and our homes, we must

be at work to make the world better. If Christians do not make the world better, the world will surely make the Church worse. (*C. H. Fowler.*) *The heathen may reach heaven without the gospel, but better with it* :—A man may make his way across the Atlantic in a skiff, for all I know, but if you are intending to cross the sea, take my advice, and secure passage in a first-class steamer, and you will be more likely to get there. So it is with these heathen millions. I do not know but some of them may drift, and we shall find them in the city of God. But I do know that by giving them the gospel, by building up and supporting among them a Christian Church, we shall greatly multiply their chances of heaven. (*Ibid.*) *A good man seeks to make others good* :—"A good man is always seeking to make others good, as fire turneth all things about it into fire." You cannot make fire stay where it is; it will spread as opportunity serves it. It will subdue all its surroundings to itself. Carlyle says that "man is emphatically a proselytising creature," and assuredly the new creature is such. Life grows, and so invades the regions of death, and spiritual life is most of all intense in its growing and spreading. Liberty to hold our opinions but not to spread them is no liberty: for one of our main opinions is, that we should bring all around us to Jesus and to obedience to the truth. Lord, help us ever to be doing this, subduing the earth for Thee by spreading on all sides the name of Jesus! Let our life burn till the whole world is on a blaze.

Vers. 9–12. **And when He had spoken these words, while they beheld, He was taken up.**—*Taken up* :—How we talk about "up," took "up"! What eager, earnest faces are looking up through the clouds of sorrow. The atmosphere above us seems palpitant with the hopes and aspirations of hearts below. The secret of this is, God is "up," and Jesus was taken "up." Note—I. THAT THE DEPARTED GOOD ARE "TAKEN UP." Jesus promised that the disciples should follow Him (John xiv. 2–5); and all good spirits find their higher level. Heaven is the rendezvous of all goodness, the barn of God into which He gathers His grain. Our loved ones are not far away, only the cloud separates us. But Jesus was not taken up until "He had spoken these things," *i.e.*, finished His work. When we have done that, like Him we shall be taken up to our reward. II. THAT GOD SUPPLIES THE PLACE OF THE DEPARTED GOOD (ver. 10). Jesus went up and the angels came down; and they took His place beside the desolate disciples, and who knows but that they hovered about until the Holy Ghost supplied the Master's place. So it is. If God takes Moses, He brings up Joshua; if He takes up Elijah, Elisha catches his falling mantle. This law of compensation is seen all through nature, human life, and religion. III. THAT THE DEPARTED GOOD SHALL COME AGAIN (ver. 11). This was the disciples' comfort in regard to the departed Christ. "This same Jesus." So "they that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." Do not grieve then that the grave has closed upon them. (*W. Johnson.*) *The ascension* :—I. THE LORD WAS TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN. 1. Fact of the ascension: stated here (Luke xxiv.; Acts i.) 2. Also implied—*e.g.*, John vi. 62; xx. 17. 3. And in Acts and Epistles asserted —*e.g.*, Eph. iv. 10; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 22. Also in the Acts and Epistles, implied *passim* (the Saviour being ever referred to as living, invisible, glorified, and to come again from heaven). See, *e.g.*, Acts vii. 55, 56; Phil. iii. 20; 1 Thess. iv. 16. 4. (1) An absolute miracle. (2) And also a consoling and teaching truth, in what it says of the reality of heaven and as aiding us in grasping that reality (Col. iii. 1). Heaven is where He is. II. HE SAT ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. 1. The metaphor (from an Oriental throne, a seat admitting more than one occupant) implies the share of the incarnate Lord in the supreme glory—more than mere nearness to it. 2. See, in support of this, Rev. xxii. 1, &c. ("throne of God and of the Lamb"); and especially John xvii. 5 (where N.B. that "with Thine own self" is *παρὰ σεαυτῷ*, "by Thine own side"; and so at the end of the verse, *τῇ δόξῃ ᾗ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρά σοι*). 3. Reflect—"the Son of Man (chap. vii. 55) is at the right hand of God." Not only is Christ there as God the Son (John i. 1, &c.), but as man—as Jesus (Acts i. 11; Heb. iv. 14). What a pledge for His brethren (John xvii. 24, &c.). III. AFTER THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO THEM. 1. Merciful prelude. The clear, spoken revelation given before the mysterious removal. We see Him not (1 Pet. i. 8), but He has spoken—(1) In human speech. (2) In visible life. (3) In atoning death (see Heb. xii. 24). 2. Application of this and the whole ascension truth (John xvii. 13). He has spoken. He is there. (*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*) *The ascension of Christ and its lessons* :—I. The ascension of our Lord is a topic whereon FAMILIARITY HAS WORKED ITS USUAL RESULTS; it has lost for most minds the sharpness of its outline and the profundity of its teaching because universally

accepted by Christians; and yet no doctrine raises deeper questions, or will yield more profitable and far-reaching lessons. First, then, we may note the place this doctrine holds in apostolic teaching. Taking the records of that teaching contained in the Acts and the Epistles, we find that it occupies a real substantial position. The ascension is there referred to, hinted at, taken as granted, pre-supposed, but it is not obtruded nor dwelt upon overmuch. The resurrection of Christ was the great central point of apostolic testimony; the ascension of Christ was simply a portion of that fundamental doctrine, and a natural deduction from it. If Christ had been raised from the dead and had thus become the first-fruits of the grave, it required but little additional exercise of faith to believe that He had passed into that unseen and immediate presence of Deity where the perfected soul finds its complete satisfaction. St. Peter's conception of Christianity, for instance, involved the ascension. Whether in his speech at the election of Matthias, or in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, or in his address in Solomon's porch after the healing of the crippled beggar, his teaching ever presupposes and involves the ascension. He takes the doctrine and the fact for granted. Jesus is with him the Being "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things." So is it too with St. John in his Gospel. He never directly mentions the fact of Christ's ascension, but he always implies it. So, too, with St. Paul and the other apostolic writers of the New Testament. Is he exhorting the Colossians to a supernatural life: it is because they have supernatural privileges in their ascended Lord. "If ye then were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God." II. But SOME ONE MAY RAISE CURIOUS QUESTIONS AS TO THE FACTS OF THE ASCENSION. Whither, for instance, it may be asked, did our Lord depart when He left this earthly scene? The childish notion that He went up and up far above the most distant star will not of course stand a moment's reflection. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles does not describe our Saviour as thus ascending through infinite space. It simply describes Him as removed from off this earthly ball, and then, a cloud shutting Him out from view, Christ passed into the inner and unseen universe wherein He now dwells. The existence of that inner and unseen universe, asserted clearly enough in Scripture, has of late years been curiously confirmed by scientific speculation. Scripture asserts the existence of such an unseen universe, and the ascension implies it. The second coming of our Saviour is never described as a descent from some far-off region. What a solemn light such a Scriptural view sheds upon life! The unseen world is not at some vast distance, but, as the ascension would seem to imply, close at hand, shut out from us by that thin veil of matter which angelic hands will one day rend for ever. III. The ascension was A FITTING AND A NATURAL TERMINATION OF CHRIST'S EARTHLY MINISTRY, CONSIDERING THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF HIS SACRED PERSONALITY. The departure of the Eternal King was, like His first approach, a part of a scheme which forms one united and harmonious whole. The Incarnation and the Ascension were necessarily related the one to the other. IV. Again, we may advance a step further, and say that not only was the ascension a natural and fitting termination to the activities of the Eternal Son manifest in the flesh, IT WAS A NECESSARY COMPLETION AND FINISH. "It is expedient," said Christ Himself, "that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you." Let us take the matter very simply thus. Had our Lord not ascended into the unseen state whence He had emerged for the purpose of rescuing mankind, He must in that case (always proceeding on the supposition that He had risen from the dead, because we always suppose our readers to be believers) have remained permanently or temporarily resident in some one place. He might have chosen Jerusalem. There would have been nothing to tempt Him to Antioch, or Athens, or Alexandria, or Rome. Nay, rather the tone and temper of those cities must have rendered them abhorrent as dwelling-places to the great Teacher of holiness and purity. At any rate, the risen Saviour, if He remained upon earth, must have chosen some one place where His presence and His personal glory would have been manifested. All interest in local Churches or local work would have been destroyed, because every eye and every heart would be perpetually turning towards the one spot where the risen Lord was dwelling, and where personal adoration could be paid to Him. All honest, manly self-reliance would have been lost for individuals, for Churches, and for nations. Judaism would have triumphed and the dispensation of the Spirit would have ceased. The whole idea, too, of Christianity as a scheme of moral probation would have been overthrown. Christ as belonging to the supernatural sphere would of course have been raised above the laws of time and space.

Sight would have taken the place of faith, and the terrified submission of slaves would have been substituted for the moral, loving obedience of the regenerate soul. The whole social order of life would also have been overthrown. The ascension of Jesus Christ was absolutely necessary to equip the Church for its universal mission, by withdrawing the bodily presence of Christ into that unseen region which bears no special relation to any terrestrial locality, but is the common destiny, the true fatherland, of all the sons of God. V. We have now seen how the ascension was needful for the Church, BY RENDERING CHRIST AN IDEAL OBJECT OF WORSHIP FOR THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE, THUS SAVING IT FROM THAT TENDENCY TO MERE LOCALISM WHICH WOULD HAVE UTTERLY CHANGED ITS CHARACTER. We can also trace another great blessing involved in it. The ascension glorified humanity as humanity, and ennobled man viewed simply as man. The ascension thus transformed life by adding a new dignity to life and to life's duties. This was a very necessary lesson for the ancient world, especially the ancient Gentile world, which Christ came to enlighten and to save. Man, considered by himself as man, had no peculiar dignity in the popular religious estimate of Greece and Rome. A Greek or a Roman was a dignified person, not, however, in virtue of his humanity, but in virtue of his Greek or Roman citizenship. The gladiatorial shows were the most striking illustration of this contempt for human nature which paganism inculcated. We leave to science the investigation of the past and of the lowly sources whence man's body may have come; but the doctrine of the Ascension speaks of its present sanctity and of its future glory, telling of the human body as a body of humiliation and of lowliness indeed, but yet proclaiming it as even now, in the person of Christ, ascended into the heavens, and seated on the throne of the Most High. It may have been once humble in its origin; it is now glorious in its dignity and elevation; and that dignity and that elevation shed a halo upon human nature, no matter how degraded and wherever it may be found, because it is like unto that Body, the first-fruits of humanity, which stands at the right hand of God. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *Taken up*:—So many of the events of our Lord's incarnate life are connected with Olivet that it might almost be called the mountain of the Lord Jesus. It was His closet, His pulpit, the place of intercourse with His disciples. Bethany at its base was their home. Underneath it was Gethsemane, and there from its crest He rose. Consider—I. SEVERAL ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ASCENSION. 1. As to the manner of it, it was visible. These things were not done in a corner. His crucifixion and burial were public. It was requisite that His resurrection should be so. Forty days did He accumulate proofs of it, and then in the broad open day He ascended up on high. 2. The place where it happened is worthy of notice. "He led them out as far as Bethany." There was a peculiar fitness in this selection. Prophecies had fixed the place of His ascension as the Mount of Olives, and Bethany was at its base. We can imagine the feelings of the disciples as they trod the familiar road. It is fitting that the Conqueror should pass by Gethsemane, that He should pass the place where He wept over Jerusalem, and that His triumph should take place in view of the house of sorrow. 3. The act during the performance of which He was lifted up on high. "Blessed them." This was His daily work, for which He became incarnate, and for which He returned to His glory. He blesses now, not from the mountain, but from the throne. II. THE PURPOSES OF THE ASCENSION. 1. The personal results were the publicity of the scene and the triumph of His entrance into His primal glory. It was a witness which all the world could understand that His work on earth was done. It was only the complement of Calvary, the ovation of the triumph actually won on the Cross. Moreover it was a part of the consequences of redemption that the Father should not only sustain the Son in His sufferings, but because of them He should exalt Him to pre-eminence of government and honour. 2. There were representative results. Christ is the federal Head. By His exaltation our own race derives surpassing honour. Humanity is throned in the highest. 3. There were mediatorial results. "He received gifts for man." (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *The ascension*:—1. Was as indubitable as any act of His life—"As they were looking, He was taken up." 2. Brought angels to the earth immediately with a message of comfort. 3. Is no excuse for standing idly gazing into heaven. There is work here to be done, the doing of which will quickest hasten His return. 4. Is only for a while. He will return again, and come in great power and great glory. 5. Has given to us an advocate on high—He ever liveth to make intercession for us. (*S. S. Times.*) *The ascension*:—We have three narratives of the ascension, each of which presents it in a somewhat different application. 1. In St. Mark the aspect of faith is pre-

dominant. It sets before Christian people, in their life of faithful labour, the form of Him who, though now out of sight, is still and evermore working with them, and confirming His words by signs following. 2. St. Luke presents it in its aspect of love; sets before Christians, in their hours of loneliness or of depression, the form of Him, who, when He left this world, left it with hands uplifted in blessing. 3. In the Acts we have the aspect of hope. As St. Luke's Gospel closed with the narrative of the Ascension, so the Acts opens with it. It was not more naturally the close of the gospel than it was the beginning of the history of the Church. It was the event which, while it withdrew from personal work below, introduced Him into that life above, and the power of which He works through others. And we are to regard it as a fact full of hope. The words of the two angels give it this aspect. Learn—I. THAT THE POSTURE OF THOSE WHO LOVE CHRIST MUST HENCEFORTH BE ONE NOT MORE OF RETROSPECT THAN OF EXPECTATION. It is well indeed that you should treasure the thought of Him as He was on earth. His wonderful works, His perfect example, His Divine words. And to look up after Him into heaven, and see Him there the High Priest of man; the Resurrection and the Life, first of the soul, and hereafter also of the body; to ascend thither, in heart, after Him. Thus it is that men are made strong for conflict, victorious over temptation, and at last fit for heaven. But all this is a different thing from vain regret and idle contemplation. To gaze up into heaven not after One who is gone, but for One who shall come is our work. And in those few words lies the whole of the vast difference between two states and lives; those of a true, and wise, and diligent, and those of a dreamy, and gloomy, and torpid Christian. II. BUT HOW DOES THE ASCENSION FOSTER THIS HOPE OR SUGGEST THIS DUTY? The words of the angels will answer that question. The ascension was intended to make real the thought of Christ's return. He might have simply disappeared, and left them to form their own conjectures what had become of Him. Perhaps even then they might have formed the right conjecture from His own words. But it would have fallen far short of the conviction inspired by the actual sight. There would have been a mystery which might well have diminished the comfort and impaired the satisfaction of His disciples. But now they would feel that they could trace Him in His glory, and expect Him to come again. Nothing is more remarkable than the personal hope of the personal return of Christ, which cheered the first ages of the Church. It is no good sign when the language of Scripture is read as an allegory, but a sign of the decay of faith. It was in the dark and cold ages of the Church, when even the wise virgins too often slumbered and slept, that this definite hope of the Bridegroom's coming was lost sight of. And was it not by a just retribution that they who refused to infer the Advent from the Ascension, came at last from denying the Advent to deny the Ascension also? If ever the faith of the Church is brought back to its simplicity in matters of doctrine, it must be by its being brought back to its simplicity in matters of fact. Take one of the Gospel miracles by itself, and of course it is improbable. But take each one in connection with the proofs Christ gave of His holiness, truth, and goodness, and thus of His Divinity, and we shall find it not only credible, but natural also; consistent, harmonious, and to be expected. Even thus is it with the hope of which we are speaking. It might be in itself hard to be understood, that God should bring this dispensation to a close by the personal advent of the Mediator as Judge. But view that purpose in the light of the Incarnation, and the Advent in the light of the Ascension; and all shall become symmetrical. The disciples saw Him go: why should it be incredible that He should likewise come? "A cloud received Him out of their sight": even so shall a cloud be the sign when they who look for Him watch His appearing. Conclusion: What to us is our Lord's ascension? 1. Do we know anything of the assurance that we have in heaven, One who knows our frame and has felt our infirmities? One who ascended, that He might intercede for us, minister to us the Spirit, and prepare a place for us? 2. If there is One, up there, who sees and will judge; what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness! (*Dean Vaughan.*)

The ascension:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. While blessing His disciples (Luke xxiv. 50, 51; *cf.* Lev. ix. 22). The first tidings of our Saviour's birth were attended with blessings to men; and when He died, He breathed out His soul in blessings to His enemies. So now He is translated into heaven with a blessing in His mouth. And, indeed, His whole life was a blessing to mankind—a blessed pattern to us; in imitation whereof we should endeavour that our whole life may be a blessing too. 2. In the view of His disciples. After the apostles were fully convinced by several appearances that He was indeed risen; that they might be fully

satisfied that He came from God and went to Him, He was in their sight taken up. And this is no small confirmation of the truth of our religion. 3. In a cloud fitly represents the law. Elias was carried up by a whirlwind in a fiery chariot, with horses of fire: but our Saviour in a cloud; to signify to us the coolness and calmness of the gospel dispensation, in comparison of that of the law; which difference our Saviour had before observed to His disciples upon a remarkable occasion (Luke ix. 54, 55). And there is likewise another difference. The blessing which Elijah left to Elisha is conceived in very doubtful words (2 Kings ii. 9). This was suitable to the obscurity of the law; but our Saviour makes a plain and absolute promise of the Holy Ghost, answerable to the clearness and grace of the gospel (ver. 8). 4. Into heaven (ver. 11). And this is elsewhere more particularly expressed, by declaring the dignity to which He was exalted (Mark xvi. 19). This exaltation of Christ was conferred upon Him as a reward of His great humiliation and sufferings (Heb. xii. 2; Phil. ii. 9, 10). II. THE CONSEQUENT BENEFITS. 1. The sending of the Holy Ghost in miraculous powers and gifts upon the apostles, to qualify them for the speedy and effectual propagation of the gospel, and to give credit to them in the preaching of it (John xvi. 7). 2. His powerful intercession for us at the right hand of God (Heb. ix. 24). 3. A mighty confirmation of our faith. (1) As to the truth of His doctrine in general. If after all the miracles of His life, and His resurrection from the dead, any man can doubt whether He came from God; yet this is evidence beyond all exception that God took Him to Himself. (2) As to His coming again to judge (x. 42). Conclusion: The consideration of our Saviour's ascension is very comfortable to all true Christians. 1. In respect of our condition in this world. The Church, and every particular member of it, is exposed to trouble and danger; but it is a great comfort that we are under His patronage and protection, who hath "all power given Him in heaven and earth" (Heb. iv. 14, 15). 2. In respect of the happiness which we hope for in the next world. No religion hath given men so sensible a demonstration of a blessed immortality as Christianity by the ascension. The reasonings of the philosophers concerning immortality besides their uncertainty are only calculated for the more refined and speculative part of mankind; but every man is capable of the force of this argument, that He who declared to the world another life after this, and the happy condition of good men in another world, was Himself visibly taken up into heaven. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The ascension*:—I. THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD IS IN PERFECT HARMONY WITH THE OTHER PORTIONS OF HIS HISTORY. His birth, the voice from heaven at His baptism, His works, His words, were all supernatural. When He was crucified the earth trembled, on the third day He rose, and then, in opposition to the laws of gravity, He ascended up to His Father. All this is perfectly harmonious. Of old His name was called "Wonderful"; and if you reject what is wonderful in the history of Christ, then there is no Christ whatever. It is the light of the sun that makes that luminary what it is. Extinguish the light of the sun, and it becomes a dark, invisible body, revolving uselessly in the depth of heaven. After the sun has set there is twilight. But it grows feebler and feebler every minute, and by and by all is enveloped in the darkness. Now you may eliminate from Christianity the supernatural facts of it, and after you have done that for centuries, very likely, the twilight of the setting sun—the after effects of what Christianity once had been—would remain here; but as for the Christian religion and Church, and the Christ of history, without the supernatural they cannot be. II. THE CONDUCT OF OUR LORD AT THE TIME OF HIS ASCENSION HARMONISES WITH ALL THAT IS WRITTEN OF HIM BEFORE THAT TIME. "While He blessed them." That was His work. He was like Himself to the end. His heart was not embittered by the Cross. His last look was one of sympathy and love. It was the same at the end as at the beginning. III. THE ASCENSION IS CONNECTED WITH THE CARRYING ON OF HIS OWN WORK. 1. He ascended "that He might fill all things"—that is, the hearts of men, the governments of the world, all literature, art, science, philosophy, commerce, courts of law, pulpits, with His influence. The facts of the history of the Redeemer, the truths embodied in these facts—have saved Europe from animalism, or materialism, or downright atheism. These facts, like leaven, are put into the hearts of men everywhere. 2. Christ has left the spirit of His life here. Fragrance is on the rose, but distinct from the rose. The rose is the fact, the fragrance is something over and above the rose. The landscape is one thing, its beauty of another. There are truths in the Book, but the genius with which those truths are treated is another thing. There are the facts of the Redeemer's life, but there also is the spirit of His life upon those facts—a

fragrance, a beauty, a genius, a tenderness, an atmosphere, a divineness which belong to no other facts in the world. It is not the salvation of your souls only that you owe to Him—He has humanised humanity, and He is rectifying and consecrating Europe by the influence of the spirit of His life. Let any artist here say if I am wrong. He has beautified art, and pagan art can never exist again. 3. He ascended that He might send the Holy Ghost down among men. By Holy Ghost I do not mean a mere influence, or power, or energy going forth, but a personality, come down to regenerate the heart and create in it a noble ambition, strengthen it for brave purpose, and consecrate it. IV. THE ASCENSION INSPIRED THE NOBLEST FEELINGS IN THE HEARTS OF HIS APOSTLES (Luke xxiv. 52). While they looked at the glorious vision they instinctively felt a reverence and admiration that could not be expressed. These feelings are not to become extinguished in Christian hearts. The lowest state of mind, in regard to the Redeemer, is stolid indifference. The highest state to which many people attain, is inquiry concerning Christ. Inquire by all means, but there is a higher state than that. A great number seem never to attain to anything higher than simply believing on Jesus. But our religion means more than knowledge, faith, awe, hope. It means reverence, admiration, transcendent wonder. How many of us are content to live without elevated moments when the soul is lost in wonder, love, and praise? V. THE ASCENSION TEACHES THAT VIRTUOUS SUFFERINGS LEAD TO AND END IN GLORY. It was becoming that Jesus Christ should have ascended from the Mount of Olives. At the foot of that mountain was the place of His sorrow and agony. The death of a good man is, by far, more an ascension to heaven than a descent into the grave. It is very little after all that the grave shall possess of us. Take a tree, consume it, and then look at the small quantity of ash left. That is the only thing that tree derived from the earth. Where are the other elements? They belonged to the skies and have returned to the skies to mingle with their brother elements. Death is the consuming, and the little heap of ashes, when the burning is over, is all that the grave shall have of us; but the intellect, the will, the conscience, the affections, the imagination, the spirit, the man returns to God who gave it. (*Thomas Jones.*) *The ascension*:—I. ITS HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHARACTER. 1. As to the historical fact. If, like Matthew and John, the other evangelists had omitted to tell us of the ascension, yet we could not have conceived of any other sequence of the resurrection; we could not have imagined the life of Christ to have wasted away in old age or sickness, much less to have died a second time. It was needful —(1) To His redeeming trimmph, that His conquest over death should be final. (2) To His redeeming reward, that glory should follow His humiliation. (3) As a soothing to our Christian feeling, that His body, broken and bleeding on the Cross, should be uplifted and glorified. (4) As an historical basis for apostolic preaching, and as a doctrinal element of most important practical influences. And that which our reason must have concluded, Scriptural testimony confirms, not to mention the allusions of the Prophecies, the Psalms, and the Epistles, and our Lord's own predictions in John, which can only be understood of a bodily enthronement; we have here the explicit declaration of two inspired writers, and all the disciples were witnesses of this departure; while three only beheld His transfiguration, and none His resurrection. 2. As to its circumstances—(1) The time selected was the fortieth day after His passion, the mystic period of Moses' abode on the Mount, of Elijah's sojourn in the wilderness, and of the Redeemer's own temptation—an interval after His resurrection long enough to furnish indubitable proof of it, to restore the agitated disciples to calmness, and to instruct them in the truths associated with His death and resurrection. (2) The place. Once more our Lord accompanied the eleven across the brook Kedron, and along the path which He traversed to His passion. Once more, as He ascended the well-known track to Bethany, the guilty city would rise to His view, until perhaps they reached the spot where He had sat down and wept over it; there the temple reared its head; there was the scene of His trial, and "the place that is called Calvary, where they crucified Him"; immediately at His feet was the garden of Gethsemane; while not far distant was the scene of His tenderest human friendships. (3) There was doubtless a studied adaptation to the thoughts and feelings of the disciples in the mode of this leave-taking. There is always a gloom about final separation from those we love; but its circumstances greatly determine the character of our recollections. We see through the wasting and parting tabernacle, the beamings and breakings through of celestial glory, the moral glory of faith, and hope, and triumph overpowering, the pain and dissolution; then the recollection is not so

much of earthly life departing as of heavenly life commencing. And thus we may imagine the Redeemer selected the circumstances of His final departure, and we do not wonder that "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy." We might easily have imagined grander circumstances. There was not, as at His birth, a multitude of the heavenly host; no chariots of fire, nothing that could divert attention from His own identity and glory. The disciples would probably have been dazzled and confounded had it been otherwise. And there is delicacy and encouragement in His parting attitude; He, their Saviour and friend, without any array of terrible magnificence, leaves them, and enters heaven in the act of blessing. And thus the most timid is taught to have confidence in our great High Priest. Let us not, then, think, when conscious of His departure, that it is necessarily in anger. The cloud that receives Him may but be the vail that hides the richer blessings still which He is preparing to pour out upon us. II. ITS MEDIATORIAL AND DOCTRINAL IMPORTANCE. 1. The Ascension is the final historic attestation of the validity and acceptance of the Atonement. A moral attestation is continually going on in the effects which the preaching of the Atonement produces. But the Ascension is a direct personal attestation to the sufficiency of Christ's expiatory death. 2. The Ascension was the necessary introduction of the Mediator to the scene and reception of His mediatorial reward. Mark tells us that "He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God." "God hath highly exalted Him." 3. Christ ascended that He might bestow the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit. 4. He ascended that He might, as our High Priest and Intercessor, "appear in the presence of God for us." 5. He ascended to reign as Mediatorial King, to superintend the providence of the world, to be "head over all things to His Church," and to "expect until His enemies shall be made His footstool." 6. He ascended according to His promise, to "prepare a place" for His disciples in His "Father's house." Conclusion: learn—1. How to conceive of the spiritual world, a world in which human nature shall be glorified as it has been glorified in Christ. 2. How precious the encouragements of our Christian life. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched," &c. 3. The attitude and temper of our Christian life. The effect on the disciples was an effect not of sorrow but of joy. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The ascension*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The place. It is only natural that a sacred interest should attach to the spot which received the last print of the Redeemer's footsteps. No doubt the honour accorded to particular places may open the door to much of fraud, and folly, and superstition. But the Mount of Olives was a fit scene for the ascension. Around no other spot does there gather such a cluster of hallowed associations. 2. The witnesses. Romulus is said to have gone up into the clouds in a thunderstorm, and of Mahomet it is pretended that he was miraculously taken up into heaven; but no witnesses were ever produced who saw these events. Our Lord was careful to have chosen and competent witnesses. He did not challenge all Jerusalem to see what was going to take place; nor invite the five hundred asembled at Galilee. The miracle is not harder to believe than that eleven holy and loving men should be mistaken in the identity of one, with whom they had eaten and discoursed after He rose from the dead. 3. The form of transport. A cloud: that emblem of mingled obscurity and light which Deity often employs as a medium through which to converse with man. Thus Jehovah "maketh the clouds His chariot." Of the glory which settled on the Mount of Transfiguration, the characteristic feature is that it was "a bright cloud." It was a pillar of cloud which went before Israel in the wilderness, and it was the descending cloud at the dedication of the Temple which told of an accepted sacrifice, and an approving and present God. Most fitting was it, therefore, that such a substance should enshrine the glorified humanity of Jesus. It spoke of His Deity. It connected Him more directly with the symbolisms and revelations of the heavenly world. It preserved the weak vision of the disciples from being confounded and dazzled. It prefigured the method of their Lord's return. 4. The manner. It was mild, merciful, and majestic. Like a conqueror, wreathing his brow with trophies—like a priest, lifting up his hands to bless—like a parent, gathering his loved ones round to give them a parting charge. He gave them—(1) a charge: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations," &c. (2) A parting promise: "Lo, I am with you alway." (3) A benediction: "And He lifted up His hands and blessed them." And thus, in the mode of the Saviour's parting, we cannot fail to see a blending of His three offices. As a Prophet, He provides for the future evangelisation of the world. As a King, He

engages for the perpetual preservation of His Church. As a Priest, He scatters from the throne of His ascension all the treasures of heavenly benediction. II. THE LESSONS. 1. The grandeur of the scheme of redemption, as seen in the joy of the heavenly host in this its earthly consummation. When God brought His only begotten Son into the world, it was said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." How gladly would they welcome Him back to their own pure courts when His work was done. "God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with a sound of a trumpet." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c. 2. The special honour put upon our nature—upon His humanity, and upon ours. 3. The cementing and hallowing of those ties which subsist betwixt Himself and His Church—in their several relations of King and subject, Advocate and client, Head and members, Bridegroom and bride. 4. A recognition of Christ's title to universal empire. It is the solemn investiture of the Saviour with authority over all worlds, times, economies, intelligences. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The ascension:*—1. Jesus retired from Jerusalem for this final act of His earthly life. Great deeds are better done in solitude, when one is shut up to the Father alone. A man's piety cannot be very deep, if it does not sometimes have a few personal and unutterable reserves in it. 2. Christ chose a spot hitherto full of only debased memories; Bethany, "house of the poor." This ascension made it historic, more even than the august march of the Shekinah over the same plot of ground (Ezek. xi. 23). Very much of our earthly geography will be famous in heaven to those who love Jesus. 3. Our Lord took with Him only His humble circle of disciples as witnesses. Those simple fishermen had seen His humiliation; now they saw its offset. "Not many mighty, not many noble are called." Lady Huntington once wrote that she was accustomed, every time she met this verse, to "thank God for the letter M." What she meant was that, she (being a woman of rank) was not necessarily excluded from Divine grace, as she would have been, had the word been "any," not "many." 4. Christ paused at the final moment for a priestly act. He extended His hands; but there is no hint of His imposing them. He was blessing His disciples; He was in no sense mysteriously ordaining them. If any one asks what He said there is room for conjecture (Num. vi. 23). 5. There was great grace of suggestion in the gesture. When His hands were extended, all would see plainly the prints of the nails in His resurrection body. It was a most instructive lesson to learn; the Son of God showed "the marks—stigmas—of the Lord Jesus" at the moment of His coronation and advance to His throne. 6. Jesus left the field of His vast triumph without any display or fuss. All the pageants, all the hallelujahs, were reserved for the celestial city when the lawful Prince of glory came in. It is not everybody who is great enough to disappear when in the moment of success. 7. When our Lord returns, it will be with the same form of greeting (ver. 11). Then let all believers learn that the crown of a religious and Christ-like life is blessing; the symbol of Jesus' gospel is blessing; the very prediction of His coming again is blessing; the attitude He chooses is the silent grace of benediction. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The ascension: its purposes:*—Christ ascended—I. THAT MEN MIGHT BELIEVE IN HIM. For three years He had taught, and with what result? Most of those who believed trusted in Him not so much for spiritual blessings as for the conquest of the heathen invader or for the "loaves and fishes." Now contrast this failure to awaken the faith of men, while He lived on earth, with the success of His apostles after the ascension. The first sermon was followed by the conversion of three thousand souls. The reason of this contrast is not hard to find. While Jesus lived a human life, and performed miracles, He called forth admiration and wonder, but this only prevented a deep spiritual movement in men's hearts. In the Gospels we seldom come across narratives of men convicted of sin and crying for redemption, but after the ascension Christ began to move upon the conscience of the world as "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." II. THAT MEN MIGHT KNOW HIM AND COMMUNE WITH HIM. Men were won, indeed, by the beauty of His character. But who knew Him? Whose heart throbbed in sympathy with His? Where will you find the record of any real communion on the great themes that were nearest His heart? When He addressed them they but half understood Him. But contrast these disciples after the ascension. Then they began to know Him. They grasped the significance of His coming, His labour and His death. Knowing Him now in the spirit and aim of His great mediatorial life, they communed with Him, and illumined with this new knowledge and inspired by this communion, they went forth to preach the

gospel, and it proved itself the power of God and the wisdom of God. We easily understand this. The daily life of men serves as often to conceal as to reveal them. How often a great statesman is not seen in his true proportions until he has been received "out of sight"! How often the child knows not the meaning of a father's or a mother's life until death has separated the parent from them! So it was with the disciples. III. IN ORDER THAT HIS PEOPLE MIGHT TRULY FOLLOW HIM. While He was with them on the earth the disciples sought to imitate His outward life, to repeat His miracles, and His judgments. I cannot detect a single sign that the mind which was in Christ Jesus was in one of them. The result was that they never became independent of His physical presence. But how different when He had ascended! The impetuous and ambitious Peter lays down his life, like his Master, for the redemption of men. The "son of thunder" breathes forth the spirit of Christ in the words, "Little children, let us love one another." Instead of attempting to imitate Christ's outward life, they sought to drink into His spirit. And so it is with us. IV. THAT HE MIGHT BE THE SPIRITUAL REDEEMER OF THE WHOLE WORLD. The Church and the world are to become one; the spirit of Christ is to become the dominant spirit of the world's life. In order to achieve this Jesus removed Himself from the limitations of place and time and nationality; and, ascending on high, seated Himself on the throne of universal dominion. And thus it was that when Christ had gone the Church moved forward on the path of universal conquest. (*J. De Witt, D.D.*) *Christ's way to heaven unclosed*:—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 through the path through which He 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 passed can never be closed by human skill or power; and that He has before us an open door which no man shall be able to shut. (*J. Alexander, D.D.*) *The trail of the ascending Saviour*:—Sometimes, when the sky is beclouded, we do not see that across the garden path there sways a ladder of gossamer, linking tree with tree; but when the sun shines it is revealed by its silver sheen. So, as the infidel looks upwards, he can see no bond of union between this atom of star-dust and the metropolis of the universe, until his eyes are opened, and he sees the ladder left by the trail of the departing Saviour. Thank God, we are not cut adrift to the mercy of every current; this dark coal-ship is moored alongside the bright ship of heavenly grace; yes, and there is a plank between them. (*F. B. Meyer.*) *Christ in heaven*:—Christ's ascension lights up our thought of heaven. Says one: "The presence of the glorified humanity of Christ seems a necessary preliminary and condition of our presence in heaven. We could not be at home among those august and terrible splendours unless we saw Him, our Brother, in the heart of all. As Joseph's brethren, who had been all their lives wild Arab shepherds, would have felt ill at ease indeed in the proudest court in the world had it not been that their brother was there upon the throne, so we would not have found heaven to be our home unless we found it to be the place of the presence of Jesus Christ. Heaven is no place for us unless Christ Jesus be there:

> "My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim;
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him." (*G. H. James.*)

The angels watching Jesus:—It takes a spiritual nature to see the spiritual facts of this world. Doubtless there were thousands in Galilee and Judæa who passed the Messiah without a glance. Let us have a walk of two miles through the heart of any metropolis with any man, and we would not care for any further exposition of his character. He is to be judged by what He himself "sees." Around the display in the window of the diamond-broker there gathers a certain number by the silent process of natural selection. At the toy store a different crowd augments itself. Before the bulletin board of the stock exchange a third company collects; and at a bookseller's shop a fourth. While men were watching the movements of Herod or the campaigns of Cæsar the angels were watching Jesus. They hovered over the manger at Bethlehem; minstered to His fainting frame in the wilderness;

guarded the tomb in the garden, and followed with glad eyes His form as it disappeared in the clouds above Olivet. It is a crucial test of character whether we see or slight the living Christ in the men and women of our own day. (*Christian Age.*) *The ascension: its moral uses*:—I. OUR FAITH IN CHRIST'S DIVINITY IS MADE SURE. He who said, "I came down from heaven," spoke also of the Ascension as the means whereby the doubts of His disciples should be removed (John vi. 38, 51, 61–62). II. OUR HOPE IN HIS PROMISES IS STRENGTHENED. Where He is gone we shall also go, since He is gone as our first-fruits, and to prepare a place for us. III. OUR LOVE IS INFLAMED. By His going up into heaven our hearts are raised in expectation to the same place, and our love is kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit He sends down from thence. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The Ascension: its diffusive benefits*:—So long as a lamp in a room is placed on a low level its light may be intercepted by the bodies of persons around it, and so prevented from reaching others who are in the remoter corners. But let it be lifted up to the ceiling, and it sheds its beams down on all who are below. Our Lord, while on earth, was circumscribed by place and earthly relationships; but since His ascension, His presence and influence are diffused everywhere through the spiritual world, as the rays of the sun are through the natural. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The Ascension: its lessons*:—I. HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS. He went as the great Forerunner of His people, and we must follow in His course. Where the Head is there should the members be; and our treasure, life, affection are meant to be with Him at the right hand of God. II. SIMPLE DUTY. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is emphatically the Epistle of the Ascension, this is the aspect of the doctrine which is always urged. Because Christ is highly exalted and we are raised up together with Him, therefore we are to be lowly and meek, and to forbear one another in love; to put off the old man, &c. It is the same lesson which is taught in two of the Psalms appointed for the service of Ascension Day, "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?" Is it only the lofty, the devoted? No, but common men who, by God's grace, have lived their common lives in the paths of purity and duty, the lowly, the undeceitful, the unmalicious, the uncorrupt. III. HOLY FEAR. How are you living? As Christ ascended, so shall He one day descend to awful judgment. If you be a hardened sinner, and will continue so, then fear; for then to you the lesson of Christ's ascension is a lesson of wrath and doom. IV. But if you be living in justice and mercy, and walking humbly with your God, then the lesson is one of HOPE. It is a pledge to us of that forgiveness which Christ died to win. For Christ is our Intercessor. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The Ascension: the Saviour's gifts*:—It was the custom of the Roman emperors, at their triumphal entrance, to cast new coins among the multitudes: so doth Christ, in His triumphal entrance into heaven, throw the greatest gifts for the good of man that were ever given. (*T. Goodwin, D.D.*) *The ascension of Christ and of Elijah*:—While the going up of Elias may be compared to the flight of a bird which none can follow, the ascension of Christ is, as it were, a bridge between heaven and earth, laid down for all who are drawn to Him. (*J. Baumgarten.*) *The Ascension and the Second Advent practically considered*:—1. Four great events shine out in our Saviour's story—His birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. These make four rounds in that ladder of light, the top whereof reacheth to heaven. We could not afford to dispense with any one of them. That the Son of God was born creates a brotherhood; that He died is the rest and life of our spirits; that He rose is the warrant of our justification, and an assurance of the resurrection of all His people. Equally delightful is the remembrance of His ascension. No song is sweeter than this—"Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive," &c. 2. Each one of those four events points to another, and lead up to it: the Second Advent. Had He not come a first time in humiliation He could not have come a second time in glory "without a sin-offering unto salvation." Because He died we rejoice that He cometh to destroy the last enemy. It is our joy that in consequence of His rising the trump of the archangel shall sound for the awaking of all His slumbering people. As for His ascension, He could not a second time descend if He had not first ascended. 3. We will start from the ascension. Picture our Lord and the eleven walking up the side of Olivet. They come to a standstill, having reached the brow of the hill. While the disciples are looking, the Lord has ascended to the clouds. They stand spell-bound, and suddenly a bright cloud, like a chariot of God, bears Him away. They are riveted to the spot, very naturally so; but it is not the Lord's will that they should long remain inactive; their reverie is interrupted. Two messengers of God appear in human form that they may not alarm them, and in white raiment as if to

remind them that all was bright and joyous. As they had once said to the women, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen"; so did they now say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus," &c. Their reverie over, the apostles at once gird up their loins for active service; they hasten to obey the command, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem." Here is—I. A GENTLE CHIDING. 1. What these men were doing seems at first sight to be—(1) Very right. If Jesus were among us now we would fix our eyes upon Him, and never withdraw them. When He ascended up into heaven it was the duty of His friends to look upon Him. If it be right to look up into heaven, it must be still more right to look up while Jesus rises to the place of His glory; but they went further—they stood "gazing." "Look" is ever the right word. "Look unto Me, and be saved." Be your posture that of one "looking unto Jesus," always throughout life. But it is not commendable, when the look is not that of worship, but of curiosity. If infinite wisdom had withdrawn the object, what was their gazing but a sort of reflection upon the wisdom which had removed their Lord? Yet it did seem very right. Thus certain things that you and I may do may appear right, and yet we may need to be chidden out of them into something better. A steadfast gaze into heaven may be to a devout soul a high order of worship, but if this filled up much of our working time it might become the idlest form of folly. (2) Very natural. I should have done the same. Hearts are not to be argued with. You stand by a grave. You cannot help it, the place is precious to you; yet you could not prove that you do any good, and deserve to be gently chidden with the question, "Why?" It may be the most natural thing in the world, and yet it may not be a wise thing. The Lord allows us to do that which is innocently natural, but He will not have us carry it too far. We must not stand gazing here for ever, and therefore we are aroused to get back to the Jerusalem of practical life, where we may do service for our Master. (3) But was not after all justifiable upon strict reason. While Christ was going up it was proper that they should adoringly look at Him. But when He was gone, still to remain gazing was an act which they could not explain to themselves nor justify to others. I remember a woman whose only son was emigrating. The train came up and he entered the carriage. After the train had passed, she ran along the platform and pursued the flying train. It was natural, but what was the use of it? We had better abstain from acts which serve no practical purpose. 2. What they did we are very apt to imitate. "Oh," say you, "I shall never stand gazing up into heaven." I am not sure of that. (1) Some Christians are very curious, but not obedient. I remember one who was great at apocalyptic symbols, but he had no family prayer. By all means search till you know all that the Lord has revealed concerning things to come; but first see that your children are brought to the Saviour, and that you are workers in His Church. (2) Others are contemplative but not active—much given to the study of Scripture, but not zealous for good works. When a man's religion all lies in enjoying holy things for his own self, there is a disease upon him. When his judgment of a sermon is based upon the one question, "Did it feed me?" it is a swinish judgment. (3) Some are impatient for some marvellous interposition. We get at times into a sad state of mind, because we do not see the kingdom of Christ advancing as we desire. The Master is away, and we cry, "When will He be back again? Why tarries He through the ages?" In certain cases this uneasiness has drawn to itself an intense desire for sign-seeing. What fanaticisms come of this! If I were introduced into a room where a large number of parcels were stored up, and I was told that there was something good for me, I should begin to look for that which had my name upon it, and when I came upon a parcel and I saw in pretty big letters, "It is not for you," I should leave it alone. Here, then, is a casket of knowledge marked, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons," &c. Cease to meddle with matters which are concealed, and be satisfied to know the things which are clearly revealed. II. A CHEERING DESCRIPTION—"This same Jesus." I appreciate this the more because it came from those who knew Him. "He was seen of angels." 1. Jesus is gone, but He still exists. As surely as He did hang upon the Cross, so surely does He, the self-same Man, sit upon the throne of God. Jesus lives; mind that you live also. "Jesus" means "a Saviour." Oh, ye anxious sinners, the name of Him who has gone up into His glory is full of invitation to you! Will you not come to "this same Jesus"? 2. He who is to come will be the same Jesus that went up into heaven. He will be "the same Jesus" in nature though not in condition: He will possess the same tenderness when He comes to judge. Go to Him with your troubles, as you would have done when He was here.

Look forward to His second coming without dread. On the back of that sweet title came this question, "Why stand ye here gazing into heaven?" They might have said, "We stay here because we do not know where to go. Our Master is gone." But oh, it is the same Jesus, and He is coming again, so go down to Jerusalem and get to work directly. Do not worry yourselves; it is not a disaster that Christ has gone, but an advance in His work. Despisers tell us nowadays, "Your Divine Christ is gone; we have not seen a trace of His miracle-working hand, nor of that voice which no man could rival." Here is our answer: He lives; and it is our delight to turn our heavenly gazing into an earthward watching, and to go down into the city, and there to tell that Jesus is risen, that whosoever believeth in Him shall have everlasting life. His ascension is not a retreat, but an advance. His tarrying is not for want of power, but because of the abundance of His long-suffering. III. A GREAT PRACTICAL TRUTH, which will not keep us gazing into heaven, but will make us render earnest service. 1. Jesus is gone into heaven; up to the throne, from which He can send us succour. Is not that a good argument—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations," &c.? 2. Jesus will come again. A commander has not given up the campaign because it is expedient that he should withdraw from your part of the field. Our Lord is doing the best thing for His kingdom in going away. 3. He is coming in like manner as He departed. He will descend in clouds even as He went up in clouds; and "He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" even as He stood aforetime. Do not let anybody spiritualise this away. Jesus is coming as a matter of fact, therefore go down to your sphere of service as a matter of fact. Jesus is literally and actually coming, and He will literally and actually call upon you to give an account of your stewardship. 4. Be ready to meet your coming Lord. I called one day on one of our members, and she was whitening the front steps. She got up all in confusion, and said, "Oh dear, sir, I did not know you were coming to-day, or I would have been ready." I replied, "Dear friend, you could not be in better trim than you are: you are doing your duty like a good housewife, and may God bless you. When Jesus comes, I hope He will find me doing as you are doing, namely, fulfilling the duty of the hour." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The apostles' last sight of Jesus*:—Note here—I. THE MASTER OF ALL RESOURCES MAKING USE OF NATURAL MEANS IN CONNECTION WITH A STUPENDOUS MIRACLE. Jesus showed Himself superior to natural laws, yet up to the highest point possible He made use of natural means on the way to His glorious end. He might have ascended from the valley, but since He made hills so much nearer heaven, He would not neglect the benefit of His own creation. He who could always have walked on the sea did so but once, and He to whom the highest mountains are but valleys would walk up a hill to ascend into heaven. This should teach us to bless God for means when we have them, and to trust Him for means when we have them not. II. THE GREAT MASTER GOING TO HIS REST WHEN HIS WORK WAS DONE. He had overcome, and must therefore now go to His throne. He had shown His sovereign power over the sea by walking on it and making it pay His tribute; over the earth by raising the dead and forsaking His own tomb; over hell by conquering Satan; and He must now show His power over the air by a local ascending into heaven. III. CHRIST SERVED BY OTHER BEINGS THAN MEN. The cloud might be a multitude of heavenly attendants. Certainly celestial messengers instructed the apostles about "this same Jesus." How great is His dignity who has such servants, and what an honour to serve Him. IV. THAT EVEN CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATION MUST BE REGULATED WITH REFERENCE TO OTHER DUTIES. It was but natural that the disciples should gaze after Jesus; but the angel's word called them off from an object engrossing and delightful to their work. To neglect the shop for the prayer-meeting, to allow your cattle to hunger that you may hear a sermon, to make private devotion an excuse for refusing to visit the sick and needy, is what God cannot bless; and when a Christian is called from such dangerous ways he ought to feel deeply grateful. V. THAT THE ASCENSION IS A PATTERN OF THE SECOND ADVENT. It will be—1. Personal. 2. With clouds. 3. With angelic attendants. (*W. Hudson.*) **A cloud received Him.**—*The Ascension cloud*:—Lovers of nature find almost as much pleasure in watching the clouds as in gazing upon a landscape; in some respects even more, for the colouring is far more splendid, and the whole scene is one of perpetual change and variety. We read very much of clouds in Holy Scripture. The one before us is the Ascension cloud. A last thought is the extent and amount of the change involved in the Ascension. "A cloud received Him." That is all. This and no more is the change made by the Ascension. Behind, above the cloud, is the Person who a moment ago was visible, was audible, was

conversing and communing with us, was here, and answering our questions; was speaking of things pertaining to His kingdom. There is now just a cloud between us—between us and Him. That is all. No other change has had place or room. We are still gazing into heaven, only a cloud has intercepted the view. His last act was benediction: while He blessed He was taken from us. The hand is stretched out still. It is to leave His peace with us which passeth understanding. The Ascension cloud has nothing but benediction in it. It was that He might fill earth and heaven, St. Paul tells us, that He went away. In other words, it was that, being out of sight, and because He was out of sight, He might be to us that spiritual presence which alone profits, satisfies, comforts, or saves. The Ascension cloud is all blessing. The mystery which it involves is no illusion. It is true and wholesome doctrine. It is the doctrine of the reality, and the activity, and the nearness to us of that spiritual presence which is our life. Alas! it is quite otherwise with other clouds which intercept the view of the Ascended. "Earth-born clouds" our evening hymn speaks of. They are of all kinds. There is the cloud of simple indifference. The heart feels no want which earth cannot supply. The heart sees no beauty in spiritual satisfaction. Christ is out of sight; the cloud is between, and we care not to pierce it. Let it hide the Invisible; we do not want Him. And then there is the cloud of unbelief. We have heard of the sneer of the infidel; alas! we have listened to it. All things are dared in these days, even if it be to the parodying and caricature of the Bible. Wheresoever the soul has no God in it, there clouds are, and their name is legion. There is the earth-born cloud of sinning. Yes, for one cloud of worldliness, or levity, or conscious unbelief, there are in the individual skies thousands and tens of thousands of damp, dark, heavy clouds of sin; and each one of these hides Jesus Christ from view. If it be no bigger than a man's hand it is enough. Each one of these little clouds places Him at a measureless distance, Him the holy, the undefiled, the separate from sinners. He cannot dwell where sin is, either as guest or host. "A cloud receiveth Him out of their sight." It was one of the earth-born clouds. It was not the sweet Ascension cloud, for that while it intercepts the view of sense only quickens the view of faith, which is the eye of the soul. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Comfort in a cloud:*—A friend of mine told me of a visit he had paid to a poor woman overwhelmed with trouble. "Mary," said he, "you must have very dark days; the clouds must overcome you sometimes." "Yes," she replied, "when I am very dark and low I go to the window, and if I see a heavy cloud I think of those precious words, 'A cloud received Him out of their sight,' and I look up and see the cloud sure enough, and then I think, 'Well, that may be the cloud that hides Him'; and so you see there is comfort in a cloud." *The intervening cloud:*—A minister says: "I once visited an invalid lady who for a long time had been confined to her bed, and she said to me, 'The Lord has forgotten me altogether.' I replied, 'Supposing a heavy mist should fall so that you could not see that lighthouse on the other side of the river, would you believe it was there?' 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'because I had seen it before, and I should all the time hear the whistle which warns mariners of danger.' 'Yes, and in the same way you may know that the Lord is near. Your bodily weakness is the cloud between you and your God. His Word still speaks to you, and the eye of faith can surely see through this cloud as clearly as through an earthly mist.' This led her to a life of faith and comfort."

Vers. 10, 11. **And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up.**—*Too much mere sentiment in religion:*—It may be that the same two angels who rolled away the stone, and appeared at His open sepulchre, were present now. Or were they the "two men," Moses and Elijah, who had appeared at the Transfiguration? Whoever they were, they were glorified beings, sent to do honour to Christ. The words may be taken as a rebuke for the indulgence of too much sentiment in connection with religion. Sentiment in religion is not only good, but essential; without the sentiments of love, hope, gratitude, adoration, there could be no religion. But if it continue merely as sentiment, and takes no practical form, sways not the actions and shapes not the life, it is rather pernicious than useful. I. That too much sentimental interest in the MARVELLOUS in religion is not good. Religion has its marvels, supernatural events crowd the Word of God; but to yield our minds too much to the influence of the wonderful, is not good. The sentiment of wonder has its beneficent mission; it tends to take us out of ourselves, to break the monotony of our experience, and to give a passing freshness to life. But the

indulgence of this sentiment of wonder, apart from religion, is a great evil. The religionists who are always gazing after signs and wonders become dreamy mystics and the dupes of priestly imposture. The wonder which the marvellous in religion excites, becomes only useful as it lifts us to a higher plane of practical life, only as it tends to make our lives sublime. II. That too much sentimental interest in the OBJECTIVE in religion is not good. The disciples were looking outside of themselves, fixing their gaze on the heavens. We do well so to gaze upon the outward, as to reduce the whole into a science that shall become the richest inheritance of the intellect. In religion, too, we must be interested in the outward. The soul is neither self-sustaining nor self-directing; its elements of life must be derived from without; its lessons of direction must come from without. But to have all our interests absorbed in the externals of religion is a terrible evil, and, alas! a prevalent one. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost." III. That too much sentimental interest in the TEMPORARY in religion is not good. There is a natural tendency in these souls of ours to linger with interest over departed objects that were once dear to the heart. "We cling," says one, "to the shell, the husks, the garments, after the kernel, the essence, and the life have gone." To indulge in this sentiment in natural things, is not good; the mourner whose sentiments are always absorbed in the dear ones that are gone, grows moody and diseased. The permanent was with them—the eternal principles of truth and the spirit of Christ, these did not depart; it was a mere temporary manifestation that went; and to have their sentiments engrossed in that, was not good. There are those around us in all directions whose sympathies are taken up with the mere temporary forms of religion. (*Homilist.*) *Words to the spectators of the ascension*:—I. The CHIDING element. "Why stand ye gazing?" There is undoubtedly reproof in these words. 1. "Why stand ye?"—you need not lament that which is a blessing. All that is necessary on earth for your spiritual culture and well-being He has accomplished, and now He enters heaven in order to give efficiency to all the spiritual instrumentalities which He has set in operation amongst you. You should rejoice, rather than lament—rejoice at what He has done for you, rejoice that He has triumphed over His enemies, rejoice that He is leaving His degradation, sorrows, and enemies for scenes of dignity, blessedness, and love. Ah, how often, through our ignorance, we lament over events which should fill us with rejoicing. 2. "Why stand ye"—you gain much by His departure. It is "expedient" for you that He goes away, for if He goes not away "the Comforter will not come." When He is gone you will be thrown back upon yourselves and be made self-reliant. 3. "Why stand ye"—He has given you a commission to work. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem." II. The CHEERING element. This same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." 1. He will return to you "in like manner." How unexpectedly He went away. It is said, "while they looked" He went. "In like manner" He will come: unexpectedly. 2. He will return to you identical in personality. "This same Jesus." Same loving Brother, tried Friend, mighty Lord, &c. Whatever changes take place in the universe, they will not touch Him. 3. He will return to you in great glory. He went up in great glory, "a cloud received Him out of their sight." What cloud was that? It was that luminous, mystic flame which was ever regarded as the symbol of the Divine Presence. That which gleamed in the bush to Moses, in the pillar that conducted the Children of Israel through the wilderness, over the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, which glided through the heavens like a star and conducted the wise men to the place where Jesus was born; that which spread over the Mount of Transfiguration and made the scene so transporting. "In like manner" He will come. "I beheld a great white throne, and Him that sat thereon," &c. Conclusion: Such is what seems implied in this angelic language and from it three general truths may be drawn. 1. That what we deem our greatest losses are often our greatest gain. 2. That we indulge too much in the sentiments of religion when they detain us from earnest work." 3. That the destinies of men in all worlds and ages are bound up in Christ. "This same Jesus." (*Ibid.*) *Why stand ye gazing*:—There is reproof in the question. We might have thought that the question answered itself. Would it not have been strange if they had not stood gazing? Less wonderful spectacles than that have drawn together a crowd of gazers, and no one thinks of arguing with them. Curiosity alone will account for gazing upon this spectacle; ascent into heaven by one in human form, unaided by any visible appliance. Who, I say, would not gaze up into heaven to watch this?

But how much more, if the person thus ascending was a friend—a friend closer than a brother. The disciples gazed as though they were looking their last upon the departed form. To be reminded, then, that this was by no means their last sight of Him was to be recalled at once to thoughts of peace, and hope, and blessedness; to be reproved for this gazing by the assurance which followed, that "this same Jesus shall come again in like manner as ye now see Him go," had healing in the very wound. Interpreted by the teaching of the Last Supper, the reproof said this to them: "Remember how He said to you while He was yet with you, 'A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while and ye shall see Me.'" One fulfilment of that saying you have already witnessed: He went from you by death, and He came back to you by resurrection. Another fulfilment of the same saying is now in development: He goes from you by ascension, and He shall come back to you in the Advent. This, then, was the meaning for the first disciples of the "Why stand ye gazing?" which is our text. Within ten days they understood it. On the instant it comforted them, for St. Luke expressly says, that they returned to Jerusalem that very hour with great joy. The idea of parting was swallowed up for them in the idea of meeting. But now, let us hear this question addressed to ourselves: "Why stand ye here gazing? What mean ye by this silence?" and let us think what we shall answer. "Why stand ye to-night in this church gazing on the ascension?" We take an onward step when we reply. I. BECAUSE IT HELPS US TO REALISE A WORLD BEYOND THIS WORLD, a life above this life, a substantial rock that is higher than we, on which we would firmly stand our feet amidst the billows and storms of the temporal and the transient. To fix a steadfast gaze upon the ascending Lord, till a cloud comes between and intercepts the view, to which flesh and blood are unequal, of that glorious, that mysterious transition from the material into the immaterial universe—we find it helpful, we find it comforting, under the heavy pressure of sense and time, whether our circumstances at this present are joyous or grievous, weighted with care and sorrow, or but too jubilant with pleasure and prosperity. It is not easy to believe in a world out of sight. We want every help that a religious life can give to it, we want the aid of prayer, we want the discipline of providence, we want the experience of years, we want, first and above all, a revelation such as God gives in His Son, commending itself to man's conscience and resting upon a basis of impregnable fact. I know not what would become of us in days such as these—days of unrest and disquietude, days of anxiety bursting sometimes into horror, days of failing hearts and almost despairing hopes, for the future of our own and other lands, if we could not gaze upward after the ascended Saviour and infer the certainty of a better country, that is a heavenly. II. THE DESIRE TO REALISE THE LIFE OF CHRIST HIMSELF AS GONE INTO HEAVEN FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION. III. THAT WE ARE ALL LEARNING IN HEART AND MIND TO ASCEND AFTER HIM, AND THERE WITH HIM CONTINUALLY TO DWELL. There are many counterfeits of this grace, there are also some substitutes for it, counted as good or better, sometimes even by the Church of this age. It is an age which makes activity everything; measures religion by its tangible effects; leaves itself no inner life, as it were; itself depends on the outward, and thinks little even of the industry which has nothing to show for itself. The Church too much humours and pampers this temper of the times. Now, the ascent of our Lord is the protest against this whole system. They who would witness for Him must find time to track His ascending; they who would reproduce Him in His reality to this nineteenth age must first have gazed steadfastly up; there must be leisure found or made for this, leisure for meditation, leisure for study, leisure for communing. Let each one fix his gaze upon the ascending Lord, that he may follow Him where the Ascended rests in that calm heaven, the heaven of holiness and the heaven of love. Let him dwell with the Ascended, having boldness to enter into the Holiest. Let us draw nigh; let it be a purified entering, and let it be a purified return also. That is the spiritual mind whose home is heaven. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Because we would follow where He has led, live the life of heaven here, and at last be with Him for ever where He is. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The disciples at the Ascension*:—I. MEN OVERPOWERED AND DISPOSSESSED OF SELF-CONTROL IN THE PRESENCE OF A WONDROUS REVELATION. There are moments in which men are not themselves. Great events suddenly happen and the spectators lose all presence of mind, however sagacious they may ordinarily be. Sometimes they cannot speak for joy, sometimes for terror, sometimes for simple amazement. This is the case sometimes with children, and often with men when, *e.g.*, a letter is received containing unexpected news. The thing to be remembered

here is that this is the natural effect of Christian revelation. When the angels came to Bethlehem the shepherds were afraid, so were the women to whom the angels spake at the sepulchre. And no man ought to receive Divine communications or see Divine effects without sensibility. Nor ought we to look on the sublimities of nature or the wonders of art as if they were nothing. This is one of the perils of familiarity. A rustic thinks little of the mountain under whose shadow he was born, but is struck dumb when he gazes on St. Paul's. A Londoner passes the cathedral without knowing that it is there, but looks at Snowdon for hours during his summer holiday. II. MEN RECALLED FROM ENFEEBLING REVERIE. It was good for them to look upward, but there was something more to be done. We can waste time in the sublimest contemplation. When a man is naturally inclined to ecstasy he ought to fight against his inclination so as to bring it into harmony with other powers. There are persons to whom Christianity is so sublime a thing that they fail to see it in practical life. It is right to have hours of rapture, but a man cannot live so always. So the disciples were interrogated by the two men in white apparel —Moses and Elias, I think; for there is something Mosaic in the inquiry, and something of the power and passion of Elijah. We too are matched by the old master-workers of the world. Seeing then we are encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses, why should our life be a gazing when we are called to work? When the women looked down into the sepulchre, the angel said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" So we are not always to be looking down. The lesson of the text is that we must not always be looking up. What then is to be our attitude? Look about you; and look up only to gain inspiration for the work nearest to hand. III. MEN INSTRUCTED AND COMFORTED BY A PROMISE. "This same Jesus." Who wants an amended Christ? "This same Jesus" who knows, has taught, has died to save you "shall come again." One would like to see Jesus; but one would not like Him to be so changed that those who knew Him first know Him no longer. We want such elements of identity as shall enable the disciples to gladly recognise Him as the same Christ. He is promised to come again in the same sublime fashion, sovereign in will, gentle in spirit, pure as God, tenderer than woman. The world cannot live without that promise. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Gazing into heaven:*— There is here—I. AN AFFECTIONATE EXPOSTULATION WITH THOSE WHO ARE UNDER PERSONAL BEREAVEMENT. When Jesus had kept telling these friends of His that He purposed to leave them before long, they received no settled impression from it. It is of no use to attempt to become prepared for the loss of one whom we love. Now they looked after their ascending Lord with unutterable dismay. When any one has parted with some precious object of affection, the wounded spirit remains just broken, gazing up into vacancy, sometimes even wishing it might fly away and be at rest. But this cannot be indulged. These disciples are told to report immediately for duty. The mourner's eyes should be fixed upon work, and not upon loss. See the promise (Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6.). II. AN EARNEST INCITEMENT TO THE LAGGARD OR LISTLESS. The great world needed the gospel without delay. Christ was gone, but the Comforter was coming. Just as soon as they advanced to duty the day of Pentecost dawned. There are men who stand gazing up into heaven after a revival. Now, nowhere does God's Word bid us wait for any special outpouring of spiritual influence. The Holy Spirit is in the Church. III. A CLEAR COUNSEL FOR THOSE IN EARNEST IN THE SEEKING OF CHRIST FOR THEIR SOULS. It is possible for a man to stand gazing up into heaven for a course of years, and then suddenly discover that what he has been looking for was an experience, and not a Saviour. Salvation is not a thing to be vacantly gazed after. Repent of your sins now. Put your trust in Christ now. The entire work of turning unto a new life usually begins with some commonplace step of commitment of one's self before others. A public word in a prayer-meeting, the asking of a blessing at the table, a checking admonition to a comrade, a mere refusal to do a wrong or worldly act, will never make a man a Christian, but it may show he has become one. IV. A COMFORT FOR SUCH CHRISTIANS AS ARE IN BONDAGE THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH. Let us think of our departure as an ascension like Christ's. One may habituate himself to melancholy foreboding until all looks dark and frightful on ahead. Or he may accustom his mind to regarding a change of worlds as only a sweet, bright journey along the path the Saviour went from the Mount of Olives. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Indolence:*— Nothing is more dangerous than idleness. He who has nothing to do will soon be doing something wrong. "Our idle," says an eminent divine, "are Satan's busy days. If the mind is properly engaged, there is little room for the entrance of temptation; but when the mind is empty and open, the enemy can throw in what

he pleases. Stagnant waters produce thousands of noxious insects that are unknown in flowing streams." *Looking after it is useless*:—How true to nature is that gazing "steadfastly into heaven" after gazing was useless! So we look at the spot on the horizon where the last gleam of a sail that bears away dear ones has faded. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Unprofitable gazing*:—The "two men in white apparel" make a part of the grand supernatural array which the common scenery of the earth put on as the Lord was leaving it. From the entrance of the Saviour into the garden, on through the following forty-three days, the spiritual world and the material seemed to have the doors between them swung open, and to become one. If we believe the history, or credit the incarnation, at all, is not this just as we should expect? He in whom the realities of both heaven and earth were united; He who could say—"The Son of Man is now in heaven," He is passing back personally into the unseen communion, where all His friends are to follow Him. I believe in miracles because I see the greater miracle—Christ—grander than all this world's men, and yet lowlier, saying that He comes forth from God, and goes to God, as simply as my child shows me the flower found in the garden—yet so saying it that all the philosophers and critics of eighteen hundred years have not been able to break the authority or explain the secret. The question is—I. A CALL FROM CONTEMPLATION TO ACTION. Only a little breathing space was to be given them first to gather up their energies; and even that was not to be an interval of idleness. They were to go at once to Jerusalem, and their waiting there was to be like the waiting of the still midsummer elements, before the mountain winds sweep down and the tongues of fire leap out—a busy waiting—a preparation for this long campaign of many ages. They were to be earnest and constant in prayer and praise; to settle in their minds the doctrines and directions of their Master, pertaining to the kingdom; to fasten and cement the bonds of unity with one accord, and to fill up the vacant place in the apostolate. Thus their business had been marked out as every Christian's is. But the apostles are not turning to that business; they are still resting in a kind of sentimental trance between their commission and their ministry. They were living as some Christians do nowadays—in their feelings more than in their convictions and their will, in fruitless memories, not in daring hopes. Indulged any longer, this would become a mere life of religious sentiment, not a life of religious service—and so not a healthy life at all. If those men that had companied so long with Christ needed to be startled out of a false indulgence in the mere idle luxury of feeling, most of us need it much more. I hear a man say it makes him "feel better" to say his prayers; so far so good; but how far does the feeling go, and the power of the prayer keep him company, as a law of regulation to his lips and a purifier of his conduct? Lacordaire says, "I desire to be remembered only as one who believed, who loved, and who prayed." But why only these? Ought there not to be an equal desire to honour the Lord in an active following of His steps and proclaiming Him in life? II. A SUMMONS TO WALK, HENCEFORTH, NOT BY THE LIGHT OF AN OUTWARD LEADER, BUT BY A SECRET AND STEADFAST TRUST IN HIM WHO IS FOR EVER WITH US BY AN INWARD POSSESSION. If, then, the question of the heavenly men be put into some paraphrase for ourselves here, this would be its import. Reduce your privileges to Christian practice, and your faith to action. Life is not given us for speculation, or gazing, or mere delight, even though the relish be religious—not for reverie and dreaming, even though it were the reverie of devotion, or a dream of Paradise. This world, our own little corner of it, wants sacrifice and labour, running feet and open hands, busy thoughts and gentle tongues. III. A DEMAND THAT OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT, SO THAT IT MAY BE ONLY DEPENDENT ON GOD. Not that we are to cast away any outward prop so long as God's providence holds it in its place and comforts us by letting us lean upon it; but that we should not be perplexed or disheartened when any such help is taken away by Him, or enfeeble ourselves by letting our integrity, or our purity, or our prayers depend on it instead of depending directly on Him. There is no danger that our eyes or our hearts will be turned too much upwards, heavenwards—provided we look there, in faith and prayer, for the light and the strength to do our Christian service here. At present this is our place; and the judgment before us is a judgment for deeds done in the body. These men, when they were bidden to stop gazing into heaven and go to their work were not turned away from heavenly things to earthly things, but the opposite. They were to stop looking into the air, that by a truer and God-appointee road they might travel, in God's time, higher up into the Christian heaven. They were to rouse themselves from a dream, that they might work out their salvation

and the salvation of the world. To that end, the present line of living, however agreeable and prosperous, the present residence or occupation, however delightful, or the present apparent helps, however prized, as soon as they become tempters to sluggishness, must be given up—a sacrifice to Him whose sacrifice to us is the only assurance of life. Hence God's providence is continually pushing us on, displacing one or another scheme, or vision, or staff, or companion. He does it for what he would make of us—better men. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Idle emotion useless*:—Love to God is no idle emotion or lazy rapture, no vague sentiment, but the root of all practical goodness, of all strenuous efforts, of all virtue, and of all praise. That strong tide is meant to drive the busy wheels of life and to bear precious freightage on its bosom; not to flow away in profitless foam. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Go about your business*:—Some years ago, a new clock was made to be placed in the Temple Hall. When finished the clockmaker was desired to wait upon the Benchers of the Temple, who would think of a suitable motto to be put under the clock. He applied several times, but without getting the desired information, as they had not determined on the inscription. Continuing to importune them, he at last came when the old Benchers were met in the Temple Hall, and had just sat down to dinner. The workman again requested to be informed of the motto. One of the Benchers who thought the application ill-timed, and who was fonder of eating and drinking than inventing mottoes, testily replied, "Go about your business!" The mechanic taking this for an answer to his question, went home and inserted at the bottom of the clock, "Go about your business!" and placed it in the Temple Hall, to the great surprise of the Benchers, who, considering the circumstances, argued that accident had produced a better motto than they could think of, and ever since the Temple clock has continued to remind the lawyer and the public to go about their business. (*Christian Herald.*) **This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go.**—*Christ's second coming*:—I. ITS TIME. 1. Unknown (Matt. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32). 2. The times of restoration (chap. iii. 19). 3. The latter day (Job xix. 25). 4. "Such an hour as ye think not" (Matt. xxiv. 44). 5. "After that tribulation," &c. (Mark xiii. 24–26). 6. A falling away first (2 Thess. ii. 3). II. HOW CHARACTERISED. 1. The times of restoration (chap. iii. 19). 2. The day of God (2 Pet. iii. 12). 3. The last time (1 Pet. i. 5). 4. The revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 7, 13). 5. Appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour (Tit. ii. 13). 6. The day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. i. 8). 7. The day of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 6). 8. The appearing of the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. v. 4). III. ITS MANNER. 1. Suddenly and unexpectedly (Matt. xxiv. 44; Mark xiii. 36; Luke xii. 40). 2. As a thief in the night (1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. xvi. 15). 3. As the lightning (Matt. xxiv. 27). 4. As the flood (Matt. xxiv. 37–39). 5. As He ascended (ver. 11). 6. In clouds (Matt. xxiv. 30, xxvi. 64; Rev. i. 7). 7. With a shout and the voice of the archangel (1 Thess. iv. 16). 8. With angels (Matt. xvi. 27, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38; 2 Thess. i. 7). 9. With His saints (1 Thess. iii. 13; Jude 14). 10. In the glory of His Father (Matt. xvi. 27). 11. In His own glory (Matt. xxv. 31; Luke ix. 26). 12. In flaming fire (2 Thess. i. 8). 13. With power and great glory (Matt. xxiv. 30.) IV. ITS PURPOSES. 1. To be glorified in His saints (2 Thess. i. 10). 2. To bring to light the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. iv. 5). 3. To reign (Isa. xxiv. 23; Dan. vii. 14; Rev. xi. 15). 4. Gather His elect (Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 15–17). 5. To judge (Matt. xxv. 31). 6. To reward (Rev. xxii. 12). V. DUTIES RELATIVE TO IT. 1. Should consider as at hand (Rom. xiii. 12; Phil. iv. 5; 1 Pet. iv. 7). 2. Be prepared for (Matt. xxiv. 44, 46; Luke xii. 37, 38, 40). 3. Should love (2 Tim. iv. 8). 4. Look for (Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13). 5. Wait for (1 Cor. i. 7; 1 Thess. i. 10). 6. Watch for (Matt. xxiv. 42; Mark xiii. 35–37; Luke xxi. 36). 7. Be patient unto (2 Thess. iii. 5; James v. 7, 8). (*S. S. Times.*) *Christ's coming*:—Love makes the tears of farewells sparkle into welcomes, and if we could retain the same impression of Christ's loss, His return would be as nigh. It is, moreover, in the New Testament the great event which towers above every other. The heaven that gives back Christ gives back all we have loved and lost, solves all doubts and ends all sorrows. His coming looks in upon the whole life of His Church, as a lofty mountain peak looks in upon every little valley and sequestered home around its base, and belongs to them alike. Every generation lies under the shadow of it, for whatever is transcendently great is constantly near, and in moments of conviction it absorbs petty interests and annihilates intervals. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *Waiting for Christ's return*:—The Rev. T. Brown, in *The Watchword*, tells of a gentleman,

accompanied by his little son, having an errand at the East India House, who left the boy upon the steps, telling him to wait till he returned. Shortly afterwards, being much engrossed with the business which he had in hand, he left the building by another door, and went home, entirely forgetting his son. When the family assembled at dinner the mother noticed the child's absence, and made anxious inquiry for him. Then the incident of the morning flashed upon the father's mind. He hurried back to the East India House, and there he found the little boy, tired and hungry, waiting, as he had been told to, at the door. He had been there four hours. "I knew you would come, father," said he; "you said you would." Such secure and childlike trust is the faith of all who die "in Christ." All who fall asleep in Jesus, know that Jesus will come for them again, for He said He would, and He never forgets. In like manner the living believer should anticipate His second coming. *The Second Advent*:—Note here—I. OUR LORD'S UNCHANGED IDENTITY. After having been separated by years of time and leagues of space from a familiar friend, if a reunion is anticipated each will probably speculate on the change which the interval has wrought in the other. "He will have formed new friendships and contracted fresh habits; another generation has sprung up since we were companions, and the old links no longer exist; he can hardly feel for me as he once did." But no such surmises can mingle with our thoughts of Jesus. "There is one Lord Jesus Christ," and but one. The ascended and coming Saviour is the same who came and suffered (Eph. iv. 9). A native Indian preacher was met on his way to Church by two young English officers bent on sport. They asked him, "How is Jesus Christ to-day?" Astonished that two young men from the country who sent the Bible should take the sacred name in vain, he gently rebuked them, but added, "If you really want to know how Jesus Christ is, He is the 'same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'"—a word fitly spoken which led the young men to the Saviour. 1. Jesus Christ is the same in—(1) The perfections of His nature. (2) The tenderness of His sympathy. (3) The plenteousness of His grace. (4) The extent and perpetuity of His rule. Since His ascension those who have seen Him declare that He retains His identity—Stephen, Paul (1 Cor. ix. 1), John at Patmos. As He still bears the marks of His suffering, so He retains sympathy for every member of His body. Although "by seraph hosts adored, He to earth's lowest cares is still awake." 2. So it is with our friends who have gone home. They have not lost their individuality—only their mortality and sin. They have not melted into the infinite azure. Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration were the same as in Hebrew story. II. THE CERTAINTY AND MANNER OF HIS RETURN. 1. He continually revisits His people. (1) Spiritually. "The King Himself draws near and feasts His saints." (2) Representatively. The angel of death is His messenger calling His people home. 2. He is coming. (1) Personally. (2) Visibly. (3) Gloriously. Not as first He came, a helpless infant, but a glorious conqueror (Dan. vii. 13; Rev. i. 7, xiv. 14). (*R. Lewis.*) *The Second Advent*:—These words cannot refer to Pentecost, nor to Christ's spiritual communion with His people, because other references point to the Second Advent as in the future, and far more glorious than any manifestations in the past. I. CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN. In the Early Church the expectation of soon seeing Christ was strong. But when this was disappointed the thought fell into the background. Yet error as to time does not affect the fact. The world waited many ages for the First Advent, but "in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son." Why, then, should the Church despair if she must wait ages for the second? II. CHRIST WILL COME IN GLORY. He ascended in triumph; He will return in triumph. In the prophets we have visions of glory and humiliation associated with the Messiah, and the Rabbis expected two Messiahs, one suffering and the other conquering. We now see that one man can be both in successive periods. Christ fulfils prophecy by degrees. Had the whole of Christ's career fallen in the days of Tiberius the Jews might properly have rejected Him. We look for the final fulfilment of prophecy to the future glory of Christ. III. CHRIST WILL COME TO REIGN. His glory will not be an empty pageant. They who look for a visible throne and a secular government fall into the error of the Jews. How He will appear we know not, but we know that His kingdom will be always spiritual, and when it comes "all men shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest." This hope should stimulate the Church's diligence. As she carries out her mission His full reign draws nearer. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *The Second Advent: the different feelings awakened by it*:—Did you ever hear the sound of the trumpets which are blown before the judges as they come into the city to open the assizes? Did you ever reflect how different are the

feelings which those trumpets awaken in the minds of different men? The innocent man, who has no cause to be tried, hears them unmoved. They proclaim no terrors to him. He listens and looks on quietly, and is not afraid. But often there is some poor wretch waiting his trial, in a silent cell, to whom those trumpets are a knell of despair. They tell him that the day of trial is at hand. Yet a little time, and he will stand at the bar of justice, and hear witness after witness telling the story of his misdeeds. Yet a little time and all will be over—the trial, the verdict, the sentence; and there will remain nothing for him but punishment and disgrace. No wonder the prisoner's heart beats when he hears the trumpet's sound! So shall the sound be of the archangel's trump. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *The Second Advent: the uncertainty of its date:*—The cloud that enveloped our Saviour still shrouds His expected presence on the throne of judgment. It is a purposed obscurity, a wise and merciful denial of knowledge. In this matter it is His gracious will to be the perpetual subject of watchfulness, expectation, fear, desire, but no more. To cherish anticipation He has permitted gleams of light to cross the darkness; to baffle presumption He has made them only gleams. He has harmonised with consummate skill every part of His revelation to produce this general result—now speaking as if a few seasons more were to herald the new heaven and the new earth, now as if His days were as thousands of years; at one moment whispering into the ear of His disciple, at another retreating into the depth of infinite ages. It is His purpose thus to live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with the consternation of a near, nor the indifference of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand. This, the deep devotion of watchfulness, humility, and awe, He who knows us best knows to be the fittest posture for our spirits; therefore does He preserve the salutary suspense which ensures it, and therefore will He determine His advent to no definite day in the calender of eternity. And yet this uncertainty is abused to security; and exactly as the invisibility of the Creator, which is His perfection, produces the miserable creed of the atheist, the obscurity that veils the hour of judgment, though meant in merciful warning, persuades the ungodly heart that none is ever to arrive. (*W. Archer Butler, M.A.*) *The two Advents: contrast between them:*—Christ came the first time in the guise of humanity; He is to come the second time in brightness, as a light to the godly, a terror to the wicked. He came the first time in weakness, He is to come the second time in might; the first time in our littleness, the second time in His own majesty; the first time in mercy, the second in judgment; the first time to redeem, the second to recompense, and that all the more terribly because of the long-suffering and delay. (*A. Hildebert.*) *The two Advents: the humiliation of the first, the glory of the second:*—The stable of Bethlehem disappears, and behold the clouds are His chariot. That lonely wanderer amid the hills of Palestine, who was forsaken by all, persecuted by many, is now attended by thousands of angels. The hand which held the reed now sways the sceptre of universal dominion. He has left the Cross and ascended the great white throne; and many crowns now sparkle on the head around which thorns were wreathed. He was crucified then amid the execrations of the mob; now He comes amid the hallelujahs of the skies to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. (*W. Landels, D.D.*)

Vers. 12–14. **Then returned they unto Jerusalem.**—*The return to Jerusalem:*—The distance was a "Sabbath-day's journey"; not that Moses had limited a journey on the Sabbath; but the Rabbins derived the rule from the prohibition to depart, on the sacred day, from the camp, which was supposed to be two miles square. The return, had it not been for the promise of the Father, would have been like turning from the gates of heaven to the antechamber of hell. I. THE PLACE. "An upper room." This could hardly have been in the temple, for the ecclesiastical authorities were too hostile to suffer such a company within the sacred precincts. It was probably the room in which our Lord ate His last supper, and which, from His manner of pointing it out, seems to have belonged to a disciple. The Jews had such an upper room for their devotions, as we read of Peter going up to one, for prayer; and of Paul holding, in an upper room, a meeting of the Church at Miletus. In the houses of Jerusalem such apartments were provided for those who came up to keep the feasts. Here the disciples "abode," *i.e.*, probably spent the day there; retiring to separate lodgings at night. What reflections must have rushed into their minds on coming to the scene of the Last Supper! How much

better they now understood our Lord's discourse, and how soothing must have been the remembrance of His prayer! After seeing Him make the clouds His chariot, what must they have thought of His condescension in washing the disciples' feet! In that room, after a few days, descended the Spirit, of which Jesus said not in vain, "He shall glorify Me." II. THE COMPANY. As if to show how important it is for us to know who the apostles were, Luke, after giving the list in the Gospel, here repeats it. "The women" seem to be those who came up with our Lord "from Galilee, and who ministered to Him of their substance." "Mary, the mother of Jesus," not of God, as she has been impiously called, is there; and this is all that the inspired history says of her whom "all generations shall call blessed." Verily the Scriptures are not chargeable with Mariolatry. By "the brethren" of Christ being there, we conclude that it could no longer be said, "neither did they believe on Him." The "hundred and twenty" included probably the seventy evangelists; some inhabitants of Jerusalem, who, like the master of the house, believed, and such persons as Joseph of Arimathea. This upper room was the cradle of the Christian Church, now an infant, but soon to become a giant and stride over a conquered world. Who then would "despise the day of small things"? III. THEIR EMPLOYMENT. 1. Their harmony was secured by the discourses which they had heard and the scenes they had witnessed, which had extinguished self, that fire-brand of discord. With a world ready to rise in arms against them, their strength lay in union; and now that the traitor, the discordant one, was gone, we may say, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" 2. They were commanded to wait, but not to be idle; and their business was prayer for that Spirit who was to fit them for their work. They came from this retirement, to live in the view of a world, eyed by enemies as the butt of persecution, and by friends as examples and guides. Not the least of the blessings which resulted from these days of prayer was the lesson given to public men to prepare for great doings by secret devotions. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *The ten days:*—The interval between Ascension and Whitsuntide represents an exceptional portion of the history of the Church, and may be compared, or rather contrasted, with the three days during which our Lord rested in the tomb; in each Christ was gone and the Comforter was not come; in each the Church had received a part of her endowments but not the whole; in each the disciples waited patiently till they should obtain a more complete commission, though in the one case they waited with sad hearts and disappointed hopes, while in the other, notwithstanding the absence of their Lord, they experienced great joy, and were continually praising and blessing God. (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *The first assembly of the Christian Church:*—This assembly was marked by—I. SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. The work was unworldly, and therefore separation was necessary. This separation was —1. Local. Worldly business was not likely to come to the "upper room," as there were no attractions for buyers and sellers. Every Church should have a place of meeting set apart for its own use. 2. Mental. No worldly-minded man could have anything in common with their mental state. They were waiting for the bestowal of what no outsider had ever seen or heard. Does this mental distinction exist to-day? 3. Moral. They had given themselves up to be directed by Jesus. Such renunciation marks all true Christians. It cannot co-exist with the pride and self-sufficiency which mark unregenerate men. II. UNITY. The separation would not have answered its purpose without this. All present—1. Recognised one Head. Attachment to a chief often unites men of varying gifts, tastes, and ambitions. So high and low, educated and illiterate, &c., are united in Christ. The light of the sun illumines planets of different magnitudes in various orbits, and each reflects the light of the ruling orb. So Christ is the centre of the Christian system, binds each member of the system to Himself, and freely sheds His light on all. Discord in a Church is therefore unchristian. 2. Had oneness of spirit. They all stood in the same relation to Christ, agreed in the exercises to which they were now devoted, and had grace to love one another. This oneness has often appeared where personal elements have been of very diverse kinds. Such unity in diversity is one of the beautiful effects of Christianity. 3. Were of one purpose—viz., to know, experience, and do the Divine will. For this end they conferred, waited, and prayed. In the abolition of slavery men of opposite opinions, &c., were united by a common purpose. Such union will ever be shown where men aim at Christian ends. III. CONFIDENT EXPECTATION. They persevered in the work to which they had given themselves. They had strong faith in Him whose words had brought and now kept them together. When that faith was tried by delay it bore

the test. Continuance in prayer would increase the sense of power at the throne of grace; and this would intensify the longing for the promised blessing. This confident expectation ought to appear in all Christian assemblies, for there are Divine promises yet to be fulfilled. (*W. Hudson.*) *The waiting time*:—Was—I. A TRANSITION PERIOD. It stood midway between Christ's completed work on earth and the unopened work of the Spirit from heaven. In the history of redemption the first chapter closed on the day of the Incarnation. A long, dreary, chequered period that had been, but it was succeeded by one in all respects the reverse—brief, bright with heaven, and, though ending tragically, bringing life and immortality to light. But it was reserved for the Spirit to make this good, and His dispensation, the last chapter, was now to open. But ere the curtain should be drawn, a breathing time of ten days was in the wisdom of God to take place. It was like the "silence in heaven, for the space of half an hour" between the breaking of the "seals" and the appearance of the angels. II. A TIME OF FELT NEED. The eleven were told that they were to be their Master's witnesses, but they had no clear comprehension of the tale they were to tell, and could not but feel that they had neither position, culture, influence, nor any ground to hope for success save in their assurance of the truth of their story, and the help they might receive in telling it. As they thought of this what sinkings would come over them, which would rather be intensified, as day after day found them in the upper room, but for some counteractive. III. A TIME OF EXPECTANCY. How often would they recall and find it indispensable to recall the promise of the Father—ill as they understood what it meant. Yet being charged not to stir till it was fulfilled, they could not but hope that it would bring a full qualification for their arduous mission. But it was no time of silent waiting, for it was—IV. A TIME OF PRAYER. Who can doubt that the burden of the supplication was the promised power. But besides this it was—V. A TIME OF FRATERNAL CONFERENCE. They could hardly have prayed without intermission; and it is only reasonable to assume that the intervals would be filled up with the interchange of recollections and encouragements. VI. IT WAS A TIME OF ACTION (vers. 15-26.) (*D. Brown, D.D.*) *Waiting for the promise*:—It is on Thursday, probably in the evening, that the disciples return to Jerusalem. Did they expect to receive it that very night? This we know not; but we do know that then opened a new era in the intercourse of man with heaven. As they began to pray, how would they find all their conceptions of the Majesty on high changed! The glory of the Father encompassing a human form, a beaming from a human brow! Mingling with this first joy for the Master's exaltation would be the feeling, "He has entered for us within the veil! He maketh intercession for us!" Hush! which of the twelve is it that says to the brethren—"Let us ask the Father in His name"? (John xvi. 23-24). The angels had often sung together over the prayer of repenting sinners. Now, for the first time, they hear prayers authorised and accredited by the name of the Only-begotten of the Father. That name has just been set "above every name"; and as it echoes through the host on high, with the solemn joy of a hundred believing voices, "things in heaven" bow. What must have been that moment for the saints in Paradise, who had seen the Saviour afar off, but never known the joy of praying directly in His name! Father Abraham had "rejoiced to see His day." What would be His gladness now? David, what would be "the things" which, in that wonderful moment, his voice would sing, "touching the King"? Oh, the joy of that first hour of praying in the name of Christ! What short and burning petitions would go up from the lips which first quoted, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He shall give it you!" But the Spirit has not seen it good to hand down the strong and tender collects of these ten days. Then surely it is unlawful to impose good forms of prayer upon all men, because ancient saints wrote them. He who will never use a form in public prayer casts away the wisdom of the past. He who will use only forms casts away the hope of utterance to be given by the Spirit at present, and even shuts up the future in the dead hand of the past. Does any one of the hundred and twenty up to this moment forget that Thursday night? The Friday morning dawns: the day the Lord had died. Would He not send His promised Substitute to-day? Now came back all His words about the death "which He should accomplish." Yet the Friday wears away, and no "baptism of fire"! The Saturday sets in; its hours are filled up as before, with prayer; but no answer. And now dawns the first day of the week, the day whereon He rose, the first Lord's day He had passed on His throne of glory. Surely they would expect that the blessing be delayed no longer. But the evening steals on, and all their prayers might have risen into a heaven that

could not hear. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday pass. Their faith does not fail; still in the temple "praising and blessing God," or in the upper room in "prayer and supplication," they continue of one accord. Though He tarry, yet will they wait for Him. This is waiting. Some speak of waiting for salvation as if it meant making ourselves at ease, and dismissing both effort and anxiety. Who so waits for any person, or any event? When waiting, your mind is set on a certain point; you can give yourself to nothing else. You are looking forward and preparing; every moment of delay increases the sensitiveness of your mind as to that one thing. A servant waiting for his master, a wife waiting for the footstep of her husband, a mother waiting for her expected boy, a merchant waiting for his richly-laden ship, a sailor waiting for the sight of land, a monarch waiting for tidings of the battle: all these are cases wherein the mind is set on one object, and cannot easily give attention to another. To-morrow will be Thursday, a full week from the Ascension; that will be the day. The Thursday finds them, as before, "of one accord in one place": no Thomas absent through unbelief. How the scene of that day week would return to their view! How they would over and over again, in mind, repeat the occurrences of a week ago! But the day wears on, and no blessing. Is not the delay long? "Not many days!" Does the promise hold good? They must have felt disappointed as the evening fell. Now is the hour of trial. Will their faith fail? Will some stay at home, or "go a-fishing," saying that they will wait the Lord's time, and not be unwarrantably anxious about what, after all, does not depend on them, but on the Lord? Or will they begin to find out that the cause lies in the unfaithfulness of their companions? Happily the spirit of faith and love abides upon them. Happy for them that none fancied He could fix upon others the cause of their unanswered prayers! The Thursday is gone; eight days! The Friday and the Saturday follow it, marked by the same persistency in union, in praise, in prayer, and by the same absence of encouragement. Ten days gone! the promise, "Not many days," is all but broken. The final proof given by Peter, that he was waiting indeed, making all preparation for the event, was in calling upon his brethren to fill up the number of apostles. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Waiting for the promise:*—They were waiting in quiet expectation and hope, as little children sitting together on a Christmas Eve in a dark room, while in the next room the Christmas presents are preparing; for it was again the time of Advent, of the Advent of the Lord in the Spirit. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *Waiting for the promise:*—As those who dye cloth first prepare the cloth to receive the dye which it is to take, so does God ordain that the soul which is to receive His grace must be fitted for the sanctifying Spirit. (*Chrysostom.*) *Waiting for the promise: the duty of ministers and churches:*—It may be asked whether we are to expect that in all ages, a sufficient number of men will be raised up, bearing the primitive marks of a call from God, and of gifts from God; and our reply would be simply, "Remember the ten days." There we see men whose commission had come from the lips of the Lord Jesus, whose training has been under His own eye, who have forsaken houses, and lands, and all that could bind them to secular avocations, who are ready to set forth upon the work of calling and warning a world that is "lying in the wicked one"; and yet day after day the inhibition lies upon them, that they are to tarry until they are endued with power from on high. As we look at that spectacle—sinners dying, time rolling on, the Master looking down from His newly-ascended throne on the world which He has redeemed, seeing death bear away its thousands while His servants keep silence—there is in that silence a tone which booms through all the future, warning us that never, never, under the dispensation of the Spirit, are men to set out upon the embassy to Christ, be their qualifications or credentials what they may, until first they have been endued with power from on high, been baptized with tongues of fire. Better let the Church wait ever so long—better let the ordinances of God's house be without perfunctory actors, and all, feeling sore need, be forced to cry with special urgency for fresh outpourings and baptisms of the Holy Ghost, to raise up holy ministers, than that, by any manner of factitious supply, substitutes should be furnished—substitutes no more ministers of God, than coals arranged in a grate are a fire; or than a golden candlestick with a wax taper, never kindled, is a light. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *The first prayer-meeting after the Ascension:*—I. THE SCENE. "Upper" does not mean a room above the lower floor, much less a garret or inferior apartment, but one comparatively spacious—reserved in Greek and Jewish houses for the use of guests, or for unusual occasions. "Upper rooms were a kind of domestic chapels in every house. There they assembled to read the law, and to

transact religious affairs. In returning to Jerusalem the disciples showed—1. Their obedience to Christ. 2. Their fearless faith. II. THE ATTENDANCE. The roll of names reminds us of—1. The sociality of Christ's system. If you would unite men in social affection, you must get them to love supremely your common object. Christianity alone supplies an object that all hearts can love supremely; and therefore of all systems it is the most social. 2. The triumph of grace. Here is Peter no longer fearful, and Thomas no longer incredulous, &c. Women are also here: their presence being noted in strong contrast which assigned a separate court in the temple, and kept women apart in the synagogue. In Christ there is neither male nor female. Christianity has raised woman to her present position, and woman has ever proved most loyal to the system that has made her what she is. 3. The ravages of sin. Where is Judas? He was present at the supper, perhaps in this very room. III. THE SPIRIT was a spirit of—1. Union. They were not only assembled in the same place and for the same purpose; but there was a great unanimity of sentiment amongst them. They agreed in the blessings they sought, and in the mode of seeking them. 2. Perseverance. *Cf.* Parable of unjust judge. Conclusion: Would that all prayer-meetings were something like this. We must go back to apostolic times for our models of devotion. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *A model prayer-meeting*:—If the prayer-meeting is the thermometer of the Church, then the first Christian prayer-meeting registers a high degree of spiritual life existing just after the departure of Christ. This was a model in point of—I. ATTENDANCE. There were one hundred and twenty present. 1. All the office-bearers were there. Are modern elders and deacons as exemplary? 2. The male members were there. Business or pleasure did not hinder them. 3. The female members were there. "The women" still form a large proportion of the attendants at prayer-meetings. II. THE SPIRIT. Peace and unity prevailed. The day of "murmuring" had not yet come (chap. vi. 1.) Union is strength. A divided Church cannot long remain a praying Church. God answers prayer when it is offered by few or many "with one accord." The promise is addressed to those who are "agreed." III. THE RESULTS (see chap. ii.). The Church was born at a prayer-meeting, which should encourage us to sustain our often thinly attended and cold-spirited prayer-meetings. The prayer-meeting is more than the thermometer of the Church, it is the source of her spiritual power. There is as intimate a relation between the prayer-meeting and the outpouring of the Spirit as between the gathering of the cloud and the downpour of the shower. Pentecostal revivals must be preceded by ante-Pentecostal prayer-meetings. (*T. S. Dickson, M.A.*) *The meeting for prayer preparatory to the day of Pentecost*:—This passage refers to the most interesting period in the history of the Church, the results of which will be felt to all eternity. In one point of view the infant Church was in a bereaved condition. Still their glorified Lord had given to them words of promise which inspired them with the confident expectation of coming glory. And never was there a more interesting congregation. No Jewish ruler, no Rabbi, no Roman senator was there. It was a select and happy group of holy men and women, who had met for the most important purpose, to agonise in prayer. They were not acting under a momentary impulse; nor as the result of a transient excitement, but under the influence of that deep personal piety that needs no other impulse but what is supplied by a sense of duty, or by its own spontaneous energy. I. THE FEATURES BY WHICH THEY WERE DISTINGUISHED. 1. They contemplated the attainment of a special object. The Saviour's promise, so far from inducing indifference, awoke attention, urged to duty, and gave a specific character to prayer. During the greater part of the Saviour's ministry they seem to have known little of the doctrine of Divine influence. But at its close the Lord dwelt mainly upon this fundamental truth; and now the doctrine inspired their hopes, warmed their hearts, and must have formed the subject of their prayerful appeal to heaven. This blessing is as important for us as for them. The doctrine of Divine influence is admitted as an article of our faith, but it fails to exert the amount of influence over us which its importance demands. Yet, upon the prayers of the Church is made to depend the bestowment of the Spirit in any enlarged degree. And what else can secure the salvation of the perishing? or warm the hearts of slumbering saints? or reclaim the backslider from his wanderings? or correct the existing errors of the Church? 2. The prayers were presented in concert and union. The place was humble, but it served the purpose. It was not enough that that each one separately should have been endued with the spirit of prayer. Religion is social. Like gravitation, its tendency is to bring its recipients into con-

tact; and the wants of the Church make it necessary for its members to meet that they may blend their affections and unite in service. 3. These devotional exercises were continuous and persevering. The disciples laid aside for several days their ordinary occupations and gave themselves to the uninterrupted pursuit of spiritual things. This course was as true to philosophy as it was consistent with religion. It is by oft-repeated strokes that the artisan produces the desired impression on the metal; and that the heart may be subdued and elevated, it must be brought into continuous contact with spiritual realities. It is partly on such grounds that extraordinary religious services may be adopted and justified. A state of things may exist in a Church such as to call for some special effort. It may have lost its first love, and the things that remain may be ready to die. All ordinary effort to revive its piety seems to be in vain. It may be necessary, therefore, to resort to extraordinary measures and give ourselves to special prayer. 4. These exercises must have been marked by fervency and sustained by faith and hope. II. THE INFLUENCE AND RESULTS BY WHICH THESE DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES WOULD BE ATTENDED. 1. They would improve personal piety. That indeed had progressed considerably. Still, in point of depth, comprehensiveness, and power, it was susceptible of improvement. And if the first disciples needed an improvement in spiritual character, how much more we? What, then, shall accomplish it? United, as well as private prayer. 2. They would prepare the disciples to receive the promised effusion of the Spirit, and for their future vocation. A fixed rule in the Divine government is that the minds of men must be prepared by a suitable course of discipline for the reception of any special token of the favour of God. Isaiah was not called to witness before the live coal from the altar touched his lips. Moses was instructed by immediate communion with the Most High, preparatory to his mission. Would you be endued with power from on high and win souls to Christ? Then pray in unison. 3. They sustained an intimate relation to the events of the day of Pentecost. May they not be regarded as a most gracious answer to the prayers of the suppliant Church? (*W. A. Hurndall.*) *Prayer-meetings not to be given up*:—A pious woman, when it was decided to close the prayer-meeting in a certain village, declared that it should not be, for she would be there if no one else was. True to her word, when, the next morning, some one said to her jestingly, "Did you have a prayer-meeting last night?" "Ah, that we did," she replied. "How many were present?" "Four," she said. "Why," said he, "I heard that you were there all alone." "No," she said; "I was the only one visible; but the Father was there, and the Son was there, and the Holy Spirit was there, and we were all agreed in prayer." Before long others took shame themselves at the earnest perseverance of this poor woman, the prayer-meeting was revived and the church prospered. (*W. Baxendale.*) *Prayer-meetings, Sunday morning*:—I have been endeavouring to establish among us what are called Aaron and Hur Societies; *i.e.*, little collections of four or five or more persons, who meet before service on Sabbath morning, to spend an hour in prayer for a blessing on the minister and the ordinances. They began on New Year's Day and we seemed to have an immediate answer, for the meeting was unusually solemn; and we have reason to hope that the Word was not preached in vain. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Social prayer*:—By this is meant such meetings as are held pre-eminently for the purpose of prayer, praise, and revival. I. IMPORTANCE. 1. The inauguration of the Christian Church was preceded and attended with social prayer. The Day of Pentecost followed a ten days' prayer-meeting of the one hundred and twenty disciples. 2. Seasons of joy or danger were marked by meetings for prayer (chaps. iv. 23–31; xii. 12; xvi. 13). 3. Revivals of religion are closely connected with them. When Zion travails in prayer she brings forth her spiritual children (Isa. lxvi. 8). 4. Great movements have been originated in them. The first foreign missionary society had its inception in the meeting for prayer held by five young men—Mills, Richards, Robbins, Loomis, and Green—under a haystack at Williamstown in 1806. II. DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEETINGS FOR SOCIAL PURPOSES. 1. The weekly Church prayer-meeting. 2. Ladies' prayer-meetings. 3. Business men's noonday meetings. 4. The week of prayer. 5. Neighbourhood or cottage prayer-meetings. 6. Conventions or convocations for prayer and revival. III. SCRIPTURE PROMISES. 1. That Christ will make one in their company, whether they be few or many (Matt. xviii. 20). 2. That the prayer of faith shall be answered (Matt. xviii. 19; John xvi. 23, 24). 3. That their rewards shall be sure (Matt. iii. 16). IV. How MAY THE EFFICIENCY OF SUCH MEETINGS BE ENLARGED? 1. By preceding them with secret prayer. 2. By regular and prompt attendance. 3. By labouring to secure

the attendance upon them of every able-bodied Church member and others. (*L. O. Thompson.*) *An assembly of Christians*:—You know those lights which we use in public places, where you have a ring pierced with a hundred tiny holes, from each of which bursts a separate flame; but when all are lit they run into one brilliant circle, and lose their separateness in the rounded completeness of the blended blaze. This is like what Christ's Church ought to be. We each, by our own personal contact with Him, by our individual communion with our Saviour, become light in the Lord, and yet we joyfully blend with our brethren and fused into one, give forth our mingled light. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Prayer meetings*:—One of the greenest spots upon earth was the parish of St. Peter's, Dundee, when the lovely M'Cheyne was its pastor. He thus records in his diary the spirit of prayer which prevailed among his people: "Many prayer-meetings were formed, some of which were strictly private, and others, conducted by persons of some Christian experience, were open to persons under concern at one another's houses. At the time of my return from the mission to the Jews I found thirty-nine such meetings held weekly in connection with the congregation. *The social power of prayer*:—Akin to the moral are the social effects of prayer. Prayer makes men as members of society different in their whole being from those who do not pray. It gilds social intercourse and conduct with a tenderness, an unobstructiveness, a sincerity, a frankness, an evenness of temper, a cheerfulness, a collectedness, a constant consideration for others, united to a simple loyalty to truth and duty, which leavens and strengthens society. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Result of united prayer*:—There was an old deacon in a city in Michigan who was connected with a church which had no conversion for sixteen years. He came to his death-bed, and felt that he could not die in peace. He sent for the minister, but he had been too long accustomed to the darkness to be easily awakened. Failing with all the male members of the church he sent for the ladies, and pleaded with them to pray for a revival. They prayed and fasted before God. In a little while the whole church was moved. I received a despatch from the minister. On my arrival he took me into a room filled with these ladies praying that the Lord would reveal His power. I felt, as soon as I entered, that God was there. The next night the power came, and in forty-eight hours there was scarcely a young man or young woman who was not converted to God, or anxious to be saved. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The substance of the Church*:—There is a mine near Plymouth, where the men work in it two hundred and fifty feet below the surface, have a little shelf for their Bibles and their hymn-books, and a little place where every morning, when they go down in the black darkness, they bow before God, and praise Him whose tender mercies are over all His works. You never heard of these miners, perhaps, and do not know them; but possibly some of them are the very substance of the Church. There sits Mr. Somebody in that pew; oh, what a support he is to the Church! Yes, in money matters, perhaps; but do you know there is poor old Mrs. Nobody in the aisle that is most likely a greater pillar to the Church than he, for she is a holier Christian, one who lives nearer to her God and serves Him better, and she is "the substance thereof"? Ah, that old woman in the garret that is often in prayer, that old man on his bed that spends days and nights in supplication, such people as these are the substance of the Church. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The duty of prayer*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE APOSTLES. 1. They had just been visited with a very afflicting dispensation. We all know something of the pangs of separation, but how trying must have been separation from the Redeemer Himself! Amidst the experience of the pain which separation inflicted, however, they betook themselves to prayer, and in the exercise they sought and found consolation. Have you such a salve for the experience of trials? 2. They had just met with disappointment in reference to their worldly views and expectations. How did they act? did they exhibit symptoms of chagrin or hesitate about persevering in the service of Christ? No, they betook themselves to prayer. Let us follow their example. 3. They were placed in circumstances of great trial and perplexity. Not only were they now deprived of their Adviser and Friend, not only were their worldly expectations blasted, but they were taught to look for the experience of difficulty, persecution, and death. And, besides this, there was perplexity as to the duties they were to discharge (ver. 8): How were they qualified then to go to the uttermost parts of the earth to appear before the learned, the great, and the wise? But in the midst of all this they went to Him who could comfort them; and they did not repair to Him in vain. 4. A promise had been made to them, and their prayers had a very special reference to this. There are many who contend that prayer is useless because it is

impossible that it can alter the decrees of the Almighty. There are some who condemn it for the same reason. But the apostles were made aware, not only of God's decrees, but they had a promise actually made to them, yet they prayed for the very things which Christ had declared should be bestowed. True it is that no one can resist the will of the Almighty; but God works by means, and prayer is one of them. II. THE SPIRIT AND TEMPER THAT CHARACTERISED THEIR SUPPLICATIONS. 1. They doubtless prayed in the name of Christ (John xvi. 22). When we go to God never let us forget that the name we mention is that of Him who sitteth at the right hand of the Father. 2. They prayed in a spirit of obedience. We read here of their supplication, but notice their practice: "They returned unto Jerusalem." Let us be taught by this, that if we expect our prayers to be heard we must not only go to God in the name of Christ, but we must go seeking, and praying, and aspiring after obedience. 3. They showed also the spirit of love. We do read of their disputes, but we shall read of these no more. They are met with one accord. 4. They united together. And this teaches us the importance of public worship. (*J. Marshall.*) *Church attitudes: unity*:—To separate ourselves from our brethren is to lose power. Half-dead brands heaped close will kindle one another, and flame will sparkle beneath the film of white ashes on their edges. Fling them apart and they go out. Rake them together and they glow. Let us try not to be little, feeble tapers, stuck in separate sockets, and each twinkling struggling rays over some inch or so of space; but draw near to our brethren, and be workers together with them that there may rise a glorious flame from our summed and collective brightness which shall be a guide and hospitable call to many a wandering and weary spirit. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Church attitudes: expectancy*:—The sunshine flows into the opened eye, the breath of life into the expanding lung—so surely, so immediately, the fulness of God fills the waiting, wishing souls. (*Ibid.*) *Church attitudes: receptivity*:—If the Church is to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit she must cultivate the receiving frame of mind—she must place herself in right attitude toward the gift she would receive. The thirsty man who comes to the fountain must hold his cup the right side up if he is to receive the refreshing water, then the water will fill it; but if he holds the cup the wrong side up the water will flow over and dash away from it, and thus his thirst will not be quenched. Penitence, unity, prayer, earnestness, constitute the receptive attitude of the soul; to such the Spirit will be given without measure. "*Peter, James, and John*":—A curious text was once used by the Rev. J. Thain Davidson, D.D., in his first ministerial charge in Scotland, for the purpose of securing a large gathering of children whom he was anxious to address. The text was "Peter, James, and John"—from which he sought to show the individualising love of Christ. Fifteen years passed away and he heard nothing of that sermon; but one day, after he was settled in London, a young man called upon him: "Do you remember me, sir?" "No; I do not." "Do you remember the sermon you preached years ago on Peter, James, and John?" "Yes." "I was but a boy then, but I walked six miles to hear you, and God blessed that sermon to my conversion." Since then the young man has devoted himself to the ministry, and he is now a useful minister of Christ in America. This illustrates the importance of presenting to children's minds Bible truth in the most striking manner. *Prayer, patience in*:—How many courtiers go a hundred times a year into the prince's chamber without hope of once speaking with him, but only to be seen of him! So must we come to the exercise of prayer, purely and merely to do our duty and to testify our fidelity. (*St. Francis de Sales.*) *Prayer, persevering*:—Two Christian ladies, whose husbands were unconverted, feeling their great danger, agreed to spend one hour each day in united prayer for their salvation. This was continued for seven years; when they debated whether they should pray longer, so useless did their prayers appear, and decided to persevere till death, and, if their husbands went to destruction, it should be loaded with prayers. In renewed strength they prayed three years longer; when one of them was awakened in the night by her husband who was in great distress for sin. As soon as the day dawned she hastened, with joy, to tell her praying companion that God was about to answer their prayers. What was her surprise to meet her friend coming to her on the same errand! Thus ten years of united and persevering prayer was crowned with the conversion of both husbands on the same day. (*E. Foster.*) *Prayer, the secret of strength*:—There is an old story of mythology about a giant named Antæus, who was born by the earth. In order to keep alive this giant was obliged to touch the earth as often as once in five minutes, and every time he thus came in contact with the earth he became twice as strong as before.

The Christian resembles Antæus. In order to become and continue a truly living Christian, the disciple of Christ must often approach his Father by prayer. (*Preacher's Lantern.*) *Prayer, the secret of usefulness*:—Spurgeon, being asked as to the reason of his marvellous and blessed usefulness for God, pointed to the floor of the tabernacle saying, "In the room beneath you will find three hundred praying Christians. Every time I preach here they gather together, and uphold my hands by continuous prayer and supplication—there you will find the secret of all the blessing. *Prayer, faith in*:—Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow; faith is the hand which draws the bow, and sends the arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow is of no use; and the arrow without the bow is of little worth; and both, without the strength of the hand, to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer, nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avail the Christian anything. What was said of the Israelites, "They could not enter in because of unbelief," the same may be said of many of our prayers: they cannot enter into heaven because they are not put up in faith. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Prayer and revivals*:—The great revival in New York in 1858–9 began in answer to the earnest believing prayers of one man. After long waiting upon God, asking Him to show him what He would have him to do, and becoming more and more confident that God would show him the way through which hundreds might be influenced for their souls' good, he at last began a noon-day prayer-meeting. The first half-hour nobody came, and he prayed through it alone. At half-past twelve the step of a solitary individual was heard on the stairs; others came, until six made up the whole company. His record of that meeting was, "The Lord was with us to bless us." Of those six, one was a Presbyterian, one a Baptist, another a Congregationalist, and another a Reformed Dutch." (*The Power of Prayer.*) *Church unity*:—They were "all together in one mind." How graphic this sketch of true union; and of union for the attainment of a definite object! The expression implies not only concord, union of heart, but concert, agreement of will, prearrangement, and design. "All together in one mind." How fair a model for the imitation of the expectant Church in every age—for "sure His after-comings will be like to His first, to them that are, and not to any but them that are 'of one accord.'" "All," comprising every diversity of mental and moral constitution, in every degree of development, each retaining his proper individuality, yet each in vital sympathy and unison with all the rest. Various yet one, and the more completely one because various. "All together," the individual influencing the community, and the whole community influencing each individual; each communicating something to all; and all communicating something to each; Peter's quickness and vigour acting upon Thomas's sober considerateness; and Thomas's quiet considerateness keeping Peter's impetuous energy under wholesome restraint; the serene fervour of John blending with the activity of Andrew, and the unhesitating openness of Bartholomew; Martha's vivacity combining with her sister Mary's thoughtfulness, and the subdued and tender seriousness of Mary, the mother of the Lord; each simultaneously active and passive, and all sensibly quickened, by their union, to increasing earnestness and confidence. "All together, and of one mind," that single mind centring all its hopes, exercising all its energies on one object—the immediate descent of power from on high. (*F. W. Briggs.*)

Ver. 15. **And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.**—*Peter's attitude*:—Mark the bearing of Peter towards his fellow-believers. No priestly attitude does he assume. Though he leads, he associates the whole assembly with himself. He will have *them* to choose candidates for the apostleship; he accepts their nomination; and though it is all but certain that in laying these two before the Lord, *he* was the spokesman, this is not said. Nor was it only on this first occasion, when he might be supposed rather to shrink, that he thus acted, but on every subsequent occasion his procedure was in keeping with this. So little ground is there not only for the lordly assumptions of those who call themselves successors of "the prince of the apostles," but for that ecclesiastical ambition which has proved the bane and blight of many who repudiate Romish pretensions. (*D. Brown, D.D.*) *A model church meeting*:—This was a meeting—I. To TRANSACT BUSINESS OF VERY GRAVE IMPORTANCE. To elect an apostle—an eye-witness of the resurrection—in the place of Judas. The resurrection is the key-stone of the Christian system. The fact was so extraordinary, and clashed so mightily with popular prejudices that no one would dare to proclaim it who had not been deeply convinced of it by irresistible evidence. To be able to do this was necessary

to constitute an apostle. II. IN WHICH THE ASSEMBLED MEMBERS HAD A DUTY TO FULFIL, and all of them, male and female, were called upon to exercise their best judgment, and to give their conscientious vote. The candidates were set up not by the apostles, but by the whole body of disciples. The appointment of ministers is not the right of an individual, however distinguished in Church and state, but by the assembled Church. III. COMPETENT IN ITSELF TO DISCHARGE THE BUSINESS. They sought no counsel from any body of men external to themselves, nor would they have submitted to dictation from any person or society outside, however dignified. The power of a Church for its own business is in itself inspired and guided by Christ its Head. IV. SUPERINTENDED BY ITS ABLEST MEMBER. Peter's conduct shows that he was the most competent—*the* man to direct affairs. Observe—1. His sketch of the miserable man who had once occupied the vacant post. 2. His counsel as to present duty. Peter's principle was that the new apostle should be selected from those who were most intimate with the Master—a principle to be for ever observed. He only is qualified for the highest office in the Church whose alliance with Christ is most vital. V. IN WHICH THEY ENGAGED IN UNITED PRAYER TO HEAVEN FOR DIRECTION. The prayer implies—1. A recognition of the Divine omniscience. A deep impression of God's acquaintance with all hearts is essential to devotion. 2. A desire to have their choice regulated by the Divine. "We only desire to vote for Him whom Thou hast ordained." Conclusion: Would that all church meetings had ever been ruled by this model. Gathered not for trivial but important business; recognising the right of every member to a voice; holding the power to transact all its affairs independently of external authority, &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Preparing for ecclesiastical business*:—Notice that the company was—1. Comparatively small. But it was the first part of Christ's mighty kingdom. Despise not the day of small things. 2. Business-like. "Names" suggests that a list was probably drawn up—a sign of intelligence and earnestness. 3. Imperfect. One place was vacant, and the company could not be content till it was filled. 4. Every member of it acknowledged the authority of Holy Scripture. The company was prepared—I. BY BEING ADEQUATELY INSTRUCTED. Peter's speech showed—1. That the place of Judas must be filled up. The number of apostles followed that of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were commonly designated as "the Twelve," both before and after the death of Judas. 2. That the whole assembly must take part in filling up the vacancy. 3. That the Word of God was to give the assembly present direction. 4. That definite qualifications were required in an apostle. 5. That a definite work had to be done by the apostles. This instruction probably cleared up vague thinkings for many a member of the company. II. BY BEING STRONGLY WARNED AGAINST SIN. In the case of Judas they saw—1. Sin working in one who had held office under Jesus—the Saviour from sin. What qualifications had they which Judas had not had? Yet sin turned him out of his office. Then let all beware. 2. Sin working in one who had been chosen for office by Jesus Himself. 3. Sin growing to great enormity. 4. Sin making its perpetrator infamous. 5. Sin ending in a doom of darkness. Conclusion: Here we see—1. The true primacy of Peter. He led in preparation, interpretation and prayer. The fulfilment of the words, "Thou art Peter," &c., is here begun. The foundation is not the confession, but the man (Gal. ii. 9; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 4–6). Christ is the one foundation stone (1 Cor. iii. 11); but there is also a foundation of the apostles and prophets, and this is laid in Peter. Accordingly he founded the Jewish portion of the Church, as we see in the early chapters of this book. On him, standing on Christ, were laid in one day three thousand souls. And he also founded the Gentile portion (chaps. x., xi.). But Peter had no special primacy of rank after his own special work was completed. And he could have no successor. 2. The true functions of the preacher. Peter gave the sense of Scripture, and applied it to the circumstances of the time so directing the hearers. The Acts is the best treatise on homiletics. 3. A good example for all Christians. Under Peter's direction the company prayed, considered their duty, and so proceeded to action—prayer, meditation, work, describe the whole sphere of Christian duty. (*W. Hudson.*) *The premature election*:—1. "In those days" Peter "stood up." It was a pity he did so, for he had been told to sit down. But who can wait ten days? Yet those periods of waiting are interposed in every life, for the trial of patience and for the perfecting of faith. "They also serve who only stand and wait." "Stand still and see the salvation of God." "Your strength is to sit still." But Peter was a man who could not wait. He was always more or less of a talkative man. Instead of

embodying it in patience and endurance his energy evaporated in speech. He will become a better man by and by; yes, even in this opening speech, he begins to show that delicacy of touch which made him conspicuous amid all the apostolic writers. It was to be feared that he would begin with a mistake, because he ended with one (John xxi. 21). The fussy church must be doing something, if it is only mischief; the mechanical church cannot stand still; they consider that if they are walking up and down very much, they are doing something, but if they be sitting quietly still in expectancy and eager love, they are doing nothing. Peter will have a vote taken, or a ballot; he will complete the broken circle—he who broke the circle most. 2. Peter begins where all wise teachers begin, if they would continue efficiently, and conclude beneficently. He founds what he has to say upon the Scriptures. This is the peculiarity of Christian teaching: it founds itself upon the Written Word. Even where there may be differences of interpretation, it rests upon something deeper than merely verbal exposition. Herein is that sublime possibility of all Christian sections being substantially and integrally right. It is the spirit that unites, it is the letter that divides and kills. It is quite possible for a heterodox man to have an orthodox spirit, and it is by his spirit that he will be saved, and not by his letter. 3. Grounding himself upon Scripture, and only partially interpreting it, Peter proceeded to take a ballot for an apostle to succeed the apostate Judas. Who asked him to rise and address the disciples at all? The disciples were told to wait for the baptism of power. Peter was not endued with the Holy Ghost in the Pentecostal sense when he made this speech. The conditions of succession to the apostolate are very beautiful (vers. 21, 22). That is the law of the ministry to-day. "Lay hands suddenly on no man." The Christian ministry must be composed of men who have "companied with us" and known the Lord Jesus Christ all the time. You cannot make ministers; they must be born, not of blood, &c. This is the mischief against which we have to guard, that you can buy ministers with money. This genius is not in the market. 4. Having elected two men for choice, the disciples prayed: they left the case in the hands of God, but unfortunately they had first taken it into their own. Never take your own case into your own hand. Persons say, "Be prudent"—if ever you can for a moment sit yourself down, resolving to be prudent, God has forsaken you! Persons say, "Beware of exaggeration, of enterprises that are dangerous"—those persons never did anything for the world; they cannot; cold water never drove an engine, and a body without wings never knew the danger, the mystery, the joy of flight. Seek an inspired life. So the apostles committed themselves in prayer to God for guidance. So would I take every matter to God day by day. 5. The disciples gave forth their lots. How pitiful. In a few more days they will have had the Holy Ghost. There are men now who would decide everything by lot: it seems a short and easy method, but it is no method in the house of God; we are now under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. There is no such way of discovering God's thought. We do not decide things by lot in our own narrow sphere, nor do we carry things unanimously ourselves. Thus, these are the voters that live in you—Judgment, Self-interest, immediate Success, Curiosity, Speculation, Family considerations, Health, Time, and some twenty more voters all have a seat in the council of your mind. Now those who are in favour of this course say, "Aye," those who oppose say, "No," and then you, that innermost You, says, "The ayes have it—or the noes," so that in reality you do not carry your own personal decisions unanimously. Sometimes your judgment does not vote at all, then the resolution is said to be carried *nem. con.* Sometimes you carry your resolutions unanimously, the whole man stands up and says, "Let it be done." When I have wished in critical hours to know what was right, I have submitted myself to three tests—(1) What is my own deepest conviction. (2) What is the concurrent voice of my most trusted counsellors. (3) What is the fair inference from conspiring circumstances? With these, I have said, "There is none other than God's will: if it be not, Lord, stop me. Not my will but Thine be done." 6. In the case before us the lot fell upon Matthias, and you hear no more about him. I do not want to be a balloted minister: here because I had six votes, and another man had only five: I want to stand in my ministry by right Divine, by credentials not written by men and that cannot be expunged by men. That is the calling of the whole Church: do not imagine that Episcopalianism, Congregationalism, &c., will save you. We are not saved by name, nor are we an influential Church because we bear an illustrious name. Every day needs its own inspiration, as every day requires its own bread. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Christian life organic*:—1. THE SUICIDE OF

JUDAS CREATED A VACANCY IN THE NUMBER OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. Christ does not seem to have spoken concerning this, but leaves it to be filled by the Church. And this is the duty to which Peter summons them. The little handful of believers were waiting for "the promise of the Father." They were called not to activity, but to stillness and expectancy. But Peter at once organises a council and proceeds to an Episcopal election. And, unquestionably, Peter was right, and the disciples recognised it to be their first duty to fill up the ranks and perfect the organisation, and so enlarge the influence and increase the working power of that Divine agency which Christ had committed to their charge. II. Let us admit freely that ORGANISATION IS NOT LIFE, BUT WITHOUT ORGANISATION THERE CAN BE NO LIFE. In nature we know of life at all, only as it exhibits itself under organised forms, and so St. Paul affirms must the life of Divine truth in the world, be an organised life with a head, and hands and feet—in other words with that which governs and that which communicates and that which obeys. When a farmer in the Salt Lake Valley constructs that ingenious system of sinuous and interlacing tile water-courses by which the melting snows of the Wausatch Mountains are conducted to every remotest corner of his vineyards and cornfields, he has not thereby secured the smallest guarantee that the snow will fall, or that it will melt, or that it will obey the law of gravitation and run down hill into his tanks. These things are ordered by God, and his orchards blossom and his corn sprouts, not because he has laid so many feet of drain-pipe, but because God has put into the melted snow or the chance shower some mysterious power of making that arid desert of sand with its silex and potash to burst forth, straightway so soon as the water has touched it, and bud and blossom as a rose. But none the less, as things are, that arid and desert valley would never have burst into flower if the farmer's simple machinery had not so organised and utilised these forces of nature that the baptism of the one became the new birth and resurrection of the other. III. And this, at any rate, is the lesson of such a parable, as it is of all history. THE CHURCH OF GOD IS IN THE WORLD, NOT AS A HUMAN INVENTION, BUT AS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT TO BE APPLIED BY HUMAN HANDS. Its fellowship is not salvation, but it is a means of salvation. Its sacraments are not grace, but they are channels of grace. Its Bible is not a charm or a talisman, but it is a teacher and guide. Its services are not spells, but they are helps and refreshments. I honour with my whole soul that protest against the formalism of the Church, which resents the tendency to make of these things the whole of religion. I honour no less that vehement and robust indignation which denounces the temper that hands over all men who do not belong to your Church or mine or some other of equal historic pretensions, to the uncovenanted mercies of God. But all this does not affect in the smallest degree, the question whether or no Christ has founded a Church, whether or no you and I have sought, and found its fellowship. The Church exists in the world not to enjoy our patronage, to invite our criticism, to gratify our taste, but to accept our discipleship. Her organised life, her ministry, her sacraments, her worship, the proclamation of her Lord's message—all these things are not less essential to-day, than when in the beginning Peter convened the hundred and twenty disciples to choose Matthias. This Christian organisation is Divine, and as such it speaks its message and holds forth its ministrations. It may be that some of us have come to regard the Church as a kind of social appendage, a rather more dignified marrying and burying and baptising association, which we are to make use of when tradition or custom or decorum constrains us to, and at other times conveniently forget. But the moment that we look into it we find that it asserts of itself nothing less than a Divine origin, and it demands a definite obedience. We may say that that authority is groundless, but until we have proved it, our allegiance is not an option, it is a debt. IV. And so I PLEAD WITH PARENTS TO TRAIN CHILDREN IN WAYS OF REVERENT FAMILIARITY WITH GOD'S WORD, GOD'S HOUSE, AND GOD'S DAY. Let them understand that something higher than your taste or preference makes these things sacred and binding. And that you may do this the more effectually, give them, I entreat you, that mightiest teaching which consists in your own consistent and devout example. And in your holidays remember that wherever you go, you are a baptised member of the Church, and treachery to your baptismal vow is as disloyal under a foreign flag as it would be under your own. (*Bp. H. C. Potter, D.D.*) *Lessons from the pre-Pentecostal period*:—In this paragraph we have—I. THE LAW OF LEADERSHIP IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. 1. Society without leadership sinks into confusion. 2. In the long run leadership resolves itself into a question of personal qualification. Sooner or later unqualified men

have to resign positions they ought never to have assumed. 3. In a great leader many elements are combined. Others may excel him in detached points, but taken as a whole, he rules not by one dominant faculty, but by a noble proportion of gifts. 4. The position of leader is not so easy as it seems to unreflecting observers. Men see the elevation, not the strain and responsibility. 5. The only sound rule for promotion is wisdom which should be recognised irrespective of age or position. 6. He leads best who knows the art of wise following. The leader is often, as here, but the mouthpiece of the whole community. 7. All human leadership is to be subjected to the Headship of the Divine Redeemer. II. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. 1. It was required that the successor to the vacant bishopric be a man who had known Christ. Those who now sustain the office of witnesses for Christ must be men whose spiritual intimacy with Him is intense and fully tested. Every minister must have seen Christ and known the power of His resurrection. 2. It is clear from the election of Matthias that there is in the Scriptures a distinct claim to apostolic succession. Who then are in this succession? Those who are animated by the apostolic spirit. It is not a question of ecclesiastical descent, but of spiritual illumination and sympathy. 3. The twelfth minister was chosen by the whole Church subject to a distinct expression of the Divine Will. The election was not determined by personal taste, much less by the industrious canvassing of ambitious candidates. The minister was sought by prayer and as a consequence was received with submission and thankfulness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–20. **Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled . . . concerning Judas.**—*The subserviency of crime to the purposes of God*:—We know not a more remarkable expression than "The wrath of man shall praise Thee, the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." The manner in which God overrules wickedness, and by which crime is as much an instrument in His hands as obedience, evidences our Maker's greatness as well as His unlimited dominion. God is able to reckon with thorough certainty upon the commission of a crime, and yet leave men quite free in the commission. We are so accustomed to denounce the traitor for his crime, that we are apt to overlook the important ends which are eventually subserved. It will be our object to exhibit generally the testimony to Christianity which is furnished by the treason of Judas. I. LET US PREMISE ONE OR TWO OBSERVATIONS UPON THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS; for bad as this was, it may by possibility be misrepresented. We see no reason to believe that Judas had any design on the life of his Master, for, seeing the consequences of his treachery, he was torn with mortification and remorse. He might have supposed it highly improbable that, by placing Christ in the hands of His enemies, he would have been instrumental in His death; for the Jews had then no legal power of putting to death; and it was not likely that the Romans would pay attention to their accusations. Judas then may have calculated that all that could be done to Christ would be putting some restraint upon His person, and preventing Him from further propagating the religion, by whose precepts he himself was condemned. II. We shall proceed, on this supposition, in TRACING THE ENDS WHICH THE TREACHERY SUBSERVED. You may imagine that the traitor seized a favourable opportunity of indulging his avarice, and of stopping the diffusion of a religion, which, as a money-grasping man, he must have cordially disliked. Now, if he had been possessed of any information which at all tended to invalidate its truth, how eagerly would he have adduced it, and the chief priests have received it! The mere putting to death was as nothing compared with the proving Him a deceiver. And yet Judas, eager as he was for money, and anxious to crush the new religion, has no intelligence to give which may disprove Christ's pretensions. This is amongst the strongest of proofs that Christ was "a teacher sent from God." 1. Our Lord's pretensions rested chiefly on His miracles, so that to show deceit in the one would have overthrown the other. Infidelity will sometimes argue that there might have been collusion in the miracles. Now, had this been the case, Judas must have known it, and if Judas must have known, this would have been a fine piece of intelligence to have sold to the chief priests, and by communicating it he would at once have enriched himself and destroyed Christianity. Nay, he would have done a righteous deed; and while gratifying his avarice, he would have laid up no food for remorse. 2. The infant religion might have been assailed with at least equal power through the moral character of its Founder. And one of the most beautiful arguments by which we may defend Christianity is derived from the more than human purity of

Christ. And if it were possible to invalidate in the least degree the truth that Christ "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," the whole system would fall to the ground. Mark, that "the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and they found none." Yet they were bargaining with Judas, one of His intimate associates, who must have been accurately acquainted with all the flaws, if such there were, in His character. In the silence of this traitor in selling his Master, we find irresistible attestation to the fact that Christ Jesus was indeed "a lamb without blemish and without spot." 3. The prophecies might have been frustrated. It had been declared, in Zechariah, that the Messiah should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and this price be given to the potter. Now had the chief priest and scribes offered more than thirty pieces, or had Judas been contented with fewer, or had the price of blood, when returned by the traitor, been spent on the land of any but a potter, there would have been a defect in the evidence that Jesus was the Christ. And the infatuated rulers could not see this. Perhaps they drove a hard bargain with Judas, beating him down till they reached the exact sum which prophecy specified as the number of the pieces of metal. They never thought, when exulting that they had bought Jesus at the price of a slave, that they had completed the evidence of His being their king. The like may be said of the potter's field. With all their profligacy, they were scrupulous in touching the money; and therefore will they use it in proving Jesus the Christ. It shall buy the potter's field—the only purpose to which it can be turned; and after being the price of His blood it shall serve to prove His commission. The only prophecies with which infidelity could be successfully pressed are those in which it is impossible that the parties professedly interested should have planned or procured the accomplishment. Nothing can more directly answer this commission than those which have reference to the compact with Judas. Conclusion: This is our consolation whilst "the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing"—we know that the will of our Creator shall take effect. Hostility and malice and treachery shall prevail nothing against the Lord and His Christ. They shall but defend and consolidate the Church. Judas Iscariot vindicates the Master he betrayed, and sustains the cause from which he apostatised. Therefore need we be nothing dismayed if the wicked combine to oppose Christianity. There is one that sits above the tempest, and so directs it, that its fury shall be spent on those by whom it has been raised. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Judas: his sin:—He was guide to them that took Jesus. I. THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO TAKE CHRIST. 1. Faith takes Jesus. It takes Christ at His word. (1) In His promises. (2) In His warnings, when He directs the life by those careful provisions and restrictions which are found everywhere in His Word. (3) In His precepts, when it strives to obey that which He commands, to submit to that which He appoints. (4) In His person. (5) In His covenanted presence in this world by the Spirit. 2. Falseness takes Christ. Inspired by hatred of His words, by restlessness under His control, by uncongeniality with His spirit, it cries, "I will not have this man to reign over me." And when that spirit of opposition is developed there is no mode of destruction too vile for falseness to accept. The world is full of those who are controlled by this hostility. Opposition to Jesus among men only lacks leadership; and whensoever such a guide is found they covenant with him even to a costly sacrifice if he will deliver the Jesus of the Church into their hands. Pilate's timidity, and Herod's overweening, weak curiosity, are bad enough in condemning Christ; but He says, "He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." It is not enough that the Judas who guides this hostility should plead his own freedom from violence. He adds meanness to his other sins when he shirks the responsibility he has assumed. There are multitudes who need no accusers before God's throne. There are those who confess that they are opponents, and mean to be such, and whose only apology is, "At all events, we do not profess to be anything better," and in God's book of remembrance their apology becomes their accusation. Then there are those who say, "We know the truth perfectly." Then, brother, if thy life is still against Christ, when thou shalt stand before that terrible bar thine own faith shall testify against thee. Of all dooms there is none so dreadful as that of him who strives to hold the privilege of professed discipleship, and yet is a guide to them that take Jesus. II. THREE STEPS WHICH SUCH A GUIDE MUST TAKE. Only three? How short a journey it is! David sums it up with other words in his first Psalm. The likeness of Judas' life in these three respects can be traced, I fear, in that of some of us. 1. He counsels with Jesus' enemies. 2. He reveals His hiding. 3. He perverts a profession of affection. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*)

God's foreknowledge practically considered:—Foreknowledge and predestination are not subjects for a careless, trifling, or cavilling mind to grapple with. Neither are they subjects which, under any circumstances, admit of being treated in an abstract or mere speculative way. That God foreknows all actions, and all occurrences, we cannot deny, without at once stripping Him of an essential attribute of His being. That His foreknowledge comprehends the final destiny of every human being, is clear. In order, however, to get rid of this inevitable conclusion, the doctrine of contingencies is sometimes resorted to; and we are asked how a thing can be certainly foreknown which is dependent upon occurrencies that may or may not take place. This is a mere evasion—the raising of a second difficulty, in order to dispose of the first. Is it more difficult for God to foresee the working contingencies, and the specific movements of pure volition, than it would be to foresee those results if they were suspended upon an absolute decree? But we are told that by pressing the doctrine of foreknowledge we place ourselves on the threshold of predestination; inasmuch as a thing definitely foreknown is as certain as a thing positively foreordained. I have neither the power nor the will to resist this inference, because I believe it to be a legitimate conclusion arising out of undeniable premisses. But then we are told, further, and by another class of persons, that foreknowledge and predestination involve in them the execution of a decree, whereby a large portion of mankind are reprobated and doomed to eternal misery; and the case of Judas is referred to as an instance in point. Here we are completely at issue with them, and for this plain reason—that the Bible speaks a different language from that which they see fit to employ on the subject. The Bible represents the door of mercy as being wide open for the admission of every son and daughter of Adam. If the language actually employed by the inspired writers does not tell me that Christ died for all, could any other language have been adopted by them, calculated to convey the idea more forcibly, admitting that they wished to convey it at all? A second thought which presses itself upon the attention, as the result of a fair survey of the book of God, is,—that where the offers of mercy are rejected, such rejection is altogether voluntary: in other words, that obstacles to salvation rest entirely with man; and that every sinner who perishes under a blaze of evangelical light, is, to all intents, a self-destroyer. Still, however, though the theory of absolute unconditional reprobation is disproved by the testimony of Scripture, there is a rebounding echo which says that foreknowledge is certainty; and that if God foreknows who of His creatures will be finally saved, and who of them will be eternally lost, it amounts to the same thing, so far as the single point of destination is concerned, as if He had positively decreed life to some and death to others. This, again, is a position which I shall not attempt to controvert; and yet it is a position requiring to be taken in connection with the elucidation of certain principles which are constantly and practically operating in the affairs of human life. God foreknows everything; and yet man acts as if He foreknew nothing. Volition is as perfect, the will is as unfettered in the one case as it would or could be in the other. Simple foreknowledge, as distinguished from absolute predestination, is founded on free agency, and in no way does it influence or control it. The very certainty by which it is characterised is the result of free agents acting as they please, of rational intelligences ranging at large in the wide field of unrestrained liberty. If men are not saved, it is because they refuse to be saved, and for no other cause; and hence we may well ask, Where is the humility, where is the wisdom, where is the piety, of persons disquieting their minds, because their Creator is an omniscient Intelligence, and because the attribute of omniscience involves foreknowledge and certainty? You will observe that I have confined myself to the point of foreknowledge, leaving that of predestination, excepting incidently, untouched. I have done so because I consider it as irrelevant to the case of Judas, and not propounded, either directly or by implication, in the text. Predestination stands closely connected with sovereignty; and sovereignty has exclusively to do with the bestowment of good; exerting itself solely in acts of beneficence; decreeing blessings, not curses; ordaining men to life, not dooming them to destruction. At the same time, I cannot refrain from saying, in reference to predestination, that, in a practical point of view, it presents, so far as I can judge, no greater difficulties to the mind than those connected with foreknowledge. It is equally consistent with the freedom of man as a rational agent, with the universality of gospel offers, and with the fulness of gospel grace. Conclusion: 1. The subject we have considered constitutes a loud call to humanity. Instead of cavilling at difficulties, let us resolve them into the imperfection of mortal

vision; and, instead of boasting our mental powers, let us lie prostrate at the Divine footstool, as those who feel their own littleness, and are sensible how blind and ignorant they are, in reference to heavenly things. 2. The subject should guard us against the error of suffering ourselves to be fettered by any human system. Let promises and precepts, doctrines, and duties, decrees and responsibilities, occupy the places assigned to them on the page of Scripture; and what God has joined together let not the presumptuous hand of man dare to put asunder. 3. The contemplation of God's foreknowledge should never be engaged in otherwise than in close connection with gospel promises and gospel precepts. God knows no such character as a sincere inquirer shut out from mercy's gate; and sooner shall the sun be shorn of its beams—sooner shall the rainbow discharge its beauteous colours—than a praying soul shall perish, because Divine foresight takes cognizance of human destination. 4. The doctrine of Divine foreknowledge, as taught in Scripture directly and inferentially, tends, when duly apprehended, through a spiritual medium, both to impart comfort, and to prompt exertion. In proportion as faith and hope ripen into assurance, the soul is perceptibly strengthened for the performance of its active duties; and on the same principle, the certainty of Divine foreknowledge, irradiated with the bright beams of evangelical promise, so stimulates the believer's energies that he becomes "ready to every good work"—"steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (*Wm. Knight, M.A.*) *Judas's iniquity and its consequences:*—From these learn—1. How great a sin avarice is, and to what a depth of wickedness it precipitates a man. 2. How deep the fall of those who fall from great grace and from high privileges. 3. How grievous the sin of desperation. It was this which made the difference between the sin of the traitor and that of the denier. (*Cornelius à Lapide.*) *Judas: his fate:*—He fell headlong, or, rather, flat on his face (*cf.* Josephus, "Jewish Wars," vi. 1–6), a fact not contradictory, but additional, to the circumstances mentioned in Matt. xxvii. 5, where the word is the same as that used by the LXX. concerning Ahithophel. Theophylact explained that the rope broke, Judas having flung himself off some height. It will be remembered that ten thousand Idumean captives, cast down from the top of a rock, after Amaziah's victory, "were all broken in pieces" (2 Chron. xxv. 12). (*Bp. Jacobson.*) *A traitor's death:*—The Duke of Buckingham, having by an unfortunate accident lost the army which he had raised against the usurper Richard III., was forced to flee for his life without page or attendant. At last he took refuge in the house of Humphrey Bannister at Shrewsbury, who, being one of his servants, and having formerly raised him from a low condition, would, he trusted, be ready to afford him every possible protection. Bannister, however, upon the king's proclamation, promising £1,000 reward to him that should apprehend the Duke, betrayed his master to John Merton, high sheriff of Shropshire, who sent him under a strong guard to Salisbury, where the king then was, by whom he was condemned to be beheaded. But Divine vengeance pursued the traitor and his family; for, on demanding the £1,000, that was the price of his master's blood, King Richard refused to pay it, saying, "He that would be false to so good a master ought not to be encouraged." He was afterwards hanged for manslaughter: his eldest son fell into a state of derangement, and died in a hog-sty; his second son became deformed and lame; his third son was drowned in a small pool of water, and the rest of his family perished miserably. *The potter's field:*—At Jerusalem traces of an ancient gateway have been discovered, apparently that known as "The Gate of the Potters," the quarter where earthenware was manufactured. Opposite to this lies the "Potter's Field," still called Aceldama, on which rises an old ruin thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, the whole forming a flat-roofed cover to a dismal house of the dead. Two caverns open in the floor, their rocky sides pierced with holes for bodies; and galleries of holes run into the hill from the bottom. Holes in the roof are still seen through which the corpses were let down by ropes, and there are marks of the steps by which the tombs were entered. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *Aceldama, the field of blood:*—Bought with the price of blood (Matt. xxvii. 8), and, according to received tradition, stained with the blood of Judas. The name would remind Jewish readers of that bloodshedding, the consequences of which had been invoked on themselves and on their children. The place commonly shown as Aceldama has ever been famous on account of the sarcophagus virtue possessed by the earth in hastening the decay of dead bodies. Shiploads of it were carried to the Campo Santo in Pisa. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) *Aceldama:*—The gambling spirit, which is at all times a stupendous evil, ever and anon sweeps over

the country like an epidemic, prostrating uncounted thousands. There has never been a worse attack than that from which all the villages, towns, and cities are now suffering. 1. This sin works ruin, first, by providing an unhealthful stimulant. 2. Again, this sin works ruin by killing industry. 3. Furthermore, this sin is the source of dishonesty. 4. Notice also the effect of this crime upon domestic happiness. (*T. de Witt Talmage.*) *The prophecies in Peter's speech*:—The first quotation (ver. 20) down to "therein" is taken substantially from Psa. lxix. 25, with some compression of LXX., and a variation in the number of the pronoun from plural to singular, by which Judas is taken as a representative of Christ's enemies. This Psalm, quoted in the New Testament oftener than any other, except xxii., is pre-eminently Messianic. Ver. 9 is applied to Christ by John (ii. 17); the words immediately following by Paul (Rom. xv. 3); and the fulfilment of ver. 21 is noted by John (xix. 28–30). The second quotation is taken with verbal exactness from LXX., Psa. cix. 8—the Iscariot Psalm. The conduct of Judas warranted the identifying him with Doeg and Ahithophel. David and his enemies are treated as types of Christ and His enemies. And after the exposition given by our Lord (Luke xxiv. 44), it is out of the question to impute to Peter misunderstanding or misapplication. (*Bp. Jacobson.*)

Vers. 21, 22. **Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.**—*The familiar side of Christ's life*:—There are many ways of regarding the life of Christ: *e.g.*, the philosophical or ideal, as in John's Gospel; the historical, in its larger world relation, as in Luke and St. Paul's Epistles; or, as here, the familiar. A proverbial touch may be detected in the phraseology of the text recalling Psa. cxxi. 8. Such an expression indicates "the daily round" as distinguished from the special occasions of life. Note two or three reflections upon the great fact of the dwelling amongst us of God's Son. I. THIS CONTACT MUST BE A GROUND FOR THE MOST COMPLETE SYMPATHY BETWEEN HIM AND US. 1. How thoroughly He shared the occupation, interest, and outlook of man. He entered into human thought, and looked upon the universe as it appears to the human eye and mind. Nothing human was indifferent to Him. All questions of labour, of the family, of social or political affairs, were and are of concern to Him. He is one with us. 2. He was a partaker in the suffering and shame of men. Pain, sorrow, disappointment, formed the alphabet of His experience as of ours. These were for Him a discipline as well as for us, and He regarded them and the problems they present as one of ourselves. II. How INDEPENDENT CHRIST WAS OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ASSOCIATES. It has been said that "no man is a hero to his valet." Familiarity breeds, if not contempt, at any rate, loss of reverence. Can we conceive of Jesus losing in moral dignity or the esteem of men by daily intercourse? Here He receives the title "Lord," and His going in and out is "over" His people, *i.e.*, authoritatively, as a shepherd over his sheep. He chose a life least calculated to produce social or political effects, yet His influence was enhanced by that fact. His work so absolutely depended on Himself that political influence or high social position would have injured it. But was He Himself affected by His station in life? Carlyle's vices, we are told by Froude, were to be looked for, considering his nature and upbringing as a Scottish peasant, and even his virtues were those of people of humble circumstances. Were the virtues of the Peasant of Galilee subject to this drawback? Nay; for we see how He towers above His contemporaries and followers. To such an age He could owe nothing, and the best of all ages have done Him homage and tried to imitate Him. III. IT IS JUST THIS "DAILY ROUND" OF LIFE THAT NEEDS SAVING. Five-sixths of life consists of routine, and what would be the use of a religion that could not affect this? There is a constant tendency to detach the common things of life from moral considerations. Christ's parables discovered the mystery of the kingdom of heaven that was latent in men's daily lives. Who shall tell how much the childhood of Jesus has done to purify home life, or His work as a carpenter to ennoble labour? (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *The election of Saint Matthias considered and applied*:—On the day which is appointed to commemorate the Apostle Matthias, our Church has selected for the Epistle a portion of Scripture from the Acts of the Apostles, the only portion of Scripture in which his name is to be found. Whatever else is related of him in uninspired authors is attended with uncertainty, however worthy of remembrance. One circumstance is mentioned concerning him by two respectable writers among the early Christians, viz., that he was one of the seventy disciples whom the Lord

Christ, during His earthly ministry, sent forth to work miracles and to preach in His name. This circumstance proves that he was known to Christ, and Christ to him; and that Christ had distinguished him among His followers. I. The first piece of instruction which I think we may learn from this portion of Scripture history is THAT AMONG THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF GOD BAD AND UNFAITHFUL MEN MAY BE FOUND. Judas Iscariot was a traitor among the twelve apostles. Satan, as we read in the Book of Job, was among the sons of God when they came to present themselves to Jehovah. Among the early converts to the faith of Christ, Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, were discovered to be insincere. Our Saviour's parables of the wheat and tares growing in the same field, and of the good and bad fish caught in the same net, give us the like view of His Church here on earth. We know that His Church triumphant will be presented to Him "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." The ministers of Christ's Church, though especially called to be examples to the people whom they are appointed to teach and lead, are certainly not exempt from this corrupting influence: neither is it to be expected that they should be. They are still but men, liable to temptation as the rest of mankind, and subject to the peculiar temptations of their calling. II. But another piece of instruction which we may learn from this portion of Scripture history is THAT, THOUGH WICKEDNESS BE FOREKNOWN, FORETOLD, AND PREDETERMINED BY GOD, IT IS WICKEDNESS NOTWITHSTANDING. To God, who knows all things, it was certainly known that Judas would act the part which history relates he did. Was Judas, then, innocent on this account? Mark the language of the historian in writing of it: "This man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity." Take another instance of the like kind in our Lord Jesus Christ: "Him," says St. Peter, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Let no Christian, therefore, set the foreknowledge and predestination of God against the willing agency and responsibility of man, as if they were inconsistent and at variance with each other, and could not both be true. And let those who would excuse their impieties, by pretending a fatal necessity, be told that, if their sins be decreed and inevitable, so also is their punishment; and if they cannot but choose the one, they must equally choose the other. III. A third piece of instruction which we may learn from this portion of Scripture history is THAT WHEN, BY DEATH OR OTHERWISE, A MINISTER OF CHRIST'S CHURCH IS REMOVED FROM HIS CUSTOMARY SPHERE OF SPIRITUAL LABOUR, IT IS THE DUTY OF THE BISHOP, PATRON, AND PEOPLE, AS FAR AS LIES IN THEM, TO APPOINT A GOOD AND WELL-QUALIFIED MINISTER IN HIS PLACE. We may notice, however, in the election of Matthias what was thought particularly necessary for his office. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." It was an accurate knowledge of Jesus, from the beginning of His public ministry, which was from the time of His being baptised by John to the day of His ascension into heaven. And this knowledge was to qualify the apostle to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Next, therefore, to honesty of character and sincerity of affection to Jesus, this information was a needful quality in a preacher of the gospel. The same quality is still needed in preachers of the gospel, though not to be obtained from visible intercourse with the holy Jesus. They ought to be well acquainted with the history of His life; with the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Him; with the manner of their fulfilment, as far as they have been fulfilled; and with all the evidences which clearly prove Him to be "the Christ, the Saviour of the world." To state this knowledge properly and effectually, their hearts also ought to be warmed with love to Jesus, and to the sinners whom He came "to seek and to save." IV. A fourth piece of instruction which we may learn from this portion of Scripture history is THE DUTY OF PRAYER IN THE CASE OF THE ORDINATION OF MINISTERS GENERALLY, AND ON THE APPOINTMENT OF ANY INDIVIDUAL MINISTER TO SOME PARTICULAR FIELD OF LABOUR IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. This duty was carefully performed by the apostles and disciples of Christ in the instance before us. Let private prayer be added to that which is public, that the Holy Spirit may direct the minds and hearts of all parties concerned in the ordination of ministers. Having thus prayed in faith, they should receive the minister sent to them as Christ's ambassador, to be reverenced for the sake of the King, his divine Master. But, more than this, their prayers should be seconded and followed

up by active and cheerful efforts to help him in the great work to which he is called; to unite with him, in their several spheres and stations, in promoting and extending his labour of love, in teaching the young and ignorant, in strengthening the weak, in correcting those who fall into error; and, by their own bright and consistent example, glorifying God, and causing God to be glorified by others, through them. (*W. D. Johnston, M.A.*) *The reality and requirements of the Christian ministry* (Ordination Sermon):—1. Here was one of the noblest ventures of faith ever made by man. Viewed from the world's side, it was, as great faith always is, frivolous trifling or daring madness. A little company of ignorant men, in a small province of the Roman world, had for three years followed up and down their land a new teacher, who professed to come from God, but had been crucified and slain. They had been terrified and scattered, and now they gather together in an upper room, and talk of choosing one in the traitor's stead to complete their broken number. They speak great words: they seem to look forth into the wide world around, as though it waited for them, as though they had a message for it, and power over it. Either their minds were full of the darkest delusions, or they were acting in the very might of God. And which was the truth the event may tell us. From that completed company a voice awoke to which the world did listen, and before which it fell. No visible strength dwelt in them as they went forth on their errand. They were scourged, imprisoned, slain. Their weapons were endurance, submission, love, faith, martyrdom—and with these they triumphed. They preached "Jesus and the resurrection," and hard souls yielded and were gathered into the new company, and wore its cross and carried on its triumphs, until the world trembled at the change which was passing on itself. And so they have advanced with unfaltering step from that day to this, until all that is mightiest in power, and greatest in nobleness, and highest in intellect, has bowed down in adoration before that witness of the resurrection of Jesus. 2. The acts which we are here this day to do are but the carrying out of those which then were wrought, and we may see in the course of their work what should be the issue of ours. Here is—I. THE STRENGTH IN WHICH EACH ONE OF THOSE SENT FORTH IS TO LABOUR, AND THE SPIRIT IN WHICH HE IS TO BE RECEIVED. Here is his strength—he is called by God to this office (and woe be to him if he rush into it uncalled), and goes about God's work: he may be, he ought to be, conscious of weakness, and therefore he may be strong; for conscious feebleness may drive him from himself to God in Christ. In spite of appearances, at all times in his ministry there is strength for him: "I witness not of myself, but of the resurrection of my Lord; my words are not mine, but His; I witness not by strength, but by weakness, glorying in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And as having such an office they are to be received, not for their natural eloquence or power, not for their acquired skill or learning, but for the supernatural presence which will make their weakness strong. II. THE NATURE OF THEIR CHARGE—they are sent to bear the witness of Christ's resurrection. All is shut up in this. They come from God to the world with the message of reconciliation; and this message is the incarnation of the eternal Son, His death, His rising again, and from this the truth of the ever-blessed Trinity, and man's restored relation to his God. This is what man's heart longs for unconsciously, and what the asceticism of the natural man is so restlessly craving for where it can never find it. III. HOW ARE WE TO DISCHARGE THIS GREAT VOCATION? 1. We must be deep students of God's Word. Where else are we to learn our witness of Christ's resurrection? Here it is written clear and full—in the Old Testament in type, prophecy, and promise; in the New in fulfilment, act, history, and grace. In it, day by day, we must live with Him. Thus must our message sink into our own hearts. Even as they "who companied with" Him "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," learned unawares, day by day, the truth they needed, so must it be with us. 2. We must be men of prayer. The union of these two is the essence of the apostolical character. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the Word"; and without prayer we cannot bear this burden. How without it shall we have an insight into Scripture? how turn what we read to profit? how have power with God or with our brethren? In prayer, in real, hearty, earnest prayer, all things around us are set into their proper places. In prayer our minds are armed for the coming temptations of the day; they are cooled, refreshed, and calmed after its vexations, fatigues, and anxiety. On our knees, if anywhere, we learn to love the souls of our people; to hate our own sins; to trust in Him who shows us then His wounded side and pierced hands, and to love Him with our

whole heart. Nothing will make up for the lack of prayer. The busiest ministry without it is sure to become shallow and bustling. To come forth from secret communing with Him, and bear our witness, and to retire again behind the veil to pour out our hearts before Him in unceasing intercessions and devout adorations, this is, indeed, the secret of a blessed, fruitful ministry. Nor let us suppose that at once, and by the force of a single resolution, we can become men of prayer. The spirit of devotion is the gift of God; thou must seek it long and earnestly; and His grace will work it in thy heart. Thou must practise it and labour for it. Thou must pray often if thou wouldest pray well. 3. We must be men of holiness. (1) Because without this there cannot be reality in our witness. We cannot testify of the resurrection of Christ unless we ourselves have known its power. Even though our lives be correct, yet our lives must be unreal unless the truths we speak have thoroughly pervaded our own souls. If we have for ourselves no living faith in a risen Saviour, we cannot speak of Him with power to others. We must be great saints if we would have our people holy. The pastor's character forms, to a great degree, the character of his flock. We must show them in our risen lives that Christ indeed is risen. This is a witness, from the force of which they cannot escape. (2) Because we are in the kingdom of God's grace, and to us is committed a dispensation of His grace. Every act of ours will be real and effectual only so far as God's grace goes with it; and though He may be, and is, pleased to work by His grace even at the hands of the unholy, yet who can say how greatly such unfaithfulness does mar His work, how much is lost which might be gained? How can the other necessities of our character be supplied if we fail here? How can we be students of God's Word without God's grace? How can they pray for themselves or their people who have not the Spirit of grace and supplication? How can they draw down the blessed dew on others who even repel it from themselves? Who can have daily audience of our King but those who dwell within His courts? (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) *Witnesses of the resurrection*:—The fact of Christ's resurrection was the staple of the first Christian sermon. The apostles did not deal so much in doctrine; but they proclaimed what they had seen. There are three main connections in which the fact is viewed in Scripture. It was—1. A fact affecting Him, carrying with it necessarily some great truths with regard to His character, nature, and work. And it was in that aspect mainly that the earliest preachers dealt with it. 2. Then, as the Spirit led them to understand more and more of it, it came to be a pattern, pledge, and prophecy of their own. 3. And then it came to be a symbol of spiritual resurrection. The text branches out into three considerations. I. THE WITNESSES. Here we have the "head of the Apostolic College," on whose supposed primacy—which is certainly not a "rock"—such tremendous claims have been built, laying down the qualifications and the functions of an apostle. How simply they present themselves to His mind. The qualifications are only personal knowledge of Jesus Christ in His earthly history, because the function is only to attest His resurrection. The same conception lies in Christ's last designation, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." It appears again and again in the earlier address reported in this book. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses," &c., &c. How striking the contrast this idea presents to the portentous theories of later times. The work of the apostles in Christ's lifetime embraced three elements, none of which were peculiar to them—to be with Christ, to preach, and to work miracles; their characteristic work after His ascension was this of witness-bearing. The Church did not owe to them its extension, nor Christian doctrine its form, and whilst Peter and James and John appear in the history, and Matthew wrote a Gospel, and the other James and Jude are the authors of brief Epistles, the rest of the twelve never appear afterwards. This book is not the Acts of the Apostles. It tells the work of Peter alone among the twelve. The Hellenists Stephen and Philip, the Cypriote Barnabas—and the man of Tarsus, greater than they all—these spread the name of Christ beyond the limits of the Holy City and the chosen people. The solemn power of "binding and loosing" was not a prerogative of the twelve, for we read that Jesus came where "the disciples were assembled," and "He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted." Where in all this is a trace of the special apostolic powers which have been alleged to be transmitted from them? Nowhere. Who was it that came and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me that thou mightest be filled with the Holy Ghost"? A simple "layman." Who was it that stood by, a passive and astonished spectator of the communication of spiritual gifts to Gentile converts, and could only say,

"Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift, as He did unto us, what was I that I could withstand God?" Peter, the leader of the twelve. Their task was apparently a humbler, really a far more important, one. They had to lay broad and deep the basis for all the growth and grace of the Church in the facts which they witnessed. To that work there can be no successors. II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE TESTIMONY. Peter regards (as does the whole New Testament) the witness which he and his fellows bore as enough to lay firm and deep the historical fact of the resurrection. 1. If we think of Christianity as being mainly a set of truths, then, of course, the way to prove Christianity is to show the consistency of its truths with one another and with other truths, their derivation from admitted principles, their reasonableness, their adaptation to men's nature, and the refining and elevating effects of their adoption, and so on. If we think of Christianity, on the other hand, as being first a set of historical facts which carry the doctrines, then the way to prove Christianity is not to show how reasonable it is, &c. These are legitimate ways of establishing principles; but the way to establish a fact is only one—that is, to find somebody that can say, "I know it, for I saw it." And my belief is that the course of modern "apologetics" has departed from its real stronghold when it has consented to argue the question on these lower and less sufficing grounds. The gospel is first and foremost a history, and you cannot prove that a thing has happened by showing how very desirable it is that it should happen, &c.—all that is irrelevant. It is true because sufficient eye-witnesses assert it. 2. With regard to the sufficiency of the specific evidence—(1) Suppose you yield up everything that modern scepticism can demand about the date and authorship of the New Testament, we have still left four letters of Paul's which nobody has ever denied, viz., the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, whose dates bring them within five-and-twenty years of the alleged date of Christ's resurrection. Now we find in all of them the distinct allegation of this fact, and side by side with it the reference to his own vision of the risen Saviour, which carries us up within ten years of the alleged fact. It was not a handful of women who fancied they had seen Him once, very early in dim twilight of morning, but it was half a thousand of them that had beheld Him. He had been seen by them, not once, but often; not far off, but close at hand; not in one place, but in Galilee and Jerusalem; at all hours of the day, abroad and in the house, walking and sitting, speaking and eating, by them singly and in numbers. He had been seen too by incredulous eyes and surprised hearts, who doubted ere they worshipped; and the world may be thankful that they were slow of heart to believe. (2) Would not this testimony be enough to guarantee any event but this? And if so, why is not it enough to guarantee this, too? If the resurrection be not a fact, then the belief in it was—(*a*) A delusion. But it was not; for such an illusion is altogether unexampled. Nations have said, "Our king is not dead—he is gone away and he will come back." Loving disciples have said, "Our Teacher lives in solitude, and will return to us." But this is no parallel to these. This is not a fond imagination giving an apparent substance to its own creation, but sense recognising the fact. And to suppose that that should have been the rooted conviction of hundreds of men that were not idicts finds no parallel in the history and no analogy in legend. (*b*) A myth; but a myth does not grow in ten years. And there was no motive to frame if Christ was dead and all was over. (*c*) A deceit; but the character of the men, and the absence of self-interest, and the persecutions which they endured, made that inconceivable. (3) And all this we are asked to put aside at the outrageous assertion which no man that believes in a God can logically maintain, viz., that—(*a*) No testimony can reach to the miraculous. But cannot testimony reach to this: I know, because I saw, that a man was dead, and I saw him alive again? If testimony can do that, I think we may safely leave the verbal sophism that it cannot reach to the miraculous to take care of itself. (*b*) Miracle is impossible. But that is an illogical begging of the whole question, and cannot avail to brush aside testimony. You cannot smother facts by theories in that fashion. One would like to know how it comes that our modern men of science who protest so much against science being corrupted by metaphysics should commit themselves to an assertion like that? Surely that is stark, staring metaphysics. Let them keep to their own line, and tell us all that crucibles and scalpels can reveal, and we will listen as becomes us. But when they contradict their own principles in order to deny the possibility of miracle, we need only give them back their own words, and ask that the investigation of facts shall not be hampered and clogged with metaphysical prejudices. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FACT WHICH

IS THUS BORNE WITNESS TO. 1. With the Resurrection stands or falls the Divinity of Christ. Christ said, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and the third day He shall rise again." Now, if Death holds Him still, then what becomes of these words, and of our estimate of the character of Him, the speaker? Let us hear no more about the pure morality of Jesus Christ. Take away the Resurrection and we have left beautiful precepts, and fair wisdom deformed with a monstrous self-assertion, and the constant reiteration of claims which the event proves to have been baseless. Either He has risen from the dead or His words were blasphemy. "Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," or that which our lips refuse to say even in a hypothesis! 2. With the Resurrection stands or falls Christ's whole work for our redemption. If He died, like other men, we have no proof that the Cross was anything but a martyr's. His resurrection is the proof that His death was not the tribute which for Himself He had to pay, but the ransom for us. If He has not risen, He has not put away sin; and if He has not put it away by the sacrifice of Himself, none has, and it remains. We come back to the old dreary alternative: if Christ be not risen your faith is vain, and our preaching is vain, &c. And if He be not risen, there is no resurrection for us; and the world is desolate, and the heaven is empty, and the grave is dark, and sin abides, and death is eternal. Well, then, may we take up the ancient glad salutation, "The Lord is risen"; and turning from these thoughts of the disaster and despair that that awful supposition drags after it, fall back upon the sober certainty, and with the apostle break forth in triumph, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 23–26. **And they appointed two.**—*An election sermon:*—This, the earliest, stands remarkably distinguished from the episcopal elections of after ages. Every one acquainted with history knows that the election of a bishop was one of the fiercest questions which shook the Church of Christ. Appointment by the people. Presbyters. Various customs. Anecdote of Ambrose of Milan. Appointment by the Emperor or Bishop of Rome. Quarrel of ages between the Emperor and the Pope. Consider—I. THE OBJECT OF THE ELECTION. To elect a bishop of the universal Church. It might be that in process of time the apostle should be appointed to a particular city—as St. James was to Jerusalem. But his duty was owed to the Church in general, and not to that particular city; and if he had allowed local interests to stand before the interests of the whole, he would have neglected the duty of his high office, and if those who appointed him considered the interest of Jerusalem instead of the Church universal, they would have failed in their duty. In the third century Cyprian stated this principle: "The Episcopate, one and indivisible, held in its entirety by each bishop, every part standing for the whole." The political application is plain. Each legislator legislates for the country, not for a county or town. Each elector holds his franchise as a sacred trust, to be exercised not for his town, or faction, or himself, or his friends, but for the general weal of the people of England. We are not to be biassed by asking what charity does a candidate support, nor by his view of some local question, nor by his support of Tractarian or Evangelical societies. We are, in our high responsibility, selecting, not a president for a religious society, nor a patron of a town, nor a subscriber to an hospital, but a legislator for England. II. THE MODE OF THE ELECTION. It was partly human, partly Divine. The human element is plain enough in that it was popular. The Divine element lay in this that it was overruled by God. The selected one might be the chosen of the people, yet not the chosen of God. Hence they prayed, "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men," &c. The common notion is, *vox populi vox Dei—i.e.*, a law is right because it is a people's will. We have not quite gone to this length in England. On the Continent it has long been prevalent. Possibly it is the expression of that Antichrist "who showeth himself that he is God"; self-will setting itself up paramount to the will of God. The *vox populi* is sometimes *vox Dei*, sometimes not. It was so when the people rescued Jonathan from his father's unjust sentence; and when, after the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, they cried, "The Lord He is God." But not when, in Moses' absence, they required Aaron to make them a golden calf for a god. Or when they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" or "Crucify Him!" Politicians eagerly debate the question, how best to secure a fair representation of the people's voice—a question not to be put aside. But the Christian sees a question deeper far than this—how the popular will shall truly

represent the will of God. And we shall attain this, not by nicely balancing interest against interest, much less by manœuvring to defeat the opposite cause; but by each doing all he can to rouse himself and others to a high sense of responsibility. It is a noble thought, that of every elector going to vote, as these men did, for the Church, for the people, for God, and for the right, earnestly anxious that he and others should do right. Else this was an appeal to chance and not to God; and every election, by ballot or by suffrage, is else an appeal to chance. III. THE SPIRIT. 1. A religious spirit. "They prayed," &c. Now, we shall be met here by an objection. This was a religious work—the selection of an apostle; but the choice of a representative is only a secular one. But it is not the occupation, but the spirit which makes the difference. The election of a bishop may be most secular; the election of a representative may be religious. St. Paul taught that nothing is profane. Sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, St. Peter learned that nothing is common or unclean. Many relics remain to us from our religious forefathers indicative of this truth. Grace before meals. *Dei gratia* on coins of the realm; "In the name of God," at the commencement of wills; oaths in court of justice—all proclaim that the simplest acts of our domestic and political life are sacred or profane according to the spirit in which they are performed; not in the question whether they are done for the State or the Church, but whether with God or without God. Observe: It is not the preluding such an election with public prayer that would make it a religious act. It is religious so far as each man discharges his part as a duty and solemn responsibility. If looked on in this spirit would the debauchery, which is fostered by rich men of all parties among the poor for their own purposes, be possible? Would they, for the sake of one vote, or a hundred votes, brutalise their fellow creatures? 2. It was done conscientiously. Each Christian found himself in possession of a new right—that of giving a vote or casting a lot. Like all rights, it was a duty. He had not a right to do what he liked, only to do right. And if any one had swayed him to support the cause of Barsabas or that of Matthias on any motives except this one—"You ought"—he had so far injured his conscience. The worst of crimes is to injure a human conscience. Now bribery is a sin. Not because a particular law has been made against it, but because it lowers the sense of personal responsibility. And whether you do directly by giving, indirectly by withdrawing, assistance, or patronage—you sin against Christ. 3. It was not done from personal interest. If the supporters of the two candidates had been influenced by such considerations as blood-relationship, or the chance of favour and promotion, a high function would have been degraded. In secular matters, however, we do not judge so. A man generally decides according to his professional or his personal interests. You know almost to a certainty beforehand which way a man will vote, if you know his profession. Partly no doubt, this is involuntarily—the result of those prejudices which attach to us all from association. But it is partly voluntary. We know that we are thinking not of the general good, but of our own interests. And thus a farmer would think himself justified in looking at a question simply as it affected his class, and a noble as it affected his caste, and a working man as it bore upon the working classes. Brethren, we are Christians. Something of a principle higher than this ought to be ours. What is the law of the Cross of Christ? The sacrifice of the One for the whole, the cheerful surrender of the few for the many. Else, what do we more than others? These are fine words—patriotism, public principle, purity. Be sure these words are but sentimental expressions, except as they spring out of the Cross of Christ. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The election of Matthias*:—Let us pause a little to meditate upon an objection which might have been here raised. Why fill up what Christ Himself left vacant? some short-sighted objector might have urged; and yet we see good reason why Christ may have omitted to supply the place of Judas, and may have designed that the apostles themselves should have done so. Our Lord Jesus Christ gifted His apostles with corporate power; He bestowed upon them authority to act in His stead and name; and it is not God's way of action to grant power and authority, and then to allow it to remain unexercised and undeveloped. When God confers any gift He expects that it shall be used for His honour and man's benefit. The Lord thus wished to teach the Church from earliest days to walk alone. The apostles had been long enough depending on His personal presence and guidance, and now, that they might learn to exercise the privileges and duties of their Divine freedom, He leaves them to choose one to fill that position of supernatural rank and office from which Judas had fallen. The risen Saviour acted in

grace as God ever acts in nature. He bestowed His gifts lavishly and generously, and then expected man to respond to the gifts by making that good use of them which earnest prayer, sanctified reason, and Christian common-sense dictated. (*G. T. Stokes, M.A.*) *Readiness and preparedness*:—The Church, like a line of soldiers in action, must have no vacant places; each gap in the line must be made good. The unfilled post is a point of weakness in the system and the work, and the enemy against whom we strive is not slow to take advantage. The weak place is soon detected, and the gap in the line will soon be still further enlarged. A rent unmended rapidly grows greater. The apostles felt this. So at once they proceed to fill the vacant place. Two thoughts meet us here. If a place has to be filled, two requirements must be satisfied. First, we must have one prepared, one fit to fill the position; secondly, we must have one ready and willing to take up the work. Matthias was a disciple of experience. He was not a recent convert, no novice. Hitherto, we may conclude, he had filled no official position. But by attendance on the Lord's ministry he had been preparing himself to take up the work when a call should come. He was probably quite unconscious as to when or how it would come; but as a Christian, as a soldier of Christ, as a servant of his Master, he was always liable. The summons, "I have need of thee," might come at any moment. Would the summons find him fitted to obey it? He had "companied"—come along together—"with them." He had listened to Christ's teaching, watched Christ live and work; he could speak from experience. Is there not here a lesson for all? We do not know when Christ may need us; we do not know exactly how He may wish that we should be employed. But the summons may come. When it comes, in what state will it find us? Shall we know from experience anything of what a Christian life really is? A knowledge of Christian truth and Christian life is indispensable for Church workers. They must be prepared. And as a modern writer has said, "preparation is not preparedness," but it is the secret of it, the means whereby it is obtained. Preparation, constant, ever going on, is the way to be prepared. But the worker, besides being prepared, must be also ready, that is, willing to obey the call when it comes. How often has a clergyman to lament the sorrowful fact that those who might be of the greatest service are sometimes the least willing to take up work. Yet to whom "much is given, of him shall be much required." According to our means, abilities, opportunities, shall we be judged. Notice the example of Matthias and Joseph. There is not a word of hesitation or excuse. They knew not upon which the lot might fall, but either was willing and ready; it was sufficient that the call had come, they must not dream of disobedience. They did not know what might lie before them—danger, toil, persecution, in all probability a martyr's death. But there is no shrinking, no attempt to excuse themselves or find reasons why they should not take office. It has been of the nature of a national boast that Englishmen sought rather than shunned the point of danger, the life of active service and toil. How often have we read of the soldier chafing under the circumstances which cast his lot in the reserve rather than in the midst of the action which was progressing at the front! Should there not be a like spirit exhibited by the soldiers of the Cross? The life of action and the life of danger is surely in some measure the life of honour. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) *Ministers should be picked men*:—It is said of the Egyptians that they chose their priests from the most learned of their philosophers, and then they esteemed their priests so highly that they chose their kings from them. We require to have for God's ministers the pick of all the Christian host; such men, indeed, that if the nation wanted kings they could not do better than elevate them to the throne. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God knows the heart*:—When Samuel Wilberforce, afterwards Bishop, went to his first charge, some of the parishioners complained that the bishop had sent them a boy. They condemned him before he spoke because of his looks. But after they had heard his first sermon they withdrew their first statement, and said, "We find he is a man." This illustrates the way in which too often we judge men, but we must remember that although man looketh on the outward appearance the Lord looketh on the heart. *Workers indicated by God*:—"One night, a week before we got to Colombo, Mr. Millard and I were praying to God for special guidance in Ceylon, and I said to him, 'The Lord has told me to bring on from Ceylon Mr. Campbell, Mr. Horan, Mr. Jackson, and David.' 'Well,' said he, 'if you bring on any one, these are the four names.' So day by day we prayed, 'Oh, Lord, is it Thy will that we should bring them on?' We had a fortnight in Ceylon, and we spent the greater

part of it in prayer to be perfectly certain of God's will. We were staying at a house a little distance out of Colombo that a friend very kindly put at our disposal, and there we gathered to wait on God in prayer. One day Mr. Millard and Mr. Campbell were there praying. They said nothing to me about it. They prayed, 'Now, Lord, we will put Thee to the test: wilt Thou send up into this room those who are to go to Australia, and only those?' They waited. The door opened, and Mr. Jackson went in and knelt with the other two. Mr. Horan was at his tea, but somehow he thought to himself, 'I must go up'; so he left his tea and went upstairs, and went into the room and knelt down with the others. I also was downstairs, and said to myself, 'I will go up and have a little prayer.' I went into the room and found these friends there before me. But where was David? Was he to come or not? He was, at the time, in Colombo, five miles away. He knew nothing about the prayer in the upper room. As David was walking along the street of Colombo he lifted up his heart to God and said, 'Where am I to go now, and what am I to do?' The Lord told him to take a carriage and drive out to Dellagama House at once. David got into a conveyance and drove out. He appeared with his black face all shining with glory. Now we were certain that David was to go with us to Australia. So we sailed, and arrived at Melbourne." (*G. C. Grubb.*) *The beginning of ecclesiastical business*:—1. The requisite qualifications of apostleship were discerned in two members of the company. The claims of the two were probably equally balanced and superior to those of the rest. 2. The whole matter was referred to the Head of the Church in prayer. 3. They prayed Him to settle for them what they could not settle for themselves. No choice of theirs could make a man an apostle. 4. They looked for the expression of the Divine decision in the best way known to them. The lot had been sanctioned by God under the Old Dispensation; but it is significant that no more is heard of it. The unction of the Holy One rendered it unnecessary. 5. The decision asked for was cordially accepted. This beginning of ecclesiastical business presents to us—I. RIGHT-MINDED PEOPLE NOT YET FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. The truth had had its effect upon them, but like many now they were only in a course of preparation for the fulness of Divine knowledge. Such now should do the will of God as they know it as these did, and seek the promised blessing in prayer. II. RIGHT-MINDED PEOPLE, THOUGH NOT YET FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT, YET DIRECTED BY THEIR CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST. They believed that He, the Searcher of hearts, was surveying them; that prayer to Him would be answered; that they had a work to do for which He must fit them; and though one had fallen another would be found for his place. So now there are servants of Christ who, though not assured of sonship, are yet on the road to assurance. Let such maintain their confidence in Christ, and they will reach the goal as the disciples did. III. THE APOSTOLIC STAFF COMPLETED IN PROPER TIME. The proper time was during the ten days. The disciples were expectant, but their confidence was increased when they felt that they had done their duty. Seamen are the more hopeful when the breeze strikes on the spread canvas, and physicians when they have used all the resources of their science. So congregations should be ready for what God waits to give, by a full cordial acceptance of His will. (*W. Hudson.*) *The holy choice*:—They begin with prayer; this was the usual manner in the Church of God (Numb. xxvii. 16; John xvii. 27; Acts vi. 6). It is not fit he that is chosen for God should be chosen without God. But for this, Samuel himself may be mistaken and choose even wrong, before he hit upon the right. This prayer respects two things: I. THE PERSON IS DESCRIBED—1. By His omnipotence. "Lord"—(1) Of what? Not Lord of such a county, barony, seigniory; nor Lord by virtue of office, but most absolute. His lordship is universal: Lord of heaven, the owner of those glorious mansions; Lord of earth, disposer of all kingdoms and principalities; Lord of hell, to lock up the old dragon and his crew in the bottomless pit; Lord of death, to unlock the graves. (2) To the Lord of all they commend the choice of His own servants. Every mortal lord hath this power, how much more that Lord which makes lords! Who so fit to choose as He that can choose the fit? Who so fit to choose as He that can make those fit whom He doth choose? It is He alone that can give power and grace to the elected, therefore not to be left out in the election. It is happy when we do remit all doubts to His decision, and resign ourselves to His disposition. We must not be our own carvers, but let God's choice be ours. When we know His pleasure, let us show our obedience. 2. Omniscience: it is God's peculiar to be the searcher of the heart. But why the heart? Here was an apostle to be chosen: now wisdom, learning, eloquence, might seem to be more

necessary qualities. No, they are all nothing to an honest heart. I deny not but learning to divide the word, elocution to pronounce it, wisdom to discern the truth, boldness to deliver it, be all parts requirable in a preacher. But as if all these were scarce worth mention in respect of the heart, they say not, which is the greater scholar, but which is the better man (1 Sam. xvi. 7). (1) Why do they not say, Thou that knowest the estates of men, who is rich, and fit to support a high place, and who so poor that the place must support him? Because, at the beam of the sanctuary, money makes not the man, although it often adds some metal to the man; makes his justice the bolder, and in less hazard of being vitiated. But if the poor man have "wisdom to deliver the city" (Eccles. vi. 15), he is worthy to govern the city. I yield that something is due to the state of authority. But wise government, not rich garment, shows an able man. (2) Why do they not say, Thou that knowest the birth or blood of men? I know it is a reverend thing to see an ancient castle or palace not in decay, or a fair tree sound and perfect timber. But as foul birds build their nests in an old forsaken house, and doted trees are good for nothing but the fire; so the decay of virtue is the ruin of nobility. To speak morally, active worth is better than passive: this last we have from our ancestors, the first from ourselves. Let me rather see one virtue in a man alive, than all the rest in his pedigree dead. It is not the birth, but the new birth that makes men truly noble. (3) Why do they not say, Thou that knowest the wisdom and policy of men? Certainly, this is requisite to a man of place. But a man may be wise for himself, not for God, not for the public good. A cunning head without an honest heart is but like a house with many convenient stairs, entries, and other passages, but never a fair room. II. THE MATTER ENTREATED. "Show whom Thou hast chosen." 1. What kind of hearts God will not choose. (1) A distracted heart; part whereof is dedicated to the Lord, and part to the world. He that made all will not be contented with a piece. *Aut Cæsar, aut nihil.* Many divisions followed sin. (*a*) It divided heart from God (Isa. lix. 2). (*b*) It divided heart from heart. God by marriage made one of two, sin doth often make two of one. (*c*) It divided the tongue from the heart. So Cain answered God, when He questioned him about Abel. (*d*) It divided tongue from tongue at the building of Babel. (*e*) It divided the heart from itself (Psa. xii. 2): one for the Church, another for the change; one for Sundays, another for working days. (2) A stony heart. A rock, which all the floods of God's mercies and judgments cannot soften; a stithy, that is still the harder for beating. It hath all the properties of a stone: it is as cold, heavy, hard, and senseless as a stone. Were it of iron it might be wrought; were it of lead, it might be molten, and cast into some better form; were it of earth, it might be tempered to another fashion; but being stone, nothing remains but that it be broken. What was Pharaoh's greatest plague? His hard heart. He that knows all hearts, knows how ill this would be in a magistrate or minister; a heart which no cries of orphans, no tears of widows, no mourning of the oppressed, can melt into pity. (3) A covetous heart, the desires whereof are never filled. A handful of corn put to the whole heap increaseth it; yea, add water to the sea, it hath so much the more; but "he that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver." This vice is in all men iniquity, but in a minister or magistrate blasphemy; the root of all evil in every man, the rot of all goodness in a great man. 2. What kind of hearts God will choose. (1) A wise heart (1 Kings ii. 9). There is no trade but a peculiar wisdom belongs to it, without which all is tedious and unprofitable; how much more to the highest and busiest vocation. (2) A meek heart. The first governor that God set over His Israel was Moses, a man of the meekest spirit. How is he fit to govern others, that hath not learned to govern himself? He that cannot rule a boat upon the river is not to be trusted with steering a vessel on the ocean. Nor yet must this parience degenerate into cowardliness: Moses, that was so meek in his own cause, in God's cause was as resolute. So there is also—(3) A heart of fortitude and courage. The rules and squares that regulate others are not made of lead or soft wood, such as will bend or bow. The principal columns of a house had not need be heart of oak. The spirit that resolves to do the will of heaven, what malignant powers soever would cross it on earth, is the heart that God chooseth. (4) An honest heart. Without this, courage will prove but legal injustice, policy but mere subtlety, and ability but the devil's anvil to forge mischiefs on. Private men have many curbs, but men in authority, if they fear not God, have nothing else to fear. If he be a simple dastard, he fears all men; if a headstrong commander, he fears no man: like that unjust judge (Luke xviii. 2). 3. Why God will choose men by the heart. Because—(1) The heart is the *primum*

mobile that sets all the wheels agoing, and improves them to the right end. When God begins to make a man good, He begins at the heart. And as naturally the heart is first in being, so here the will (which is meant by the heart) is chief in commanding. If it say to the eye, See, it seeth; to the ear, Hear, it hearkeneth, &c. If the heart lead the way to God, not a member of the body, not a faculty of the soul, will stay behind. (2) No part of man can sin without the heart; the heart can sin without all the rest. The heart is like a mill: if the wind or water be violent, the mill will go whether the miller will or not; yet he may chose what kind of grain it shall grind, wheat or darnel. (3) The heart is what God specially cares for: "My son, give Me thy heart"; and good reason, for I gave My own Son's heart to death for it. It is not less thine for being Mine; yea, it cannot be thine comfortably unless it be Mine perfectly. God requires it principally, but not only; give Him that, and all the rest will follow. He that gives me fire needs not be requested for light and heat, for they are inseparable. (4) All outward works a hypocrite may do, only he fails in the heart; and because he fails there, he is lost everywhere. Who will put that timber into the building of his house which is rotten at the heart? Man judgeth the heart by the works; God judgeth the works by the heart. Therefore God will excuse all necessary defects, but only of the heart. The blind man cannot serve God with his eyes, he is excused; the deaf cannot serve God with his ears, he is excused, &c., but no man is excused for not serving God with his heart. (5) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Therefore David prays, "Create in me a clean heart." The Lord rested from the works of His creation the seventh day; but so dearly He loves clean hearts, that He rests from creating them no day. As Jehu said to Jehonadab. "Is thy heart right? then give me thy hand, come up into my chariot"; so this is God's question, Is thy heart upright? then give Me thy hand, ascend My triumphant chariot, the everlasting glory of heaven. Conclusion: Because there is such difference of hearts, and such need of a good one, they put it to Him that knows them all, and knows which is best of all. A little living stone in God's building is worth a whole quarry of the world. One honest heart is better than a thousand other. Man often fails in his election; God cannot err. (*T. Adams.*) *Festival of St. Matthias*:—We look back upon the career of Judas, who by transgression fell from "this ministry and apostleship"; and, secondly, see what is to be learnt from the election of Matthias. I. Judas has been described as "one of the standing moral problems of the gospel history." He is not a lay figure, draped in the historical dress provided by the Psalter, a mythical personage. His portrait stands out from the canvas of the Gospels life-like, vivid, terrible. He is no creation of the imagination, no mere foil to bring out into stronger relief the transcendent virtues of the Christ; but a real man, who betrayed his Master, and then hung himself. He illustrates the possibilities of evil, and the doctrine that "the corruption of the best becomes the worst." And first it must be remembered that Judas "fell." He is sometimes depicted as though he had always had the heart of an alien; and when chosen by our Lord to be one of His apostles, was then a traitor in spirit. This is a mistake. When our Lord said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He says "*is* a devil." He does not say "was." Judas Iscariot had a genuine vocation to the apostolate; that is, he had in him the makings of an apostle; otherwise, our Lord would not have chosen him. But vocations may be lost. Judas fell through yielding to temptation. Two sins mark the stages of his downward course —avarice and despair. It may be asserted, that however hardening may be the effect of this vice of avarice, when it has led to the committal of some heinous crime the benumbed conscience is often painfully and suddenly aroused from its state of torpor, and filled with dismay. The sinner is startled at the lengths which he has gone. Judas, doubtless, had tampered with the moral faculty, and persuaded himself that though he had betrayed his Master, Christ would, after all, escape from the hands of His enemies. His remorse, when he saw the effects of his treachery, bear witness, not to the absence of covetousness, but to the power of conscience, whose voice, though it may be for a time smothered, will assert itself in terrible tones at last. The disciple was not subjected to the trial without sufficient helps and cautions to enable him, had he willed, to vanquish his dominant passion, and to grow into the likeness of his Master. But a greater sin than covetousness followed—that of despair. The sins which are opposite to those great virtues, Faith, Hope, and Love, which have God for their Object, are sins of a deep dye. They are unbelief, despair, and hatred of God. Among these, despair is especially fraught with danger to us, because it takes away the hope "which recalls us from

our sins and lead us to good." Despair is a sin against Divine mercy, that attribute in the exercise of which God is said to "delight." If Judas had sought for mercy, he would have found it. He had the semblance of repentance without its spirit. He had no hope; and, so in a frenzy of despair, he fled from the temple, and ended his life—in the strange and awful language, "that he might go to his own place." II. We turn now to brighter thoughts. Our Lord chose twelve apostles. It seems to have been important that this number should be preserved. It has been called "emphatically the Church number." It occurs again and again in Holy Scripture. There were twelve patriarchs, twelve altars, twelve precious stones in Aaron's breastplate, twelve judges, twelve wells at Elim, twelve loaves of show-bread. In the Book of the Revelation there are twelve stars round the head of the woman clothed with the sun, twelve foundations and gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. The first act of the apostles after the ascension of Christ is to fill up the gap in their number. Matthias was more than a successor of Judas; he was to take his place, to be invested with the dignity of an original apostle. But note how this vacancy was supplied. First, by united prayer—prayer, mark you, to Christ—they sought to know His choice, Who is the discerner of hearts; and then they cast lots; "and—the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The Holy Spirit was not yet given, and thus they resorted to a method which had often been adopted for settling doubtful questions by different nations, that of casting lots, not as any precedent for the Church in the future; but as a means for discovering the mind of God in that interim between the missions of Divine persons, when they were left without a guide. Many are the lessons which may be drawn from our subject. Many are the warnings which it suggests. The excess of hope is presumption; its defect, despair. The history of Judas shows the peril of both. "Be not high-minded, but fear." No office or position can insure us against falling. We see those who have had the highest privileges fall from God. Lucifer and the angels, Adam and Eve, David, Solomon, Peter, and Judas. Secondly, let us, on the other hand, never despair. There is no evil in the creature which the mercy of God cannot remedy—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Despair is worse than covetousness: for "with the Lord there is mercy"; it has its home and origin in the Divine character, and "with Him is plenteous redemption." (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) **Judas by transgression fell that he might go to his own place.**—*Judas:*—It seems very strange that Jesus, who knew the hearts of men, should have admitted as one of the twelve a thief, a devil, a traitor, one who had better never been born. Gifts of some kind he must have had, rendering the choice of him not strange to others, not unfit in itself. Was it that, though our Lord discerned the germs of evil in his character, He saw also germs of good, and hoped that, as a result of association with Himself, these might prevail? If we suppose so, new force is given to many of Christ's sayings. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." What a truth for Judas, if he were vainly trying to follow both! The destructive power of "the cares of this world," and "the deceitfulness of riches," Judas heard of. He heard of the fate of the unfaithful steward, &c. If Jesus had this merciful desire, not least among the griefs of the Man of Sorrows must have been the deepening conviction that His efforts were in vain, and that He was but adding to the condemnation of one from whom "so much would be required," as so much had been given. What a pang each evidence of this must have given to Jesus! *E.g.*, the objection to the costly ointment with which Mary anointed the Lord. At last Jesus said, "One of you shall betray Me," and Judas, "having received the sop, went immediately out." It has been suggested that motives other than base actuated Judas, but these contradict the narrative and every probability. I. CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE PENALTIES. Amidst much obscurity two things are clear: 1. That the consequences of evil will be felt after death; that what is sown here shall be reaped there, and that the "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" felt, and inflicted by God, will be of such a sort that the strongest and most dreadful images are not too strong or dreadful to express it. 2. That, whatever the reality, the Judge of all the earth will do only right; so that no suspicion of injustice, or distress because of it, need or ought to have place in our minds. II. EACH GOING TO HIS OWN PLACE. Whether the apostles had clearer knowledge about the fate of Judas than they here express, we know not. At least there is singular moderation and reverence in what they said. One might well have excused sterner language about the betrayer. Their refraining is a pattern to us all. But this statement fits every case as well as that of Judas. It is

not a mere confession of ignorance, which says nothing. See how exactly true it is of the material world. The two are so mysteriously allied that, to an extraordinary degree, what is true of the one is true of the other; and it is most useful to study the one to gain hints about God's government of the other. We should avoid many errors if we recognised this oftener. The position of each mass of matter is exactly determined by its quantity and condition in relation to the forces around and within it. No pebble, no star, can be in a place one hair's breadth different from that to which it is guided by its peculiar character. Every difference of character involves a difference of position. The same is true of each of those millions of invisible atoms of which each atom is composed. The place each fills is not determined by chance or by caprice, but by its very nature. Is not that indication of a Divine order, allied to morality and justice? And so no mere caprice will determine the position of spiritual beings in the future world, but each will "go to his own place" there, by a law as true and an order as beautiful as that which regulates the position of each material particle. The true, the pure, the loving and unselfish, will they not tend necessarily towards Him who is truth, and purity, and love, as the nearest planets live in the radiance of the sun? The untrue, the impure, the selfish, will they not as necessarily be repelled from the Divine light by their very condition? So with every intermediate description of character. Conclusion: In view of these sublime laws of Divine order and fitness, what a pitiable and monstrous delusion is it that mere profession will avail; that to say to Christ, "Lord, Lord," is enough; that to be duly baptized and buried by a priest is to be safe for ever. What we are, or by Christ's help become, that is everything—not what we profess to be. So Christ and Judas went "each to his own place"; so you and I shall do also. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*)

The place for Judas, and for others like him:—A zealous partisan of the notion that there is no future punishment was telling his children the story of "The Babes in the Wood," when a shrewd little boy looked up and asked, "What became of the little children?" "Oh, they went to heaven, of course!" was the prompt reply. "And what became of the horrid old uncle?" It was a poser; and for some moments the universalist looked confused. His favourite hobby must, however, be sustained at all costs, and he answered as composedly as he could, "Why, he went to heaven also!" "I am so sorry," said the child, "for I am afraid the bad man will kill them again!" Here was logic in a nutshell, which no theories could overturn. President Nott had preached a sermon setting forth the everlasting punishment of the impenitent, when a man of the same class rudely said, "Well, sir, I have been to hear you preach, and now I want you to prove your doctrine." "I thought I had proved it," was the mild reply, "for I took the Bible for testimony." "Well," persisted the assailant, waxing valiant, "I do not find it in my Bible, and I do not believe it." "What *do* you believe?" asked Dr. Nott, in a quiet and unconcerned tone. "Why, I believe that mankind will be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and those that deserve punishment will be sent to a place of punishment for awhile, and remain there until the debt is paid, when they will be taken out and carried to heaven." "I have but a word to say in reply," observed Dr. Nott, "and first, for what did Christ die? and lastly, there is a straight road to heaven; but if you are determined to go round through hell to get there, I cannot help it." The man took his leave, the wiser for the interview, and a more careful study of the Bible led him to adopt the orthodox belief. If any one were asked, "Where do you suppose Judas went after death?" could he, in his sober senses, answer, "To heaven?" The thing is utterly preposterous; and we are prepared to read in the text that he went to "his own place"—a place suited to one who had proved himself a child of the devil. Every student knows that the significant expression is used by ancient writers to denote going to one's eternal destiny. Thus the Jewish Targum, in Numb. xxiv. 25, where it is said of Balaam that he "went to his own place," adds, that this "place" was Gehenna, the place of final torment. The Chaldee paraphrase of Eccles. vi. 6 declares, "Although the days of a man's life were two thousand years, and he did not study the Law, and do justice, in the day of his death his soul shall descend to hell, to the one place where all sinners go." St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Magnesians, wrote, "Because all things have an end, the two things death and life shall lie down together, and each one shall go to his own place." Without referring, then, to many passages of Holy Scripture, the brief allusion to the doom of Judas is enough to settle the question. Hell is not a mere arbitrary appointment of the Almighty, but as the polluted would not be fitted for heaven, and could

not enjoy it, there must, of necessity, be some place adapted to their condition, and God teaches us that hell is that place. The guilty and impenitent accordingly will have no ground of complaint if a just God appoints for him precisely such a place as his own conduct in life has prepared him for. An eloquent speaker was attempting to show, from garbled passages of Scripture, that the gospel is peace and good-will, and not terror nor hell fire, when a young man rose and said: "Did Paul preach the gospel before Felix?" "Yes." "And did Felix tremble?" "He did." The young man took his hat, bowed politely, and retired, the rest of the people going out with him. The simplest-minded present could not but understand that the gospel which the apostle preached must have had some reference to future punishment, or the wicked and the haughty Felix would hardly have thus lost his self-command. It is useless to attempt to obviate the necessity for future punishment by insisting that we suffer for our sins in this life. There are such cases, it is true, but they are the exception, and not the rule. What, then, becomes of the rest? The pirate Gibbs, whose name, for so many years, was a terror to those who sailed among the West Indies, when tried and condemned, confessed that the first few murders did occasion him some twinges of conscience, but that in course of time he could cut the throats of a whole ship's crew, and then eat his supper and lie down and sleep as quietly as a babe! It seems from this that if remorse in this life is God's way of punishing crimes, then the more horrible deeds that bad people commit the less He punishes them! If one act of sin, as in the case of Eve, Uzziah, Miriam, Nadab and Abihu, and thousands more, draw down the wrath of God, what must a whole life of sin! Think of the destruction of the cities of the plain, and then call to mind the Saviour's words, "It shall be more tolerable," &c. Wicked people need no "sending to hell," since they go there of their own accord. The gulf which divides heaven from hell is one of moral unlikeness, and as people have sought the company that suited them here, so they will find themselves in congenial society hereafter. The sinner makes his own damnation, and he cannot blame God with it. "Thou hast destroyed thyself!" There is still another objection, viz., that eternal punishment is too long as the penalty for the sins of a short life. A just God is the best judge of this. The only question is, Was the transgressor duly forewarned? A man who proposes to embark on a steamer does not expect, after he has been told the hour of departure, that the bell will be rung for half a day, or even an hour, in accommodation to his dilatory habits. He may, by losing the voyage, change the prospects of a whole life, and even a few seconds may decide the case. A day is not too short a space for a crime which will be punished by imprisonment for life, and if a note is due at the bank, the loss of credit is not escaped because the promisor had received but one notice. Did any person ever object to eternal salvation, that it is too long to be the reward of this short life? Dante described both heaven and hell most wonderfully, for he had been in both. Once, as the servant of sin, he had known shame and doubt and darkness and despair,—which are certainly the grim portal of hell; and then, through God's forbearing mercy, he had found peace in believing, and love to God, which casteth out fear—and here was the beginning of heaven. And so, when timid people saw him as he glided along the street, they said, with a shudder, "There is the man who has been in hell!" If we would not go where Judas has gone, we must begin our heavenly life on earth. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The soul in "his own place":*—I. EVERY BEING MUST HAVE ITS OWN PLACE. Nothing can be more obvious than the exact adaptation to each other and to the region in which they dwell, of the objects and beings of this world. 1. Everything which is earthly, whose being belongs to, and will terminate with earth, is in its own place. Who can doubt that the bird, with its curious mechanism of eye and wing, was intented to exist in air; or that the fish has been expressly formed for its watery abode; or that the beast of prey is at home in its forest haunts; or that man himself, physically considered, was intended for his abode and position here, and that if removed to another world, differing at all in its constitution from the present, they must either cease to exist, or exist only in a state of disorder and distress? 2. We may extend the observation to the world itself; and say, that our globe moves year after year along its own path, that it revolves in the very orbit for which it was designed. 3. And certainly it is true of the human intellect, that it has been provided with proper objects and occasions for the exercise of its powers, that it is placed in the midst of circumstances which are fitted to educate its faculties. It is required for earthly uses; and it has been accurately adapted to the purposes for which it is required. 4. Spiritual beings have likewise their "own place"; that although it may not be the case here, yet elsewhere, moral natures will find their

own appropriate abode, will move amidst scenes and society with the spirit of which they can truly sympathise. The being who loves holiness and truth, must, in its perfect and proper condition, consort only with beings who love holiness and truth, and dwell in a region of holiness; and the being who loves evil and error, must, in its final and proper condition, consort only with beings who love evil and error, and dwell in an abode of evil. And the Scriptures uniformly represent the final abodes of men, as being severally adapted to the righteous and the wicked. But it is evident that these separate states can never exist on earth, nor be entered by those who are yet in the flesh. The infirmities of the body, as well as the influence of external things, must hinder a consummate manifestation of holiness, as well as a perfect development of evil. II. THE LIGHT WHICH THIS PRINCIPLE THROWS UPON OUR PRESENT STATE. Like Judas while still on earth, we are not now in our own place, but we are going there. Our position is temporary and imperfect. And its difficulties can be explained, only by regarding it as introductory to our perfect and permanent condition. The evil and the good are now joined together in a confused and discordant mass. They are travelling in companies along the same road, and strange appears the disorder and disunion in which they now proceed; but their common path will soon branch into two avenues, along which they will move in separated groups, each in its proper character, and each perfectly united in its course. Think of Judas associating with his fellow apostles and with his Lord; his utter want of sympathy with them; the irksome restraint, of which he must have been ever conscious. He is a type and example to ourselves. Are there any who have a love for holiness? Then earth is not their home, and cannot be their abiding place. Like Judas, they are living amidst circumstances in which they have no delight; among companions with whom they have no fellowship. Are there any who have a love for evil? Like Judas, they must often come among the true disciples of our Lord; but then, like Judas, they would rather be away. They are not now in their own place. III. THE LIGHT WHICH THIS PRINCIPLE THROWS UPON OUR FUTURE STATE. This principle is applicable to the explanation of the difficulty, that while the varieties of moral character are almost innumerable, we should be told of only two states after death. With respect to the holy or the utterly depraved, there is no difficulty. Heaven is plainly fitted for the one, and hell for the other. But the majority of mankind occupy a medium position; we can hardly affirm that they belong to the one or the other, displaying continually as they do the characteristics of both. There seems no reason why they should spend their eternity with saints; nor in the outer darkness "prepared for the devil and his angels." Then, again, there are vast numbers who may more easily be described by saying what they are not, than by saying what they are. These, again, appear to be without fitness, as without merit, for an abode either with angels or with fiends. Now to this difficulty, our text, taken in connection with other Scriptures, seems to give a decisive explanation. Judas is represented as going unto "his own place," as if, when his soul after death came at once under the dominion and influence of a spiritual law, which removed it to the sphere which was properly its own. And the difficulty will be at once removed, if we can assign this law, and show that it must take effect on every spirit dividing the souls of men into two classes, according to one decisive characteristic which, whatever be their varieties of moral character, either is or is not clearly inscribed upon them all. This law our Lord has Himself asserted. Of every being it may be affirmed either that it does or does not love God. And according to their possession or their want of this affection will some go away to the kingdom prepared for them, and others to that "prepared for the devil and his angels." There are some souls in a state of indifference, and some in a state of hatred to God. But both these want the principle, which alone can make heaven their own place. And there are other souls which love God and are in affinity with Him; such, when they leave earth, must proceed at once to heaven. It is "their own place," for God is there, and they are spiritually united unto Him; for Christ is there, and where He is, there must they also be; for it is an abode of holiness, and they have been sanctified by Almighty grace, they have been made meet for that inheritance of light. (*G. S. Drew, M.A.*) *Men sorted in the future*:—Men will be sorted yonder. Gravitation will come into play undisturbed; and the pebbles will be ranged according to their weights on the great shore where the sea has cast them up, as they are upon Chesil beach down there in the English Channel, and many another coast besides; all the big ones together and sized off to the smaller ones, regularly and steadily laid out. (*A. Maclaren D.D.*) *Where would we be?*—I was in

America a few months ago, and went down the Alleghany Mountain on a railway train. It was a thing to remember to see the speed at which we went down the incline. A nervous passenger asked the conductor: "What would happen to us if the brake gave way?" "We have a spare one which we would apply at once," he answered. "If it also gave way, what then?" again queried the passenger. "We have one on the last van, which we can put on." "If it gave way, where would we be?" The conductor looked him in the face, and said gravely: "Friend, that depends upon the way you have lived." *The fall of Judas:*—God does not predestinate man to fail. That is strikingly told in the history of Judas. "From a ministry and apostleship Judas fell, that he might go to his own place." The ministry and apostleship were that to which God had destined him. To work out that was the destiny appointed to him, as truly as to any of the other apostles. He was called, elected to that. But when he refused to execute that mission, the very circumstances which, by God's decree, were leading him to blessedness, hurried him to ruin. Circumstances prepared by eternal love became the destiny which conducted him to everlasting doom. He was a predestined man—crushed by his fate. But he went to his own place. He had shaped his own destiny. So the ship is wrecked by the winds and waves—hurried to its fate. But the wind and waves were in truth its best friends. Rightly guided, it would have made use of them to reach the port; wrongly steered, they became the destiny which drove it on the rocks. Failure—the wreck of life, is not to be impiously traced to the will of God. God will have all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth. God willeth not the death of a sinner. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *Hypocrisy does not disprove the reality of religion:*—Will you say that there are no real stars, because you sometimes see meteors fall, which for a time appear to be stars? Will you say that blossoms never produce fruit, because many of them fall off, and some fruit which appeared sound is rotten at the core? Equally absurd is it to say there is no such thing as real religion, because many who profess it fall away or prove to be hypocrites in heart. (*E. Payson.*) *A place for every man:*—I. Every man HAS his own place, here and hereafter. II. Every man MAKES his own place, here and hereafter. III. Every man FINDS his own place, here and hereafter. IV. Every man FEELS that it is his own place when he gets there. (*A. Dickson, D.D.*) *Every man in his own place:*—When you know where you will most likely find a man for whom you are looking, you commonly know also what to expect of the man himself when he is found. Nobody would select for a position of trust a youth whom everybody would say was to be looked for at the drinking-saloon or at the idler's corner. A fair question to ask, in the case of any man about whom you would learn, is: Will he probably be found—at the race-course, or in some place of honest business, during the daytime; at the club-room or in his library, in the evening; at the theatre, or at the prayer-meeting? That is also a fair question for every one to ask of himself: Where may those who know me best most reasonably expect to find me? The answer to that question tells a great deal regarding personal character; not because the place makes the man, but because the man chooses his place, and sooner or later he will find the place which is likest to himself. Scripture need say no more regarding the spiritual fate of Judas Iscariot than that he went to his own place. (*H. C. Trumball, D.D.*) *The law of spiritual gravitation:*—1. No event in the history of science more widely known as that of Sir I. Newton and the fall of the apple. From thence the law of gravitation in the law of matter. 2. Similar law in the world of mind. 3. The text teaches us that there is such a law in the world of spirit. I. IT IS INDEPENDENT OF A MAN'S POSITION. There is no royal road in gravitation by which the delicate flower shall need no support because of its beauty; or by which success shall be secured to an idle man; or in the spiritual life a man be kept secure because his privileges are great. Law is inexorable. The higher the privilege the greater the fall, if the conditions are not observed. 1. The high position of Judas did not save him. Think of the probable effects of such a position as that of apostle, companion of Christ. But behold the actual effects. His advantages were but the instruments of his fall. 2. It is so with us. No man is out of the reach of law. In the matter of privilege our case in many respects analogous. Trace the history of a soul; let it hate what God loves and love what God hates: during all that time it is gravitating to its own place, with all the certainty of law. And when he dies the man does not leave himself behind, the man and his character constitute the undying self. II. IT IS ACCELERATING IN ITS PROGRESS. Nature is full of instances of this. Things and events tend to a climax; the sun passes on to its

meridian, the river to the full, the avalanche to its final crash. 1. Watch this with Judas. His downward course was hastened by his reigning sin (John xii. 4, xiii. 2, 27; Matt. xxvii. 15), and by the feeling of isolation (Matt. xxvii. 3–5), for he was cut off from the good and spurned by the evil. 2. It is so with all men similarly placed. By the growing strength of a given tendency, and by its power to employ all the mind. For life tends to a unity. More and more one purpose or passion or set of purposes or passions govern the life. Let the backslider and impenitent lay this to heart. III. IT DETERMINES THE FUTURE BY THE PRESENT. You can see the ill effects of some things, but this great law works more quietly. In Judas it is worked before our eyes. His use of opportunity and position made his place for him. "He was a thief," and that is the cause "he went to his own place"; that is the effect. We are architects of our own fortunes. Apart from repentance and faith there is no cleansing, and it is worse than madness to think that life hereafter will be other than the outcome of the life here. IV. IT LEADS TO A SELF-MADE DESTINY. He was not doomed to sin, and his destiny was but the natural outcome of such a life. It did not need a Judas to save the world, though his is but the greatest out of a thousand cases in which man's evil is made to work out the saving purposes of God. The destiny of Judas was of his own making, and not of Christ's. It is so with ourselves (note difference between Matt. xxv. 34 and 41). (*G. T. Keeble.*) **And they gave forth their lots.**—*The lot:*—As interpreted by ver. 24 and by the word "fell" here there can be no doubt that the passage speaks of "lots" and not "votes." The two were standing, as far as they could see, on the same level. It was left for the Searcher of hearts to show, by the exclusion of human will, which of the two He had chosen. The most usual way of casting lots in such cases was to write each name on a tablet, place them in an urn, and then shake the urn till one came out. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The lot:*—The only instance of an appeal to lots occurs between the departure of our Lord and Pentecost. The Church could dispense with them after the coming of the Holy Ghost, who was to guide into all truth, through whom we are encouraged to hope for a right judgment in all things. No recourse was had to lots in the appointment of deacons. But the Church regards the appointment as Divine (collect for St. Matthias' day). Under the Old Testament lots were regarded as divinely directed (Prov. xvi. 33), and therefore conclusive (xviii. 18). They distinguished the scapegoat (Lev. xvi. 8), convicted Achan, designated Saul to the monarchy, and distributed the promised land (Numb. xxvi. 55, 56). Lots also assigned their several duties among the priests in the temple (1 Chron. xxiv. 5, xxv. 8; Luke i. 9). Augustine deemed it lawful to determine by lot what ministers of the Church should remain and who should seek safety by flight, when prosecution threatened. The Moravians in 1464 had recourse to lots for deciding the question of their having a ministry of their own, and in 1467 for the appointment of their first three ministers. As late as 1731, the retention of their own discipline instead of incorporation with the Lutheran Church, was determined in like manner. Wesley also had, and indulged, a predilection for sortilege. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) *The lot: its lawfulness for Christians:*—When two courses are open to a man, and he is in doubt as to the election of either of them, why should he not, after due religious preparation, involving as this must the entire subordination of his will to God, risk the decision of the case on the casting of lots? Is there anything in such a course inconsistent with the simplicity of the Christian religion? The man, it is presumed, is most deeply anxious to know what God would have him do; he is willing to make any sacrifice the Divine will may impose on him, and however the decision may oppose his own choice he is prepared to accept it. Under such circumstances surely the lot may be used with advantage. But everything depends upon the spirit of the inquirer. For he may almost unconsciously manipulate the lot so as to gratify a wish he would hardly confess even to himself. In almost all cases of doubt, the perplexed man has more or less of a choice. At that point the battle has to be fought. The man has a leaning towards a certain course, yet he would not pursue it if he knew it to be opposed to the Divine will; at the same time he would be most thankful were the lot to confirm his secret bias. That man is not prepared to go to the lot until he has divested himself of every suggestion of his own will. We are not prepared to teach that upon *every* occasion we should turn the decisions of our life upon the casting of lots. We are not prepared to condemn their use, thus guarded, in very special cases of difficulty. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Matthias.**—*After life of Matthias:*—We know no particulars of the after life of Matthias. He was of course partaker with the rest of the twelve of the miraculous

effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; and afterwards of their labours and distresses, at first in Judæa, and then in other parts of the world. But where St. Matthias went is uncertain; some say Macedonia, some say Ethiopia, some say Cappadocia. All authorities, I believe, are agreed that he won the crown of a martyr; but how he died, or where, or when, we cannot certainly tell. One account says that he was taken by the Jews, and stoned, and afterwards beheaded on a charge of blasphemy; another, that he was crucified, "as Judas was hanged upon a tree, so Matthias suffered upon a cross." (*A. M. Loring, M.A.*) *Obscure lives of saints:*—Clement of Alexandria recounts for us some sayings traditionally ascribed to St. Matthias, all of a severe and sternly ascetic tone. But in reality we know nothing of what he either did or taught. The vast majority even of the apostles have their names alone recorded, while nothing is told concerning their labours or their sufferings. Their one desire was that Christ alone should be magnified, and to this end they willed to lose themselves in the boundless sea of His risen glory. And thus they have left us a noble and inspiriting example. We are not apostles, martyrs, or confessors, yet we often find it hard to take our part and do our duty in the spirit displayed by Matthias and Joseph called Barsabas. We long for public recognition and public reward. We chafe and fret internally because we have to bear our temptations and suffer our trials and do our work unknown and unrecognised by all but God. Let the example of these holy men help us to put away all such vain thoughts. God Himself is our all-seeing and ever-present Judge. The Incarnate Master Himself is watching us. The angels and the spirits of the just made perfect are witnesses of our earthly struggles. No matter how low, how humble, how insignificant the story of our spiritual trials and struggles, they are all marked in heaven by that Divine Master, who will at last reward every man, not according to his position in the world, but in strict accordance with the principles of infallible justice. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) **He was numbered with the eleven apostles.**—*The election of Matthias:*—The Greek word is not the same as in vers. 17, and implies that Matthias was "voted in," the suffrage of the Church unanimously confirming the indication of the Divine will what had been given by the lot. It may be that the new apostle took the place that Judas had rendered vacant, and was reckoned as the last of the twelve. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *A Divine appointment:*—The validity of the appointment, which has been questioned, is incidentally recognised in chap. ii. 14, vi. 2; the Twelve must have included Matthias. The appointment being directly Divine superseded the laying on of hands. (*Bp. Jacobson.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–4. **And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.**—*The day of Pentecost:*—I. IN THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST WE DISCOVER EVIDENCE OF A SPECIAL DIVINE INFLUENCE. This idea is too prevalent, that the agency of the Supreme is only of a general character—that the repentance and salvation of sinners are brought about, independently of any direct agency on the part of God. They spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Most convincing evidence of a special Divine influence is found also in the effects produced upon the day of Pentecost. II. THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST CONFIRMED THE DIVINE MISSION OF JESUS AND THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. Whilst on earth the Lord Jesus gave abundant evidence that He was from God. Jesus encouraged His disciples to expect that they would be endued with special power from on high. III. THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST EXHIBIT THE FOLLY OF OPPOSITION TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. The day of Pentecost assures us that Jehovah regards the kingdom of His Son with supreme affection, and that all His perfections are engaged for its defence and enlargement. IV. THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST EXHIBIT THE GRAND MEANS OF ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF CHRIST AND SAVING SINNERS. V. THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST EXHIBIT THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S GRAND SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT. VI. THE OCCURRENCES OF THAT DAY EXHIBIT THE REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION. By a revival of religion we understand an uncommon and general interest in the sub-

ject of salvation, produced by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of Divine truth. Such, substantially, was the revival on the day of Pentecost. Do you say that the excitement, denominated a revival of religion, occurs in connection with the special efforts of Christians? We answer, that the excitement on the day of Pentecost occurred in a similiar connection. Do you say that the Divine influence to which we allude, as to the mode of its operation, is enveloped in the darkness of mystery? So it was on the day of Pentecost. Do you say there is enthusiasm connected with the excitement denominated a revival of religion? Fanaticism there may have been. But does such a fact prove the entire absence of genuine religion? Does it prove that no revival is a sober, rational work? Do you say that in a time of general excitement there will be instances of gross imposition on the Church? So it was in the Pentecost revival, when, in awful warning to hypocrites, Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead. Do you say that the excitement denominated a revival of religion, is often succeeded by instances of apostacy? We answer, that apostacies have likewise occurred under other circumstances. The occurrences of the day of Pentecost exhibit, likewise, the importance of revivals of religion. In a single day it gave to the Christian Church a weight of influence more than a hundredfold greater than it had previously possessed. It is important to individual happiness and to the community at large. (*Baxter Dickinson.*) *Pentecost—the first-fruits :*—But why was the gift of the Spirit delayed until the day of Pentecost was fully come? No man must irreverently pry into the purposes of Deity. I. PENTECOST WAS THE FEAST OF FIRST-FRUITS; THEREFORE SYMBOLICAL OF THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Lev. xxiii. 15, 17; Deut. xvi. 9). The first sheaf of the Christian harvest, the first fruit of the Christian reaping was there ingathered. II. PENTECOST WAS ASSOCIATED IN THE JEWISH WORSHIP WITH THE GIVING OF THE LAW FROM SINAI. Fifty days after the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites received the law from Sinai. To this day the gift of the law is kept in view in the Jewish observance of Pentecost. 1. Conviction of sin is the prominent idea of the apostolic Pentecost. Peter's sermon resulted in the cry, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Conviction of sin is the prelude to a reformed life. In our Christian families and amongst our young people, trained from infancy in Christian virtue, we need not always look for the intense conviction of sin which is apparent on this first day of the Christian Pentecost. No! God's ways are often gentle. 2. The first gift of the Paraclete on the day of Pentecost—the day which, in Jewish thought, was specially consecrated to the giving of the law from Sinai—was specially fitted to the mission of Him "who will convict the world in respect of sin." III. THE FIRST-FRUITS ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST ARE TYPICAL OF THE INGATHERING OF ALL NATIONS TO CHRIST. More foreign Jews attended the Pentecost than any other Jewish feast. And in the light of Pentecost we look forward hopefully to the time when the "great multitude, whom no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues" shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, and shall cry with a great voice, saying, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 9, 10). IV. PENTECOST TEACHES THE UNION OF VAST SPIRITUAL POWER WITH FEEBLE HUMAN AGENCY. (*George Deane, D.Sc.*) *Whit-Sunday :*—I. WHAT THE DAY OF PENTECOST GAVE INDISPUTABLE PROOF OF. 1. The truth of Old and New Testament prophecies (Isa. xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 27; Joel ii. 28; Zech. iv. 6; John xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7; Acts i. 5, &c.). 2. The reality of the Messiahship and mission of Christ. The Holy Ghost would bring to the remembrance of the disciples the words they had heard their Master utter, and reveal the meaning of the things of Christ unto them. The Spirit bears witness with our spirits to-day that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. 3. The person, presence, and power of the Holy Ghost. II. WHAT THE DAY OF PENTECOST GAVE INFALLIBLE PLEDGE OF. The success of the preaching of Peter on that day was the earnest of the successive victories the gospel would achieve over error in the world down to the end of time. Those victories would be won—1. In spite of the paucity of numbers on the side of the gospel. 2. In spite of the poverty of the preachers of the gospel. 3. In spite of the antagonism of the enemies of the gospel. 4. In spite of the unfaithfulness of professors of the gospel. III. WHAT THE DAY OF PENTECOST GAVE IRREVOCABLE PATTERN OF. The primitive Church had to —1. Wait for the day. 2. Work for the day. Human agony linked with Divine power. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Pentecost :*—I. THE SEASON when the Spirit was given. 1. In God's appointed time. There is a set time to favour Zion, both to try our faith and to prove God's sovereignty. If every drop of rain has its appointed birthday, every gleam of light its predestinated pathway, and every spark of fire its settled

hour for flying upward, certainly the will of God must have arranged and settled the period and place of every gracious visitation. 2. After the ascension. The Spirit was not given till after Jesus had been glorified. Various blessings are ascribable to different parts of Christ's work. His life is our imputed righteousness; His death brings us pardon; His resurrection confers upon us justification; His ascension yields to us the Holy Spirit. "When He ascended up on high," &c. It was the wont of the Roman conqueror as he rode along to scatter large quantities of money among the admiring crowd. So our glorified Lord scattered gifts among men. 3. At Pentecost. Some say that at Pentecost the law was proclaimed on Sinai. If so, it was very significant that on the day when the law was issued amid thunders and lightnings, the gospel—God's new and better law—should be proclaimed with mighty wind and tongues of fire. We are clear, however, that Pentecost was a harvest-festival. On that day the sheaf was waved before the Lord and the harvest consecrated. The passover was to our Saviour the time of His sowing, but Pentecost was the day of His reaping, and the fields which were ripe to the harvest when He sat on the well, are reaped now that He sits upon the throne. 4. When there was most need. Vast crowds were gathered. What would have been the use of the many tongues when no strangers were ready to hear? Whenever we see unusual gatherings, whenever the spirit of hearing is poured out upon the people, we ought to pray for and expect an unusual visitation of the Spirit. 5. Where they were all with one accord in one place. Christians cannot all now be in one place, but they can all be of one accord. When there are no cold hearts, no prejudices and bigotries to separate, no schism to rend the one sacred garment of Christ, then may we expect to see the Spirit of God resting upon us. 6. When they were earnest about one grand object. II. THE MANNER. Each word here is suggestive. 1. Suddenly. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and so, though the Spirit may have been secretly preparing men's hearts, yet the real work of revival is done suddenly to the surprise of all observers. 2. There was a sound. Although the Spirit of God is silent, yet His operations are not silent in their results. 3. As of wind. In Greek and Hebrew the word used for wind and for Spirit is the same. The wind is doubtless, chosen as an emblem because of its mysteriousness: "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth"; because of its freeness: "It bloweth where it listeth"; because of diversity of its operations, for the wind blows a gentle zephyr at one moment, and anon it mounts to a howling blast. The Holy Spirit at one time comes to comfort, and at other times to alarm, &c. 4. It was rushing. This pourtrayed the rapidity with which the Spirit's influences spread—rushing like a torrent. Within fifty years from Pentecost the gospel had been preached in every country of the known world. 5. It was mighty, irresistible, and so is the Spirit of God; where He comes nothing can stand against Him. 6. It filled all the place where they were sitting. The sound was not merely heard by the disciples. When the Spirit of God comes, He never confines Himself to the Church. A revival in a village penetrates even the pot-house. The Spirit of God at work in the Church is soon felt in the farm-yard, work-room, and factory. 7. But this was not all. I must now mention what was the appearance seen—a bright luminous cloud probably, not unlike that which once rested in the wilderness over the tribes by night—which suddenly divided, or was cleft, and separate tongues of fire rested upon the head of each of the disciples. They would understand that thus a Divine power was given to them. Heathens represent beams of light or flames of fire proceeding from their false deities, and the nimbus with which Roman Catholic painters always adorn the heads of saints, is a relic of the same idea. It was said by the ancients of Hesiod, the first of all the poets, that whereas he was once nothing but a simple neat-herd, yet suddenly a Divine flame fell upon him, and he became henceforth one of the noblest of men. We feel assured that so natural a metaphor would be at once understood by the apostles. (1) It was a tongue, for God has been pleased to make the tongue do mightier deeds than either sword or pen; by the foolishness of preaching to save them that deliver. (2) It was a tongue of fire, to show that God's ministers speak, not coldly as though they had tongues of ice, nor learnedly as with tongues of gold, nor arrogantly as with tongues of brass, nor pliantly as with tongues of willow, nor sternly as with tongues of iron, but earnestly as with the tongue of flame; their words consume sin, scorch falsehood, enlighten the darkness, and comfort the poor. (3) It sat upon them. So the Spirit of God is an abiding influence, and the saints shall persevere. (4) It sat upon each of them, so that while there was but one fire, yet each believer received his portion of the one Spirit. There are diversities of opera-

tions, but it is the same Lord. III. THE RESULT. After all this, what are you expecting? Shall the wind blow down dynasties—the fire consume dominions? No; Spiritual and not carnal is the kingdom of God. The result lies in three things. 1. A sermon. The Spirit of God was given to help Peter preach. You turn with interest to know what sort of a sermon a man would preach who was full to the brim of the Holy Ghost. You expect him to be more eloquent than Robert Hall, or Chalmers; more learned than the Puritans. You expect all the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes to be put in the shade. No such thing! Never was there a sermon more commonplace. It is one of the blessed effects of the Holy Spirit to make ministers preach simply. 2. The people were pricked in the heart, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" What a disorderly thing! Blessed disorder which the Spirit of God gives. Men then feel that they have heard something which has gone right into their inmost nature and receive a wound which only God can heal. 3. Faith and the outward confession of it in baptism. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The descent of the Spirit:*—The circumstances connected with the event. I. THE TIME. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." It was the fiftieth day after the Passover, and beginning of the harvest festival. Harvest home! Surely it was no blind chance that made this appointment for the inauguration of the dispensation of spiritual ingathering (Rev. xiv. 15). II. THE PLACE. It was "a house," the noteworthy fact being that it was not the temple. Up to this time the temple had monopolised the formal worship of Jehovah; but to-day a new order begins. The privileges of worship are to be everywhere and for all sorts and conditions of men. III. THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ. Here were a hundred and twenty feeble folk, none mighty or noble among them, distinguished from the multitudinous rank and file of common people only by the fact that God had chosen them to be the nucleus of the Christian Church. Thus, kneeling together, they held the coign of vantage. They were sure of the blessing. May it not be that, under similar conditions, the Church of our times would be similarly blest? IV. THE ONLOOKERS. There came together to witness this strange occurrence a motley and polyglot assemblage of "Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." Was ever a more representative body of people? And this was as it should have been, for the thing about to happen was of universal importance, and the power about to descend was, like the sceptre in Balaam's vision, to smite even to the remotest corners of the earth. The time had come for the propagation of a catholic gospel; and this heterogeneous company of people was the first representative Christian congregation that ever assembled on earth. Those who, on this occasion, were "sojourning at Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven," carried back to their countrymen the announcement of the new religion; and thus the seed was sown whose full and glorious fruition will be seen at the close of history, when "a great multitude which no man can number," &c. (Rev. vii. 9). V. WHAT THEY SAW AND HEARD. At this point everything is significant. 1. The "sound as of a mighty, rushing wind." This must instantly have recalled to the minds of the disciples their Master's word, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Ezekiel's vision in the valley of dry bones we have a similar association of the wind or breath (Hebrew *ruach*) with spiritual influence: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" The symbol is appropriate, suggesting an influence so elevating and inspiring as to mark the beginning of a new life. 2. The fire. This would instantly recall the words of John the Baptist, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Fire burns, subdues, purifies, penetrates, illumines, energises. Fire is power. The heart that has received the baptism from on high is "set on fire" with a passion for all things true and right. 3. Cloven tongues. It is to be observed that the symbol used to designate the power of the gospel dispensation was not an iron rod, nor a sword, nor a pontifical mitre, but a cloven tongue—the symbol of speech, of argument, of "the foolishness of preaching." The victory by which the world is to be subjugated to the gospel is to be a moral victory; and the power which is to accomplish it is the simple story of the Cross. Jehovah is not in the storm nor in the earthquake, but in the still, small voice. VI. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EVENT. 1. It marked the reformation and reorganisation of Judaism into the Christian Church. In this company of a hundred and twenty persons—like-minded as to the ruling principle of life and en-

gaged with one accord in prayer for a specific blessing—we behold, in seed and promise, a mighty organism which is destined to survive all shocks and oppositions, gathering meat out of the eater and sweetness out of the strong, until at length it shall bring the world and lay it before its Master's feet. This is the living mechanism that Ezekiel saw by the river Chebar, "a whirlwind out of the north and a fire infolding itself and winged creatures going straight forward: whither the spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went" (Ezek. i. 4–10). This working Church of Jesus, inspired by a purpose above all carnal ambitions and endued with power to accomplish it, is at this moment incomparably the greatest force on earth. 2. The miracle of the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of a new epoch. The old economy of types and shadows was over; the dispensation of the Spirit was at hand. Thenceforth the Holy Ghost was to rule in human affairs. It was a transitional point in history. Let us thank God that we live on the hither side of it. Nay, rather, let us thank God over and over that we are permitted to take part in the splendid achievements of these days. 3. This Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit marked the beginning of the end. At that moment God Himself made bare His arm and said, The kingdoms of this world shall be Mine! Those who looked on "were amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" In answer they were referred by Peter to the prophesy of Joel: "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." It is scarcely to be believed that God will wait upon the slow processes which His people are using for the conversion of the world. He has mighty forces in reserve which we in our poor philosophies have never dreamed of; and who can tell at what moment He may bring them into requisition? (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Pentecost*:—1. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The exact day was not specified, and still less the precise nature of the gift. Expectation has always been the posture of the Church. For ages the expectation was that of the Messiah's coming; and no sooner did the Messiah appear than a new season of expectation set in; the expectation of His second coming. Nowhere is there, nor ought there to be, mere retrospection or satisfaction. Many chief graces can only be exercised by looking forward and upward. 2. The condition of the disciples between Ascension and Pentecost was one of expectation in a double sense. They were taught by the angels to look for their Lord's return. But there was a near return as well as one more remote. When our Lord said "I will see you again," &c., He said so in three senses—in His own resurrection; in their resurrection; but between these two there lay a spiritual but not therefore an unreal advent. 3. The feast of Pentecost was one of the three great festivals of Israel. It was so called from one particular point in the celebration of the Passover; the waving of the sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest on the morrow after the Passover-Sabbath. From that day they were to number seven complete sabbaths, and then arrived the feast of weeks or of Pentecost; on which occasion, as at the earlier Passover, and the later Tabernacles, all the men were required to appear before the Lord at His sanctuary in Jerusalem. The Passover had already found its antitype in that season at which Christ the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for us. The feast of Tabernacles, the celebration of the completion of harvest and vintage, and of the rest which followed the entrance into Canaan, is to find its antitype in that rest which remains for the people of God in heaven. The intermediate festival of Pentecost was to have its antitype in that gift which this chapter describes. Jewish tradition marked out the feast as the commemoration of the giving of the law. And peculiar significance is therefore given to the choice of the day for the giving of that new law, of the Spirit of life, by which the commandments of God were to be written, not on tables of stone, but on the tablets of a renewed and willing heart. At all events the festival of the first-fruits was now to be fulfilled in the Holy Spirit as the first-fruits of the heavenly inheritance. Two things in the narrative need to be distinguished. I. THE ORIGIN OF THE GIFT. 1. Men are slow in understanding and stubborn in disputing spiritual or supernatural influences; resolving everything into workings of nature, chance, or imagination. There is no spiritual influence which the philosophers and theologians of this age would not explain away, or laugh down. It is well, perhaps, that the gospel was established in men's convictions in an age of greater simplicity and of less presumption. 2. But if God would make it evident that He is at work, I know not how it can be done without miracle. If our Lord would convince common men that He had all the power of God, was there any

mode so really decisive as that which the Gospels describe to us? Those who had actually seen Him still a tempest, raise a corpse, &c., must have felt that God had given them evidence of the Messiahship of Christ. Even thus was it with the coming of the Holy Ghost. Hearts might have been influenced, lives might have been changed, and men might have ascribed it to natural causes; but if it was to be made plain, beyond gainsaying, that the Holy Spirit had descended to make His abode in the Church and in the hearts of men, there must be some sign of which the senses could take cognisance, and from which but one inference could be drawn. 3. Such a sign was that marvellous power of which we have here the first example. If unlettered men were heard to utter sounds recognised by men of diverse nations as their native speech, what other explanation could be given save that which Peter gave? 4. And is there anything irrational in the supposition that God should come in direct personal communication with man, or should make it plain whence that communication was derived? It can be no reproach to a revelation that its utterance is decisive and its proofs intelligible to unlettered men. 5. In the signs which accompanied the descent of the Holy Ghost we can recognise all the emblems by which He had been foretold. (1) The rushing mighty wind, "blowing where it listeth," audible in its sound, inscrutable in its source and destination. (2) The fiery flame which had been taken from the first as the description of the Saviour's baptism. (3) The voice which bore witness to the informing, instructing, and counselling presence within. II. THE GIFT SIGNIFIED. 1. We read of it in its prediction and in its experience. Look for the one to John xiv.–xvi., and for the other to Rom. viii., Gal. v. Study those and you will see how little they can enter into the fulness of the promise, who either imagine it to have been designed for apostles only, or as consisting principally of miraculous gifts. The Holy Spirit was promised as the Comforter, the Remembrancer, the Teacher, the Guide, the inward Advocate, the Representative of Christ, the Presence of God and of Christ in the soul, whose coming was to make it a gain even that the Saviour should depart. And what then was the experience of this great gift? How did they describe it who had found it for their own? Hear what Paul, who was not present at Pentecost, but only received the gift afterwards as any one of you might receive it in answer to prayer, tells how the Holy Ghost within had set him free from the bondage of sin and death; how He had turned his affections from things below to things above; how he had found the Holy Spirit to be indeed a Spirit not of fear but the Spirit of adoption, &c. 2. The gift of the Spirit is one half of the whole need of man. We need forgiveness first. But there is a need behind, without which forgiveness would be a mockery—the gift of the Holy Ghost pledged in baptism—promised in the Word of life. We are ignorant, poor, weak, sad, and lonely in heart, until the Sun of Righteousness rises upon us with that healing in His wings, which is first the joy of a free forgiveness, and secondly the joy of an indwelling Spirit! And be we well assured that, if we are filled with the Holy Ghost, the other words of the text will be realised in us; we shall also speak with another tongue, the Spirit giving us the utterance. How transforming is the influence of the Holy Spirit upon human lips! Can we live with a man in whom God dwells and not perceive it in his words? Let us pray for the gift of that new Divine speech, in the power of which he who once opened his lips only to trifle, to defame, or to deceive, has begun to breathe the sounds of love and joy and peace, of gentleness and goodness and faith and meekness. Thus shall men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Thus shall we bear that testimony, not of word only but of sign, by which minds are convinced and hearts opened, by which God's name is made known on earth, His saving health among all nations. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Pentecost a spiritual spring feast*:—I. THE SPRING BREEZES WHICH BLOW: stormy blasts and soft zephyrs. II. THE SPRING VOICES WHICH ARE HEARD: the inspired tongues of the apostles praising the mighty acts of God, and the timid voices of awakened consciences inquiring after salvation. III. THE SPRING BLOSSOMS WHICH APPEAR: childlike faith and brotherly love. (*Gerok.*) *The Pentecostal outpouring*:—I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT. 1. The ascension. Christ had taught that His going away was essential to the Spirit's coming. 2. The attitude of the disciples. (1) Patient waiting. (2) Union. (3) Prayer. (4) Fellowship with the risen Christ. II. ITS SENSIBLE ACCOMPANIMENTS. The elements of nature were now, as so often, symbolical of spiritual realities. 1. The sound like wind indicating the immediacy, secrecy and swiftness of the Divine action. 2. The appearance like fire symbolising warming, quickening, cleansing. III. THE GIFT ITSELF. The Spirit's influence was—1. In its nature adapted to

affect men's minds and hearts. 2. In its measure as vast as human capacities could receive. 3. In its extent universal, being designed for Christ's whole Church. IV. THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES. 1. The apostles were empowered to speak with other tongues, which was a sign of Divine energy. 2. Preaching was made powerful to the conversion of many; enemies of Christ became friends. 3. The Church was established upon a sure and lasting foundation. (*Family Churchman.*) *The gift of Pentecost the best gift of God*, in virtue of—I. ITS ROOT—the merits of Christ, His humiliation and exaltation. II. ITS NATURE—the union of the Spirit of God with man. III. ITS OPERATIONS—the new creation of the heart and of the world. (*Gerok.*) *Pentecost; or, the first Christian day*:—Next to the day of Christ's death, Pentecost was the greatest day that ever dawned. It was "the birth-day" of the Church, the first day of the new creation, in which chaos began to be fashioned and arranged by the plastic power of the Spirit, the day of the grand and solemn opening of the kingdom of heaven, after the completion of the Christ's preparatory work, the day on which the fountain was unsealed, whose waters should flow forth for the healing and purifying of the nations. And as it was the first of Christian days, so was it a type of Christian days. Note—I. THE HISTORY. 1. The season was the Pentecost, a Jewish festival. 2. The hour, "the hour of prayer." 3. The place was one of the apartments of the temple. If we put these things together, we shall have two results. (1) They secured a large and fitting audience. Great numbers of Jews and proselytes visited Jerusalem; and the temple was just the place where they could most easily become parties to the introduction of the new dispensation. (2) It was strikingly taught that the old state of things was giving place to another, which should change its form but perfect its spirit. The shell was being broken to yield a new life; the beautiful fly was being developed from the worm. Judaism was to be displaced by that which should spiritualise and ennoble its truths and principles. The temple was to become a church, and Pentecost to witness a new celebration of harvest, the ingathering of souls. 4. The antecedents. The apostles "continued with one accord," &c. II. THE OCCURRENCES AS STRIKINGLY SUGGESTIVE OF IMPORTANT TRUTHS IN RELATION TO THE DISPENSATION THUS INTRODUCED. There was—1. A new Spirit. Whatever spiritual influences had been shed forth in former periods, the Holy Ghost, in the New Testament sense, was to be the gift of the glorified Saviour, the characteristic blessing of His kingdom. We must beware of restricting this fact to miraculous endowments. The gift of tongues, &c., were but signs and seals of the spiritual power intended to draw attention to the inward gift, only as the thunder and lightning of the new spiritual world, occasional and impressive incidents of powers and processes whose constant, silent operation is the very life of men. (1) The world needed the Spirit. It was not a case merely for new religious opinions, habits, or institutions; the need was of life from above; the nature required to be restored and quickened. Sin had cut off the supplies of Divine grace, had converted the temple into a tomb. It was the grand design of the gospel to engraft humanity upon Deity, to breathe into our dead souls the breath of life. (2) The apostles needed the Spirit. Much as they had been with Jesus, they were still strangers to His inner being, the deeper meaning of His acts and words, the glory of His Cross; they were like the skeletons in the valley of vision, very dry, till at the prophet's bidding they became living men. 2. A new truth. "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God," the same as composed the subject of Peter's discourse; the history of Christ. True, they knew that He had died, and risen again, and ascended: but all this, though familiar as history, was new as truth. And just as a man who has travelled in the dark, looks back at break of day and admires the objects that he passed, aware only of their existence, or deeming them objects of fear, so the disciples recalled the events of their Master's life, and rejoiced in much which had perplexed and grieved them. The death and departure of Christ were to His followers like the fabled statue of Memnon, which sent forth sounds, mournful in the night, but melodious at the rising of the sun: when God's morning light arose, how sweet the notes those facts, once only sad, emitted! Christianity is essentially historical. It does not set men on arduous inquiries, nor answer them by logical expositions; but it points us to the incarnate Son of God; tells us how He lived and suffered and arose to glory; tells us that He was, that He is: He is the object of its faith, its love, its obedience and its joy. Such was evidently Peter's thought when he used "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" to open it to the Jewish world on the day of Pentecost. Such was also Paul's (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). This was the truth which they propounded to men of every class and in every

condition—to Greek (1 Cor. ii. 2); to Jew (Gal. vi. 14); to Roman (Rom. viii. 3, 4); and it proved, in the case of all, the power of God unto every one that believeth. The declaration of this truth on the day of Pentecost was therefore not an exceptional thing; it was a specimen of the kind of moral instrumentality which should be characteristic of Christianity. 3. A new vehicle. "They began to speak with other tongues." (1) Had a Jew been told that God was about to introduce a new and transcendent dispensation in a style worthy of its superior excellence, he would probably have expected a grand ceremonial. But he was here taught that Christianity would be a system, not of ceremonialism, but of moral agency, and that its chief means would be uttered thought and feeling, man coming into contact with man, reason with reason, heart with heart. No system of religion has made such use of the voice as Christianity, and its purest forms have always been connected with the largest use of the voice. (2) The manner as well as the fact of the use of the tongue was instructive. In the publicity and indiscriminateness of Pentecostal preaching there was something different from all that had appeared in the best types of heathen wisdom. The philosophers universally disregarded the poor; their discoveries were confined to those who sought and could purchase them. But the gift of tongues declared not only that speech would be the most appropriate organ of the gospel, but that it would "speak to the people" without exception, "all the words of this life." 4. A new world. No power on earth could have brought together, at that time, so typical a congregation. And herein was there an expression of the catholicity of the gospel. It not only declared that the world might enjoy the privileges of the true religion, but it spoke to the world in its own language; it destroyed every "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile, and made the common possession of every race the rich inheritance of "the gospel of the grace of God." The confusion of tongues (Gen. xi. 7) was reversed, and it was proclaimed that the effect of the gospel would be the destruction of all that divided and alienated men; that its purpose was to form a new "body," into which all should be "baptized by one Spirit, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free," so creating a "new man," in which there should be "neither Greek nor Jew," &c. 5. A new impression (vers. 37, 41–42). (1) There had been mighty religious movements among Jews and Gentiles, but there had been no seasons similar to Pentecost. Not that we are to dissociate that time from times preceding. "Other men had laboured, and the disciples entered into their labours." Christ had no Pentecost; but He was always doing that without which no Pentecost could have been. He was breaking up the fallow-ground, and sowing seed; the ingathering was to come. It is a far greater thing to make a gospel than to preach a gospel. And when Peter with quickening energy spake to the people, and thousands confessed the sovereignty of truth, he was only the instrument of bringing to bear the virtue and power of Christ's redemption. "The corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died," but, having died, it now "brought forth much fruit." (2) But however men had been moved or changed before, they had never been moved or changed thus. The sense of guilt was not strange, but penitence had never possessed the depth and the tenderness which belonged to theirs who "looked on Him whom they had pierced, and mourned for Him." Moral and religious reformation had often rewarded the labours of the wise and good, but never had it taken so Divine a type as in those who now "gladly received the Word." Men had often associated themselves together at the bidding of outward law or inward love, but organisation and fellowship had never known their truest life and strongest bonds till the thousands of Pentecost joined the Church at Jerusalem. III. APPLICATION: 1. Let us recognise the fact that this is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is now given because Jesus is glorified. It is the time of spiritual life, "the day of Christ's power." 2. The means whereby "the power from on high" may be obtained for ourselves and others. These are prayer and truth. It was the supplicating Church that was filled with the Spirit; it was the speaking Church that received the addition of three thousand souls. This is a union that evermore prevails, and without which there can be no realisation of Pentecostal times. 3. The pouring forth of the Spirit of Christ is the present, the universal, the urgent necessity of men. The main misery of the world is its carnal life, its separation from God: it will never be whole and happy till it be possessed and regenerated by the Spirit of the living God. (*A. J. Morris.*) *The day of Pentecost*:—The occurrences of the day exhibit—1. Evidence of a special Divine influence. 2. The Divine mission of Jesus and the truth of Christianity. 3. The folly of opposition to Christ's kingdom. 4. The grand means of advancing Christ's

cause and saving sinners. 5. The Christian minister's great source of encouragement. 6. The reality and importance of revivals of religion. (*B. Dickinson, M.A.*) *The day of Pentecost*:—The disciples—I. BEGAN TO SPEAK. Hitherto they had kept silence. They were learners and asked questions. True, they were sent by Christ to try their "'prentice hands"; but their discourses could not have been much to boast of, or they would have been recorded. But no sooner were they filled with the Spirit than they began to speak out. A man may have a little of the Spirit and be able to observe silence; but if he is filled he cannot hold his peace. "Necessity is laid upon me." From their irrepressible desire to speak, many concluded they were "full of new wine." And herein there is a superficial likeness between "being filled with wine" and "being filled with the Spirit": in either case there is a powerful desire to speak. A few chapters further on in reply to the magistrates, they said, "We *cannot* but speak." The Holy Spirit was fermenting within them and bursting through all restraints (see Job xxxii. 17–20, and Marg.). II. WITH OTHER TONGUES. 1. This is a power inherent in all men. Men speak with new tongues every year. Some can converse in many languages. Here the Spirit quickened this power. The first miracle of Christ was the turning of water into wine. There is nothing unnatural in that. Do we not see it every year in the vintages of Europe? The supernatural consisted in its instantaneousness. And so the first miracle of the Holy Ghost consisted in the rapidity with which the knowledge of other tongues was acquired. 2. Some acquire knowledge with much greater rapidity than others. Who can tell how quickly the human intellect may acquire it when inspired by the Holy Ghost? Sir William Hamilton tells us of a servant girl who, under the excitement of fever, repeated long and intricate passages from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew authors, which she had occasionally overheard her old master read as he was walking up and down in his house. If that be the case under the excitement of fever, is it incredible that the disciples spoke with foreign tongues under the influences of the Holy Spirit? Man is only a degenerate specimen of what he once was. Adam could learn more in five minutes than we can in five years. He could instinctively make language, a much more formidable task than to learn it. Let the wound which sin has inflicted on the mind be healed up, and man will learn a new language with as much facility as Adam made one. 3. The Holy Spirit, it is admitted, ennobles other faculties; then why not this? He made Bezaleel and Aholiab skilful workmen, and still endows men with the knowledge necessary to the successful prosecution of art. When Christianity appeared, the arts and sciences were at a very low ebb. But before long the new religion poured a new spirit into society, and began to ennoble the intellect of the race. Just as you have seen a tree, after being well manured, budding out in early spring with fresh vitality, so Christianity enriched the human mind. Poetry revived under it—the best poetry of the world is Christian. Painting grew under the shadow of its wing—the grand pictures are nearly all representations of scenes in the life of the Saviour. Music and architecture also have chiefly flourished on Christian soil and in immediate connection with Christian worship. And so with the sciences. The revival of learning was coincident with the revival of Christianity. Science did not make the discovery that the sun is the centre of our system until Luther discovered that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, is the centre of religion. Stephenson was once asked, What was the power that pulled the train along the rails? He answered, The sun. The sun was not the immediate power—that was the fire under the boiler; but he knew that science could trace back the fire of the coal to the fire of the sun. And the power that is now working in the heart of civilization, that is pushing upward and forward all that is good and true is the power of the Spirit of Christ. 4. As sin, which lies like an incubus on the heart of humanity, hindering free movement, will be expunged, we may expect corresponding celerity in our acquisition of knowledge. Possibly the lofty mental state of the apostles is the normal state of man. Daniel was thrown to the lions' den, and the lions hurt him not. That we call supernatural: yet it is perhaps the true natural—the state in which man was placed in Paradise, and in which he will find himself again by and by. The three young men in Babylon were cast into the fiery furnace, and the flame did not singe a hair of their heads. That we call supernatural: yet it may be the true natural. Man was not subject to death either natural or accidental before the entrance of sin into the world; and man redeemed will go through the fire and not be burnt. Christ walked the sea, that we call supernatural: yet I am not sure but it is the true natural—the state in which man found himself in the Paradise of old, and in Paradise regained he will

walk through rivers and they will not overflow him. Paul took hold of serpents, and they did not bite him, nor did they bite man in Eden, and they will not bite him in the future. And the disciples on the day of Pentecost spoke with other tongues. The family of man once spoke the same language; and who knows but the partition walls between nations as the result of the confusion of languages will be totally removed by a vast display of intellectual power on the part of the race baptized with the Holy Ghost? The miracle of Pentecost will gradually neutralise the miracle of Babel. Men travel now with greater speed than of old; they correspond with greater rapidity; and who can tell but that learning will move with greater ease, relieved to a certain extent from the present drudgery? "There *is* a royal road to learning." Let sin be purged out, and man will learn by intuition. III. THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD. 1. His ordinary works are the Creation in its various ramifications. He makes the sun to rise and to set; His wonderful works are as Peter's sermon shows, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The only subjects worthy of the pulpit are not the arts and sciences, but the gospel—a thing specially lacking in the sermons of some leading preachers. 2. It is truly remarkable that the wonderful works of God are easily translatable. Science is not suitable for every language; it cannot speak Welsh, *e.g.*; but the gospel can. A minister insisted on the importance of knowing Greek to understand the New Testament. "I do not," remarked an old lady, "perceive the necessity, for my Saviour knows Welsh as well as I do. It is in Welsh that I always speak to Him, and that He always speaks to me. He knew Welsh when I was a little girl, and we have talked Welsh together ever since." 3. But the words intimate that the disciples spoke in foreign languages with a thorough command of their peculiar idiom and accent. Not only in their languages but in their "tongues" they had the very twang of natives. Native tongue has very great influence over man. The same truths uttered in another language, though well understood, exercise not the same charm. "Can an Ethiopian change his skin?" Yes, as soon as he can change his tongue. When St. Paul addressed the enraged multitude in Jerusalem in Hebrew, they grew calm and attentive. Latin and Greek would only excite them. 4. Seeing that language is the only weapon in the propagation of the gospel, it is of great importance that its ministers should know how to use it deftly and well. The sword of Cromwell was mighty; all Europe feared the flash of it. But the tongue and pen of Milton did more to ensure liberty of conscience. The pen is stronger than the sword—the tongue can drown the roar of cannon. 5. And the Church leads the van in the study of languages. Commerce and love of learning have done a little in that direction; but they generally follow in the wake of the gospel. Who are the first to learn the languages of distant nations, to write their grammars, to compile their dictionaries? Missionaries of the gospel. What book is the first to speak in the barbarous tongues of the earth? The Bible; but the moment the Bible speaks in those tongues they forthwith cease to be barbarous. Sin has left its deep, black marks upon language. Open your English dictionary and you will find in the first page that three-fourths of the words owe their existence and significance to sin. But these words must gradually grow obsolete, and language be refashioned—the gospel will leave its mark upon the dictionary. The Church of the present day is richly endued with the gift of tongues, every fresh effusion of the Spirit being followed by the certain acquisition of a new language. Go to the Bible Society House, where the Church speaks in no fewer than two hundred and fifty languages. The disciples only began; the Church continues and will continue till all nations shall have heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. 6. But we are not taught languages miraculously now. True; and for valid reasons—(1) One is the printing press. What the gift of tongues did for the Church of Pentecost, the printing press has done for the Church of the Reformation. (2) Another is the abundance of the labourers. In the primitive Church there were only a few, whereas there was a whole world to evangelise. So God gave them their tools ready made—sickles sharpened for work. But the need for this no longer exists. There are Christians enough in England alone to learn all the languages of the earth, and to preach the gospel to every creature in less than ten years, without in the least disturbing the ordinary course of business at home. God, therefore, has withdrawn the miracle. To continue it would be to patronise indolence, and do for believers what they can easily do for themselves. 7. The miracle has ceased, but the blessing enveloped in the miracle remains. (1) The necessity for miracles arises out of the want and not of the wealth of the age. Hence Jesus turned water into wine, multiplied loaves and fishes and healed the

sick, because there were no other means of supply and effectual medicine. It is different now. (2) The miraculous ages are always the most spiritually impoverished. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt is marked by miracles. But the necessity for them arose out of the moral dearth of the times. As the consciousness of God grew, the miraculous continued to wax smaller, till in the reigns of David and Solomon—the richest period materially, intellectually, and spiritually—it ceased altogether. But in subsequent reigns spiritual religion rapidly declined; therefore the gift of miracles was again revived in the persons of Elijah and Elisha. When the Saviour appeared the epoch was the most degraded in the annals of the race. The gift of miracles was therefore granted once more. Miraculous is always in inverse proportion to spiritual power; where the latter grows the former declines. Will miracles be again revived in the Christian Church? Not unless spiritual religion be threatened with speedy extinction. IV. TO MEN OF OTHER NATIONS. 1. Increased life always demands increased scope for its exercise. There was no power to spread itself in religion under the Old Testament. The Spirit was given in very scanty measures, just enough to preserve, but not to multiply life and replenish the earth. That Judaism should cover only a small portion of the globe was an absolute necessity, for it could maintain its life only by concentration. If the fire be small, it can only be kept burning by being heaped close together. Let the coals be scattered, and the fire will die out. And under the Old Testament only a few sparks came down from heaven to earth; hence it was necessary to gather them together within the narrow confines of Palestine. And in the days of the Saviour the fire was nearly extinguished. Fire was the great need of the age. "I indeed baptize you with water," exclaims the Baptist; but water can only cleanse the surface, but He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And on the day of Pentecost the prediction is fulfilled. The fire first burns into the hearts of the disciples, then it begins to extend its area, and now it threatens to burn up all the stubble of the world. 2. This increased life reveals itself instinctively in a desire to enlarge its circumference. Whenever the presence of the Spirit is powerfully felt in the Church, it is invariably followed by a renewed effort to evangelise the world. Let the spring impart new life to the roots of the trees, and the life will at once be transmitted to the branches, covering them with abundant foliage. Let the warm, genial months come round, reviving the drooping nature of the bird after the long dreary winter cold, and the bird shows it immediately in his song. He does not sing because he thinks he ought; he sings because he must. And it is a poor way of promoting the evangelistic zeal of the Church to demonstrate constantly what she ought to do. It is useless to lay down rules for the guidance of the Churches unless we supply them with motive power. (1) I do not cry down organisations; they are very valuable in their proper place. But they are only cisterns, and cisterns, though of the most approved pattern, are not of much use to quench thirst. The Pentecostal Church had few organisations; but she had the water of life to give freely to all who were in need. The modern Church can boast of multitudinous organisations; and so far she can claim superiority to the early Church, for cisterns after all are serviceable. What glorious cisterns are missionary societies! They have silver pipes connecting them with every country under heaven; the waterworks are laid to convey the water of life to every thirsty soul. But the results are seldom proportionate to the expenditure. The cisterns too often run dry. How few the triumphs of Christianity at home and abroad! How tardy its onward march! Why? Lack of funds, answer our secretaries. Nay, lack of life, piety, the Holy Spirit of God. Had the apostles funds to back their efforts? (2) Reflection on the part of the Church is not to be discouraged. But stock-taking will not clothe the naked. We spend too much time in surveying our property, and meanwhile our enthusiasm considerably abates. The Greek Church took stock of all the Christian doctrines and reduced them into carefully worded articles. But in reflection she lost her ardour, in speculation evaporated all her life. The most orthodox church became practically a dead church. I have not heard of her sending out missionaries to evangelise the heathen. What then is required to awaken within her the old life and incite her to new adventures? What is wanting to make Roman and Protestant Churches more powerful for good in the world? Another outpouring of the Holy Ghost. We have cisterns enough, pray for the living water; machinery enough, pray the Spirit of the living creature to enter the wheels, and then it will do more work and make less noise. V. THAT THEY ALSO MIGHT BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST. "Repent and be baptized," &c. 1. Truth, though it be Christian truth, cannot

fill and satisfy our nature. God alone can do that. This, of course, implies that human nature is capacious enough to take in the Spirit. God is too great for our powers, but not for our wants; too vast for our reason, but not for our hearts. Our abilities are limited enough, but our necessities are verily boundless. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; and He made him in the similitude even of His infinitude. I have infinite wants within me, and through the Infinite within I can know the Infinite without, and receive Him in the ample plenitude of His power and grace into my soul. How does the infant know his mother? By his wants. He knows not whether she is rich or poor, accomplished or unlearned, beautiful or plain; but he thoroughly knows her when he is hungry, for she feeds him; when he is cold, for she warms him; when he is in pain, for she soothes him. We know God just in the same way. 2. We may be filled with Him so as to convince unbelievers, not only that we have been with God, but that He dwells in us of a truth. There is a curious invention to fill the human body with electricity. If you only approach the body so filled, it will shoot forth sparks of wild lightning. But all connection between the body and the earth must be severed; the man must stand on a non-conducting material, else the electric fluid will flow out as fast as it flows in. In like manner we may be recipients of the Divine fire. And sometimes we feel as if we were getting full, we emit Divine sparks at the approach of others—they are convinced that God is in us of a truth. But ere many days pass, the hallowed influences have all flowed out. Worldliness is the great sin of the Church; it robs us of the Divine in Christian experience. Oh for another Pentecostal baptism! We need the Spirit now as much as ever to convert unbelievers, and to stir up the dormant energies of the Church. Why is it that Christian workers see so little fruit to their labours? That the success is not commensurate with the organisations? Some answer, The poverty of your sermons. But that cannot be the reason for every preaching qualification met in Christ, and yet He made but comparatively few converts. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." A cold church, an unbelieving church robs itself of the choicest blessings of heaven. Let it not blame its ministers for its non-success—roses will not grow in Greenland, trees will not blossom at the North Pole. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The day of Pentecost:* —I. THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE WORLD HAS BEEN MARKED BY GREAT STEPS OR PERIODS, SEPARATED BY STRIKING EVENTS OR EPOCHS, AND CONSTITUTING DISPENSATIONS OR ERAS. 1. Thus the creation of man inaugurated an era which continued until the Flood; the covenant with Noah inaugurated another, which continued until the Exodus; the delivery of the law another, which continued until Christ's ascension; and the day of Pentecost another, in the course of which our own generation finds its place. This, too, will be superseded by the Second Advent. And it is well for us to connect the little day of our life with this magnificent progression. As an independent thing our life is utterly insignificant; as a contributing item, it becomes almost sublime. 2. Up to the day of Pentecost every dispensation was preparatory. Christianity is final; and therefore surpasses in importance every other that preceded it. All the constituent elements of Christianity were now provided; the life of Christ had demonstrated the practicability and holiness of God's law; His death had constituted an atonement for transgressors; His resurrection had attested it; His ascension had consummated His incarnate life; and then, after seven or eight days, as if to mark by a solemn pause the broad boundary line of Judaism and Christianity, the Holy Spirit was palpably bestowed; and the spiritual religion of Christ inaugurated. 3. Amongst the anniversaries of the Church, therefore, the day of Pentecost must ever occupy an august position. Christianity was a completed system stereotyped for all men to the end of the world in a historical form. II. THE DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE WHICH THE DAY OF PENTECOST MARKED AND CONSUMMATED. The dispensation of the Spirit stands in natural and logical order amongst the Divine dispensations looked at. 1. As manifestations of God. Of these there have been three successively presented, and corresponding with the triune distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. First, the revelation of the Father—the manifestation of those ideas of the Divine nature which we associate with the Father—such as power, wisdom, holiness, and law. Secondly, the revelation of the Son—the manifestation of those ideas of the Divine nature which we associate with the Son—such as teaching, mediation, sacrifice, love. Lastly, the revelation of the Spirit—as the Source of life, the Enlightener, the Sanctifier, the Comforter. And these correspond in their order to the spiritual education of men. In their ignorance and guilt they need first to be

taught the idea of God. Convinced of sin, they then need to be taught a way of reconciliation; and under the dispensation of the Son, they have the great saving plan revealed. Under the dispensation of the Spirit, a provision is made for the efficiency of the plan; spiritual life is quickened; they are not only forgiven, but sanctified. So with their education in worship. Under the dispensation of the Father, they learn the first rudiments of worship, through material symbols and pictures; under the dispensation of the Son they worship the spiritual God, but in connection with the living body of the Incarnate One; under the dispensation of the Spirit, they worship without any material medium in "spirit and in truth." The dispensation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost assumed two distinct forms, and produced two distinct effects. (1) As miraculous endowment it was peculiar to the apostles. This was indicated by material symbols. But such endowment was incidental and subordinate. Just as the miracles of Christ are not to be confounded with His moral mission, so the miraculous endowments of the Spirit are not to be confounded with His moral or sanctifying influences. The miraculous element in both cases is simply the credential or attestation of the moral. It soon, therefore, ceased. As moral evidence for Christianity accumulated, and the written records of the New Testament were completed, miraculous testimony was withdrawn. (2) But the deeper and abiding manifestation was that moral and regenerating influence of it of which Christ discoursed to Nicodemus, and is known, therefore, only by its effects. The former was an endowment of the preacher; this is an endowment of the hearer, qualifying and disposing him to receive it in the saving love and power of it. 2. As a saving provision for man. (1) This dispensation of the Spirit abides with the Church for ever, and is bestowed upon all believers. And this is the grand and transcendent characteristic of Christianity, whereby it provides for the efficacy of its own religious teaching. Other religions give laws, and leave men unaided with the stern requirement; but Christianity gives dispositions as well as laws. It puts a new spirit into those whom it calls to its discipleship. (2) We cannot, therefore, exaggerate the importance of this provision. Without it, all that Christ has taught or done would have been in vain; we should for lack of spiritual discernment have failed to discern spiritual things, and for lack of spiritual affection failed to have embraced them. (3) Of course spiritual influence of this kind must have been in operation before. No holy man ever became such save through the influences of the Holy Spirit, allusions to which are very numerous in the Old Testament. But just as the work of Christ was in efficacious operation before Christ Himself was historically manifested, so was the work of the Spirit. Just as the first pardoned man was justified by faith in Christ, so the first holy man was renewed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and just as the Nativity was the manifestation of the atoning Christ, so the day of Pentecost was the manifestation of the renewing spirit. As much of the character and work of the Son were revealed as the world could receive; and as much of the influence of the Spirit was exerted as the moral condition of the world would admit of. Hence we may understand how there should be a greater amount of spiritual influence operating in the Christian Church than in the Jewish Church. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The fitness of the day of Pentecost*:—It is natural to assume a purpose in the Divine choice of the day on which the disciples were thus to receive the promise of the Father. That choice may have been determined, if one may so speak, either in view of the circumstances of the feast, or of its history and symbolic fitness. 1. Of all the feasts of the Jewish year it was that which attracted the largest number of pilgrims from distant lands. The dangers of travel by sea or land in the early spring or late autumn (*cf.* chap. xxvii. 9) prevented their coming in any large numbers to the Passover. At no other feast would there have been representatives of so many nations. It was Pentecost that St. Paul went up to keep once and again, during his mission-work in Greece and Asia (chaps. xviii. 21; xx. 16). So there was no time on which the gift of the Spirit was likely to produce such direct and immediate results. 2. Each aspect of the old Feast of Weeks, now known as Pentecost, or the "Fiftieth-day" Feast, presented a symbolic meaning which made it typical of the work now about to be accomplished. (1) It was the "feast of harvest, the feast of the first-fruits"; and so it was meet that it should witness the first great gathering of the fields that were white to harvest (Exod. xxiii. 16). (2) It was one on which, more than on any other, the Israelite was to remember that he had been a bondman in the land of Egypt, and had been led forth to freedom (Deut. xvi. 12), and on it, accordingly, they were to do no servile work (Lev. xxiii. 31); and it was, therefore, a fit time for the gift of the Spirit, of whom it was emphatic

cally true that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17), and who was to guide the Church into the truth which should make men free indeed (John viii. 32). (3) It was a day on which sacrifices of every kind were offered—burnt-offerings, and sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and peace-offerings—and so represented the consecration of body, soul, and spirit as a spiritual sacrifice (Lev. xxiii. 17–20). (4) As on the Passover the first ripe sheaf of corn was waved before Jehovah as the type of the sacrifice of Christ, of the corn of wheat which is not quickened except it die (Lev. xxiii. 10; John xii. 24), so on Pentecost two wave-loaves of fine flour were to be offered, the type, it may be, under the light now thrown on them, of the Jewish and the Gentile Churches (Lev. xxiii. 17). And these loaves were to be leavened, as a witness that the process of the contact of mind with mind, which—as the prohibition of leaven in the Passover ritual bore witness—is naturally so fruitful in evil, might yet, under a higher influence, become one of unspeakable good: the new life working through the three measures of meal until the whole was leavened (Matt. xiii. 33). 3. The Feast of Pentecost had—traditionally, at least—also a commemorative character. On that day—so it was computed by the later Rabbis, though the Book of Exodus (xix. 1) seems to leave the matter in some uncertainty—the Israelites had encamped round Sinai, and there had been thunders, and darkness, and voices, and the great Laws had been proclaimed. It was, that is, an epoch-making day in the religious history of Israel. It was fit that it should be chosen for another great epoch-making day, which, seeming at first to be meant for Israel only, was intended ultimately for mankind. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The feast of harvest:*—I. THE CONSECRATED HARVEST OF THE FIELD. It may seem somewhat singular that we should be talking of harvest on the first of June, but in Palestine the harvest is much earlier than where the climate is more severe. At the beginning of the barley harvest the first ripe ears were presented to the Lord in due order, but at the fuller festival they brought into God's house, not the ears of wheat, but two large loaves—the fruit of the earth actually prepared for human food. What did that mean? 1. That all came from God. We regard our bread as the fruit of our own labour; but who gives us strength to labour, and gives the earth the power to bring forth her harvest? I fear in many houses bread is eaten and the Giver is forgotten. Let us by grateful offerings to the Lord express our thankfulness for all the comforts we enjoy. 2. That all our possessions need God's blessing upon them. Without a blessing from God His gifts become temptations, and bring with them care rather than refreshment. It was a joyous sight to see the loaves and the fishes multiplied; but the best part of it was that the Master looked up to heaven and blessed them. If thou hast little, yet if God has blessed thy little there is a flavour in it which the ungodly cannot know when they fill themselves with stalled oxen. If thou hast ample, yet if thou hast more blessing, thy riches shall not be a snare to thee. 3. That all we have we hold under God as His stewards. These two loaves were a kind of peppercorn rent acknowledging the superior landlord who was the true owner of the Holy Land. We farm our portions and gather the fruit as stewards for the Most High, and bring a part thereof to His altar in token that we would use the rest to His glory. Have we all done this with our substance? Where is that one talent of thine, O slothful servant? Where are those five talents, O thou man of influence and of wealth? 4. That they were afraid they might commit sin in the using of what God had given. The first thank-offering was of barley, fresh plucked from the field; but this second offering of the first-fruits was not wheat as God made it. Why was it ordained that they should present leaven to God? To show us that common life, with all its imperfections, may yet be used for God's glory. We may, through our Lord Jesus, be accepted in shop-life as well as in sanctuary-life, in market-dealing as well as in sacramental meditation. Yet do not fail to notice that they brought also a burnt-offering: so the precious blood of Christ's sacrifice must fall upon our leavened loaves, or they will be sour before the Lord. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Nay, that was not all. In consideration of the loaf being leavened, they brought with it a sin-offering as well (Lev. xxiii. 19). Confessing, as each one of us must do, that however hearty our dedication to God, there is still a faultiness in our lives, we are glad to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. 5. All this was done as an act of joy. A new meat-offering was offered unto the Lord with peace-offerings, which two always signify, among other things, a quiet, happy communion with God. In addition to all this they presented a drink-offering of wine, which expresses the joy of the offerer. Pentecost was not a fast, but a festival. When thou givest anything to God, give it not as though it

were a tax, but freely; or it cannot be accepted. God loveth a cheerful giver. His service is perfect freedom; to give to Him is rapture; to live to Him is heaven. II. THE CONSECRATED HARVEST OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, as taught by the events of the great Christian Pentecost. Our Lord is the greatest of all sowers, for He sowed Himself. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground," &c. Had He not said, "The fields are white already to harvest"? and now, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the fruit was seen of them, and joyfully gathered. Learn—1. That the first harvest of our Lord Jesus Christ was through the Holy Ghost. There were no three thousand converts till first of all was heard the rushing of mighty wind. Till the cloven tongues had rested on the disciples there were no broken hearts among the crowd. Until the believers were all filled with the Holy Ghost the minds of their hearers were not filled with conviction. If you desire to save your class you must yourselves be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost. You cannot burn a way for the truth into the heart of another unless the tongue of fire is given to you from on high. 2. That day may be considered to be the ordering of the Christian dispensation. It was exactly fifty days after the original Passover that the law was given on Mount Sinai. At the commencement of the New Testament dispensation the Lord gives the Spirit. Under the old covenant the command was given; but under the new the will and the power to obey are bestowed by the Holy Ghost. Moses on the mount can only tell us what to do, but Jesus ascended on high pours out the power to do it. Now we are not under the law, but under grace, and the Spirit is our guiding force. 3. This Pentecost was also the beginning of a great harvest of Jews and Gentiles. Were there not two loaves? Not only shall Israel be saved, but the multitude of the Gentiles shall be turned unto the Lord. If the first-fruits were so great, what will the ultimate harvest be? (1) The filling of the apostles with the Holy Ghost was a part of the first-fruits. A man full of the Holy Ghost rejoices the heart of Christ. (2) Still, the major part of the Pentecostal first-fruits will be found in the great number that were that day converted. 4. The Christian Pentecost is to us full of instruction. (1) The disciples had to wait for it. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth." Sow on: Pentecost will yet yield its loaves unto the Lord. (2) They obtained nothing until they began preaching the gospel, and then in one day the Church was multiplied by twenty-five. (3) Of all those people saved it was acknowledged that they belonged unto the Lord alone. (4) Even if we should see three thousand converted in a day we must not reckon that such first-fruits would be absolutely perfect. In all our successes and additions there will sure to be a leaven. Do not wonder if some converts go back. It will always be so; tares grow with the wheat, and bad fish are taken in the same net with the good. III. THE CONSECRATED HARVEST FROM EACH PARTICULAR PERSON. In Deuteronomy xxvi. you will find there a form of service which I pray may serve your turn to-day. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

A Whitsunday meditation:—There is a Christian as well as a Jewish year; we ought not to be unmindful of the changes which illustrate God's holy counsel and tender conduct. The Author of natural and spiritual life is one, and He gives many a hint of His gracious purpose in the changes of the year. Christ has taught us to see in seed-sowing a symbol of the Cross, and a call to Christian sacrifice. The "harvest," the solemn fruitful autumn-time, reminds us of "the end of the world," and has its strangely blended influences of mournfulness and hope. Spring is a type of the resurrection; life bursting out of the grave. Of all symbols of the Christian life, this early summer-time is the most blessed. Calm as these warm and not yet sultry days; peaceful as early June mornings; fresh as the dews and showers; rich as the verdure of our landscape, it is given us to know that our Christian life is under the silent energy of the Spirit. I. THE PASSOVER AND PENTECOST WERE INTIMATELY CONNECTED. 1. The injunction to keep the feast of first-fruits concludes, "and thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt"; the rejoicing followed the commemoration of the deliverance. The Jews call the day of Pentecost the "concluding festival"; *i.e.*, the festival that concludes the Paschal celebration. The association is not difficult to trace. The national life of Israel was the sequel to their deliverance from Egypt. It was not enough for them to be set free and to be led into the desert. God had prepared a land for them needing greater labour and more careful cultivation than Egypt, but yielding better fruits. The feast of Pentecost was their memorial that God had fulfilled His promise. They brought the fruits of the land which He had given them, and remembered year by year that He blessed their toil, and was nourishing the men He had redeemed. 2. Spiritual life is the sequel of Christian redemption; the gift of the

Holy Ghost was God's purposed supplement of Calvary. Spiritual history begins with the Cross, but it does not end there. It sometimes happens that the first gladness and gratitude of a forgiven soul are followed by a strange restlessness and dissatisfaction, as was the deliverance of Israel. But the Paschal time, of haste and scarce-quelled anxiety, of girded loins and unleavened bread and bitter herbs, are followed by the Pentecost of life, love, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is not till this Divine life is formed within us by God's Spirit, strong as the forces that clothe the earth with summer beauty, that we can fully commemorate the death of Christ which is our redemption. The Holy Ghost was needed by the men who were to be preachers of the Cross. He not only unfolded to them its meaning; He dwelt in them an energy tender, earnest, and strong, like that of Christ the Redeemer. They had life in them; and nothing could suppress their faith, their gladness, or their labours; and by all the genial force of life, men were constrained by their influence, and drawn into their communion. And so now, if Christian teaching is ineffective, it is because it lacks the force of Christian life. Our teaching may be scrupulously orthodox, yet very repellent and cold. Our efforts may be unnumbered, and our plans most wisely organised; yet, without the love, the earnestness that only life can give, they will be all in vain. There is something for us besides praying for the Divine life; it is to live it. Christians sometimes ask that "the Spirit may be poured out." He has been poured out. II. PENTECOST WAS A MEMORIAL OF GOD'S CONSTANT PRESENCE AND POWER. The feast was ordained to remind the Jews who it was who gave them their corn and wine and oil. They were not permitted to eat of the year's harvest till the first sheaves had been waved before the Lord, and the two loaves offered to Him; lest they should think that the earth brought forth fruit of itself, lest they should be undevout, and gluttonous, and drunken in their feasts. This was the consecration of the "first-fruits" which would hallow the "whole lump" of which they were daily partaking. The Jews, like Englishmen, were prone to practical atheism; they, like Englishmen, only recognised God in signal events of their history, unmindful of the care that was daily mindful of them, and the bounty which daily made them glad. All piety decays when we forget that the "Father" is "ever working." Body and soul, as well as spirit, have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Food and raiment, house-room and friends, have been given us by the same Father who gave us His Son. The power that quickened the world from the Cross is ruling over it still; the love that shines in the Cross gives summer flowers and autumn fruits. Men who see nothing more than forces of nature in the power that yearly clothes the hill-sides, and makes the valleys fruitful, see too in the Christian life nothing more than human nature under new developments. The day of Pentecost is the witness of a Divine person abiding near us, and working in us all the energies and influences of a Christian life. It prevents our falling into that despondency which must be our lot if we have none to trust in but ourselves. Where we are powerless, He imparts life; and then truth becomes plain, and motives are felt that we could not awaken. Earnest Christian people need the teaching of the day of Pentecost. There are many who connect the Holy Ghost only with their conversion, and with periods of high-wrought emotion; but in the whole range of Christian life, however varied to our feeling, the Spirit, the source of life, is working. Yes, and in hearts that have not yet yielded themselves to Jesus; in children born into godly households, and abandoned ones listening wonderingly to new words of hope and love; in providential circumstances; by words of kindness and deeds that flow from a heart of love; in everything that has a Christian tendency, in every influence that comes from Christ and moves towards Him, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." A few weeks ago, and though we knew, we did not feel that summer was nigh. The trees were bare, and the earth was hard, and we shivered beneath the chilling blast. But God was working; the spirit of life was moving in the sluggish sap, the sun was gathering force, and the western winds were on their way to us with refreshing showers. And lo! the summer is here. Let us work according to God's will, and we shall one day see the glad and genial life that the Divine Spirit is accomplishing; for He is near us and is in us still. "I have planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase." (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The White Sunday (children's sermon)*:—1. Two reasons for the name. (1) On Whitsunday people used to come to be baptized, dressed all in white. Why? Because they wanted to feel that they were going to be made clean. And so it came to be called "White Sunday," or, shortened, "Whit Sunday." (2) If you count Easter Sunday one, and then count on to this Sunday, you will find that

this is the eighth. Now the French word for "eight" is "*huit*." You know a great many French words came into English, but people did not know how to spell some of them, so they spelt this word "*huit*" as if it were "white." 2. What happened on Whitsunday? The Holy Ghost came down. I cannot explain to you all about the Holy Ghost. It is very deep and mysterious. Perhaps you have heard about the monk who was trying to explain all about God. He went down to the seaside, and found a man with a little shell in his hand scooping up the sea. He said to the man, "What are you doing?" He replied, "I am going to put the sea into this shell." "You cannot do it," said the monk. Then the man replied, "My task is easier than yours. You are trying to put the great God into your little mind." 3. What does "Holy Ghost" mean? Holy Spirit. Sometimes, when we cannot look at the sun, we look at a sunbeam; or we look at the reflection of the sun in a looking-glass. We cannot see the sun in his full lustre. Now I want to speak about the Holy Ghost by emblems. I. What is that you can feel, but cannot see? THE WIND. You can feel the Holy Ghost, but you cannot see Him. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. The Saviour likened Him to that, and said, "Except a man be born," &c. Now—1. Nobody can go to heaven unless they are "born again." A man was once asked, "Where were you born?" He said, "In London, and in Salisbury." "What! born in two places?" he was asked. He explained, "My body was born in London, and my soul was born in Salisbury." Now what does it mean? Did you ever see a new-born baby? What a new, strange world it has come into. When you become a real Christian, you enter a new world, and all will be so new to you. Poor little baby! Somebody must feed it, clothe it, carry it. So when you become a Christian you must feel, "Jesus must carry me, clothe me, feed me." When you are "born again" you will have new thoughts, new feelings. 2. Does everybody know when they are "born again"? Some do; but very few. There is a great palm-tree called the *Palm Azaleum*, and when the blossom comes out of the shield, the flower breaks the shield with a noise as loud as a cannon. Everybody can know when that flower comes out. Some conversions are like that, but most are as quiet as when the little grain comes out of the grass, or when the flower comes out in the bud; you can hardly tell when it happens. One day there was a wicked man driving his cart along a road, and suddenly the wind blew a tract to his feet. Where that tract came from he never knew. He took it up and read it, and a word there changed the man, made him a Christian. The Holy Ghost, like the wind, turned his heart. 3. Did you ever see an Æolian harp? It is a very wonderful thing, a little harp with a few strings. No human fingers play upon it. If you keep it in your room it won't play; but if you put it just outside the window, on a windy day, it will play such sweet music. A great writer has said, "The human heart is a harp of a thousand strings." All the thoughts and feelings in your heart are all strings. If the Holy Spirit comes they will play very sweet music. But your heart won't play without the Holy Spirit. II. The Holy Ghost is like WATER. When you were baptized some water was poured over your head to tell you that the Holy Ghost can make the heart clean. There was a good man who, when he wanted to think about holy things, put before himself three words, "black," "red," and "white." He looked at the word "black," and he thought, "That is my heart, which is very black." Then he looked at the word "red," and thought, "The blood of Jesus can make the black thing white." And then he looked at the word "white," and thought, "I hope my heart has been washed, and made white through the Holy Ghost." III. When the Holy Ghost came down upon the Lord Jesus He appeared as a DOVE. And a dove is considered an emblem of something very gentle. The Holy Ghost comes very gently, and He makes us gentle. I knew two little girls who were going out of a church, and one little girl pushed by the other, and she made way for her to pass, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers." That was gentle, like a dove. As a boy was once going to throw a stone at a little bird, the bird sang so sweetly that the boy could not throw. Another, passing, said, "Why don't you throw? You will hit it." "I cannot," he said; "the little bird is singing so sweetly." If you know anybody who is unkind to you, you sing like the little bird, and then see if anybody will hurt you. IV. The Holy Spirit is like DEW. "Dew" is to be seen in the morning and evening. It is very pretty and makes everything so fresh where it comes. Now, if you wish to be good and please God, take care that every morning and evening you get a little of the dew of the Holy Spirit upon you; it will make everything fresh and nice. You are in the morning of life. Now is the time to have dew, and may it always abide in and upon you, not like the natural dew, that

soon passes away. V. The Holy Spirit is like FIRE. Supposing I were to give you a piece of iron, and ask you to make an image out of it, what would you do? If you got a hammer and chisel, and worked ever so hard, it would not make it into an image. What, then, would you do? Put it into the fire, then it would get soft; then you could make it into almost any shape you like. Your hearts are like iron. You have tried to make them good, but you cannot do so; but put them into "the fire," the Holy Spirit will make them soft and make them into right shapes. Supposing I saw two girls quarrelling, and I wanted to make them at one, how can I do it? Supposing I gave you two bits of iron, and asked you to make them one, how would you do it? You must weld them together. You could not do it till you put them into the fire. So if I find two persons quarrelling, and I want to make them one, I should try to do it by the Holy Spirit. VI. The Holy Spirit is A SEAL. Now, supposing a person had got some very precious jewels, and was going abroad, and he wanted to be quite sure that they would be safe when he came back again. He would lock them up, and put a seal upon the lock, that nobody might be able to break the lock. You are Christ's jewels, and He has gone abroad. By and by He will come back again. He has "sealed" you with the Holy Spirit. If you take care not to break that "seal," then you are quite safe; but if you trifle with it, *i.e.*, if you grieve the Holy Spirit, the "seal" will be broken; then what will become of the jewels? But keep the Holy Spirit in your heart, then you will be safe when Christ comes back. In the time of the Emperor Tiberius, there was a law in Rome that anybody who carried a particular ring on his finger must never go into any dirty or wrong place. You have got the seal; keep it holy! (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Holy Spirit: The method of His bestowment unrevealed:*—It is the doctrine of the interworking of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men. I have no philosophy about it. All I say is this: that God knows what is the secret way in which mind reaches mind. I do not—you do not. I do not know why words on my tongue wake up thoughts corresponding to those words in you. I do not know why the soul of man, like a complex instrument of wondrous scope, is played upon by my words, so that there are waked up in it notes along the whole scale of being. I do not understand why things are so, but unquestionably they are so. I do not know how the mother pours her affection on the child's heart, but she does. Two stars never shone into each other as two loving souls shine into each other. I know it is so, but I do not know why it is so. I do not know how soul touches soul, how thought touches thought, or how feeling touches feeling, but I know it does. Now that which we see in the lower departments of life—that which exists between you and your friends, and me and my friends—that I take, and by my imagination I lift it up into the Divine nature, and give it depth and scope and universality; and then I have some conception of the doctrine of God's Spirit poured upon the human soul. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Holy Spirit needed:*—It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway, and it would not go; and they put up a driver, and they said, "Now, that driver will just do." They try another and another. One proposes that such and such a wheel should be altered; but still it will not go. Some one then bursts in amongst those who are conversing, and says, "No, friends; but the reason why it will not go is because there is no steam. You have no fire; you have no water in the boiler: that's why it will not go. There may be some faults about it: it may want a bit of paint here and there: but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up." But now people are saying, "This must be altered, and that must be altered." But it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. That is the Church's great want; and, until that want be supplied, we may reform and reform, and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit; and then, whatever faults there may be in our organisation, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Holy Spirit indispensable:*—Here is a noble ship. . . . The forests have masted her; in many a broad yard of canvas a hundred looms have given her wings. Her anchor has been weighed to the rude sea-chant; the needle trembles on her deck: with his eye on that friend, unlike worldly friends, true in storm as in calm, the helmsman stands impatient by the wheel. And when, as men bound to a distant shore, the crew have said farewell to wives and children, why, then, lies she there over the self-same ground, rising with the flowing and falling with the ebbing tide? The cause is plain. They want a wind to raise that drooping pennon and fill these empty sails. They look to heaven; and so they may; out of the skies their help must come. At length their prayer is heard. . . . And now, like

a steed touched by the rider's spur, she starts, bounds forward, plunges through the waves, and, heaven's wind her moving power, is off and away, amid blessings and prayers, to the land she is chartered for. Even so, though heaven-born, heaven-called, heaven-bound, though endowed with a new heart and new mind, we stand in the same need of celestial influences. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Revivals—occasional things*:—Revivals are not constant, but occasional things; they are like the showers that water the earth. (*T. H. Skinner.*) *The sending of the Holy Ghost*:—We are this day to celebrate the yearly memory of the sending down of a benefit, so great and so wonderful, as there were not tongues enough upon earth to celebrate it, but there were fain to be more sent from heaven to help to sound it out thoroughly. I. THE TIME. The day of Pentecost. Why that day? Pentecost was a great feast under the law; and meet it was this coming should be at some great feast. The first dedication of Christ's Catholic Church on earth, the first publishing the gospel, the first proclaiming the apostles' commission, were so great matters, as it was not meet they should be done in a corner. II. MANNER. 1. On their parts on whom the Holy Ghost came. It is truly said by the philosopher, that if the patient be prepared aright, the agent will have his work both the sooner and the better. And so, consequently, the Spirit in His coming, if the parties to whom He cometh be made ready. And this is three-fold: (1) Unity. Can any spirit animate or give life to members dismembered? A fair example we have in Ezekiel (chap. xxxvii. 7–9). Now the Holy Ghost is the very essential unity, love, and love-knot, of the two Persons, the Father and the Son, even of God with God. And He is sent to be the union, love, and love-knot of the two Natures united in Christ, even of God with man. And can we imagine that He will enter (essential unity) but where there is unity? There is no greater bar to His entry than discord and disunited minds. (2) Not only of one mind, that is, unanimity, but also in one place too, that is, uniformity; both in the unity of the Spirit, that is inward, and in the bond of peace too, that is, outward. God's will is, we should be as upon one foundation, so under one roof (Psa. lxviii. 6). Therefore it is expressly noted of this company where they prayed, they prayed all together (chap. iv. 24). When they heard, they heard all together (chap. viii. 6). When they brake bread, they did it all together (ver. 46). Division of places will not long be without division of minds. (3) A disposition in them, whereby they held out, and stirred not, even till the fifty days were fulfilled. That former, unanimity; this latter, longanimity. There is in us a hot, hasty spirit, impatient of any delay. 2. On His part. He came sensibly, a rare coming, since the Holy Ghost, an invisible Spirit, cometh, for the most part, invisibly. Yet here it was meet—first, that no less honour done to this law of Zion than to that of Sinai, which was public and full of majesty; and secondly, it pleased Him to vouchsafe to grace the Church, His queen, with like solemn inauguration to that of His own, when the Holy Ghost descended on Him in likeness of a Dove. This coming, then, of His thus in state, is such as it was both to be heard and seen. To the ear, which is the sense of faith; to the eye, which is the sense of love. The ear, that is the ground of the word, which is audible; the eye, which is the ground of the sacraments, which are visible. To the ear in a noise; to the eye in a show. The noise, serving as a trumpet, to awake the world, and give them warning He was come. The fiery tongues, as so many lights, to show them and let them see the day of that their visitation. (1) There comes a sound. Which is to show that the spirit is no dumb spirit but vocal. The sound thereof is gone into all lands, and hath been heard in all ages. (2) It was the sound of a wind. For first, of all bodily things it is the least bodily, and cometh nearest to the nature of a spirit, invisible as it is; and secondly, quick and active, as the spirit is. Now, this wind that came and made this sound is here described with four properties: (*a*) It fell suddenly, so doth the wind. It riseth often in the midst of a calm, giveth no warning; and even so doth the Spirit, for that cometh not by observation, neither can you make set rules of it: you must wait for it as well when it cometh not as when it comes. Many times it is found of them that seek it not. It creeps not like motions that come from the serpent. And therefore sudden, saith Gregory, because things, if they be not sudden, awake us not, affect us not. And therefore sudden, saith he again, that men may learn not to despise present motions of grace, though suddenly rising in them, and though they can give no certain reason of them, but take the wind while it bloweth as not knowing when it will or whether ever it will blow again. (*b*) It was a mighty, or vehement, wind. Although the wind is nothing else but a puff of air, the thinnest, the poorest, and

to our seeming, of the least force of all creatures, yet groweth it to that violence which pulls up trees, blows down huge piles of building, hath most strange and wonderful effects, and all this but a little thin air. And surely no less observable or admirable, nay, much more, have been and are the operations of the Spirit. Even presently after this, this Spirit, in a few poor weak and simple instruments, waxed so full and forcible as it cast down strongholds, brought into captivity many an exalting thought, made a conquest of the whole world, even then, when it was bent fully in main opposition against it. (*c*) It came from heaven. Winds naturally come not from thence, but move laterally from one coast or climate to another. To come directly down from heaven, that is supernatural, and points us plainly to Him that is ascended up into heaven, and now sendeth it down from thence that it may fill us with the breath of heaven. To distinguish this wind from others is no hard matter. If our motions come from above it is this wind, which came thence to make us heavenly-minded. (*d*) It filled that place where they sat. That place, not the places about. The common wind fills all places within his circuit alike. And this is a property very well fitting the Spirit. To blow in certain places where itself will; and upon certain persons and they shall plainly feel it, and others about them not a whit. (2) This wind brought down with it tongues to be seen. Here is not only sent a wind which serveth for their own inspiration, but tongues which serve for elocution, that is, to impart the benefit to more than themselves. It showeth that the Holy Ghost cometh and is given rather to do others good than to benefit themselves. Charity poured into their hearts would serve them; grace poured into their lips was needful to make others partakers of the benefit. This also standeth of four parts, as did the former. (*a*) There were tongues, and God can send from heaven no better thing, nor the devil from hell no worse. The best member we have (Psa. cviii. 1). The worst member we have (James iii. 6). Both, as it is employed. (*b*) Cloven tongues—and that very cleaving of right necessary use to the business intended, viz., that the knowledge of the gospel might be dispersed to every nation under heaven. If there must be a calling of the Gentiles, they must have the tongues of the Gentiles wherewith to call them. But with their many tongues they spake one thing. (*c*) They were tongues as of fire to show that they were not of our elementary fire. As the wind, so the fire from heaven, of the nature of that which made the bush burn and yet consumed it not. The tongues were as of fire to teach that the force of fire should show forth itself in their words, both in the splendour, which is the light of knowledge to clear the mist of their darkened understanding, and in the fervour, which is the force of spiritual efficacy, to quicken the dulness of their cold and dead affections. With such a tongue spake Christ Himself, when they said of Him, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spake unto us by the way?" With such a tongue St. Peter, here in this chapter; for sure there fell from Him something like fire on their hearts, when they were pricked with it and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But this is not always, nor in all with us; no more was it with them, but in those of their hearers which had some of the anointing, and that will easily take the fire, in them good will be done; or at least, where there was some smoking flax, some remainder of the Spirit, which without any great ado will be kindled anew. (*d*) These sat upon each of them. In which sitting is set down unto us their last quality—of continuance and constancy. They did not light and touch and away, after the manner of butterflies. (*Bp. Andrewes.*) *The advent of the Spirit*:—I. THAT THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH WILL CERTAINLY BE FULFILLED. 1. The Holy Spirit is promised to the Church (John xv. 26; xvi. 7; Joel ii. 28, 29). 2. The promise is not always understood in its full meaning as it ought to be. The disciples did not understand it, nor does the Church of our own age. It would not rest a day without its fulfilment (John iv. 10). 3. The promise will certainly be fulfilled. This is seen in the history of the Church at Pentecost. There was delay, but not denial. Then as now the Holy Spirit is given to the Church at the best and most appropriate time. We must wait, for it is determined by infinite wisdom. II. THAT THE CHURCH MUST PUT ITSELF INTO A PROPER MORAL ATTITUDE IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Church must be—1. Frequent in its meetings. 2. United in its spirit. 3. Prayerful in disposition (chap. i. 14). 4. Patient in temper. 5. Catholic in sentiment. Not merely the disciples were present, but many strangers. They had come to the feast, and got a better feast than they expected. Some Churches are so narrow and sectarian in their spirit, that the Holy Spirit is shut out from them. III. THAT THE ADVENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH IS ACCOMPANIED BY WONDROUS

PHENOMENA AND SUBLIME MORAL RESULTS. The advent of the Holy Spirit—1. Is set forth under appropriate emblems. 2. Affects the speaking of the Word. When men receive the Holy Spirit it is always evident in their conversation, which is aglow with heavenly fire and feeling. True eloquence is a spiritual gift. 3. Is designed to fill the human soul with Divine and ennobling influences. As the wind filled the house, so the Spirit filled the men, every crevice of their being. The heart of man must be filled with something; if God does not fill it the world will. The Divine filling is the most ennobling and blessed. (*The Study and the Pulpit.*) *The coming of the Holy Spirit*:—I am sitting, on a summer's day, in the shadow of a great New England elm. Its long branches hang motionless; there is not breeze enough to move them. All at once there comes a faint murmur; around my head the leaves are moved by a gentle current of air; then the branches begin to sway to and fro, the leaves are all in motion, and a soft, rushing sound fills my ear. So with every one that is born of the Spirit. I am in a state of spiritual lethargy, and scarcely know how to think any good thought. I am heart-empty, and there comes, I know not where or whence, a sound of the Divine presence. I am inwardly moved with new comfort and hope, the day seems to dawn in my heart, sunshine comes around my path, and I am able to go to my duties with patience. I am walking in the Spirit, I am helped by the help of God, and comforted with the comfort of God. And yet this is all in accordance with law. There is no violation of law when the breezes come, stirring the tops of the trees; and there is no violation of law when God moves in the depths of our souls, and rouses us to the love and desire of holiness. (*James Freeman Clarke.*) *The descending Spirit*:—Notice—I. SOME FEATURES OF THE EVENT HERE RELATED. 1. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit should have been conferred at Jerusalem, the capital of the old faith. It is not God's way to inaugurate the new by any harsh abandonments of the old. The Christian is only the Jewish Church led forth into a new stage of development. As the two lay in Christ's mind there was no break between them. "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." It was suitable, then, that where the old Church had matured, the new Church should germinate. 2. It is impossible to say with exactness where in Jerusalem the disciples were gathered. It is barely possible that it was in some portion of the temple edifice. If that were the case it would only be in the line of what has just been said. 3. This first giving of the Spirit was at Pentecost. Still another proof of this is that God would like to have us consider Christianity as a graft upon an old stock. 4. As to the nature of the miracle. Was it a gift of "tongues," or a gift of "ears"? The most casual perusal is sufficient to convince that it was the disciples that were inspired to speak. The hearers were not in a mood to be inspired. The Holy Ghost works inspiringly upon those who are in sympathy with Him; and this these foreign residents at Jerusalem were not. II. THE LESSONS CONNECTED WITH THE EVENT. 1. The Christian Church was born at Pentecost. The materials were already present, but standing out of organic relation with each other. It was the brooding of the Spirit that produced the formless elements of things into a shapely and prolific world. It was the inbreathing of God into the being of our first parent that developed him into a living soul. It was the influx similarly of the Divine Spirit that composed the disciples of Christ into an organised and living Church. 2. This was the first Christian revival of religion. The Church was born in a revival, and the survival of the Church has been along a continuous line of revival. There is nothing in the whole New Testament narrative more startling than the transformation which the Twelve suddenly underwent on the fiftieth day after Calvary. A cultivated ministry and well-appointed churches are well enough in their way; they are suitable for the conveyance of power, but are not themselves power. They are to positive spiritual efficacy only what river-beds are to the floods that are set to roll in them. The early Church, as compared with the modern, was poor in appliances; but one sermon then converted three thousand men, and now it takes three thousand sermons to convert one man. The difference between the times is largely difference of power. 3. The Spirit descended upon the disciples when they were together. The full meaning of Christianity is not exhausted in any relation in which it sets us individually to Christ. There are blessings that accrue to Christians only by their standing in fellowship with each other. The first Christian revival was inaugurated in a prayer-meeting. It is easy, and rather common, to treat prayer-meetings with disparagement. But it is generally found that when a revival comes it begins in God's revelation of Himself to saints that draw near to one another in prayer. 4. This first revival of religion began with the spiritual replenishment of those already Christian. It is time

wasted, and runs counter to the Divine order of things, for a Church that is not itself revived to attempt revivalistic operations among the unconverted. Christianity, to the degree in which it extends itself, does so as a kind of contagion. The result of "gotten-up" revivals is only man-made Christians; and man-made Christians stand in the way of their own conversion and add to the inertia of the Church. 5. After the Ascension the disciples simply waited for Pentecost. There was no further work that needed to be wrought in them before its bestowment. And we shall always receive the Divine baptism just as soon as there is nothing on our part that hinders it. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove Me now herewith," &c. 6. The Holy Spirit descended upon all the disciples. So far as we are Holy Ghost Christians, all substantial distinctions in this respect between the laity and the clergy are erased. 7. The Holy Spirit revealed Himself outwardly in the shape of tongues. This was prophetic of the way in which revealed truth was to be disseminated. It does not suffice that men should simply live lives of Christian constancy. Christ not only lived, He preached. The first revival, then, opened men's mouths and set men talking. There is no place for silent Christians under the administration of the Holy Ghost. The pressure of God upon the heart inevitably finds escape at the lip. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *"It's no' bilin'":*—The late Dr. William Arnot, of Edinburgh, used to tell of his being at a railway station, where he grew weary of waiting for the train to move. He inquired if the trouble was want of water. "Plenty of water," was the quick reply, "but it's no' bilin'." We have no lack of religious machinery in Church and Sabbath-schools and benevolent societies. The engines are on the track, and the trainmen are in their places. If there is little or no progress, may it not be that the water is "no' bilin'"? *Sudden revivals explained:*—I looked recently at a very remarkable sight, the burning of a huge floorcloth manufactory. I was just about returning home from my Master's work when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short space a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies. Why blazed it so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the floorcloth and in saturating the building with combustible materials; I do not mean with the intention of making a blaze, but in the ordinary course of their manufacture; so that when at last the spark came it grew into a great sheet of flame all at once. So sometimes when the gospel is faithfully preached a sinner gets present peace and pardon, and he is so full of joy his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But be it remembered that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart, preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame, so that there was only a spark needed, and then up rolled the flame to heaven. Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning, but He alone can make me so! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiritual influence from another world:*—The Gulf Stream in its beneficent and hidden influence may be taken as a sort of parable of spiritual influence. This England of ours should be naturally and properly a land of almost eternal winter. For some eight months of the year our very seas ought to be frozen over, so that no ship could approach our shores. Our islands should be a rough rude tract of country, where only the hardiest forms of life could survive—a land of forests where wild beasts should roam, whose furs should give to the place almost its only value, and where the deep snows should make agriculture almost impossible. This should be Great Britain—a proud name for so desolate a tract. What mystery is this which delivers us? Away in the distant southern world, in the fierce heat of the tropics, starts the Gulf Stream. It gathers the warmth of the sun, and sends it for thousands of miles across the seas to lave our shores. And thus the arctic winter is driven from us; and our ports are open all the year round; over us stretch the kindlier skies; about us blow the gentler winds; our fields are covered with grass, the valleys are thick with corn; the pastures are covered with flocks and herds, and this favoured land is shut off from extremes, and has the summer of the North with the winter of the South. Now think of some shivering native of Labrador, who has heard of this Gulf Stream, and scornfully shakes his head—"I do not believe it," says he; "it is impossible and absurd." Well, I would not argue the subject. I would only invite him to come and see. "But where is this Gulf Stream which does such wonders? Can you see it?" No, we cannot see it, but it is there—hidden, noiseless, mingling with our waters and transforming our climate. The parable is a many-sided illustration of the truth. Of nature, of ourselves, we do dwell in a land of winter—frozen and well-nigh dead, without the energy to put forth any life of God. But,

lo, about us do flow gracious influences from another world. We know not how, but by the Holy Spirit of God, there is breathed about us and within us the love of God, softening, transforming, bringing to us a new heaven and a new earth. And now do grow and flourish blessed things which before we knew not. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *The outpouring of the Spirit* (first sermon):—I. Mark the very critical care of the Divine Head of the Church, in fixing SPECIAL TIMES FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF SPECIAL BLESSINGS. Here we have the largest possible opportunity which God Himself could have secured for the communication of His supreme gift. Pentecost was a harvest festival; about that time people could come with the least degree of danger from various outlying countries and districts. There are opportunities even in Divine providence. The days are not all alike to God. We bind Him down to one day, whereas is there in reality a single day in our life that He has not a lien upon? Does He not come in upon birthdays, days of deliverance, of surprise, of unusual sorrow and joy? God is not the God of one day only; He takes up the one day and specially holds it before us, but only symbolically. What He does with that He wants to do with all the others. II. On this occasion we have THE LARGEST POSSIBLE UNION—1. Of nationalities. 2. Of desire. Note the word "accord." The instruments were all in tune together, without mental distraction or moral discord. God has promised nothing to disunion; the man that creates disunion in the Church must instantly be put away—he is worse than an infidel. 3. They were also gathered in one place: that is the transient word. The place is nothing, the accord is everything. Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem will men worship the Father, but the accord, the rhythmic fellowship—this is the eternal quantity, and he who meddles with it is a violator within the very shadow of the altar. Yet who thinks of this? If a poor moral cripple should be caught suddenly in some moral fault, then is the imperfect and blind Church enraged with him, but the man who is speaking ungracious words, making unlovely statements, breathing a spirit of dissension in the Church—who takes note of him? III. Then we have THE LARGEST POSSIBLE BESTOWMENT OF THE DIVINE GIFT. The word "all" includes the followers of Christ of every name and degree. We are not to suppose that popes, prelates, preachers, ministers, leaders, alone have this gift of the Holy Spirit. We must not imagine that a minister merely as such has greater spiritual privileges than a mechanic. We are all equally priests before God, our priesthood has no standing but in our holiness. As to the Church all meeting in one place, do not believe in a place-church. God's Church is everywhere. Many of you belong to God's Church and may not know it. What is your heart, what is your heart's desire, what is the sovereign purpose of your life? If you can say it is to know God's will and do it, then you are in the Church, whatever particular place you may occupy. Jesus Christ made a great promise to His disciples when they asked Him whether at that time He would restore the kingdom unto Israel. The very greatness of the promise necessitates that the fulfilment of it shall be upon a scale proportioned to itself. Now how will He fulfil the promise of enduement with power from on high? That would be no commonplace realisation of that promise, nor was there one (vers. 1–4). Imagination says, "It is enough." God always takes care to satisfy the imagination, and often to confound it. Specially does He take care to satisfy the moral nature, and to call upon conscience to say, "It is right." IV. We see from this revelation HOW HELPLESS WE ARE IN THE MATTER OF SPIRITUAL REVIVALS. What did the apostles do towards this demonstration of Divine power? They did nothing but wait, pray, hope, expect—what the world, so fond of action, would call nothing. That is all we can do. Have nothing to do with those persons who organise revivals, with any mechanised resurrection of spiritual life. We need to know the power of waiting. There are those who tell us we ought to be doing something practical, and they degrade that word into a kind of mechanical exercise. Is he doing nothing who continues steadfast in prayer? or he who speaks great words of wisdom, and who calms the heart in the midst of its searching trouble? To be practical is not to be demonstrative, to be building wood, hay, stone, and metal, it may be to give thought, to offer suggestion, to stimulate the mind, to check the ambition, to elevate the purpose of life. The disciples and apostles, previous to Pentecost, did everything by doing nothing. V. We see HOW UNMISTAKABLE FIRE IS. The difference between one man and another is a difference of heat. The difference between one reader and another is a difference of fire; the difference between one musician and another is that one man is all fire, and the other man all ice. The difference between one preacher and another is a difference of fire. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The outpouring of the Spirit* (second sermon):—I. IT

IS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST THAT WE FIND THE TRUE UNION OF THE CHURCH. There are diversities of operation, and must always be, but such diversity does not impair the unity of the Spirit. There is one faith, though there be many creeds, one baptism, though there be many forms of it, one Lord, though He shine in a thousand different lights. We have been vainly looking for union in uniformity. Consider how irrational this is. Is the human race one or many? is there any difficulty in identifying a man whatever his colour, form, stature, language?—yet are there any two men exactly alike? Man has, say, some seven features, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, form or contour, colour or complexion, yet out of those seven notes what music of facial expression has God wrought? It is so in the Christian Church. That is split up into a score of sects, but the Church itself is one. To those who look upon things from the outside merely, it would seem impossible that the Arminian and the Calvinist can both be readers of the same Bible, and worshippers of the same God. But their unity is not found in formality, in creedal expression, in propositional theology, in ecclesiastical arrangement; down in the centre of the heart lies the common organic nerve that unites Christendom in its worship and in its hope; and when the Cross is touched, the defence never comes from any one section, the whole Church with unanimous love and loyalty rushes to the vindication. This has been illustrated by the diversities which occur in the expressions of sorrow, worship, and loyalty. The Eastern sufferer lies prostrate, crying piteously and vehemently. The Western is silent and self-controlled. The difference is not in the sorrow, but in the manifestation of the sorrow. So the Oriental before his king falls flat on the ground, and the Briton before his God only kneels. Is there, then, a difference in the spirit of worship? II. HAVE WE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST? THE QUESTION DOES NOT ADMIT OF HESITATION AS TO ITS ANSWER. 1. No man can mistake the summer sun when he sees it; he will not come home with a half tale of having seen some kind of light, but is not quite sure whether it was a gas jet, or the shining of an electric light, or a new star. The sun needs no introduction, has no signature but its own glory, and needs take no oath in proof of its identity. The shadows know it, and flee away; the flowers, and open their little hearts to its blessing; all the hills and valleys know it and quiver with a new joy. 2. We may have the form, and not the spirit. People say the great thing after all for a man to do is to do good. That is correct. But what would you think of me if I said the great thing after all is for a train to go, when the train has not been attached to the engine? You are perfectly right in saying that the train is useless if it does not go, and if the train is going it is all right. But you must bring within your argument the fact that the engine could not go without the fire, that the train cannot go unless attached to the engine, that the engine and the train move, vibrate, fly, under the power of light—the light that was sealed up in the bins of the earth ten thousand ages ago is driving your great locomotives to-day! When, therefore, you tell me that a man must do good, and that is enough, you omit from your statement the vital consideration that we can only do these things as we are inspired by the indwelling Spirit of God. I see before me at this moment certain pieces of cord. What is wanted is but to connect these cords with a motive power, but until the connection is established they are but dead useless things. Connect them, set the engine going, let it cause the necessary rotations to fly, and presently an arrangement may be made by which from these cords we shall receive a dazzling glory. They are nothing in themselves, and yet without them the engine might go for a thousand ages and we should get no light. It is even so with us. We are here, men educated, intelligent, well-appointed, and what is it that we need but connection with the heavens, direct communication with the source of light and fire. III. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS COMMUNICATED TO THE CHURCH, WE MUST NOT IMAGINE THAT WE SHALL BE OTHER THAN OURSELVES, ENLARGED, ENNOBLED, AND DEVELOPED. The Spirit will not merge our individuality in a common monotony. Whatever your power is now, the incoming of the Holy Ghost will magnify and illuminate, so that your identity will be carried up to its highest expression and significance. And more than that, there will be a development of latent faculties, slumbering powers, the existence of which has never been suspected by our dearest friends. Look for surprises in the Church when the Holy Ghost falls upon it: dumb men will speak, ineloquent men will attract and fascinate by the sublimity of their new discourse, timid men will put on the lion, and those who had hidden themselves away in the obscurity of conscious feebleness will come out and offer themselves at the Lord's altar to help in the Lord's service. The resources of the Church will be multiplied in proportion as the Church enjoys the

presence and power of the Holy Ghost. How the old earth has continued to keep pace with all our civilisation and science. The electric light was, as to its possibilities, in Eden, as certainly as it is in the metropolis of England to-day. The locomotive has not created anything but a new combination and a new application and use. It is even so in the Bible. The Church knows nothing yet about the possibilities of revelation. No new Bible will be written, but new readers will come. We have learning and ability and industry enough; what we want is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (*Ibid.*) *The baptism of the Spirit experienced:*—As I turned, and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love. . . . These waves came over me and over me and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out: "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more"; yet I had no fear of death. (*C. G. Finney, D.D.*) *The baptism of the Spirit: its effects:*—It was that baptism which made the might of weakness irresistible; it was that which sent a few poor fishermen and publicans to conquer and regenerate the resisting world. In the might of that Spirit Peter broke down the old wall of partition, and admitted the Gentiles into the Church of God. By the earthquake of that Spirit the veil of the temple was rent, and free access was given to all in the holiest place. Convicted by the might of that Spirit the Rabbi of Tarsus sent the gospel flashing like a beacon fire from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Rome. The might of that Spirit, working among the Roman legionaries subdued their fierce and stubborn hearts; the might of that Spirit dilated the humble intellects of the apologists of Christianity, made ridiculous the wit of Lucian, the taunts of Celsus, the logic of Porphyry, the satire of Julian. That Spirit leapt with Telemachus into the Coliseum, and put an end for ever to the hideous butchery of the gladiators in the arena; it emancipated the wretched millions of ancient slaves; it made childhood sacred with the seal of baptism, and gave to trembling womanhood the rose of chastity and honour. The might of the Spirit again dissipated the radiant glamour of Pagan fancy, broke the wand of the enchantress, hushed the song of the Syren, branded with shame the flushed face of Bacchus, and the harlot brow of Aphrodite. The might of that Spirit, abasing the Roman eagles, wove its cross, the symbol which heathenism loathed as the gibbet of the malefactor, in gold on the banners of armies, and in gems on the diadems of kings. Touched with that Spirit, the rude northern barbarians bowed their heads before the meek white Christ. Clothed in that Spirit, the missionaries went forth from St. Thomas to Ulphilas, from Ulphilas to Boniface, from Boniface to Henry Martin and Coleridge Pattison, until the great Angel stood with one foot upon the land and one upon the sea, with an everlasting gospel in His hands. In the might of that Spirit the Crusaders gave up their lives for their fair Captain, Christ. It was the love which that Spirit kindled, like a pure flame on the altar of their hearts, which made the philanthropists, from Fabula to St. Francis, from St. Francis to St. Vincent de Paul and John Howard and David Livingstone and Lord Shaftesbury, strong to confront the menacing monopolies, and to smite the hoary head of inveterate abuse. So the descending flame, the rushing mighty wind of the Holy Ghost, is the secret of all that Christianity has done for the love of Christ its Lord. Look forward for three poor centuries from the first Pentecost, and on Whitsunday A.D. 337 died, in the white robe of baptism which he had just received, Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor of Rome. Look forward for six centuries, and it was on Whitsunday of A.D. 597 that the conversion of Saxon England began with the baptism of King Ethelbert. Look forward for seven centuries and a half, and it was on Whitsunday A.D. 755 that St. Boniface was martyred, the great apostle of the Germans. Look forward nearly nineteen centuries, and to-day, in tens of thousands of Christian Churches, from the snows of Greenland to the rocky Falkland Isles, from dawn to sunset, and again from sunset to dawn, in every single spot where there are gathered the representatives of any portion of civilised peoples, there is being preached that

very same gospel in every essential particular which was preached nearly two millenniums ago in Nazareth and Bethlehem. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *A new manifestation of the Divine Spirit*:—1. Though we cannot regard Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, since the Church was born centuries before, we are bound to regard it as the grand crowning period in the development of the plan of redemption. Periods in the working out of this plan mark the history of four thousand years, one leading to another. From Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and now from Christ's Advent to Pentecost. To this all the others pointed, and in it they were all crowned with glory. 2. But we are not to suppose that this was the first time the Divine Spirit visited this world. He strove with the antediluvians, inspired old prophets, and dwelt in old saints. But He never came in such a demonstration and plenitude of power before. Before He had distilled as the dew, now He comes down as a shower; before He had gleamed as the first rays of morning, now He appears as the brightness of noon. Note His action—I. UPON the disciples. 1. Upon their ear. "Wind," an emblem of the Spirit. (1) Invisible. (2) Mysterious. (3) Powerful. (4) Refreshing. Great epochs are usually marked by extraordinary phenomena—*e.g.*, the giving of the Law; the Advent; the Crucifixion, and now Pentecost. 2. Upon their eye. "Fire" is—(1) Purifying. (2) Consuming. (3) Transmuting. (4) Diffusive. Perhaps these supernatural appeals to the senses were intended to express the relation of the Divine Spirit. (*a*) To life—"wind" or air is vital, the breath of life. (*b*) To speech—"tongues" would intimate that the Spirit had given men new utterances. (*c*) To purity—"fire" would indicate that the Spirit had to consume all the corruptions of the soul. II. IN the disciples. "They were filled with the Holy Ghost." He took possession of their—1. Minds, and made them the organs of Divine thought. 2. Hearts, and filled them with Divine emotions. 3. Bodies, and made them His living temples. 4. Wills, and made them the organs of Divine resolutions. Nothing but the Divine will fill the soul. Without God there will be a boundless vacuum within. III. THROUGH the disciples. Your things are observable concerning their speech. 1. It followed their Divine inspiration. It was not until the Spirit had given them the right thoughts and feelings that utterance came. Better be dumb than express the sentiments of the unrenewed soul. It is when the Spirit comes that we want speech, and shall have it. A Divinely filled soul must break forth in Divine language. 2. It was miraculous. The coming at once into the possession of a new language is as great a miracle as the possession of a new limb. 3. It was unspeakably useful. It served to impress the multitude with the Divinity of Christianity, and enabled the disciples to proclaim without preparation the gospel to every man. Without it the first age of the Church would have had a different history. 4. It was profoundly religious. This wonderful gift was employed to speak of God's wonderful works. May the day soon come when God-given language, instead of being the vehicle of erroneous thought, impure feeling, depraved purpose, shall convey to men nothing but holiness, goodness, and truth. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The time of the Spirit's outpouring proves the unity of the two dispensations*:—The time when the Spirit was poured out on the body of Christians, and the Church's foundations laid deep and strong, revealed profound reverence for the old dispensation, raising by anticipation a protest against the heretical teaching which become current among the Gentiles in the second century, and has often since reappeared, as amongst the Anabaptists of Germany and the Antinomians at the Reformation. This view taught that there was an essential opposition between the Old and the New Testament, some holding that the Old Testament was the production of a spiritual being inferior and hostile to the eternal God. The Divine Spirit guided St. Luke, however, to teach the opposite view, and is careful to honour the elder dispensation and the old covenant, showing that Christianity was simply the perfection and completion of Judaism, and was developed therefrom as naturally as the bud of spring bursts forth into the splendid blossom and flower of summer. We trace these evidences of the Divine foreknowledge, as well as the Divine wisdom, in these Pentecostal revelations, providing for and forecasting future dangers with which, even in its earlier days, the bark of Christ's Church had desperately to struggle. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *Effect of the Holy Spirit*:—"Tell me," said a father to his son, "what difference you can detect between two needles—one of which has received an electric shock, whilst the other has not. And yet the one has hidden virtues, which occasion will show, of which the other has none. The electric shock has rendered the one needle a magnet, which, duly balanced, will enable man to find his way across the trackless ocean. As this needle, so may that soul be which has

received the electric shock of the Holy Ghost: on the ocean of a sinful world, it shall point wanderers to the heaven of everlasting rest." *Revivals of religion:*—I. THEIR NATURE. Religion in the soul is sometimes in a lower, sometimes in a higher state. The passage from the one to the other is more or less rapid. So in a community or church. There were periods of decline and refreshing under the Old Testament, in the time of Christ, in the time of the Reformation, in the time of Edwards and since. The phrase has now acquired the meaning of a sudden change from inattention to attention in regard to religious—to those seasons when Christian zeal is manifestly increased, and converts multiplied. II. Their REALITY, 1. This has been denied—(1) By rationalists, and all who deny the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. (2) By those who deny that the converting influences of the Spirit are ever exerted except in connection with the sacraments. (3) By those whose theory of religion does not admit of instantaneous or rapid conversions; who hold that the germ of piety implanted in baptism is, by an educational process, to be nurtured unto conversion. (4) By those who, while admitting the facts of the Bible on the subject, seem disposed to regard them as belonging rather to the miraculous than to the normal state of the Church. 2. But granting the fact of supernatural influence, there is no objection to the theory of revivals. There is nothing in them inconsistent with the nature of religion, or with the modes of Divine operation. It is a question of fact, and both Scripture and history are decisive on the point. 3. In regard to the question whether any religious excitement is a revival or not, note—(1) It is, of course, not to be taken for granted that every such excitement is a work of God. It may be nothing but the product of human acts and eloquence, and consist in the excitement of mere natural feelings. Much, no doubt, which passes for revival is more or less of that character. (2) The criteria for the decision between true and false revivals, and true and false religion is the same. (*a*) Their origin. Are they due to the preaching of the truth? (*b*) Their character. Is the excitement humble, reverential, peaceful, benevolent, holy; or is it proud, censorious, schismatical, irreverent? (*c*) Their permanent fruits. This is the only certain test. (3) Perfection is not to be expected in revivals any more than in the religion of individuals, and they are not to be condemned because of some evils. III. Their IMPORTANCE. 1. This may be estimated, proximately, in two ways—(1) By the importance of the end which they are assumed to answer—the salvation of many souls and the elevation of the piety of the Church. (2) Historically, *i.e.*, by a reference to the effects they have produced. Pentecost, the Reformation, the Mission of Wesley, &c. Estimated by these standards their importance is incalculable. 2. But there are false views of their importance, viz., (1) That they are the only ways in which religion can be promoted. Many expect nothing except during a revival, and consequently do nothing. (2) That they are the best way. They are great mercies, but there are greater. When there have been years of famine a superabundant harvest is a great blessing. But it had been better had each harvest been good. General permanent health is better than exuberant joyousness alternating with depression. IV. Their DANGERS. These may be learned—1. From their nature. Excitement in proportion to its intensity in an individual or a community calls into vigorous exercise both the good and bad elements which may be extant. It makes the self-righteous, the censorious, the vain, more so. It sets men on new, unauthorised or improper means of promoting religion; and the evil elements often mingle with the good, so as to be far more apparent than the good. The desolations of storm or flood are often more apparent than their benefits. 2. From experience we find the following evils are apt to attend revivals. (1) False teachers, doctrines, measures, as in the apostolic age. (2) False views of religion, fanaticism. (3) Contempt of the ordinary means of grace, and neglect of them. (4) Disparagement of religion in the eyes of serious, reflecting men. (5) Denunciation and schisms. (6) False views of the proper kind of preaching, and neglect of the instruction of the young. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Revival preceded by prayer:*—In the winter of 1875, we were worshipping in the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the interregnum of churches. We had the usual great audiences, but I was oppressed beyond measure by the fact that conversions were not more numerous. One Tuesday I invited to my house five old, consecrated Christian men—all of them gone now, except Father Pearson, and he, in blindness and old age, is waiting for the Master's call to come up higher. These old men came, not knowing why I had invited them. I took them to the top room of my house. I said to them: "I have called you here for special prayer. I am in an agony for a great turning to God of the people. We have vast multitudes in

attendance and they are attentive and respectful, but I cannot see that they are saved. Let us kneel down and each one pray, and not leave this room until we are all assured that the blessing will come and has come." It was a most intense crying unto God. I said, "Brethren, let this meeting be a secret," and they said it would be. That Tuesday night special service ended. On the following Friday night occurred the usual prayer-meeting. No one knew of what had occurred on Tuesday night, but the meeting was unusually thronged. Men accustomed to pray in public in great composure broke down under emotion. The people were in tears. There were sobs and silences and solemnities of such unusual power that the worshippers looked into each other's faces as much as to say, "What does all this mean?" And, when the following Sabbath came, although we were in a secular place, over four hundred arose for prayers, and a religious awakening took place that made that winter memorable for time and for eternity. There may be in this building many who were brought to God during that great ingathering, but few of them know that the upper room in my house in Quincy Street, where those five old Christian men poured out their souls before God, was the secret place of thunder. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Belief in the Holy Ghost:*—"I believe in the Holy Ghost," is not with us a mere formal expression; but the utterance of our heartfelt conviction. I have heard of a Church school in which the children were taught the Apostles' Creed, and each child had to say a sentence. One day the clergyman came in, and asked them to repeat it to him. They managed all right for a time, but all of a sudden there was an awkward silence. The clergyman said, "Why don't you go on?" One trembling little voice replied, "Please, sir, the boy that believes in the Holy Ghost isn't here to-day." I fear that is true of many churches, and many pulpits; those who believe in the Holy Ghost are not there! His very name is scarcely heard in some places of worship; and all ascription of glory and honour to Him is lost in the mention of an "influence." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Waiting where the Spirit is likely to come:*—"That ship does not seem to stir; there's not a breath of wind to move her sails"; said one of our little company. "No," replied another, "but she is where she will get the wind as soon as it begins to blow." And so it proved; for presently her canvas began to fill, and ere long she was speeding towards her desired haven. It is a good thing to be in the way of any blessing that may be coming. Perhaps you are not yet a Christian; but you say that you long to be one. Then seek to get where the sacred wind is likely to blow. The Spirit, like the wind, "bloweth where it listeth"; but there are special times and places in which His gracious influences are usually manifested. See that you are where you may expect the heavenly breeze. Prayer-meetings, Bible-classes, special services, and places of worship where the gospel of the grace of God is preached in all its fulness, are the spots where the Spirit delights to work; go there, and may the Divine afflatus fill thee, and speed thee on thy heavenward voyage! (*J. W. Harrald.*) *Are we ready for spiritual power:*—This power is what we want; but the question is, are we ready for it? Are we fit to be used, willing to be used, to be used anywhere, to be apparently unused, to be nothing, that Christ may be all? The possession of power is a great responsibility; perhaps the self-will and self-esteem of some of us would make the possession of such power a very deadly thing. Andrew Murray says, "We want to get possession of the power, and use it; God wants the power to get possession of us, and use us. If we give ourselves to the power to rule in us, the power will give itself to us to rule through us." We are waiting here this morning to be filled with power. Perhaps we had better wait first to be emptied. (*T. J. Longhurst.*) *Awaking to truth:*—The Holy Spirit comes like a rushing wind upon the disciples, and in an hour they are new men. The jailer hears and believes in a night. Luther, while toiling up the holy stairs of the Lateran, holding to salvation by works, drops that scheme on the way, and lays hold of the higher one of salvation by faith. Ignatius Loyola, in a dream, has sight of the Mother of Christ, and awakes a soldier of Jesus. It is often so. We do not so much grow into the possession of new spiritual truths as we awake to them. Their coming is not like the sunrise, that slowly discloses the shapes and relations of things, but is like the lightning, that illuminates earth and sky in one quick flash, and so imprints them for ever on the vision. (*Theodore T. Munger.*) *The gift of the Spirit dependent upon conditions:*—How to realise the immanence, or possess ourselves of the indwelling of this Holy Spirit, is purely a question of conditions. Let me illustrate my meaning. To a man in perfect health an atmosphere impregnated with disease-germs is comparatively harmless; but should he approach a typhus-stricken patient with a body exhausted by exercise, or

faint from want of food, the probabilities are that he will fall a prey to the disease. Again, as a man brings himself into harmony with all the laws of his being, life assumes a bright and joyous aspect. Forms, tints, sounds, the shouldering hill, the roseate hues of dawn, the sweet-voiced song of birds, rouse in him the spirit of devotion, and appeal to him as revelations of a hand and mind Divine. But if his eye be jaundiced, his liver torpid, his pulse irregular, his brain congested, then creation becomes a blank, the world a wilderness, and life a weariness and a woe. Or, once more, take mental conditions. Have you never, in reading a book, marked with pencil some passage that suddenly flashed its meaning in upon your mind; and then, some six months later, in re-reading the same passage, wondered how it was you failed to re-experience the inspiration of the former time? There was no change in the book; the change was in your mental condition. Have you never, in hearing some strain of music, felt that it led you into a world of faucy, a realm of strange unutterable delight, and yet, forsooth, when on a later day the same chords have been touched by the same hands, to your astonishment they languidly and meaninglessly floated past your ear without rousing the imagery of your soul? There was no change in the music, the change was in the mental conditions of your life; at one time you were responsive; at the other, dull and inert. In all spheres of our existence, joy, truth, love, are proportioned to conditions. And so in the realm of the Spirit. Fulfil the Divine conditions and you are *en rapport* with the Divine life. Permit those conditions to go unfulfilled, and the Divine life will be to you as though it were not. And oh! how simple these conditions are! They do not consist in lashing yourself into a frenzy, nor in shouting yourself into hoarseness, nor in mutilating yourself. No. The conditions are prayer and supplication from hearts one in accord. It is prayer, and prayer only, that fits us for Divine indwelling; it is prayer, and prayer only, that puts us in touch with God. A prayerless life can no more draw to itself the Holy Spirit than glass can draw the electric fire; nor can a prayerless Church bring forth the fruits of holiness any more than the frigid zone can call forth and perfect a tropical growth. "Ye have not because ye ask not; and ye have not because ye ask amiss." Live in the atmosphere of prayer; for therein, and therein only, will you fit yourself for the Divine indwelling; therein, and therein only, will you be vigorous with the life of God. (*J. Marshall Mather.*) **All with one accord in one place.**—*The outward unity of the Pentecostal Church:*—There was unity of spirit and unity in open manifestation to the world at large. Christ's disciples, when they received the gifts of heaven's choicest blessings, were not split up into dozens of different organisations, each of them hostile to the others, and each striving to aggrandise itself at the expense of kindred brotherhoods. They had keenly in remembrance the teaching of our Lord's great Eucharistic supplication (John xvii. 21). There was visible unity among the followers of Christ; there was interior love and charity, finding expression in external union which qualified the disciples for the fuller reception of the spirit of love, and rendered them powerful in doing God's work amongst men. What a contrast the Christian Church presents to this now! There are some persons who rejoice in the vast divisions in the Church; but they are shortsighted and inexperienced in the dangers and scandals which have flowed, and are flowing, from them. It is indeed in the mission field that the schisms among Christians are most evidently injurious. When the heathen see the soldiers of the Cross split up among themselves into hostile organisations, they very naturally say that it will be time enough when their own divergencies and difficulties have been reconciled to come and convert persons who at least possess internal union and concord. Then, again, these divisions lead to a wondrous waste of power both at home and abroad. If men believe that the preaching of the Cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that millions are perishing from want of that blessed story, can they feel contentment when the great work of competing sects consists, not in spreading that salvation, but in building up their own cause by proselytising from the neighbours, and gathering unto their own organisation persons who have already been made partakers of Christ Jesus? And if this competition of sects be injurious and wasteful within the bounds of Christendom, surely it is infinitely more so when various contending bodies concentrate all their forces, as they so often do, on the same locality in some unconverted land, and seem as eagerly desirous of gaining proselytes from one another as from the mass of paganism. Then, too, to take it from another point of view, what a loss in generalship, in Christian strategy, in power of concentration, results from our unhappy divisions! The united efforts made by Protestants,

Roman Catholics, and Greeks, are indeed all too small for the vast work of converting the heathen world if they were made with the greatest skill and wisdom. How much more insufficient they must be when a vast proportion of the power employed is wasted, so far as the work of conversion is concerned, because it is used simply in counteracting and withstanding the efforts of other Christian bodies. How different it was in the primitive Church! Within one hundred and fifty years, or little more, of the ascension of Christ, and the outpouring of the Divine Spirit, a Christian writer could boast that the Christian Church had permeated the whole Roman empire to such an extent that if the Christians abandoned the cities they would be turned into howling deserts. This triumphant march was simply in accordance with the Saviour's promise. The world saw that Christians loved one another, and the world was consequently converted. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **And suddenly there came a sound from heaven.**—*The sound from heaven an answer to prayer:*—The united prayer of the apostles was a cry to heaven, well pleasing to God, and this sound was a delightful answer and counter-cry from heaven; thus was this ἦχος at the same time an echo. So faithful is God to His children, their cry presses into heaven to His heart, and there results from that the return of prayer from heaven (*Apostolic Pastor.*) *The echo:*—Our truest prayers are but the echo of God's promises. God's best answers are the echo of our prayers. As in two mirrors set opposite to each other, the same image is repeated over and over again, the reflection of a reflection, so here, within the prayer, gleams an earlier promise, within the answer is mirrored the prayer. (*A Maclaren, D.D.*) *Symbols of the Spirit:*—The Holy Ghost as—I. WIND. In His—1. Secret coming. 2. Powerful shaking. 3. Purifying blowing. 4. Soft refreshing. II. FIRE. In His—1. Bright shining. 2. Genial warming. 3. Destructive burning. 4. Rapid spreading. (*Gerok.*) *Pentecostal seasons:*—1. That came in fulfilment of Divine promises—the promises of the Old Testament. 2. The first Pentecostal season came, also, in direct answer to prayer—united, earnest prayer. 3. Yet further, the first Pentecostal season came to meet urgently and profoundly felt necessities. 4. Then, lastly, the first Pentecost, in its immediate results, was a special and very extraordinary revelation of the Holy Spirit's power in the souls of men. It demonstrated at once His presence as the great Convincer and Renewer, and the ease with which He could change the hearts of men and dispose them to welcome Christ and the great salvation. (*Ray Palmer, D.D.*) *Whitsunday:*—I. THE ESSENTIAL VIRTUE OF THE DIVINE COMMUNICATION. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." What is it that God does for us when He thus acts upon us? He has, in His heavenly wisdom and in His parental love, left a way open between Himself and ourselves by which He can act upon us not indirectly, but directly, not mediately, but immediately; this is by the gentle, gracious, efficient action of His own Spirit on our spirit. 1. It is surely natural that He should do so; most likely, most credible it is that the Infinite Father of mankind should, while giving to His children a large measure of freedom, responsibility, and so of spiritual dignity, hold Himself free to touch, to quicken, to restrain, to incite, to restore, to ennoble. 2. It is surely desirable in the last degree that He should do so. Whence, otherwise, should we gain the spiritual force which gives life to the dying, energy to the languishing, sanctity and peace to the stained and struggling spirit? II. ITS MANIFESTATIONS. 1. This manifestation was remarkable; it excited a large amount of attention. 2. It was also beneficent. 3. It will be abundantly evident to all that God is with us and in us; our new and nobler life will make that clear, and will not only invite but compel attention. 4. And the influence will be beneficial; we shall lead men's thoughts upwards, Godwards. III. THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH WE MAY LOOK FOR THE DIVINE OUTPOURING. (*W. Clarkson, B.A.*) *Pentecost:*—The crucifixion coincided with the Passover; the resurrection with the feast of the first-fruits; the giving of the Spirit with the feast of the gathering in of the harvest. There was another application of the feast which had come into force in the time of our Lord, according to which the day of Pentecost commemorated the giving of the law. Whilst Jews were rejoicing over a law which could not give righteousness, because it could not give life, the little band of Christians were being vitalised and sanctified by the descent of the Divine Spirit. The whole difference between a dispensation of hard law, with all its burdens and impotence, and that of a living spirit, with all its buoyancy and power, is expressed by the occurrence of the Jewish festival and the Christian miracle in the same city at the same hour. The

incident as it lies before us has three distinct steps, the keeping well apart of which is necessary in order either rightly to conceive the external features or to apprehend the spirit and meaning of the scene. These three are the symbols and precursors of the gift; the gift itself; and its consequences. The first and the last are transient, the central one is permanent. When the symbols had prepared the hearts there came the actual bestowment, and on it followed the speaking with tongues. I. We have, first, then, to consider THE TRANSIENT SYMBOLS OF THE ABIDING GIFT. Now the story is often somewhat erroneously conceived, and it may be worth our while to try to get a clear idea of what really was seen and heard before we ask what was meant thereby. We are to conceive, then, of the whole group of 120 disciples gathered together in their usual place of resort, possibly the very same upper chamber as that in which He had said, "If I depart I will send Him unto you"; and there waiting, with the tension of expectation, which the wondrous events through which they had passed and the closing promises of their Master had now made to be the habitual attitude of their spirits—waiting in concord, hope, and prayer. And what, I suppose, happened was this. The rushing wind came and passed, the mass as of fire flashed and glowed and parted yet remaining united, and hovered over their heads and disappeared. And then they were filled with the Spirit, and then they spake with tongues. And after that the multitude entered, and heard no wind, and saw no fire, and only discerned that the men were "filled with the Holy Ghost" because they heard them speak with tongues. The symbols, therefore, were simply intended as premonitory of what was immediately to ensue, and as preparing the disciples for the gift by quickened anticipation and attention and insight. The signification of the symbols needs little elucidation. The Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, English, and other tongues express the immaterial part of man by analogous words, having the original meaning of breathing or breath. The breath is the life, and the symbol, inherent in the word spirit, carries the truth that the gift at Pentecost was, in its deepest conception, the communication of a Divine life. We are forgiven and accepted in order that a new Divine life may be imparted to us, and we get heaven because that life has been imparted. I need not remind you how there are subordinate felicities and beauties in this emblem, which, however, must never be allowed to disturb the prominence given to the central idea in it, such as those which our Lord hinted at when He said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." The depth and mystery of the source, the height and mysterious glory of the end, the liberty wherewith it makes them who possess it free when the impulses of the spirit are in harmony with the commandments of the Lord—all these things, and many more, are suggested by this great metaphor. Nor must we forget how the same motion of the same atmosphere stirs the young leaves on the summer trees and fans the hot cheek, and, gathering force, devastates cities and sweeps all before it. The variety in the operations and the might of the agent are wonderfully expressed in the symbol. The fire that parted itself into flames, and yet was all one, howsoever divided, is, too, a familiar emblem which needs little expansion. Fire is death; but fire is life too. And it is the vital, quickening, purifying, transforming energy of fire, not its consuming and annihilating force, which is expressed for us in this emblem. We speak of warm affections, fiery impulses, hearts glowing, spirits flaming with zeal, and metaphors of the like sort. Where God's Spirit is there will be no coldness; where His Spirit is there will be no dead, hard obstinacy, as of black coal and green, smoky wood; where His Spirit is it will turn all into its own fiery likeness; and out of the most unpromising material will evoke shooting flames that aspire upwards to their source. The condition of all goodness is enthusiasm, and the author of all holy enthusiasm is that fiery Spirit which will sit upon each of us. II. That brings me to the second stage here—viz., THE ABIDING GIFT. Let us take the liberty of inverting the words of the clause which describes it. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." "*Holy* Ghost." That designation, coupled with the other which is kindred to it, the Spirit of *Truth*," makes the difference between the sobriety of the Christian idea of inspiration, and the extravagances and immoralities which have honeycombed all other forms of belief that God breathes Himself into men. If Christian people would only remember that all high-flying pretences to spiritual illumination and eminent religiousness and endowments are to be measured by this sharp test, "Do they make better men?" there would have been less to weep over in some pages of the history of the

Church; and men would have been saved from fancying that any spirit is a spirit of God unless the manifestations of it are love, joy, peace, righteousness. Let us remember, "They were all filled with the *Holy* Ghost." Further, mark the abundance of the gift. The word "filled" is not to be passed lightly, as if it were merely a favourite phrase of Luke's. It cannot mean anything else than that a man, according to the height of his capacity to receive, was under the influence of that Divine Spirit, and that all the nature—thought, affection, will, practical energy—in all its manifestations, in daily life and common secular things, as well as in waiting on God in prayer and what we call religious exercises, was an inspired nature. "*Filled* with the Holy Ghost"! Filled? And most of us have a little drop in the bottom of the reservoir; a trickle of water down the dry bed; a cats-paw of wind that dies before it moves the flapping sails; a spark of fire in one corner of a cold grate. And we talk about being "filled with the Spirit"! And then there is the universality of the gift. "They were *all*." Not the eleven apostles only, as people sometimes fancy, but the whole 120 of them. Now, then, Christian people, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." III. Lastly, notice THE TRANSIENT RESULTS OF THE ABIDING GIFT. That speaking with tongues, the supernatural expression of Christian truth and devout emotion, in languages learned by no ordinary method, lasted but for a little while. What was its significance? It was a lesson, at the beginning, of the universal adaptation and intention of Christ's work and gift. It was a lesson of the solemn duty of the Church in all lands, and to all ages. But beyond that, there is another lesson which I desire to leave on your hearts. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, *and* they began to speak." Of course! Christian people who have learned with any passionate affection to love, and with any depth of intelligence to understand, Christ and His gospel, must needs speak it forth. Do you see to it that you, first of all, receive, and then you will not be lacking in the impulse to impart, that great gift. There is only one way to get that Pentecostal gift. The precursors of it in the upper room are the precursors of it still. Patient hope, expectance, concord, prayer. These brought Pentecost, and these will bring the Spirit. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The fourfold symbols of the Spirit* (text and ver. 17; and 1 John ii. 20):—Wind, fire, water, oil—these four are constant Scriptural symbols for the Spirit of God. In our texts we have the breath, the fire, the water, and the anointing oil of the Spirit to all Christian souls. I. "A RUSHING MIGHTY WIND." Spirit is breath. Wind is but air in motion. Breath is the synonym for life. Spirit and life are two words for one thing. So in the "rushing mighty wind," we have the highest work of the Spirit—the communication of a new and supernatural life. 1. We are carried back to the vision of the valley of dry bones. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The Scripture treats us all as dead, being separated from God. "They which believe on Christ receive" the Spirit, and thereby receive the life which He gives, or are "born of the Spirit," who is the Spirit of life. 2. Remember, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." If there be life given it must be kindred with the life which is its source. (1) "The wind bloweth where it listeth." That spiritual life, both in the Divine source and in the human recipient, is its own law. The wind has its laws, but these are so complicated and undiscovered that it has always been the symbol of freedom, and poets have spoken of the winds as "chartered libertines"; and "free as the air" has become a proverb. So that Divine Spirit is limited by no human conditions or laws. Just as the lower gift of "genius" is above all limits of culture or position, and falls on a wool-stapler in Stratford-on-Avon, or on a ploughman in Ayrshire, so the Spirit follows no lines that churches or institutions draw. It falls upon an Augustinian monk in a convent, and he shakes Europe. It falls upon a tinker in Bedford gaol, and he writes "Pilgrim's Progress." It falls upon a cobbler in Kettering, and he founds modern Christian missions. And so the life that is derived from the Spirit is its own law. The Christian conscience, touched by the Spirit of God, owes allegiance to no regulations or external commandments laid down by man. Under the impulse of the Divine Spirit, the human spirit "listeth" what is right, and is bound to follow the promptings of its highest desires. Those men only are free as the air who are vitalised by the Spirit of the Lord, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, and there alone, is liberty. (2) In this symbol there lies also the idea of power. The wind was not only mighty but "borne onward"—fitting type of the strong impulse by which "holy men spake as they were 'borne onward' (the word is the same) by the Holy Ghost." There are diversi-

ties of operations, but it is the same breath which sometimes blows in the softest pianissimo that scarcely rustles the summer woods in the leafy month of June, and sometimes storms in wild tempest that dashes the seas against the rocks. The history of the world since has been a commentary upon these words. With viewless, impalpable energy the mighty breath of God swept across the ancient world and laid paganism low. A breath passed over the whole civilised world, like the breath of the west wind upon the glaciers in the spring, melting the thick-ribbed ice, and wooing forth the flowers, and the world was made over again. In our own hearts and lives this is the one power that will make us strong and good. "As many as are impelled by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Is that the breath that swells all the sails of your lives, and drives you upon your course? If it be, you are Christians; if it is not you are not. II. "CLOVEN TONGUES AS OF FIRE." The Baptist contrasted the cold negative efficiency of his baptism with the quickening power of Christ's baptism of fire. Our Lord Himself employs the same metaphor when He speaks about His coming to bring fire on the earth. In this connection, the fire is a symbol of a quick, triumphant energy, which will transform us into its own likeness. There are two sides to that emblem, one destruction, one creative; one wrathful, one loving. There are the fire of love, and the fire of anger; the fire of the sunshine which is the condition of life, and the fire of the lightning which burns and consumes. 1. Fire is selected to express the work of the Spirit by reason of its leaping, triumphant, transforming energy. See how, when you kindle a pile of dead wood, the tongues of fire spring from point to point until they have conquered the whole mass, and turned it all into a ruddy likeness of the parent flame. And so this fire of God, if it falls upon you, will burn up all your coldness, and make you glow with enthusiasm, working your intellectual convictions in fire, not in frost, making your creed a living power in your lives, and kindling you into a flame of earnest consecration. The same idea is expressed by the common phrases of every language. We talk about the fervour of love, the warmth of affection, the blaze of enthusiasm, the fire of emotion, the coldness of indifference. One of the chief wants of the Church is more of the fire of God! We are all icebergs compared with what we ought to be. Look at yourselves; never mind about your brethren. Is our religion flame or ice? Listen to that solemn old warning: "Because thou art neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of My mouth." We ought to be like the seraphim, the spirits that blaze and serve; like God Himself, all aflame with love. 2. The metaphor suggests also—purifying. "The Spirit of burning" will burn the filth out of us. No washing or rubbing will ever clear sin. Get the fire of the Divine Spirit into your spirits to melt you down, and then the scum and the dross will come to the top, and you can skim them off. Two things conquer my sin; the one is the blood of Jesus Christ, which washes me from all the guilt of the past; the other is the fiery influence of that Divine Spirit which makes me pure and clean for all the time to come. III. "I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT."—*Cf.* such texts as "Except a man be born of water," &c, "He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," "A river of water of life proceeding from the throne," and the expressions, "pouring out" and "shedding forth." The significance of this is that the Spirit is—1. Cleansing. 2. Refreshing, and satisfying. There is only one thing that will slake the immortal thirst in your souls. The world will never do it; love or ambition gratified and wealth possessed, will never do it. You will be as thirsty after you have drunk of these streams as ever you were before. There is one spring "of which if a man drink, he shall never thirst" with unsatisfied, painful longings, but shall never cease to thirst with the longing which is blessedness, because it is fruition. The Spirit of God, drunk in by my spirit, will still and satisfy my whole nature, and with it I shall be glad. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" 3. Productive and fertilising. In Eastern lands a rill of water is all that is needed to make the wilderness rejoice. Turn that stream on to the barrenness of your hearts, and fair flowers will grow that would never grow without it. IV. "YE HAVE AN UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE." In the old system, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with consecrating oil, as a symbol of their calling, and of their fitness for their special offices. The reason for the use of such a symbol would lie in the invigorating and health-giving effect of the use of oil in those climates, and the meaning of the act was plain. 1. It was a preparation for a specific and distinct service. (1) You are anointed to be prophets that you may make known Him who has loved and saved you. (2) That anointing calls and fits you to be priests, mediators

between God and man; bringing God to men, and by pleading and persuasion, and the presentation of the truth, drawing men to God. (3) That unction calls and fits you to be kings, exercising authority over the little monarchy of your own natures, and over the men round you, who will bow in submission whenever they come in contact with a man all evidently aflame with the love of Jesus Christ, and filled with His Spirit. 2. And then do not forget also that when the Scriptures speak about Christian men as being anointed, it really speaks of them as being Messiahs. "Christ" "Messiah" means anointed. And when we read "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," we cannot but feel that the words are equivalent to "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." By derived authority, and in a subordinate and secondary sense, we are Messiahs, anointed with that Spirit which was given to Him not by measure, and which has passed from Him to us. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (*Ibid.*) **And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire.**—*The tongues of fire:*—It may be said generally that at Pentecost the reign of symbols closed; not, however, that worship was to be absolutely released from visible signs—witness the institution of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—but a great change passed over the relations of the signs and the reality. Formerly the symbols disguised the things signified, now they have either been displaced by or simply illustrate the manifested reality. I. LIGHT DIFFUSED OR CONDENSED AS FIRE HAD BEEN FROM THE BEGINNING THE ELECT TOKEN OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. 1. A light drawn from no material source hovered over Paradise, rested on patriarchal altars, irradiated the camp, trembled over the mercy-seat and was the glory of God filling His temple. Now when the new temple is consecrated by the advent of the Spirit the emblem appears for the last time and marks by the manner of its appearance a change which carries with it the essence of the Christian privilege. (1) Over the whole company, before it was distributed into fragments, there rested for one brief moment the glory of the Lord, as the sudden token that Jehovah had transferred His dwelling place from the holiest to the upper room. But specially the Holy Ghost signified that the Trinity was no longer a mystery hidden from the people. Within the veil the glory of God had symbolised the Three-One God. The Son had come and fulfilled His part of the symbol, "We beheld His glory," &c.; and now the Spirit descends to fulfil His part also, and when the Church was "filled with the Holy Ghost" it became a temple or "habitation of God through the Spirit." We are not in the court without conscious only that there is within the curtain an awful mystery of light. The Triune God is in our midst. (2) The diffused glory presently disparted "and sat upon each of them." In ancient times this light of the Lord's was never known to rest upon any individual —it was reserved for the congregation. Now the order is inverted, and imported that God accepted, sealed and set apart for Himself every one of them without exception. (3) But the symbol went as suddenly as it came. It could not remain, otherwise the conditions of probation would be changed. Who could sin under the irradiation of that heavenly token? And how could the world go on if the elect carried about with them this signature of heaven? But the reality remains, "they were all filled," &c. What the evanescent light taught for a moment the New Testament now teaches for ever: that the penitent believer is released from condemnation and knows it, being sealed by the Spirit of consecration. (4) The sign departed, but if restored on whom would it rest now? Whom would it leave unvisited? Over whom would it waver and then retire? What melancholy separations would it make between husband and wife, brother and sister, &c. Let every one ask, Would it rest upon me? Such tokens of acceptance or rejection we cannot expect, but we may turn with confidence to the sacred reality. Never live without the thing which this symbol signifies. 2. But this light was the light of a sacred fire. This introduces another novelty. In the ancient temple the two were distinguished. The light was behind the veil or was only diffused through the courts; the fire burned continually on the altar without. But now the light is the fire, and the fire the light. The Holy Ghost sealed believers for God by an outward token, and then filled their hearts as the refiner and sanctifier from sin. (1) Throughout the symbols and prophecies of Old Testament fire was an emblem of the purifying energy of the Spirit. Wherever the light of God's accepting presence rested, hard by was the altar on which fire consumed what God could not accept. And whether by the sharp discipline of affliction, or by the sweet and gentle influences of His grace; whether by the fire that burns or the fire that melts, the Spirit's work must be wrought in us unto

perfection. The fire must burn on until it is quenched through having nothing more to consume. (2) But in its other meaning it is a fire that never can be quenched. The meaning of the fire upon the altar was this—the refuse was purged out that the rich essence of every offering should ascend trembling to God with perfect acceptance. Our whole being must be for ever ascending in abiding consecration. Interior religion makes the Spirit a "whole burnt-offering," the principle of which is being "filled with the Holy Ghost." (3) Note the connection between the light and the fire; between the Divine acceptance through the atonement and our interior meetness for it through the Spirit. (4) The fire is kindled from heaven, but it must be kept burning from below. The Eternal High Priest, by His Spirit, puts the fire on your altar; you must be the Levite to bring the perpetual offering. Feed it with your vanities, idols, sins, until these being destroyed, it shall be quenched. Feed it with your best affections, words, actions, whole life, until your whole being shall be ready for the perfect sacrifice of heaven; and then it never shall be quenched. (5) And remember the awful counterpart. For all who refuse the grace there is prepared a fire which in another sense "never shall be quenched." II. THAT WHICH SAT ON EACH OF THE DISCIPLES ASSUMED THE FORM OF A TONGUE. This was its most characteristic novelty. Never before did it so appear and never again, and we must look for its interpretation to the subsequent history. 1. The Spirit gave to the Church a new utterance. The tongue signified that to the whole company was given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. From that hour the Spirit has been the Supreme teaching authority. 2. The voice of the Church was lifted up in two ways. (1) In the utterance of praise of the wonderful works of God. The Spirit—the tongue of God to man—made known the wonders of the incarnate Saviour as they had never been made known before. And the same Spirit—the tongue of the Church to God—dictated a hymn worthy of the revelation. And the Spirit ordered that it should be a type of the great future. The worship was offered in many languages which, as heard by God, were blended into one. Hence our assemblies are above all worshipping assemblies inspired by the Spirit. (2) But in due time the new tongue was heard in preaching also. Peter was a representative of the great company of preachers in his subject, his zeal, the demonstration of the Spirit which accompanied him, and his great success. But the distributed symbol teaches that in the whole work each individual must take a part. There is a strong tendency to introduce such music, &c., as must reduce many a poor member of the congregation to a mere spectator. Remember also that you must take your part in the preaching service, if not as a professed preacher, as a faithful servant of Christ, ready to defend His name, and recommend His salvation both by voice and by life. (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*) *Tongues of fire*:—I. TONGUES. Because—1. They were to declare by the tongue the message of God to every creature. 2. They who had been unlearned and ignorant men, unapt to teach, and powerless to convince, were from henceforth to teach and convince. 3. The Church was not to be confined to men of their own language, but was to embrace men of every language under heaven. II. AS OF FIRE. Because fire was an emblem of—1. Purity. 2. Enlightenment. 3. Warmth. 4. The power with which the Word world burn its way into the human heart (Luke xxiv. 32). 5. The fiery trials which awaited them. III. WERE DISTRIBUTED TO EACH that each might know that he had his distinct gift, and that none might exalt himself above his brother. IV. SAT UPON THEM, teaching them to do their work constantly and untiringly. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Tongues of fire*:—Richard Sheridan said he often went to hear Rowland Hill preach, because his words flowed hissing hot from his heart. Chalmers's main forte as a preacher and college professor, it is said, was his "blood-earnestness." "What we want," remarked a Chinese convert once, "is men with hot hearts to tell us of the love of Christ." Be earnest, be enthusiastic, and the fire of your own soul will kindle a flame in the souls of others. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) *Tongues of fire*:—Rabbinic writers show that it was a common belief of the Jews that an appearance like fire oft encircled the heads of distinguished teachers of the law. God has often been pleased to reveal Himself to men in conformity with their own conceptions as to the mode in which it is natural to expect communications from Him, as by star to magians. (*Bp. Hacket.*) *Tongues of fire: different kinds of*:—As the tongue kindled of hell is a fire that consumes everything with its wickedness, so tongues when they are kindled of heaven are converted into torches by which a Divine fire can be kindled in many souls (James iii. 6). (*R. Steer, D.D.*) *The necessity of the fire*:—

Suppose we saw an army sitting down before a granite fortress, and told us they intended to batter it down. We might asked them, How? They point us to a cannon-ball. Well, but there is no power in that. It is heavy, but not more than a hundredweight, or half a hundredweight. If all the men in the army were to throw it, that would make no impression. They say, No, but look at the cannon. Well, but there is no power in that; it is a machine, and nothing more. But look at the powder. Well, there is no power in that; a child may spill it, a sparrow may pick it up. Yet this powerless powder and this powerless ball are put into this powerless cannon; one spark of fire enters it, and then, in the twinkling of an eye, that powder is a flash of lightning, and that cannon-ball is a thunderbolt, which smites as if it had been sent from heaven. So is it with our Church machinery of the present day. We have our instruments for pulling down the strongholds, but, oh, for the baptism of fire. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *True eloquence:*—It is the fire of the Holy Ghost that will make men eloquent. Many of us think it consists in a power to rattle vowels and consonants together, and make language ring like a tinkling cymbal. No; that is not eloquence, it is counterfeit; that man has not command over language—language has command over him. What is eloquence? According to Gilfillan, "Eloquence is logic set on fire." But where is the fire to come from? From the great heart of God. A preacher in his study ought to gather his thoughts, to collect his materials, and ascending the pulpit he ought to set them all ablaze with fire from off the altar. (*J. C. Jones.*) *The building up of the family* (text and Gen. xi. 4):—I. THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT carries us back to the period when "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." 1. At that period the human race had begun to so multiply, that it became necessary for them to lengthen the cords of their habitations. A considerable horde journeyed westward, with the view of settling wherever the advantages of pasture might tempt them to fix their residence. Faction, however, soon began to divide them, and it became evident that such a spirit, if some effectual remedy were not applied to it, would issue in their dispersion over the earth's surface. Such a prospect, it appears, was intolerable. Even in the infancy of the race it was felt that union was strength—that to disperse the family was to debilitate it. Possibly there was another motive. The deluge was fresh in the memory, and a guilty dread of some similar judgment drew them near to one another for shelter and support. It was the period when man was beginning to awake to self-consciousness and a knowledge of his own resources. Might not those resources, wisely applied, enable him to hurl defiance at the Most High, and serve to secure him against a second deluge? This presumptuous horde then laid aside for a while their petty differences, and exclaimed, as with one voice, "Go to, let us build us a city," &c. Do not such thoughts, widely different as to outward shape, find an echo in the minds of men of the present generation? There never was a generation which possessed a fuller consciousness of the physical resources at its command, and a higher estimation of the results which, wisely applied, those resources may achieve. And never was there a stronger yearning after union. Men recognise the evils which are incidental to partisanship and division, and profess to deplore even where they cannot remedy them. But to return to our narrative. 2. The people had proceeded some way, when "the Lord came down to see the city . . . Let us go down, and there confound their language." The miracle seems to have consisted of two parts—first, their language was confounded on the spot—secondly, an instinct of dispersion was sent by God among the builders. Without such an instinct the confusion of tongues would have failed to effect its object. "So the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth," which points to the effects of such an instinct. Each little band took its own path, and finally settled down in a separate district, placing between them and their former companions the natural barriers of mountains and rivers. Here, in this state of isolation, national character began to develop itself. Those who lived much abroad in a sunny and genial climate became keenly alive to the various forms of beauty, and susceptible of a high refinement; those whose allotted district was a northern and a cold country, became rude in their manners, and adopted superstitions of a ferocious cast, in which was blended a strong element of the mysterious. Language, too, declined more and more from its original model, and assumed in each case certain great distinguishing features. And thus were the members of the human family effectually separated, and their design of establishing one great central institution baffled, while God's counsel of dispersing them stood for ever. 3. Now this narrative is fraught with admonition to those who, under the conviction that man can

only be strong and happy in union with his fellows, desire to compass that noblest of all ends, the universal brotherhood of the race. It testifies that genuine unity is only to be compassed by striking at the original root of discord. To bring men to recognise one another as brethren is a noble aim; but it is not to be achieved by a fundamental alteration of the arrangements of property or rank, while we leave untouched those springs of selfishness which lead to the accumulation of property in certain hands. To make wars to cease in the world is indeed the very prerogative of Deity; but assuredly it is not otherwise to be effected than by aiding those spiritual influences which modify and repress the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. That Christians should agree in the truth of God's Holy Word, and live together in unity and godly love—this were the very realisation of Christ's prayer—but it is an end which cannot be otherwise furthered than by the more effectual propagation of the gospel of love and peace, an end which no uniformity of ecclesiastical discipline on the one hand, no sinking or waiving of distinguishing tenets on the other, will avail to secure. That all nations should recognise their common fellowship in one world-embracing community—this is the very consummation to which true believers are looking forward; but then it cannot otherwise be brought about than by a spiritual agency, and its attempted achievement by the wider establishment of commercial relations, or by any other method of the kind, will issue most assuredly in failure. To counteract this instinct, by diffusing one of an opposite tendency, is the only sure method of success in such a work. II. LET US NOW TURN OUR THOUGHTS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT. 1. It pleased God, in His own good time and manner, to realise the presumptuous design of the Babel builders. In the mediation of His Son, which unites heaven to earth, He hath reared up a tower whose top reaches to heaven, while its base is accessible to the heirs of sinful flesh and blood, whereby the communications of prayer and praise may pass upwards to Him, and those of grace, mercy, and peace, may descend to His creatures. Clustering round the base of this tower is a city which He hath founded, and which is designed to be world-embracing. The members of the community thus formed are united together by strong and efficacious bonds, although such as are invisible to the eye of sense. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of them all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all. The same hope animates, the same Word guides, the same bread feeds, the same providence directs, the same blood cleanses, the same grace quickens and consoles them. Aye, and their fellowship extends its ample bounds beyond the barriers of the world of sense. It embraces within its fair girdle an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. xii. 22, 23). This community, so constituted, is the appointed centre of union for mankind. There, within its invisible precincts, the families of the human race may meet and recognise one another, as all claiming by faith a common interest in Christ. There, at length, the dusky Moor and the frozen Laplander, the rude Goth and the refined Greek, may acknowledge their oneness of blood. In Christ all national distinctions are annihilated (Col. iii. 11). 2. It was in order to gather the nations into this world-embracing community, that the apostles, after the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them at Pentecost, went forth as ambassadors of reconciliation. As an outward token that the Spirit, whose operation should re-unite in one mystical body the scattered families of man, was issuing forth to the moral world, the physical impediment obstructing union was removed. The apostles "spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It was not, however, this miraculous faculty which was the secret of their success: rather it was their burning love to Christ, their burning conviction that His word was truth, their burning zeal in the cause of perishing and benighted souls, so aptly emblematised by those cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them. 3. Nor has the spirit and power of apostles failed in the Church, although the extraordinary gifts which attended their mission have been withdrawn. The Church has now gained a firm footing in the earth, and accordingly is left to work her way with that spiritual power which is still alive and vigorous within her. As with the spirit of love any triumphs of Christianity may be achieved, so without it, let us not think to do anything. This is the only spirit by which we can be instrumental in repairing the breaches of mankind, and building up the family again in the second Adam. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

The tongues of fire:—The sign of the Holy Spirit's presence was a tongue of fire. It was a most suitable emblem, pregnant with meaning, and indicative of the large place which the human voice was to play in the work of the new dispensation, while the supernatural fire declared that the mere unaided human voice would avail

nothing. The voice needs to be quickened and supported by that Divine fire, that superhuman energy and power, which the Holy Ghost alone can confer. The tongue of fire pointed on the Pentecostal morn to the important part in the Church's life, and in the propagation of the gospel, which prayer and praise and preaching would hereafter occupy. It would have been well, indeed, had the Church ever remembered what the Holy Ghost thus taught, specially concerning the propagation of the gospel, for it would have been thereby saved many a disgraceful page of history. The human tongue, illuminated and sanctified by fire from the inner sanctuary, was about to be the instrument of the gospel's advancement—not penal laws, not the sword and fire of persecution; and so long as the divinely-appointed means were adhered to, so long the course of our holy religion was one long-continued triumph. But when the world and the devil were able to place in the hands of Christ's spouse their own weapons of violence and force, when the Church forgot the words of her Master, "My kingdom is not of this world," and the teachings embodied in the symbol of the tongue of fire, then spiritual paralysis fell upon religious effort; and even where human law and power have compelled an external conformity to the Christian system, as they undoubtedly have done in some cases, yet all vital energy, all true godliness, have been there utterly lacking in the religion established by means so contrary to the mind of Christ. Very good men have made sad mistakes in this matter. Archbishop Ussher was a man whose deep piety equalled his prodigious learning, yet he maintained that the civil sword ought to be used to repress false doctrine; the divines of the Westminster Assembly have left their opinion on record that it is the duty of the magistrate to use the sword on behalf of Christ's kingdom; Richard Baxter taught that the toleration of doctrines which he considered false was sinful; and all of them forgot the lesson of the day of Pentecost, that the tongue of fire was to be the only weapon permissible in the warfare of the kingdom whose rule is over spirits, not over bodies. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.**—*The historic movement towards spirituality:*—The succession which is indicated by the words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is neither nominal nor accidental, it is a philosophical progress and culmination. 1. When we go back towards the origin of things, we are dissatisfied with all mere critical terms, and yearn for something for which we cannot hit the exact word. Then is suggested the Biblical word, Father, and with it comes a promise of satisfaction in spite of all its difficulties. 2. But fatherhood is an inclusive term, suggesting the idea of childhood, and childhood is realised most impressively in the sonship of Christ; but sonship such as this, involving visible expression, is beset with peculiar risks. So He withdrew Himself immediately that He had secured for His personality an unquestioned place in history, as there was nothing more to be gained by His visible continuance on earth. 3. But what of the future of His work? Then, according to Christian teaching, was to come manifestation without visibility; instead of bodily presence, there was to be a new experience of life and spirituality. In one word, the holy *Man* was to be followed by the Holy *Ghost*. This idea of a philosophical rather than a merely arbitrary succession is strictly consistent with the fact that the whole movement of history, in all that is vital and permanent, is a movement from the outward and visible to the inward and spiritual. I. The order of CREATION. The succession runs thus: Light, firmament, dry land, seas, the fruit-tree yielding fruit, sun, moon, and stars, the moving creature that hath life, and fowl flying in the open firmament of heaven, cattle, creeping thing, and beast of the earth; if we pause here we shall be dissatisfied, because of a sense of incompleteness; but to crown the whole "God said, Let us make man in our image and in our likeness." II. The order of HUMAN RECOVERY. Beginning with the Levitical ritual, what could be more objective? The sin-offering, the trespass-offering, the incenses, &c., represent the most sensuous and exhausting system of mediation? Could aught be farther from the point of spirituality? In moving forward to the incarnation, we take an immense step along the line whose final point is spirituality, yet even there we are still distinctly upon the carnal line. The final representative of sensuous worship must Himself be the revealer of spiritual life. Jesus Christ ascended, and henceforth we know not even Him "after the flesh," for the fleshly Christ has Himself placed mankind under the tuition of a spiritual monitor. III. The order of WRITTEN TESTIMONY. From picture and symbol we pass to spiritual meanings; through the noise and fury of war we pass into the quietness and security of moral civilisation; through the

porch of miracles and mighty signs and wonders we enter the holy place of truth and love. The quality of John's Gospel requires the very place that has been assigned to it in the New Testament. John seems to say, "You have heard what the Evangelists have had to tell, and have seen the wonderful things of their Master's ministry; now let me explain the deep meaning of the whole." From Malachi to Matthew is but a step; but to get from Malachi to John, you have to cross the universe. Matthew shows the fact; John reveals the truth; Matthew pourtrays on canvas; John puts his word into the heart. IV. The whole LAW. From the minuteness of microscopic bye-laws men have passed to a spiritual sense of moral distinctions. Every moment of the Jew's time, and every act of his life, was guarded by a regulation. Amidst our spiritual light, such regulations could not be re-established without awakening the keenest resentment. The great tables of bye-laws have been taken down, because the spirit of order and of truth has been given. What is true of law is equally true of all institutionalism. V. Precisely the same movement takes place in the experience of EVERY PROGRESSIVE LIFE. Every man can test this doctrine for himself—the doctrine, namely, that the growth of manhood is towards spirituality. The child grows towards contempt of its first toys; the youth reviews the narrow satisfactions of his childhood with pity; the middle-aged man smiles, half-sneeringly, as he recalls the conceits of his youth; and the hoary-haired thinker lives already amid the peace and joy of invisible scenes, or if he go back, living in memory rather than in expectation, it is so ideally as to divest his recollections of all that was transient and unlovely. The spiritual world of the wise man increases every day. These suggestions point to the conclusion that the Holy Ghost is the reasonable completion of revelation, and as such His ministry is an impregnable proof of the reasonableness of Christianity. In the person of Jesus Christ truth was outward, visible, and most beautiful; in the person of the Holy Ghost truth is inward, spiritual, all-transfiguring. By the very necessity of the case the bodily Christ could be but a passing figure; but by a gracious mystery He caused Himself to be succeeded by an eternal Presence, "even the Spirit of Truth, which abideth for ever." It is claimed, then, on behalf of Christianity, that there is a Holy Ghost, and to this doctrine is invited not only the homage of the heart but the full assent of the most robust and dispassionate understanding. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Filled with the Spirit:—I. They were filled WITH THE SPIRIT. 1. Men may be filled but not with the Spirit (ver. 13). The audience confessed they were full, but with wine, a liquor though full of spirit, yet no spirit. It was false, yet if the Spirit may be taken for a humour, why not a humour for a spirit. Isaiah says (xxix. 9) that men may be drunk but not with wine, A hot humour is taken for this fire and termed, though untruly, a spirit of zeal, and men imbued with it are ever mending churches, states, superiors, and all save themselves. 2. Not every spirit. "There is a spirit in man," *i.e.* our own spirit, and many there be who follow their own ghost, and not the Holy Ghost; for even that ghost taketh upon it to inspire, and we know its revelations (Matt. xvi. 17). 3. Not the world's spirit (1 Cor. ii. 12). 4. But the Holy Spirit, *i.e.* His gifts and graces. And because these be of many points they are all included under these two—(1) Under the wind is represented saving graces; as necessary to our spiritual life as breath is to our natural. This is meant for us personally. Of this Spirit there are nine points (Gal. v. 22). (2) Under the tongues are set forth the grace meant for the benefit of others. Tongues serve to teach and fire to warm; and of this spirit the points are reckoned up in 1 Cor. xii. 7, &c. II. THEY WERE FILLED with the Spirit. 1. It was not a wind that blew through them, as it does through many of us, but that filled them. 2. Not that they were devoid of the Spirit before. Christ had not breathed upon them (John xx. 22) in vain. This shows us that there are diverse measures of the Spirit, some single, some double portions (1 Kings ii. 9). As there are degrees in the wind—a breath, a blast, a gale, so there are in the Spirit. It is one thing to receive the Spirit as at Easter and to be filled with Him as at Whitsuntide. Then but a breath; now a mighty wind; then but sprinkled as with a few drops (Ezek. xx. 46), now baptized with that which was plenteously poured out (Joel ii. 20). III. IN SIGN THAT THEY WERE FILLED THEY RAN OVER. The fire was kindled in them by this wind, and in sign thereof they spoke with their tongue (Psa. xxxix. 3). The wind would have served them as Christians, but as apostles, *i.e.* ambassadors, they must have tongues. 1. They were filled and *then* they began to speak. Some speak, I will not say before they are full, or half full, but while they are little better than empty, if not empty quite. 2. This beginning to speak argues courage. Any man might see that there was a new spirit come into them. Before they were

tongue-tied. A damsel did but ask Peter a question, and he faltered. But after this mighty wind blew up the fire, and they were warmed with it, then they were not afraid to testify before magistrates and kings. (*Bp. Andrewes.*) *Filled with the Spirit*:—The new era opened at Pentecost was one in which all God's people were to have God abiding in them always, the Guest, Comforter and Friend of every Christian heart. It must be admitted, however, that this Divine ideal has been very inadequately realised. Let us consider some of the results which may be expected to flow from a fuller baptism of the Spirit. I. SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS. 1. This does not mean that our thoughts should be perpetually running on the future, that we should ever be debating theological questions, but that we shall have the power to appreciate those great and eternal realities that are about us. 2. This spiritual mindedness will reveal itself—(1) In the estimate we form of our fellow men. (2) In our appreciation of the great spiritual end we ought ever to be seeking in order to do Christian work. (3) In our appreciation of Christian doctrine caring more about the spiritual substance than the particular form or fashion by which the truth may have been expressed. For instance—(*a*) In all our thought about the death and atonement of Christ, the imagination will not dwell on the physical blood that was shed, or upon the physical agony that was endured, but upon the majesty of God's righteousness, the wonder of God's love, the mystery of that great sacrifice on the Cross, and the awfulness of the sin which made that sacrifice necessary. (*b*) When we think about the second coming of Christ, our thoughts will not be taken up with the external circumstances of pomp and splendour, but rather with the triumph of good over evil, and truth over falsehood, which is the consummation to which all devout souls must ever be looking. (*c*) In thinking about inspiration we shall not trouble ourselves about theories of it, or about the mere letter, but our care will be mostly for the Divine truth itself, which will lift us up in our despondency, and guide us in our perplexity when we come to the sacred page. II. AN ACCESS OF POWER BY WHICH THE NATURALLY TIMID WILL BE ENABLED TO DO THINGS WHICH WOULD BE OTHERWISE IMPOSSIBLE TO THE STRONGEST; in regard to—1. Testimony for Christ. 2. Endurance of suffering. 3. Philanthropic work. III. A CHANGE OF DISPOSITION. 1. The cessation of "jealousies, strifes, and divisions," which Paul includes amongst the "works of the flesh." 2. The prevalence of a spirit of mercy and kindness towards others. (1) To those who in our midst are compelled to live very hard lives. (2) For those multitudes all over the world who are without the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ. IV. AN ENTHUSIASM OF HOLY FERVOUR IN ALL WORK. 1. In worship. 2. In Church life. 3. In evangelism. (*H. Arnold Thomas, M.A.*) *Filled with the Spirit*:—I. THE FULNESS. There was no part of the complex nature of man that was not pervaded by the Spirit. 1. The intellect was illumined to know the truths of the Spirit. 2. The affections were purified and inflamed with desires after heavenly things. 3. The will was strengthened to obey the motions of the Spirit. II. ITS MANIFESTATION. Those who are so filled give out only the language of the life-giving Spirit. Even when they speak of earthly things it is with a tongue reminding men of the wisdom and simplicity of the children of God. When they do aught in the common business of life, their example recalls the thought of a higher life. All they say or do is to edifying. (*Cornelius à Lapide.*) *Filled with the Spirit and receiving the Spirit*:—The difference is not of kind, but of degree. In the one case, the light of heaven has reached the dark chamber, dispelling night, but leaving some obscurity and some deep shadows. In the other, that light has filled the whole chamber, and made every corner bright. This state of the soul—being "filled with the Holy Ghost"—is the normal antecedent of true prophetic or miraculous power, but may exist without it; without it, in individuals who are never endowed with the gift either of prophecy or of miracles; without it, in individuals who have such powers, but in whom they are not in action, as in John the Baptist, before his ministry commenced. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Fulness of the Spirit not necessarily miraculous*:—Eyesight is the necessary basis of what is called a painter's or a poet's eye; the sense of hearing, the necessary basis of what is called a musical ear; yet eyesight may exist where there is no poet's or painter's eye, and hearing where there is no musical ear. So may the human soul be "filled with the Holy Ghost," having every faculty illuminated, and every affection purified, without any miraculous gift. On the other hand, the miraculous power does not necessarily imply the spiritual fulness: for Paul puts the supposition of speaking with tongues, prophesying, removing mountains, and yet lacking charity, that love which must be shed abroad in every heart that is full of the Holy Ghost. (*Ibid.*) *The fulness of the Spirit the need of the Church*:—I. WE ARE APT TO FIX OUR

THOUGHTS AND DESIRES ON SUBORDINATE INSTRUMENTALITIES. 1. Good organisation. Many are chiefly anxious to perfect the ecclesiastical apparatus of the Church; but without speaking disparagingly of this, yet perfect machinery is useless without motive power. A Church may be organised to death, and may be only like a stately tomb. The Church's finest triumphs were gained in days when it had no elaborate organisation. 2. Orthodoxy. Many are distressed by the present unsettlement of theological opinion, and regard uniformity of belief as the great desideratum. Correct thinking is much to be desired, and in proportion as any Church departs from fundamental Christian truth it emasculates its moral force. But an orthodox Church may be a scene of mental and spiritual stagnation. It may have a perfect creed and yet be loveless, lifeless, helpless. 3. Intellectual equipment. Of scholarship and disciplined thought it is impossible for a Church to have too much, but a Church that prides itself on its culture may be as cold as an iceberg and exclusive as a coterie. It may virtually say to any candidate who cannot be classed among its "thoughtful," or who does not rise to a certain standard of wealth and social status, what a deacon is reported to have said to an unwelcome applicant, "There is no vacancy in our church just now." 4. Liberty, fearless independence of thought and expression. But liberty may degenerate into license quite as easily as zeal for truth may pass into bigotry, and in its sacred name deadly errors and worthless speculations and conceits may be passed off as current coin of the realm of truth. II. WHAT WE WANT SUPREMELY IS THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT. 1. Organisation, &c., are good things, but there is something more essential. Might not the Master say to-day as He did of old, "Ye are careful about many things, but one thing is needful." With the fulness of the Spirit our organisation will be filled with power, our orthodoxy pulsate with love, our culture have in it no Phariseeism, and our liberty always serve the interests of truth and godliness. 2. "Filled with the Spirit." (1) The Church will be guided into all truth, for a fuller tide of the Spirit means finer spiritual discernment and discrimination, and deeper insight into eternal verities. (2) The Church will be "glorious in holiness," for wherever the Spirit of God dwells He is as the refiner's fire. (3) The peace and harmony of the Church will be insured, for brotherly love will reign supreme, and fidelity to truth will carry no bitterness with it. (4) The Church will be preserved from selfishness, and made missionary and philanthropic. (5) The Church will not descend to carnal and unworthy methods of spreading the kingdom of God. It will cease to bow at the shrine of mammon, disdain the expedients of worldly wisdom, and not measure its success by statistical tables or worldly standards. (6) The Church will have an attractive power. We look too much to the mere accessories of religion—to music and ritual, intellectual brilliance and sensational services, forgetful of the fact that the magnetic spell of the Church is the beauty, intensity, and fulness of its spiritual life. When the fruits of the Spirit abound men will be drawn as bees to the apple blossom, or steel filings to the magnet. (7) The Church will exert a mighty power to perform greater miracles than those of Christ, and in their presence the voice of the caviller will be silenced. Preaching will be "in the demonstration of the Spirit and power," and we shall rejoice in constant accessions. III. HOW SHALL WE OBTAIN THIS FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT? There have been seasons when the Spirit has swept in mighty tides, and we are tempted to think that the supply of the Spirit is according to some capricious or arbitrary arrangement. But the supernatural has its laws as well as the natural. 1. Everything that grieves the Spirit must be put away, "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies," &c., and "all unbelief, worldly-mindedness, pride, selfishness"; everything opposed to the simplicity, the charity and purity of Christ, or there will be fatal hindrances. 2. Earnest, importunate prayer—prayer that is not a mere repetition of conventional phrases, that has in it the utmost intensity of desire, that links together the whole communion of the faithful, and knows no cessation till the answer comes. The experience of the disciples before Pentecost, and in chap. iv. 31, is a lesson for all ages. 3. There must be avenues for the Spirit's entrance, a large measure of receptivity, sensitiveness to His influence, fidelity to the truth. He requires cheerful response as He calls to duty or sacrifice, and an implicit obedience to His commands. Luther once said that people cried, "Spirit, Spirit, Spirit!" and then struck down all the bridges by which the Spirit might enter. At the moment of his ordination Whitefield says, "I offered up my whole spirit, soul and body, to the service of God's sanctuary," and the result we know. If the sacrifice be upon the altar, the fire from heaven will come down. (*T. G. Tarn.*) *The soul*

filled with the Holy Ghost:—A piece of iron is dark and cold; imbued with a certain degree of heat, it becomes almost burning without any change of appearance; imbued with a still greater degree, its very appearance changes to that of solid fire, and it sets fire to whatever it touches. A piece of water without heat is solid and brittle; gently warmed, it flows; further heated, it mounts to the sky. An organ filled with the ordinary degree of air which exists everywhere is dumb; the touch of the player can elicit but a clicking of the keys. Throw in not other air, but an unsteady current of the same air, and sweet, but imperfect and uncertain, notes immediately respond to the player's touch: increase the current to a full supply, and every pipe swells with music. Such is the soul without the Holy Ghost, and such are the changes which pass upon it when it receives the Holy Ghost, and when it is "filled with the Holy Ghost." In the latter state only is it fully imbued with the Divine nature, bearing in all its manifestations some plain resemblance to its God, conveying to all on whom it acts some impression of Him, mounting heavenward in all its movements, and harmoniously pouring forth, from all its faculties, the praises of the Lord. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Power of a man when God works by him:*—Look at the artist's chisel; the artist cannot carve without it. Yet imagine the chisel, conscious that it was made to carve, and that it is its function, trying to carve alone. It lays itself against the hard marble, but it has neither strength nor skill. Then we can imagine the chisel full of disappointment. "Why cannot I carve?" it cries. Then the artist comes and seizes it. The chisel lays itself into his hand, and is obedient to him. Thought, feeling, imagination, skill, flow down from the deep chambers of the artist's soul to the chisel's edge. The sculptor and the chisel are not two, but one; it is the unit which they make that carves the stone. We are but the chisel to carve God's statues in this world. Unquestionably we must do the work. But the human worker is only the chisel of the great Artist. The artist needs his chisel; but the chisel can do nothing, produce no beauty of itself. The artist must seize it, and the chisel lay itself into his hand and be obedient to him. We must yield ourselves altogether to Christ, and let Him use us. Then His power, His wisdom, His skill, His thought, His love, shall flow through our soul, our brain, our heart, our fingers. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) **And began to speak with other tongues.**—*The new tongue which ought to fall to our lot by the Spirit of Pentecost:*—I. WHEREIN IT CONSISTS. 1. Not in a miraculous gift of languages. 2. Nor in a formal repetition of pious expressions. 3. But in a heart and mouth opened to thankful praise of Divine grace and joyful confession of the Lord. II. WHENCE IT PROCEEDS. 1. Not from our natural state. 2. Nor from the arts and sciences. 3. But from above, from the Spirit of God, who touches heart and lips with fire from heaven. III. WHAT PURPOSE IT SERVES. Not to vain self-glorification or worldly delectation, but to the praise of God and to the message of salvation to the world. (*K. Gerok.*) **As the Spirit gave them utterance.**—*Characteristics of Spirit-inspired speech.* They spoke—I. WISELY, as the Spirit of wisdom moved them. II. POWERFULLY, as the Spirit of power strengthened them. III. PURELY, as the Spirit of holiness sanctified them. (*Cornelius à Lapide.*) *The gospel for all nations:*—The apostles' speaking on the day of Pentecost to the people in their respective languages, was to us a plain intimation of the mind and will of God, that the sacred records should be preserved by all nations in their own tongue; that the Scriptures should be read, and public worship be performed, in the vulgar language of the nations. (*M. Henry.*)

Vers. 5–11. **And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation.**—*The first congregation appealed to by the apostles:*—I. IT CONSISTED OF MEN OF MANY LANDS. The fifteen countries remind us of the dispersion of the Jews. They had been scattered on account of their sins; but the mercy of God was shown in making this punishment a way for the gospel. Jews and proselytes would return and tell their kindred of the wonders of this day. Some without design would convey to the heathen saving truth; just as fugitive traitors may build a bridge over which the saviours of their country afterwards pass; others doubtless saw here the fulfilment of their prayers that they might benefit the perishing Gentiles among whom they dwelt. II. IT REPRESENTED THE WHOLE WORLD. When the glorious news which God designed for all had to be declared for the first time, it was fitting that all should thus be represented. But on the ground of the unity of the race every congregation represents the whole world, and he who leads one soul to the Saviour makes a contribution to the aggregate of

human good. What value does this put on the work of Christian agents of every class. III. IT EXEMPLIFIED VARIOUS MORAL CHARACTERISTICS. 1. The God-fearing and worthy. They looked on the wonders with careful and devout inquiry. In seeking the salvation of sinners it is necessary to elicit the question, "What may this be?" 2. The frivolous. They preferred the vain charge of drunkenness. No doubt the excitement in part accounted for it, but it is probable that jesting was resorted to that the impressions of the moment might be resisted. This obvious way of grieving the Spirit is sometimes exhibited in criticisms on preachers. 3. The haughty who could not bear the idea of being taught by Galileans. So David had doubt cast on his ability to show any good, and our Lord was received with suspicion because He belonged to Nazareth. But a servant has sometimes been able to teach his master the truth of God, and an illiterate preacher has often convinced men of learning whom their equals had failed to reach. (*W. Hudson.*) *How the seed of the Word is spread*:—1. In the cotton factories of Lancashire there is a huge piece of machinery fifty feet in length, and containing hundreds of spindles, which moves steadily backward and forward from one side of the room to the other. It is a great triumph of skill to insert within the machine a power by which it shall move a certain distance and then stop and go back again. There was a similar contrivance in Judaism which retained the Word of God at Jerusalem till a certain time and then sent it forth from Jerusalem. This contrivance was the regulation that all the people should repair to the capital to celebrate their appointed feasts; and this regulation was observed even after the Jews had been scattered all over the world. Hence the gathering at Pentecost. Up to that period the arrangement seemed devised to keep the worship of God in one place and to forbid the spread of true religion. But now it seemed expressly invented for the universal diffusion of the gospel of Christ. 2. In a still, sultry autumn day, as you walk through the fields, your attention is arrested by a tiny sound at intervals, like an explosion in miniature, and a few seconds after a shower of tiny balls falls upon the ground. It is the bursting of seed pods in the sun. The casket that contains the seed of some plants is composed of four or five long narrow staves, joined together like cooper work, but without the staves. The staves are glued together at the edges, and the vessel so constructed is strong enough to contain the seed till it is ripe. But if the seeds were retained beyond that the purposes of nature would be thwarted. Accordingly at this stage there is a turning point, and the action of the machinery is reversed. The same qualities in the vessels that hold fast the seed while it is green jerk it to a distance after it is ripe. The staves of the little barrel are bent, the bursting force overcomes the adhesion and opens them with a spring that flings the seed as if from a sower's hand. By this contrivance, though no human hand were near, a whole field would soon be sown by seed from a single plant. Thus the law in Israel that confined the sacrifices to a single spot, and so brought Jews from all parts at Pentecost, threw the seed of the Word as by a spring out from Jerusalem into all the neighbouring nations. These Parthians, &c., were the vessels charged with precious seed at Jerusalem, and then thrown back on the several countries whence they had come. In this way the gospel was in a single season brought to regions which otherwise it might not have reached in a century. (*W. Arnot.*) *The visitors at Jerusalem*:—The list is characteristic of the trained historian and geographer—trained, it may be, in the school of Strabo—who had carefully inquired what nations were represented at that great Pentecost, who had himself been present, at least, at one later Pentecost (chap. xxi. 15), and knew the kind of crowd that gathered to it. There is a kind of order, as of one taking a bird's-eye view of the Roman Empire, beginning with the great Parthian kingdom, which was still, as it had been in the days of Crassus, the most formidable of its foes; then the old territory of the Medes, which had once been so closely connected with the history of their fathers; then, the name of the Persians having been thrown into the background, the kindred people of Elam (commonly rendered Persia in the LXX.), whom Strabo speaks of as driven to the mountains (xi. 13, § 6); then the great cities of the Tigris and Euphrates, where the "princes of the captivity" still ruled over a large Jewish population; then passing southward and westward to Judæa; then to Cappadocia, in the interior of Asia Minor; then to Pontus, on the northern shore washed by the Euxine; then westward to the Proconsular Province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. From Ephesus the eye travels eastward to the neighbouring province of Phrygia; thence southward to Pamphylia; thence across the Mediterranean to Egypt; westward to Cyrene; northward, re-crossing the Mediterranean, to the great capital

of the empire; then, as by an after-thought, to the two regions of Crete and Arabia that had been previously omitted. The absence of some countries that we should have expected to find in the list—Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus, Bithynia, Macedonia, Achaia, Spain—is not easy to explain, but it is, at any rate, an indication that what we have is not an artificial list made up at a later date, but an actual record of those whose presence at the feast had been ascertained by the historian. Possibly they may have been omitted, because Jews and converts coming from them would naturally speak Greek, and there would be no marvel to them in hearing Galileans speaking in that language. The presence of Judæa in the list is almost as unexpected as the absence of the others. That, we think, might have been taken for granted. Some critics have accordingly conjectured that "India" must be the true reading, but without any MS. authority. Possibly the men of Judæa are named as sharing in the wonder that the Galileans were no longer distinguished by their provincial *patois* (*cf.* Matt. xxvi. 73). (*Dean Plumptre.*) **We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.**—*The thousand-tongued hallelujah of the world in honour of God:*—I. BEGUN on the morning of creation in the kingdom of nature. II. RENEWED at Pentecost in the kingdom of grace. III. PERFECTED, but never finished, on the day of manifestation in the kingdom of glory. (*Gerok.*) *The wonderful works of God:*—I. THE SUBJECT ITSELF. And where shall we begin? All that God does is wonderful. Let us enter—1. The field of creation. Here, how wonderful are the works of God! Think of—(1) Their number. Look at the heavens. Though infidelity has mocked at the idea of comparing them to the sands of the sea-shore, the discoveries of astronomy have proved it to be a fact. Look on the face of the world, how many inhabitants are there, visible and invisible! (2) Their diversity! How large are some, and how minute are others! Take up the microscope and the telescope. What vastness in the sun! what smallness in the mite! And yet there are creatures less than these, and all of them have their peculiar qualities, tribes, families, birth, breeding, education, government. Only observe the commonwealth of the ants and the queendom of the bees! (3) Their support. They are all provided for. There is sufficient for all and for all seasons. (4) Their structure. Take only one of the vegetable tribes; how miraculous its growth, how simple its form, and yet how beautiful! "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." What man contrives man may comprehend; whereas in the works of God we find that we are in the region of infinity. 2. The field of providence. Here all is wonderful! Nothing comes by chance. (1) What an astonishing series of events are displayed in the history of one single country! What mighty movements proceed from causes almost imperceptible! (2) The history of every individual is equally wonderful. 3. The field of grace. How wonderful is the work of redemption and its application to the soul! How wonderful the history of the believer from conversion to glorification! Angels desire to understand these things, and the more they discern the more they are surprised, and at each discovery they sing new songs, "Great and marvellous are all Thy works, Lord God Almighty." II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE SUBJECT WAS ANNOUNCED. "We do hear them speak," said the audience, diversified as it was, "in our tongues." It is the duty of ministers to tell the people in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," said Christ. "The common people heard Christ gladly," says the evangelist. What are philosophical expressions and learned disquisitions to these? I fear we may apply what the apostle says of speaking in an unknown tongue to many of them. Ministers should use "great plainness of speech." But this speaking to men of various languages is—1. Nothing less than a real miracle. Two things are essential to a miracle. (1) There must be something addressed to the sense as well as to the reason. These are called "signs," and it would be wonderful if signs could not be seen. (2) It must be above all known second causes. God only could have stored the minds of these men with such a multitude of merely arbitrary signs, and have given them power and ability to utter such a variety of distinct sounds. 2. The truth of it is evident also. It was undeniable. (1) These men were well known. (2) Their judges were competent to detect imposture. (3) They did not go to a distance to tell their tale; they began amongst their enemies. (4) The time was when large multitudes were present. (5) Mark their boldness; they charged the Jews around them with the murder of an innocent young man. (6) Note the result. 3. This miracle was expressly predicted. Christ said, "They shall speak with new tongues." 4. This miracle

was necessary for the accomplishment of their world-wide mission. 5. This gift of tongues was continued for years. 6. The want of this gift in the work of evangelising the world must now be supplied by human learning. And we ought to be very thankful to God that His Word is translated into so many tongues. III. How THIS SUBJECT WAS HEARD. 1. Some heard with wonder. So it is now. And this is not surprising; for the natural man discerns not the things of God. Christians are "men wondered at"; the men of the world wonder that you run not to the same excess of riot with themselves, not knowing that you have meat to eat which they know not of. And this is often attended with a good effect, for it induces them to examine, and truth always gains by investigation. But then, on the other hand, the wonder often dies away, and he who wondered comes within the number of those of whom it is said, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!" 2. Some heard in mockery. And so it is now. That which devils believe, and the belief of which makes them tremble, furnishes such men with matter for mirth. (1) Some of these mockers were once professors; the apostate is seldom found neuter. (2) Some mock from the affectation of greatness. These things may be well enough for the common people, but will not do for men of taste. (3) Some mock from the affectation of wisdom. "What will this babbler say?" "We preach Christ crucified, to the Greeks foolishness." (4) Some mock from ignorance. They mock at what they do not understand, at what they never read. Many are afraid to hear or to read the truth lest it should destroy their peace. (5) Some cannot deny certain facts which are before them; but then they show their malignity by accounting for them. They ascribe the zeal of the Christian to disappointed love—to ambition—to a sanguine complexion—to a heated imagination—to enthusiasm, &c. So here, the multitude ascribed the phenomena to drunkenness. 3. Some heard and believed. (*W. Jay.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **And they were all amazed.**—*Whit Sunday, or what our Churches need:*—Notice—I. THREE THINGS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT—things which if not the direct cause of a revival, always herald it—the shadows cast by the coming blessing. 1. A complete congregation. "They were all in one place." No absentees. This betokened earnestness, for it was in fact an early Sunday morning prayer-meeting with every one present. Always before a great blessing there will be a revived interest in sanctuary services. The half truth, "I can worship God as well at home" (which is a lie when the man is able to come to the sanctuary and does not) will not be heard. Indifference to public worship is a fatal sign. Things that would never be permitted to interfere with business or pleasure are reckoned sufficient to warrant "staying at home to-day." You found eleven o'clock this morning too early to come to worship, but I will guarantee you catch the eight o'clock excursion train to-morrow morning. 2. A congregation one in desire and motive; "With one accord." No two motives had drawn them. They came to receive the promised blessing. Is not the want of this spirit of accord the weakness of the Churches of the present day? Unbelief is not the only thing that keeps Christ from doing many mighty works. It might with equal truth be said of many a Church: "He did not many mighty works there because of their squabbling, petty, selfish spirit." There are men who will be nothing unless they are everything, and will without compunction sacrifice a whole Church's prosperity upon the wretched little altar of their own unsanctified ambition. Instead of all being baptized into one spirit, it looks more as if every one had been baptized into a different spirit and every spirit an evil one. But when all differences become drowned in one overwhelming passion of saving souls, then let the Church lift up her head, for the day of her revival draweth nigh. 3. A congregation steeped in the spirit of prayer. They had a ten days' prayer-meeting. Do you wonder they had a Whit Sunday? I should have wondered if they had not. The general prayerlessness of the Church is simply deplorable. Here and there the hundreds come to prayer. But take the general run of prayer-meetings. It is not an uncommon thing for Churches to have to give them up because so few come. Whilst all this is so it is of no use talking about having a revival. II. THE BLESSING ITSELF. 1. It came at an appointed time. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." God has a time for everything. The disciples doubtless expected the blessing sooner. They had to learn that there is a sovereignty in revivals. Man has no power to command one. He can but cry and wait. Over one Church a cloud of blessing hangs, continually letting fall showers of refreshment. Beneath its influence all is verdant, fresh and lovely. But yonder is

another Church the very contrast to this. The heavens above it seem as brass. The piety of its members seems to lack freshness and their leaf withers. Converts are almost unknown. Let not those Churches that have the blessing despise those that lack it. The only difference is that the time to favour them "has come and the time to favour the others shall come." 2. It came suddenly and in a moment. Revivals very often do. With man's work the process as well as the result is visible. Is a temple to be built, the plans are exhibited, the foundations dug out, the scaffolding reared, and for months the chipping of the chisel and the clicking of the trowel are heard. God can build His temple in a night, and like Solomon's, no sound of tool be heard. At any moment, without any previous warning, the revival may come. 3. It spread far and wide. From the upper room it soon flew along the streets of Jerusalem like an electric current. There is no telling where the influence of a revival in a Church may spread. It creeps into homes shut against the tract distributor. It glides into darkest places of vice. A revived Church will be certain to draw the multitude together. This is the secret of getting at the masses. III. THE QUESTION OF OUR TEXT. "What meaneth this?" Why, it means—1. That Christ is ascended, and has received gifts for men. An ascended, glorified Christ warrants the Church in expecting any measure of blessing, any number of conversions. "What meaneth this"? 2. That all instrumentality is nothing without the Holy Ghost, but that the meanest instrumentality with the Spirit is mighty enough to accomplish anything. Alas, what an amount of powerless machinery we have in the so-called "religious world," because it has no unction, because it is the work of man, not the working of God through the man, because it is dry and official. Instrumentality is almost worshipped, whilst the Holy Ghost is well-nigh ignored. 3. That God is pleased to work on the world through the Church. Far be it from us to call in question the good that has been accomplished by many of our "societies," but we believe that half of them could be spared with ease did a greater unction but rest upon the Church. 4. That these are the seasons God's Church is to seek at His hands. I will close with an illustration. Once upon the sea-shore, watching the "getting off" of a fishing smack, I saw in it a union of work and dependence that charmed me. The fishermen brought the craft down the beach as far as they could and then left her awhile until the tide, which was flowing, neared her. Meantime two anchors had been cast out to sea, from which were ropes to a windlass in the centre of the vessel. Soon the surf (for the sea was fresh) began to run round her as she lay a dead weight upon the shore. Then the waves began to curl over and break upon her side. The men at the windlass took a turn and made the rope fast. And now every moment the tide had more power over her. She was never still. Twenty times did I say "now she is off"; and twenty times did she settle down again upon the shore, and twenty times did the men at the windlass put on the strain. At last one wave swept higher than any before; she shook—rose—glided down towards the deep—the men turning the handle of the windlass quickly as possible. A wave she met threatened to sweep her back upon the shore, but the anchors held her, and right through the surf the men wound her, and half an hour after she was flying away before the breeze, a very contrast to the dead weight she looked upon the beach. That vessel is the Church. The Holy Ghost is the tide. The ropes and the windlass are human agencies only to be used in dependence on the tide. The tide is coming in. The Church feels its power. She moves—she rises. Oh God send the billow that shall float her now, and send her careering on her course, with the breeze of the Spirit. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The multitude in amazement*:—I. A MULTITUDE GATHERED FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. II. A MULTITUDE GATHERED FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES. They had come to the feast of Pentecost. III. A MULTITUDE ASTONISHED BY A MIRACLE. The subject was one, the languages many. So—1. In the gospel we have proof that by the foolishness of preaching God confounds the wisdom of the world. 2. Note the wonderful adaptation of the gospel to the entire world. It appeals to all natures and dispositions, and equally meets the wants of all. IV. A MULTITUDE VARIOUSLY AFFECTED. All were amazed. Some inquired, some mocked. Some said (probably the devout men mentioned in ver. 5), "What meaneth this?" This language betokened a desire to learn. Others (ver. 13) said, "They are full of new wine"; regarding the religion of Jesus Christ as fanaticism. How does the gospel affect us? (*F. Wagstaff.*) *A miracle the object of derision*:—Of all the expressions of our distaste, a scoff is the worst. Admonition may be physic, a reproof balm, a blow ointment; but derision is as poison and a sword. It was the height of Job's

complaint that persons made jests on him; and it was the depth of Samson's calamity (Judges xvi. 25). That which raises our anger presents some magnitude to our eyes; but that which we scorn is less than nothing. But now everything is not always as it appears, especially to the eye of the scoffer; for here we see things of excellency may be submitted to jests. Note I.—THE OBJECT OF THEIR DERISION. A miracle. In every miracle there is "the thing done," which must transcend the course of nature, and "the end," which is also supernatural. In respect of the power of God there is no miracle; but in His goodness He was pleased to work wonders, not for show, but for our instruction. And as He had borne witness to His Son by miracles, so doth He here to the Holy Ghost. This was the end of this miraculous operation. II. THE PERSONS. 1. What entertainment finds the miracle? What welcome hath the Holy Ghost? No other than what befals all extraordinary events. Every man lays hold of it and shapes it in such a form as he may please. To some it is a matter of wonder; to others, of mirth. 2. We should account it a strange stupidity in any one not to be more affected at the sight of the sun than of a taper, and to esteem the great palace of heaven but as a furnace. But when God stretcheth forth His hands to produce effects which follow not the force of secondary causes, then, not to put-on wonder, not to conclude that it is for some great end, is not folly, but infidelity, the daughter of malice and envy and affected ignorance. 3. Miracles are signs; and if they signify nothing it is evident that a stubborn heart and froward mind will not understand the meaning of them. And then what are miracles but trifles, matter of scoff and derision? "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles" (ver. 22), a juggler; a voice from heaven, but "thunder"; to make the blind to see, &c., witchcraft; to be full of the Spirit, "to be full of drink." When Julian had read a Defence of Christianity, he remarked, "I have read, understood, and condemned it." To which St. Basil replied, "Had you understood it, you would never have condemned it." The same befalls men prepossessed and too far engaged in the world, and the father's reply will reach home to them. 4. To this day our behaviour is little better than mocking. Our lust, which waits for the twilight, mocks at God's Omniscience (Psa. lxxiii. 11); our distrust argues against His power (Psa. lxxviii. 20; 2 Kings viii. 2); our impatience questions His truth; and those who acknowledge Him to be the Giver of life, have confined His goodness to a few. His mercy "triumpheth over" His justice; yet Novatian made every fall as low as hell: and what is despair but a mocking of God's mercy? 5. The ground of all is infidelity, the proper issue of obstinate and wilful ignorance. Plato well observeth, that none can taste and judge of that sweetness which truth affords but the philosopher, because they want that instrument of judgment which he useth; and that cannot be applied by covetousness, ambition, and lust; "the philosopher's instrument is reason." So in Divine mysteries and miracles, we cannot reach the meaning of them without a humble, pure, and free spirit, the best instrument of a Christian. 6. Indeed, reason might have taught these men that this was a miracle. For rude and illiterate men to speak on a sudden all languages, was more than all the linguists in the world could teach. And from no other principle arose the question of ver. 12. But, to "read the riddle, we must plough with another heifer" than reason (Judges xiv. 18). To dive into the sense of the miracle can proceed from no other Spirit than that whose miracle it was, even Him who enlightens them that sit in darkness, and who makes the humble and docile soul both His school and His scholar. Reason is a light, but obnoxious to fogs and mists, till this great light dispel and scatter them. Julian was a man as well furnished as any; yet he wounded religion more with his scoffs than with his sword. When he had received his death's wound, he confessed it came from the power of Christ, in a phrase of scorn, "The day is Thine, O Galilean!" Indeed the greatest scoffers have been for the most part eminent in natural abilities, whose reason, notwithstanding, could not show them their own fluctuations, the storms and tempest of their souls, she being eclipsed with her own beams. III. THE SCOFF ITSELF. 1. It was not only a scoff, but an accusation, and there be divers reasons which make men accusers, ambition, hatred, hope of reward. Œcumenius tells us it was here that perverseness which indifferently passeth censure upon any cause, or "no cause at all." And this is bred by opinion, and not by truth. If they understood not what the apostles spake, how could they say they were drunk? and if they did understand, why did they scoff? They were men settled in the very dregs of error and malice; and, having taken up an opinion, they would not let it go, no not at the sight of a miracle. 2. But yet though there were no reason nor probability to justify their

scoff, some show there was to countenance it. The apostles, after this gift of tongues, talked much: they were full indeed with the wine of the New Testament; and, as drunken men, they were merry and cheerful; they publish secrets, they fear no face, regard no power, regard not themselves. 3. This hath always been, and to this day is, the great error of the world—to make shadows substances, similitudes indentities, the faintest representations truth (1 Sam. i. 13, 14; 2 Sam. vi. 20; Mark iii. 21). Upon this ground faith is called "presumption" because it is like it; Christianity is called "madness"; for when we mortify the flesh, and estrange ourselves from the world, most that behold us think us not well in our wits. At this day true devotion goes for fancy, reverence for superstition, bowing for idolatry. Our Saviour's counsel is, "Judge not according to the appearance" (John vii. 24). For how easy is it to paint and present things as we please! Many times an evil eye makes an evil face, puts horror upon religion itself, and, where devotion shines out in the full beauty of holiness, draws a Pope or a devil. As "charity covers a multitude of sins" (James v. 20), so doth malice cover a multitude of virtues with the black mantle of vice. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) **What meaneth this?** (text and ver. 37).—*Two great questions:*—These questions are the outcome of two widely different but intimately associated states of experience—the one intellectual, the other moral. The first is an inquiry of the mind in the face of a problem which unassisted it cannot solve; the second is an inquisition of the soul in the presence of a danger from which unaided it cannot flee. An extraordinary event had taken place at which the perplexed beholders exclaimed "What meaneth this?" When the reply came it was found to involve such tremendous issues that they cried in despair "What shall we do?" I. WHAT MEANETH THIS? The inquiry was—1. Natural. The mind instinctively rebels against the unexplained. It was made for and is fed by knowledge. Just as the animal instincts are urged by thirst and hunger to search for food and drink, so the intellect is stimulated by a sense of void to inquire for the knowledge that will fill and satisfy it. These men were confronted by a mysterious fact, and were "troubled in mind" until it was accounted for. 2. Right. The liberty to inquire is one of the inalienable, inborn, and crown rights of humanity. That it may exercise this function, God has endowed it with the requisite faculties. The hunger of the mind for knowledge is a stamp of its Divine original, and a prophecy of its immortality. Inquiry makes all the difference between savagedom and civilisation, between weakness and strength. The feeble and superstitious shun it, and perish in darkness; the strong and wise welcome it and are rewarded by the light. We must carefully distinguish, however—(1) between aimless inquiry, *i.e.*, curiosity, and the search for true wisdom, and (2) between legitimate and illegitimate inquiry. "The secret things belong unto God." The present inquiry was in many respects legitimate and commendable. 3. Was addressed to the wrong persons with unsatisfactory results. Twice, we are told, they questioned one to another. They were prevented by a too hasty generalisation and by prejudice from asking those on whom these wonders were wrought what they meant. (1) It was enough for "strangers" to know that they were "Galileans," a name which embodied all that was ignorant and vile. (2) The "dwellers at Jerusalem" would recognise them as the fanatical followers of one who was set down as "a man gluttonous and a winebibber." These manifestations, therefore, were treated as the ravings of men excited with enthusiasm or with drink. But Galileans as they were, drunk or mad as they considered, there was the phenomenon. They could not account for it, but they felt it must be accounted for. And instead of asking those from whom only a reply could be obtained, they engaged in a fruitless inquiry among themselves. How like modern scepticism! 4. Suggests an important line of argument in favour of Christianity. There are certain facts equally inexplicable to the human mind to-day. We do not see cloven tongues, &c., but we are witnesses of events even more wonderful. (1) The conversion of infidels. Lord Lyttleton, Gilbert West, and some within personal knowledge. (2) The conversion of men immoral and profane. Bunyan and John Newton, &c. (3) The conversion of men of merely moral habits. John Wesley and William Wilberforce. Each case forces the question upon us. They are not isolated but common occurrences. How are they to be accounted for? On the score of weakness, wrought upon by terror or excitement, or on the score of ignorance? The known character of these men forbid these explanations. *These* wonders should set *us* inquiring, and the inquiry is as natural and proper in the one case as in the other, and furthermore by inquiring matters will be disclosed that seriously concern us all. II. WHAT

SHALL WE DO? Although not invited Peter undertook to reply to the first question. The general explanation was vers. 14–21; the particular application vers. 22–36. So with the modern facts adduced. Does this explanation satisfy? Is this explanation taken home? Then both will now as of old lead to the second question. This inquiry—1. Expressed a sense of utter helplessness. "What *shall* we do?" These men were convinced of the crime and mistake of a whole life, and of the human impossibility of rectification. 2. Was to the point, "What shall we *do?*" Not like the other question theoretical, but practical. They felt that they were in an unsatisfactory state, and that something must be *done*. What? 3. Was, like the first inquiry, answered. (1) Repent. Change your mind, forsake your sins. (2) Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; implying faith, union with the Church and public profession. Conclusion: Both inquiries were at length crowned with blessed results. Three thousand received forgiveness for the past, comfort for the present, hope for the future (vers. 38–47). (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 14–40. **But Peter standing up with the eleven.**—*The scene:*—Never was such an audience assembled as that before which this poor fisherman appeared: men of different nations, rapidly and earnestly speaking in their different tongues; one in Hebrew, mocking and saying, "These men are full of new wine"; another inquiring in Latin; another disputing in Greek; another wondering in Arabic; and an endless Babel beside expressing every variety of surprise, doubt, and curiosity. Amid such a scene the fisherman stands up; his voice strikes across the hum which prevails all down the street. He has no tongue of silver; for they say, "He is an unlearned and ignorant man." The rudeness of his Galilean speech still remains with him; yet, though "unlearned and ignorant" in their sense—as to polite learning—in a higher sense he was a scribe well instructed. On whatever other points the learned of Jerusalem might have found Peter at fault, in the sacred writings he was more thoroughly furnished than they; for though Christ took His apostles from among the poor, He left us no example for those who have not well learned the Bible, to attempt to teach it. Yet Peter had no tongue of silver, or of honey, no soothing, flattering speech, to allay the prejudices and to captivate the passions of the multitude. Nor had he a tongue of thunder; no outbursts of native eloquence distinguished his discourse. Indeed, some, if they had heard that discourse from ordinary lips, would not have hesitated to pronounce it dry—some of a class, too numerous, who do not like preachers who put them to the trouble of thinking, but enjoy only those who regale their fancy, or move their feelings, without requiring any labour of thought. Peter's sermon is no more than quoting passages from the Word of God, and reasoning upon them; yet, as in this strain he proceeds, the tongue of fire by degrees burns its way to the feelings of the multitude. The murmur gradually subsides; the mob becomes a congregation; the voice of the fisherman sweeps from end to end of that multitude, unbroken by a single sound; and, as the words rush on, they act like a stream of fire. Now, one coating of prejudice which covered the feelings is burned, and rends away: now, another and another: now the fire touches the inmost covering of prejudice, which lay close upon the heart, and it too gives way. Now, it touches the quick, and burns the very soul of the man! Presently, you might think that in that throng there was but one mind, that of the preacher, which had multiplied itself, had possessed itself of thousands of hearts, and thousands of frames, and was pouring its own thoughts through them all. At length, shame, and tears, and sobs overspread that whole assembly. Here, a head bows; there, starts a groan; yonder, rises a deep sigh; here, tears are falling; and some stern old Jew, who will neither bow nor weep, trembles with the effort to keep himself still. At length, from the depth of the crowd, the voice of the preacher is crossed by a cry, as if one was "mourning for his only son"; and it is answered by a cry, as if one was in "bitterness for his first-born." At this cry the whole multitude is carried away, and, forgetful of everything but the overwhelming feeling of the moment, they exclaim, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *St. Peter's first sermon:*—Here we have the report of a sermon preached within a few days of Christ's ascension, addressed to men many of whom knew Jesus Christ, all of whom had heard of His work, His life, and His death, and setting forth the apostolic estimate of Christ, His miracles, His teaching, His ascended condition and glory. We cannot realise, unless by an intellectual effort, the special worth of these apostolic reports contained in the Acts. Men are sometimes sceptical about

them asking, How did we get them at all? how were they handed down? This is, however, an easier question to answer than some think. If we take, for instance, this Pentecostal address alone, we know that St. Luke had many opportunities of personal communication with St. Peter. But there is another solution. The ancients made a great use of shorthand, and were quite well accustomed to take down spoken discourses, transmitting them thus to future ages. I. THE CONGREGATION assembled to listen to this first gospel discourse preached by a human agent WAS A NOTABLE AND REPRESENTATIVE ONE. They were all Jews or Jewish proselytes, showing how extremely wide, at the epoch of the Incarnation, was the dispersion of God's ancient people. The Divine seed fell upon no unploughed and unroken soil. Pure and noble ideas of worship and morality had been scattered broadcast throughout the world. Some years ago the judgment of Solomon was found depicted on the ceiling of a Pompeian house, witnessing to the spread of Scriptural knowledge through Jewish artists in the time of Tiberius and of Nero A race of missionaries, too, equipped for their work, was developed through the discipline of exile. The thousands who hung upon Peter's lips needed nothing but instruction in the faith of Jesus Christ, together with the baptism of the Spirit, and the finest, the most enthusiastic, and the most cosmopolitan of agencies lay ready to the Church's hand. While, again, the organisation of synagogues, which the exigencies of the dispersion had called into existence, was just the one suited to the various purposes of charity, worship, and teaching, which the Christian Church required. II. THE BRAVE, OUTSPOKEN TONE OF THIS SERMON evidences the power and influence of the Holy Spirit upon St. Peter's mind. Chrysostom notes the courageous tone of this address as a clear evidence of the truth of the resurrection. III. Again, the tone of St. Peter's sermon was remarkable because of its ENLARGED AND ENLIGHTENED SPIRITUALITY. It proved the Spirit's power in illuminating the human consciousness. St. Peter was rapidly gaining a true conception of the nature of the kingdom of God. He enunciates that conception in this sermon. He proclaims Christianity, in its catholic and universal aspect, when he quotes Joel as predicting the time when the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. IV. Let us look somewhat farther into the matter of this earliest Christian sermon, that we may learn THE APOSTOLIC VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME. What was the conception of Christ's life, work, and ascended state. which St. Peter presented to the astonished multitude? We must not expect, indeed, to find in this sermon a formulated and scientific system of Christian doctrine. St. Peter was as yet far too near the great events he declared, far too close to the superhuman personality of Christ, to co-ordinate his ideas and arrange his views. Yet his discourse contains all the great principles of catholic Christianity as opposed to that low view which would represent the earliest Christians as preaching the purely humanitarian scheme of modern unitarianism. St. Peter taught boldly the miraculous element of Christ's life, describing Him as "a man approved of God by mighty works," &c. Yet he did not dwell as much as we might have expected upon the miraculous side of Christ's ministry. And that for a very simple reason. The inhabitants of the East were so accustomed to the practices of magic that they simply classed the Christian missionaries with magicians. The apostles had, however, a more powerful argument in reserve. They preached a spiritual religion, a present peace with God, a present forgiveness of sins; they pointed forward to a future life of which even here below believers possess the earnest and pledge. V. Again, the sermon shows THE METHOD OF INTERPRETING THE PSALMS AND PROPHETS popular among the pious Jews of St. Peter's time. St. Peter's method of interpretation is identical with that of our Lord, of St. Paul, and of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He beholds in the Psalms hints and types of the profoundest doctrines of the Creed. He finds in the sixteenth Psalm a prophecy of the intermediate state of souls and of the resurrection of our Lord. (*G. T. Stokes. D.D.*) *St. Peter to the multitude*:—1. We are struck first with the calmness and concentrated force of this address. How difficult the task which St. Peter undertook! He had to speak on the spur of the moment, and to a crowd excited as only an Eastern crowd can be. It is not easy for the most practised orator to catch the ear, and hold the attention of a confused and hostile crowd. Shakespeare means us to recognise consummate skill in Mark Antony's handling of the Roman citizens at Cæsar's funeral; but he used flattering words, and he spoke in order to rouse the people against the assassins of Cæsar, not against themselves. St. Peter had to address the crowd on a theme which could not be welcome, and to stir them to self-condemnation. Yet we see no trace of hesitation or embarrassment. The speech

was as well conceived and compacted as if it had been premeditated for weeks. It soothed the tumult of unfriendly excitement, and stirred a tumult of convicted conscience. 2. An opening for the address was made by the rude jeering of some as to the source of that ardour which glowed in the faces and uttered itself in the words of the brethren. This charge was easily disposed of. It was a fair specimen of the capacity of carnal men to judge spiritual. (1) But St. Peter brushed it away with a sentence. It was enough that it was but the third hour of the day. What Jew would have drunk wine at all on such a morning, and before the morning sacrifice! And even if one or two could be so lost to shame, how absurd to accuse one hundred and twenty! Even the heathen reckoned it disreputable to drink strong wines in the morning. Cicero tells us indeed that the revelry at Antony's villa began at nine o'clock; but this was regarded as the foolish excess of debauchees. (2) But the complete refutation of it was the whole tone and tenor of the address, which was calm and well considered to a marvel. It showed that he and his companions were certainly "not filled with wine, wherein is excess." They were "filled with the Spirit." The apostle gave this as the true explanation, and proceeded at once to illustrate and support it by a felicitous quotation from one of the ancient prophets. He knew that in order to convince it was necessary to proceed on the common ground of Scripture. No one in that multitude, however prejudiced or impatient, could object to the citation from Joel. What St. Peter taught was the beginning of a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. It was the sign of a new era; the inauguration of a time, the length of which no man could define, but ending with a "great and terrible day of the Lord." Such was the exordium of St. Peter's speech. We can see the mockers silenced, some of them, let us hope, ashamed. The crowd ceased to sway and shout, listening to the calm, clear, strong statement which carried with it such a ring of certainty. 3. Then the speaker, pursuing his advantage, addressed himself to the main theme. The Spirit had come upon them, that they might preach Christ with power. The apostles never dragged in their great theme abruptly or awkwardly. Here St. Peter found a starting-point for preaching Jesus in the concluding words of the passage he had cited from Joel, "Whosoever should call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Who was the Lord, whose "great and notable day" should terminate the dispensation of the Spirit? St. Peter and his colleagues were prepared to say and prove that it was Jesus. And then for the first time the sin of the crucifixion was charged on the conscience of the Jews, the fulness of the gospel made known. Not a few of those present had joined in the cry, "Crucify Him!" That had not been, however, spontaneous; but had been stirred up by the rulers. And now that hot blood had coolod there must have been sore misgivings, which the apostle soon deepened. He reminded his hearers of "the mighty works and wonders and signs" by which God had accredited His prophet. He appealed to their own knowledge of those things; and their silence intimated that they could not dispute the fact. 4. Having gained the point, St. Peter proceeded to show who the prophet Jesus was—(1) By reference to His crucifixion. Was this fatal to a claim of Messiahship? Peter would once have said so; but now he stood there prepared to show that it formed an essential part of the proof that He was indeed the Christ. It was God's purpose, and was predicted in the ancient oracles. Jewish teachers had turned away from a suffering to an exclusively glorious Messiah. But none the less was He so predicted, and none the less was the fulfilment secured by God's "determinate counsel." Therefore was Jesus delivered into the hands of those who hated Him, who crucified Him by the hand of "men without the law"—the Roman soldiers. But it was really on the Jews and their children that the blood of the Just One lay—"Ye did crucify and slay." (2) Then, in a breath, the speaker announced a fact which gave a new turn to the whole history in the resurrection of the Crucified One. "Whom God raised up," &c. This, indeed, had been announced immediately after; but a counter story had been set afloat that the body had been stolen. These conflicting rumours had left the whole matter in a haze of doubt. But, before adducing witnesses, St. Peter referred again to the Old Testament. With a fine skill which the Holy Ghost had taught him, he prepared the Jews for receiving evidence, by showing that it was far from incredible, since it had been clearly foretold in one of the prophetic Psalms. Of course this did not prove that Jesus was that Christ. But, if it could be proved that Jesus had risen, His fulfilment of this oracle would go far to place it beyond doubt that He was the Messiah. And then the proof was adduced. Pointing to the Christian company, St. Peter said boldly, "This Jesus did God

raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." How could any fact of the kind have better attestation? (3) The argument had to be carried one step further; and the speaker, not knowing how long the crowd might continue to listen, proceeded at once to say that the risen Jesus was exalted by the right hand of God. On this point, too, St. Peter found support in the Old Testament—"Jehovah said to Adonai" (Psa. cx.). Every one knew who was meant by Jehovah: but who was Adonai? David could not have meant himself, for he was not his own Lord; far less could he have given such a title to any of the kings of the earth. The Spirit had inspired him to sing thus of the Lord Christ, and the proof of His ascension was before the eyes of the multitude. On the followers of Jesus, and on them only, had descended the new energy from heaven. 5. Thus the proof was completed at every point. There was no declamation but compact statement and close reasoning, leading up to the conclusion that God had made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ. And now the Christians beheld the crowd no longer mocking, but subdued, ashamed, conscience-stricken. Pricked in their hearts, many cried out, "What shall we do?" A welcome interruption! It showed St. Peter that he had struck the right chord, and that the Holy Spirit was speaking through him to the people. It enabled him to follow up his address with a very pointed application, and a very earnest appeal. They could not undo their own act, but God had done that already. This, however, they might and should do without delay: (1) "Repent."—It was not enough to be pricked in heart. Repentance is more than vexation with one's self, or even poignant sorrow. The apostle bade them reconsider the whole matter, and so change their minds regarding the Nazarene, and consequently their attitude. (2) "And be baptised every one of you unto the remission of sins."—This implied that they should believe, and confess their faith—for faith is always allied with repentance unto life, and is the instrument of forgiveness. Those who sincerely repented of their rejection of Jesus, must now believe in Him as the Christ; and in token thereof were called to join the company of His followers by openly receiving that baptism, which Christ had authorised them to administer. The consequence of this would be, that they would obtain not only pardon, but the Holy Ghost; for the promise was to their nation first, though also, God be praised, to the Gentiles—"as many as the Lord our God shall call." 6. Such was the speech of St. Peter; and the result was glorious. The fisher of men let down a good net into the deep, and caught a great draught—drew to the shore of faith and peace three thousand souls. He wrought no miracle to astonish and impress them. It was better that no sign or prodigy performed by the apostles should interfere with the direct and solemn application of truth to the conscience. He performed no ceremony. The notion of a Christianity that trusts to ceremonial and celebration was quite foreign to the apostolic conception. The speaker prevailed by the word of his testimony. The three thousand felt the power of the truth and yielded to it—the Spirit of the Lord disposing and enabling them so to do. Thus they repented, believed, were baptized, were pardoned, were quickened to newness of life. 7. In one day! It was the typical and significant day of our dispensation, a day which should be expected to repeat itself. True, there cannot be a second descent of the Holy Spirit, any more than there can be a second incarnation of the Son. But the Church should ask and look for a continuance of the mighty working of the Holy Ghost, and so for conversions by thousands. The Church wants no other means of increase than those by which it was founded—(1) the fire of the Holy Ghost, and (2) the testimony of anointed witnesses in sound speech that cannot be gainsaid, testifying to Jesus, the Saviour, that He is the Christ of Israel, and the Lord of all. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The first apostolic appeal to the multitude*:—The wondering, the questioning, and the mockery compelled the apostles to explain. So have young Christians often been constrained by what they saw or knew to attempt work for which they had little inclination. In making this appeal the apostles—I. HAD A LEADER. All had been speaking with tongues, and when that sign had answered its first purpose it was necessary for one to appeal to the intelligence of all. Peter now "stood up." 1. A man of confidence and quick decision. What a change since his denial. 2. A man who could command attention. For this end he "lifted up his voice." Having to plead for Christ and truth, he gladly used his best powers. 3. A man of knowledge; "be it known unto you." Some were guessing and misinterpreting, and honesty demanded a hearing for one who said he had certain knowledge. 4. A man of words. "Hearken to my words." He proceeded to prove what he had boldly affirmed. In this he is an example. He gave the sense of Scripture, and

did his work with sobriety and earnestness, and without reflections on the spirit of the crowd. II. HAD TO REBUT ERROR. There were misconceptions which had to be removed, and in doing this Peter did not mock the mockers, or show irritation. He calmly and kindly rooted out error that truth might take its place. Note that—1. Peter denied the false charge of drunkenness, but not as a malicious calumny, but as the actual opinion of intelligent men. "As ye suppose." In this way we may introduce an argument against the false doctrines of the day. But denial was not enough, so—2. He gave a clear reason—the hour was too early and too sacred for intoxication. Religious controversy ought to be based on undeniable facts. Yet this was not enough, so Peter—3. Interpreted the facts which the mockers had misinterpreted. It was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. Would that all preachers would meet the demand for facts by the positive truth of the Word of God. III. REALISED THAT THERE IS GIVEN TO BELIEVERS WHAT MEN'S NATURAL SUPPOSITIONS MISREPRESENT. It was natural for men to think that they could explain the strange signs; but the error was brought home in due time. How many to-day are like this multitude. They observe the profession and zeal of Christians, and hear about their experiences, but put it all down to superstition, weakness, or delusion. (*W. Hudson.*) *Preaching on the day of Pentecost*:—The restoration of Peter was fully recognised by his brethren. They felt bound to imitate Christ's conduct. He knew what underlay the weakness of His servant, and having received him to favour, sent him forth with fresh power to feed the lambs, &c. Whom God receives, let no man refuse. A tempted Christian may fall, but if he repent, his fellow Christians should receive him back. Let us contemplate—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH PETER PREACHED. 1. He preached upon the day of Pentecost. All the memories of God's goodness in seedtime, summer, and autumn, were then occupying the minds of the Hebrews. And Peter rose to appropriately publish God's glorious gospel of mercy. 2. His audience was peculiarly stimulating. Like Simeon they waited for the consolation of Israel. They had come from distant parts, and presented, in their diversified wants, a type of the world's necessities. Following the law they found the gospel. The law was a schoolmaster that brought them to Christ. An appreciative assembly has a stimulating effect upon any orator; and this audience, composed of devout inquirers, anxious to learn the whole truth about Christ, was sufficient to give the eloquence of true earnestness of Peter's preaching. 3. His position was that of spokesman for and defender of his brethren. 4. He preached under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost and with a tongue of fire. II. THE SERMON THAT PETER DELIVERED. We cannot say it was a great sermon, in the modern sense. There is no profound and far-reaching grasp of Divine truth; no display of mental and spiritual genius; no soaring flight of imagination; none of those marvellous revelations which are given in Isaiah and Ezekiel; none of those mighty sentences, lightning-like in their flash, thunder-like in their sound, that rolled from the mouth of Cicero or Demosthenes; and certainly none of that loud-coloured grandiloquence, which is so much admired by a sensation-loving world. The preaching of Peter, or Paul, or Christ, is usually destitute of these artistic qualities, and yet conspicuously fitted to serve its heavenly purpose. The characteristics of Peter's sermon are very distinct. 1. It was Scriptural. His subject was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He brings a text from Joel (chap. ii. 28-32), to show that the Spirit was promised, and should have been expected in some such way as that in which He had actually come. The use which Peter makes of his proof-text is simple, yet skilful; displays good powers of reasoning, and above all, reveals a clear knowledge of the Scriptures; and the finishing stroke brings out, most happily, the grand design of God in His wonderful promise, and its more wonderful fulfilment—"That whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." 2. Most faithful. The trumpet at his mouth gave no uncertain sound. He spake no smooth things, and minced no truth to suit fastidious tastes. Speaking, though he was, against the great men of his nation, and among an excited populace, who had a few weeks ago destroyed his Master, the earnest preacher was unconscious of timidity, and he did not hesitate to tell them plainly, that they had taken with wicked hands and crucified and slain the Lord's anointed. Harsh words, no doubt; but words like the hammer that breaks the rocky heart. And the man who would preach the Word of God with true faithfulness to his fellow-sinners must be prepared at any risk to expose and condemn every sort of wickedness. 3. Evangelical. It contained very prominently the three R's which Rowland Hill has made proverbial in our country: (1) Ruin by the fall. The apostle gave prominence to the ruinous effects of sin.

Jerusalem sinners had committed an awful crime in killing the Son of God. (2) Redemption through the death of Jesus. (3) Regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Repent, and be baptized," &c. III. THE SUCCESS OF PETER'S SERMON. We find it very difficult to realise the impression produced. There is nothing like it in modern times. People assemble in great crowds to hear the best of preachers, and go away in a state of stolid indifference. From week to week the whole preaching of the Christian sabbath, in every village and town, passes over without the smallest degree of spiritual excitement. We surely need more of that earnest, heaven-reaching prayer, that will bring the Spirit of God, like a rushing mighty wind, to fill our house and every heart with spiritual animation. This was the prime result of Pentecostal preaching. Thousands of sleeping souls were awakened. We have heard of men sailing towards the rapids of Niagara, all unconscious of danger, until they felt their boat quiver in the struggling water, and start away with alarming speed. In a moment they were filled with anxiety, and began to pull and cry with all their might for safety. So with Jerusalem sinners under the sermon of Pentecost. The whole crowd was shaking like fields of corn in the autumn wind, or tossing like troubled waves upon the stormy ocean. And with one loud cry that went ringing through the holy city, and up to the Holy God, they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Blessed question from a sinner's heart! And the question must have gone with a grateful thrill to the preacher's heart, as it surely went like a shout of triumph to the heart of Jesus on the throne. We have read somewhere of a Russian prince, coming in the course of hunting to a river's side, where a few peasants had brought to the bank a person apparently drowned. The prince had previously been reading some directions which had been issued by a humane society, about the mode of restoring animation to people who have been rescued from under water. He leaped from his horse, stripped off his flowing robes, gave instructions to the peasants how to assist, and commenced the work of rubbing the cold limbs of the unfortunate man with all his might. The work was continued by the prince for a whole hour, without any appearance of success. At length the lifeless-looking bosom began to heave and give signs of animation. On seeing which, the prince looked up, with beaming countenance, and exclaimed: "This is the happiest moment of my life." He had saved a man from death. Not less would it be a happy moment for the heart of Elisha, when he felt the flesh of the Shunamite's child waxing warm, and saw him open his eyes in life and happiness. But we can believe it was even a happier moment for the apostle of Christ on the day of Pentecost, when the people cried, "What shall we do?" and so gave signs of being raised from spiritual death to Christian vitality. No time was lost in telling the inquirers their path of duty. "Look to Jesus and be saved." (*J. Thompson, A.M.*) *A varied ministry blessed by the Holy Spirit*:—Mark the course of a river like the Thames; how it winds and twists according to its own sweet will. Yet there is a reason for every bend and curve: the geologist, studying the soil and marking the conformation of the rock, sees a reason why the river's bed diverges to the right or to the left; and so, though the Spirit of God blesses one preacher more than another, and the reason cannot be such that any man could congratulate himself upon his own goodness, yet there are certain things about Christian ministers which God blesses, and certain other things which hinder success. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The first sermon*:—1. The gospel is not a system of doctrines, a code of laws, still less a fabric of fancies or theories: it is a record of facts. It is this characteristic which makes it—(1) So satisfactory; we can plant the foot firmly upon it, for it is founded upon a rock. (2) So universal: not the religion of a few philosophers, capable of arguing out deep truths or of rising to lofty mysteries, but the religion of a world, as suitable to the simple as to the learned. 2. And as the gospel rests upon fact, so also it prompts to action. No sooner is the persecutor of the Church struck to the earth by the bright light of the Divine presence than we hear him asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And no sooner does the jailer at Philippi recognise in his prisoners the servants of the Most High God, than he asks the practical question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And no sooner does the astonished multitude hear from Peter's lips the explanation of the marvellous sign which has gathered them to listen, than they exclaim, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" What they heard was a narrative of facts: what they understood by it was a summons to action. God grant to us also a spirit of faith in gospel fact, a spirit of readiness for gospel action! 3. St. Peter sets us the example of repeating a text for his sermon. The Bible then was the Old Testa-

ment. Out of it Christian teachers were able to plead for God and to prove the gospel. In our thankfulness for the New Testament we must never learn to despise the Old. St. Peter's text was taken from Joel. That Book was probably composed 850 years before Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament were not instructed to reveal the long interval which should elapse between the two advents. The delay of the second coming was not even a revelation of the gospel. Each age was to expect it. The taunt, "Where is the promise of His coming?" was to have scope to operate, because no generation was to be made aware that the advent might not take place within its duration. And thus it is that Joel here speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit as a sign of the last days. The gospel age, however long it has continued or may continue, is the dispensation of the last times: after it comes none other, and itself is to be viewed as one whole, from the redemption which contained in itself not the promise only but the germ of all, until the coming of the very kingdom of heaven in power and great glory. "In the last days, saith God," &c. 4. After this quotation the discourse addresses itself pointedly to the audience. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. A Man, as you deemed Him, and as He was, has within these few weeks been put to death by you; the blood of that Man is at this moment upon your hands!" But was, then, that murder effectual? No; "God raised Him up because it was not possible that He should be holden of death." Not possible, by reason of His Divine nature. Not possible, because the voice of inspired prophecy had declared the contrary (Psa. xvi.). Could words like these have found their full accomplishment in their human author? The words which David thus spake, he spake as God's prophet. For himself the words could only express that assurance of a life beyond death, the hope of the saints. But in relation to Christ the words have a fuller meaning. His soul was recalled from its brief sojourn in Hades, before it had taken up its abode there as a recognised inmate. Of this revival from death we His apostles are the witnesses. Now, therefore, the events of this day become intelligible and natural. The risen Saviour hath fulfilled His promise. He promised to send—He hath sent—His Holy Spirit upon His disciples. And hereunto agree those other words of the Psalmist, "The Lord said unto my Lord," &c. That prophecy, like the former, points, not to David, but to David's Son; even to Him who is as truly the Lord of David in right of His Godhead, as He is the Son of David by reason of His manhood. "Therefore let every family of Israel know," &c. 5. Such was the discourse, to which a blessing was vouchsafed such as has been granted to no other. God works where and as and by whom He will; choosing oftentimes the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. We may read St. Peter's words unmoved. But not so did they to whom he addressed himself. Compunction was the first fruit of his preaching. Conscience now awoke. The sign before them was a sign of power: how could this be, save by the hand of God? But beyond this, it was a sign foretold by Jesus. All things had come to pass, even as He had said to them. Yes, all is now clear and consistent, though the inference is one of shame and condemnation for themselves. "When they heard, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter," &c. We will not answer the question now, rather let it press upon us as a question of deep moment for ourselves. Hearing of Christ caused—I. COMPUNCTION. What they heard was extremely simple. It was nothing more than what we have all heard ten thousand times. The words of Zechariah were fulfilled, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." They had pierced Him, and now the arrow of conviction pierced them. 1. I know not that any words of man could bring to our minds the same conviction of sin without the grace of God by His Holy Spirit. And yet we do read of such a crime as that of "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame." The Epistle to the Hebrews even says of such persons that "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." God grant, therefore, that, in its worst form, that of actual apostasy, none of us may yet have committed it! But there are approaches to that crime. There are those who make very light of the purposes for which Christ died, who contradict and go against the very object of that death; that He might put away sin; that He might redeem us from all iniquity. Is there no one here who ever helped to undo Christ's dying work in another person's soul? who ever tempted another person to commit sin; either by ridiculing his scruples, or by making the way to sin known to him, or by suggesting to his mind sinful images, or raising in his mind sinful desires? That man, whoever he is, has done worse things than even the Jews who gave Jesus to be crucified. Nothing, however cruel, done to the body, can be so heinous as the

least injury done to the soul. Alas! there are those now amongst us who have more cause to be "pricked in their heart" than ever had those men on the day of Pentecost. 2. And if not in this gravest sense, yet which of you has not cause to be sorrowful when he thinks of his Lord and his God? What is a day to you but one succession of slights done to your Saviour? How did it begin? Was not your morning prayer a poor, cold, reluctant service? And so the day went full of anything and everything rather than the thought and the love of Christ; full of the world, of vanity, of self. Then have not you, have not we all, cause to feel compunction, and to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? II. THIS COMPUNCTION MAY WELL WORK IN US ANXIETY; the conviction of sin the desire for direction. "What shall we do?" It is the want of this desire which make our meetings for worship too often cold and lifeless. What would preaching be, if it were in deed and in truth addressed to a number of human hearts, every one of which was inwardly asking, "What must I do? Preaching is a finger-post marking the traveller's way, and saying to wayfaring men, "This is the way; walk ye in it!" Let us come together, Sunday by Sunday, in this spirit; crying, "What shall I do?" and doubt not but your cry will be heard: if man should fail you, God Himself will be your preacher; your inward ear shall hear the voice of His Spirit, warning, counselling, comforting, according to your need. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A new style of religious ministry*:—Peter's sermon is something strikingly fresh in the history of preaching. Moses, Joshua, the prophets, the Baptist, Christ had preached, but this preaching was in many respects a new thing in the earth. 1. The occasion was new—the spiritual excitement of the disciples, produced by Divine influence and leading to strange thoughts. 2. The substance was new. It was not a prophetic or a present, but an historic Christ who had risen from the grave to the throne of the universe. No one had ever preached Christ in this form before. 3. The impression of the sermon was new. In analysing the discourse we find—I. A STATEMENT FOR REFUTING THE CHARGE OF THE SCOFFER. 1. The negative part includes three distinguishable points. (1) A categorical denial: "These men are *not* drunken." It is a libel. (2) An intimation of the groundlessness of the charge: "As ye suppose." It was a mere empty assumption. (3) A suggestion of high improbability: "Seeing it is but the third hour." 2. The positive part asserts that the phenomenon was the effect of Divine inspiration: "It shall come to pass," &c. The days of the Messiah are "the last days"; no other dispensation of mercy will succeed them. The passage teaches that these last days—(1) Would be connected with an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, not limited—(*a*) To any class. (*b*) To any sex. (*c*) To any age. (2) Would be connected with prodigious revolutions. The words "I will show wonders," &c., may probably be regarded as a highly poetic representation of what would follow, in government and churches, the working out of Divine ideas and spiritual influences (Isa. xiii. 10, xxxiv. 4). (3) Would be succeeded by a notable day—probably the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the Judgment. (4) Would be connected with a possibility of salvation to all who seek it. II. AN ARGUMENT FOR CONVICTING THE HEARTS OF THE HARDENED—an argument resolving itself into four facts. 1. That Jesus had wrought miracles among them while living. 2. That His crucifixion was only the working out of the Divine plan. So great is God that He can make His greatest enemies serve Him. 3. That His resurrection, which they could not deny, was a fact which accorded with their Scriptures. In this quotation from the Psalms Peter—(1) Assumes that the document which he quotes will be admitted by them as of Divine authority. (2) Takes for granted that the document refers to the resurrection of some one of distinguished excellence. (3) Reasons that the resurrection of the distinguished one predicted could not be David. (4) Concludes that the resurrection predicted must have referred to Christ. III. AN EXHORTATION TO THE AWAKENED. Peter directs them—1. To the only blessings that could meet their case: Divine pardon and Divine influence. 2 To the course of conduct essential to the attainment of those blessings. 3. To the precious promise of heaven to encourage them in the course of conduct required. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Elements of power in Peter's sermon*:—I. ADAPTATION TO CIRCUMSTANCES. There was a startling event: the sermon applied its lessons. It was spontaneous: Peter had no time to prepare a MS. or even notes. II. A SCRIPTURAL BASIS. The main points were proved by the Bible. Nature and experience are important, but do not carry conviction like the living Word. III. UNSPARING REBUKE OF SIN. Their guilt was so pressed home that they were "pricked in their hearts." IV. CHRIST AT THE BEGINNING, IN THE MIDDLE, AND AT THE END. V. THE PRESENCE OF THE

HOLY GHOST. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Peter's impulsiveness useful because wisely directed*:—Turn water into a proper receptacle, and its power is well-nigh overwhelming. Turn fire into its proper channel, and it proves an unparalleled power. And these elements thus controlled and brought into their legitimate course, will prove a blessing to man, but left uncurbed, though still a power, it is destructive in its character. Even so it is with impulsiveness, if sanctified by God's grace, and thus turned within the divinely appointed channel of redemption, it will prove a great blessing to an individual and those with whom he associates; but left uncurbed, it becomes a destructive power to happiness, peace, usefulness, and real success. (*W. H. Blake.*) *The power of the human voice*:—The true preacher has nothing to fear from any rival, for the human voice has no adequate substitute. Even a gospel written is not equal to a gospel spoken. The heart will not disdain any instrument of expression, but the instrument which it loves with all its love is the human voice—all instruments in one, and all inspired. (*J. Parker.*) *A sermon to prick the conscience*:—If a man is able to produce beautiful roses and delight his congregation with them Sunday after Sunday, by all means let him produce them: only let him take care to make his roses as God makes His—never a rose without a thorn, to prick the conscience of the hearer, and to spur him onward in his Divine life. Let the sermon please if possible; but, like Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, it ought to prick the consciences of men. (*J. C. Jones.*) *Plain preaching*:—In some churches the creed and commandments are painted so grand, in such fantastic characters, and with such perplexing convolutions, that a plain man cannot possibly make them out; and the truth is sometimes treated in the pulpit by the preacher as the painter has painted it—the language is so grand, and the rhetoric so gorgeous, that the people fail to realise the truth it may be supposed to embody. *Different styles of preaching*:—We are often told with great earnestness what is the best style for preaching; but the fact is, that what would be the very best style for one man would perhaps be the worst possible for another. In the most fervid declamation, the deepest principles may be stated and pressed home; in the calmest and most logical reasoning, powerful motives may be forced close upon the feelings; in discussing some general principle, precious portions of the text of Scripture may be elucidated; and in simple exposition, general principles may be effectively set forth. Let but the powers given to any man play with their full force, aided by all the stores of Divine knowledge which continuous acquisition from its fountain and its purest channels can obtain for him, and, the fire being present—the fire of the Spirit's power and influence—spiritual effects will result. The discussion about style amounts very much to a discussion whether the rifle, the carbine, the pistol, or the cannon, is the best weapon. Each is best in its place. The great point is, that every one shall use the weapon best suited to him, that he charge it well, and see that it is in a condition to strike fire. The criticisms which we often hear amount to this: We admit that such-an-one is a good exhortational preacher, or a good doctrinal preacher, or a good practical preacher, or a good expository preacher; but because he has not the qualities of another—qualities, perhaps, the very opposite of his own—we think lightly of him. That is, we admit that the carbine is a good carbine; but because it is not a rifle, we condemn it; and because the rifle is not a cannon, we condemn it. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*)

Vers. 17–21. **And it shall come to pass in the last days.**—*The gospel age*:—Four things taught here determine the gospel age. I. It is connected with an EXTRAORDINARY effusion of the Divine Spirit, "I will pour out My Spirit." II. It is connected with PRODIGIOUS REVOLUTIONS, "I will show wonders," &c. III. It is connected with an ULTIMATE CRISIS, "The notable day of the Lord." IV. It is connected with the possibility of a UNIVERSAL SALVATION, "Whosoever," &c. (*Homilist.*) *The pouring out of God's Spirit*:—In this highly interesting chapter we find an account—1. Of the Divine testimony borne to the truth of the gospel by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. 2. Of the different effects which this event produced on the different characters who witnessed it. In the devout it excited amazement, which led them to make serious inquiry respecting what was occurring (ver. 5–12). In the careless it excited contempt. But the wrath of man turned to the praise of God; for in the sequel we find an account—3. Of Peter's discourse in reply to those aspersions thus cast on the works of God by His wicked opposers. 1. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THESE WORDS. Here we may notice—1. The blessing promised: God's Spirit. "I will pour out of My Spirit,

saith God." By the Spirit here promised is meant both His miraculous and saving influence. 2. The manner of its dispensation; it will be poured out. This indicates the prerogative of God; that the influences of His Spirit are at His disposal. The pouring out of God's Spirit also indicates the special properties of the blessing promised. For instance, that it will be gratuitous, abundant, perpetual. 3. The extent of its influence upon all flesh. By all flesh is meant the whole human race, however distinguished, by descent, by circumstances, or by sex. 4. The season of its communication—the last days. By the last days are certainly meant the days in which we now live. 5. The certainty of its effusion. It shall come to pass, saith God, in the last days, "I will pour out of My Spirit." This event is certain—for it is predicted, and it will be fulfilled. It is promised, and will be performed. II. SOME APPLICATION OF THEM. 1. The strong claims which this subject has on our attention. It claims attention by the importance of the blessing which it exhibits. 2. The duties to which this subject urges us. It particularly urges us to apply for the saving influences of God's Spirit, as He requires us in His Word. By repentance (Acts ii. 38, 39); by faith in Christ (John vii. 39; Gal. iii. 14); and by earnest importunate prayer (Luke xi. 13). 3. The hopes with which this subject inspires us. On engaging in the duties to which our text urges us, it encourages us to hope—for the saving influence of God's Spirit in our own souls: for the general effusion of God's Spirit on the human race. (*Theological Sketch Book.*) *The sending of the Holy Ghost:* —The occasion of Peter's sermon was a lewd surmise touching the gift of tongues. As soon as God from heaven sent His fiery tongues upon His apostles, the devil from hell put his into the mouths of his apostles. Note—I. THE SPIRIT'S POURING. 1. The Spirit is here the author of prophecy. (1) Prophecy can come from no nature not rational; so the Spirit is *natura rationalis, i.e.*, a person. (2) Effusion is a proceeding of that which is poured; as inspiration, in the very body of the word "spirit." So the Spirit is a person proceeding. (3) No person, angel or spirit, can be poured out, least of all "upon all flesh." God only can be that: hence the Spirit is God. (4) But Peter saith, "*of* My spirit." The whole Spirit flesh could not hold, not even "all flesh"; and parts He hath none. The phrase, then, indicates the gifts and graces of the Spirit—beams of this light, streams of this pouring—here the gifts of prophecy and tongues. 2. The act: "pour." (1) The quality. That which is poured must be a liquid. But this seems improper to the occasion when we should have looked for fire. But Peter perhaps refers to their slander, "that it was nothing but new wine," a liquor; and certainly the metaphor was frequently used by Christ (John vii. 39; Acts i. 5). Further, this quality falls well within the graces here given—(*a*) Prophecy, likened by the great prophet (Deut. xxxii. 2) to the "dew falling upon the herbs." (*b*) Invocation, which is the pouring out of prayer, and of the very heart in prayer. (2) The quantity. Pouring is a sign of plenty. The Spirit had been given before but never with such a largess; sprinkled but not poured. (3) Pouring tells us that the Spirit came not of Himself, not till He was thus poured out; that so order might be kept in Him, and we by Him taught to keep it, *i.e.*, not to start out till we be sent, not to leak or run over, but stay till we be poured out. (4) Pouring is not as the running of a spout, but the voluntary act of a voluntary agent who has the vessel in his hand, and pours or not at will, and when he pours strikes not out the head of the vessel and let all go, but moderates his pouring. So here the Spirit dispenses. (*a*) To divers parties, (*b*) divers gifts, (*c*) in divers degrees. 3. On whom this pouring is. (1) Flesh, *i.e.*, men. But we are spirit as well as flesh. Yes, but to magnify His mercy the more that part is chosen which seems farthest removed (Isa. xl. 6; Rom. viii. 3). (2) *Upon* this flesh. But had not "into" been better? The Spirit is given both ways. At Christ's baptism the dove came "upon Him"; at His resurrection, "He breathed into" them. And so He has parted His sacraments—baptism is upon us, the Eucharist enters into us. But both come to one. If it be poured on it soaks in; if it be breathed in it works forth. But it is "upon" here—(*a*) That we may know that the graces of the Spirit are from without, and grow not from our flesh; and not only from without but "from above, from the Father of lights." (*b*) Because "upon" is the preposition proper to initiation into any new office, as in the case of anointing, investing with a robe, imposition of hands, &c. (*c*) To inure the apostles to the preposition, which so many hate. No "super," no superiority; "the right hands of fellowship," if you will, but no imposition of them; if "super" then "sub" follows; and no "sub" with those who submit neither head nor spirit to any. (3) Upon all flesh,

None is excluded—no sex, age, condition, nation. Yet not promiscuously; the text limits the promise to such as will be "My servants," *i.e.*, as will "believe and be baptized." This gives them the capacity, makes them vessels meet to receive the effusion, all which effectually exclude unbelievers and counterfeit Christians. II. THE END WHERETO. The Spirit is given to many ends, but one last—the salvation of mankind. Mankind was on the point to perish, and the Spirit was poured as a precious balm to recover and save it. 1. Means to that end. That men may be saved they are to call on the name of the Lord; that they may call to purpose they are to be called on to it, and directed in it by prophesying. (1) Prophecy stands first, for without that the people must needs perish (Prov. xxix. 18; Isa. xxxii. 14, 15). Not, however, in the sense of foretelling, but preaching (Rom. x. 13–15), as Peter prophesied here. But is this gift poured upon all flesh? No! It is not promised that all God's sons and servants shall prophesy; for there must be some to be prophesied to. "All flesh" may not be cut into tongues; some must be left for ears. Else a Cyclopean Church would grow upon us, where all were speakers and none hearers. (2) How then shall the Spirit be poured out upon all flesh? The spirit of prophecy is not all God's Spirit. If that be upon some, the spirit of grace and of supplication (Zech. xii. 10) is upon the rest. 2. The end itself—Salvation. (*Bp. Andrewes.*) *The dispensation of the Holy Ghost and its distinctive character*:—I. THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE DISPENSATION OF THE HOLY GHOST. By the dispensation of the Holy Ghost we mean a certain period during which the operations of the Holy Ghost are vouchsafed in a peculiar manner, as contrasted with other ages. Now, that such a dispensation was to be looked for is perfectly clear from the passage before us. We are distinctly told that there shall be a particular time, called the last days, when God will pour out the Spirit upon all flesh. The same truth is necessarily implied in the Lord's own promise, "It is expedient for you that I go away," &c. So again with the remarkable statement, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." Of this dispensation the Day of Pentecost was the commencement, for which there are two reasons. 1. The first is seen in the covenant transaction between the Father and the Son. The Father covenanting to give the Son a people, and all that was needful for their salvation, on condition that the Son fulfilled the law of works. The law of works was never abrogated; it pressed completely and eternally on man, or on man's representative. Christ was that representative, and the condition was absolute that He should fulfil the law, or salvation never could visit man's lost race. But salvation is dependent on the gift of the Spirit of God. The first effect of the great covenant work, therefore, must be the gift of the Spirit. Till that was accomplished, Christ had no claim upon the Father for the gift of the Spirit. Hence we read, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." 2. It relates to the work that the Holy Ghost himself had to do. "He shall glorify Me," said Jesus, "for He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Now, the things of Christ are the very things He accomplished on earth, whereby He purchased that Spirit. However the Holy Ghost might in olden times have given a sort of foretaste and instalment of what was to result from the finished work of Christ it was not until that work was accomplished, either that the Father was disposed to give, or Christ entitled to claim the Spirit, or that the Holy Spirit had the materials to work with, which He now employs for the enrichment of the soul, the introduction of it into union with Jesus, and its final exaltation into everlasting glory. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST. 1. In regard to the operations of the Holy Ghost during this dispensation generally, we have an illustration in our text, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." Another illustration is, "I will open rivers in dry places." Look at the pouring out of the streams from heaven when the rain comes down, how varied in its measure and its operation! Sometimes it comes down in a gentle, soft, tiny shower. Then again, the windows of heaven seemed to be opened, and we have a deluge. Or trace the course of a river through the valley. Now it is reduced to a small, silvery thread, and then it opens out, expands, overflows its banks, and irrigates the country all round. Then it narrows itself, and you have the silvery thread again; but the stream still runs on. The difference is in the measurement, degree, and expansion. Now what has been the fact in regard to the Holy Ghost under this dispensation? Has it not been precisely that which is illustrated by a river? Look back to the very commencement of it on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came down on the twelve, and three thousand were added to the Church. There the river was broad and expansive, the shower coming

down from heaven copiously. Shortly after that we have two thousand more. Then we read no more of this kind of thing—the river narrows. "Some believed the word spoken, and some believed not"; "some received the Holy Ghost, and some blasphemed." And so it went on for a considerable time, varying in degree and expanse, till the time of the Dark Ages. Then it ran like a little silvery thread; the mass of the world was overrun with darkness, and evil and superstition. Still, in some valleys and out-of-the-way places, we know that the work of the Spirit of God was progressing. The river never ceased to flow, however narrow it was. Thus it ran on for some centuries; and what followed? The great Reformation. The river then broke out into an immense expanse, overflowed the country all around, and irrigated the neighbourhood. Then again did the river condense, and then came the time of the Puritans; a mighty movement there was, and multitudes were gathered into the fold of Christ. Again did this genial shower apparently cease, or the river narrowed, and so it continued for some time. But once more did the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit break out in the days of Whitfield and Wesley, and Venn and Newton; there was a mighty outpouring of the grace of God, and multitudes were gathered into the Church. The river narrowed again, but it has gathered strength once more, and now we stand amazed at what the Lord is doing at home and abroad. 2. In regard to His particular operations as contrasted with those of former times; under this dispensation, and the legal dispensation. The dispensation of the law closed at the ascension. That lasted till Christ had fulfilled all its requirements when He said, "It is finished," and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and made an end of transgression. Now, this being the case, we should expect to find that the experience of holy men up to that very time was exceedingly distinct from that of holy men after that time. So Paul forcibly contrasts the Spirit of adoption with the spirit of bondage, and says, "But we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Now, did any one under the Old Testament ever cry "Abba, Father"? There is no question that they knew God as God, as Jehovah, as Almighty; but they did not know God as Father. Until humanity had been consecrated by the indwelling of Deity—until the Son of God had taken to His nature humanity, and invested that humanity with power, and made it a son with Himself—no other human being could become a son. The sonship was dependent upon Christ coming into the world; and when He came and accomplished His great work the Spirit of God then came, and the Spirit of adoption with it. Hence, again, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." Where did they have that assurance under the Old Testament? Hence, again, "The earnest of our inheritance"; after we have believed, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. Where was that the case under the Old Testament? Did it never strike you, in examining the experience of Old Testament saints, what terror and alarm they displayed in regard to death? There is another point, viz., that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is spoken of under this dispensation as a damning sin, because in proportion to the privileges is the responsibility and condemnation. A man sins against the Father, and blasphemes; there is the blood of Christ to blot it out: a man sins against the Son, and blasphemes; there is the work of the Holy Ghost to bring him to repentance: a man sins against the Holy Ghost, and he puts away the only power whereby the soul can be made penitent and brought back to Jesus. III. THE CLOSE OF THE DISPENSATION. At the end of the prophecy we have the close of the dispensation, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." These are the same signs that are spoken of by our Lord in Matthew xxiv. and Luke xxii. I do not mean to say that the Holy Ghost's operations will not continue through all eternity; they unquestionably will. All holiness in the creature for ever and ever must depend upon the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost. But as soon as the body of Jesus shall be quite complete, and the bride formed in her integrity, the work of the Holy Ghost will be done. But that runs on necessarily to the very advent of Christ, for we cannot exclude the glorification of the bodies of His people. Christ is glorified in His body, and every one of His mystical body must be like Him; but He changes them by the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. viii.). When that shall be done, that will be the end of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The Church will then be the monument of the eternal love of the Father, of the all-sufficient, perfect work of Jesus, and of the life-giving, sanctifying, and God-glorifying operations of the Holy Spirit. (*Capel Molyneux, B.A.*) *Features of the new dispensation.* I. THE PERIOD OF THE NEW DISPENSATION.—"In the last days," an expression which

covers an indefinite length of time. It also marks a "new departure" in the world's affairs. Up to this all had been preparatory, and the privileges of God's people only partially apprehended. It is to end in "the notable day of the Lord" which will wind up one portion of Christ's administration. II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF ITS PRIVILEGES. The Spirit is given to all mankind. This discloses the rationale of Christian missions. He is already where missionaries desire to be. This also discloses the grounds of confidence for those who seek the salvation of the young, for the Spirit is already graciously working before they can grasp the simplest truths of the gospel. The text proceeds to apply this principle particularly to men and women, old and young, and all classes of society are thus reached again, and the great privileges of the gospel placed within the reach of every class. This universality is a great rebuke to the vanity which sets up castes and distinctions. III. THE SPIRITUAL EQUALITY WHICH MARKS IT. The gift of the spirit is bestowed—1. On women as well as men. "Your sons and your daughters," &c. In heathenism woman has generally been oppressed. Under Judaism she had but partial privileges. Miriam, Deborah, &c., were exceptions which with other things seemed to indicate that woman was on her way to her true position. But under Christianity she attains equality with man (Gal. iii. 28). 2. On the young as well as the old. Many forms of heathenism have neglected the aged, and ill-treated parents advanced in years; Christianity regards them with veneration. Equally distinctive of Christianity is the practical recognition of the piety of childhood. 3. On servants as well as on masters. In Christianity there is no difference between bond and free. IV. IT IS A PERIOD OF WAITING. It is to continue till "the notable day of the Lord." During this period the Church waits for the Lord's coming, and for the final subjection of all. The end waited for will be marked by prodigies. There were wonders when Christ first came, there will be greater when He comes the second time. V. IT IS DISTINGUISHED BY A GLORIOUS EVANGEL (verse 21). Here we have—1. A recognition of man's great need. 2. An offer made on a condition which is natural. "Whosoever shall call." Sin causes misery, and misery a cry for help. 3. A sure promise of salvation. (*W. Hudson.*) *The promise kept*:—The events of this chapter are the fulfilment of the promise of our Saviour in Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4. But Peter recognises here the fulfilment of an earlier promise (ver. 16). The same Spirit which spake in the tongues of the apostles, and wrought effectually in the hearts of their hearers also spake by the prophets. The promise was thus fulfilled, but not exhausted; it was but the beginning of that work of preaching, and that mighty answering work in men's hearts of which the Holy Spirit was just as much the life and the secret as of the wonders of Pentecost. I. THE PROMISE AND ITS FULFILMENT. 1. "Promise," is one of the most distinguished features of this Book; so that if you want to contrast in the strongest way the Scriptures with the sacred books of other nations you might pitch upon this and say, "The Scriptures are the Book of God's promises to men." And "promise," you know also, is the main link of human life and society. "I promise to pay"—if the breath of suspicion could dim those words upon a thin strip of paper the whole fabric of commerce and social life would be shaken. The bride and the bridegroom stand side by side in God's house, and when the manly "I will" has been echoed by the softer but not less earnest and serious "I will" what has happened? Two lives which a few minutes ago were separated are now bound together, "until death do them part." The little child says, "Promise father, promise mother," and when the father or the mother has promised the little child soon learns to know that it has a hold that cannot be broken. Well, then, when we say that the Bible is the Book of God's promises, we mean that God has come down into the circle of human duty; that you can go and present a cheque payable at demand on the treasury of infinite mercy and almighty power; that the child of God can go to God and say, "My Father, Thou hast promised, now, therefore, do as Thou hast said." There is a bond between the Eternal God and the feeblest soul that trusts Him, stronger than the bond which holds our world to its central sun. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away. 2. We cannot fix the exact date of this promise of Joel; but we gather from the fact that Amos, in the reign of King Uzziah, begins by a quotation from Joel that Joel was an older prophet. The substance of his prophecy had been, in a sense, anticipated perhaps eight hundred years or more by Moses, when he said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon them"; but to Joel was given the high honour of announcing that so it should be, that God was going to answer that prayer,

A generation later we find the promise beautifully and bountifully enlarged by Isaiah (xliv. 3-5); but to Joel seems to have been given this signal honour to be the first to sound out sweet and clear this note of promise. Perhaps eight hundred years passed away, and that promise stood there upon the page in what was becoming a dead language, unfulfilled and unexplained—as long as from the days of William the Conqueror to the days of Queen Victoria—and the unbeliever could point to it and say, "What do you make of that? What is the value of a promise that is never accomplished, a prophecy that the centuries bring no nearer to fulfilment?" Generations came and went, and prophets greater than Joel rose up, fulfilled their course, and departed. Great religious revolutions, reforms, revivals took place, then they were followed by fresh outbursts of irreligion, fresh victories of unbelief and profligacy, and atheism. Alas! the whole structure seems to have broken down. But all this meant no delay, no unfaithfulness. In the fulness of time Peter was able to point to this glorious fulfilment, and to say, "Jesus, whom you have crucified, being by the right hand of God exalted, hath shed forth this which you now see and hear—'this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.'" 3. And so, across the long ages God reaches out the closed hand of promise, filled with sealed-up blessings to keep faith from fainting, to encourage patience and hope. Then, just at the appointed moment, when the dial points, when the hour of His purpose strikes, He opens it, and gives a fresh starting point for new faith. Unfulfilled prophecy Peter compares to a light shining in a dark place, a light that tries our eyes almost as much as it enlightens them—we pore in vain over the dimly-illuminated truth. The fulfilled word the same apostle compares to the sunrise, the dawn of the day, and the rising of the day-star. Time and experience at the appointed hour set their seal to the declaration that God is true. 4. Let me say a word to my younger friends. Let me urge you to give great attention to this practical evidence of the truth and inspiration of God's Word, which you may find in the actual fulfilment of God's promises. A distinct prediction pointing for hundreds of years to an event that could not be foreseen by mere human reasoning, and then the fulfilment in God's providence of that prediction betokens a power above and behind and within man. Now is not this perfectly plain, that the Old Testament Scriptures did claim to pledge God to these two things—viz., the sending of a Saviour in whom all nations should be blessed, and the bestowment upon all flesh of His Holy Spirit? The New Testament is just the record of the fulfilment of those two promises; and so is the whole history of the Church. II. GOD IS FULFILLING HIS PROMISE TO-DAY. Not that we see such proofs as we here read of; our senses are not amazed with the wonders like those of the days of Pentecost; but do not forget that one soul really converted to God is just as much the work of the Holy Spirit as one thousand or three thousand. To pray the prayer of faith; to understand God's truth; to have in reality the temper of humility, penitence, and unreserved consecration; these are just as truly the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the tongues of fire and all the miracles that followed. I am sometimes afraid that we may offer prayers for the fulfilment of this very promise, which are rather the prayers of unbelief than the prayers of faith. Do we not err often in our expectations of the limits in which God will fulfil His promise? His promise is so wide, taking in the whole Church and all mankind; it is so far-reaching, running down the whole channel of human history, that we have no business to expect it to be exhausted in our time, in our nation, in our parish; and yet if it be not, do not we sometimes pray as if God were forgetting His promise, or were unfaithful to it? Thus we dishonour God and discourage our brethren and ourselves. I do not for a moment think we ought to shut our eyes to any of the facts that are around us, even the darkest, or our ears to the bitter cry that may rise from the great city, or from the lonely village; but do not let us shut our eyes, either, to what God is doing amongst us. If we look only at the tendencies of human nature, only at the set and tide and drift of events, it is pretty easy to make a dark forecast, easy to say that the signs of the times denote the prevalence and triumph of those masterly evils, superstition, atheism, anarchy—that is, if you leave out of sight God's promise and God's Spirit. But that is just what you must not do, and have no right to do. We are crying with the prophet, "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, and that the mountains would flow down at Thy presence." But when He only touches the hills and they smoke—that is the finger of God. Perhaps we are looking for the earthquake, the fire, the tempest; but we fail, it may be, to hear the "still, small voice"; yet that is the voice of God's Spirit. Whence comes the gentle, quiet,

but yet mighty and irresistible outburst and continual growth of missionary zeal and missionary labour and missionary sacrifice, which is carrying the gospel from year to year more completely into the most central fortresses of heathenism? Zeal and labour, which have made the Bible already a known book in all the leading languages of the world—what is this? Is not this the very breath and presence of God's Spirit? Then, in what we call the outside world, there are great waves of sympathy with this Christian work; and whence come they but from the contagion of Christian love and faith and hope, the very breath of God's Spirit? III. GOD WILL FULFIL HIS PROMISE. "The last days" are a wide margin. It is not for us to measure how far that season of fulfilment may stretch out, or grow weary or unbelieving because of its stretching out longer than we expect. When that morning broke over the waters of Galilee, and the disciples looked weary and sadly at one another and at their dripping and empty nets, supposing one had said to them, "Friends, in less than half-an-hour that empty net will be so full that you won't be able to draw it on board"—why, they would have said, "If God would send an angel from heaven to be our fisherman perhaps it might be so." But who is that walking on the shore? A stranger? Hark! He speaks. "Cast on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." If it had not been for the night of toil, do you think there would have been any morning of joy? No. It is not for us, to say how long the night of toil is to be. We serve the same Master, our faith rests upon the same promise; we have the same work, and we are responsible for toil, for faithfulness, for prayer, for patience, not for results; the results are God's. Can you say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost?" Why, then, fear not, doubt not. Let us bring to God's treasury not the mere tithes of corn and wine and gold and silver, but that which will make all these seem just little gifts thrown in by the way—the tithes, the first-fruits of consecrated hearts, and hallowed lives, and affections aglow with the love of Christ, and then we may prove Him and see if He will not pour out a blessing so that there should not be room to contain. (*E. R. Conder, D.D.*) *The possibilities of life*:—There are two gifts or faculties which every one who would be a power among their fellows must do their utmost to cultivate. The first is the power of insight into the circumstances of their own time and place. The second is the power of foresight. After we have convinced ourselves of *how* and *what* things are, we shall then try to see what they may become; how and to what extent they may be changed for the better. To see the world as it is, is only to convince ourselves that it is very different from what it ought to be. To begin with ourselves. No true Christian can be contented with his present spiritual condition. Like St. Paul, the more we know of ourselves the more reason shall we have to confess that "we have not already attained, neither are already made perfect." And if the fact is true of ourselves, it is no less true of the men and things around us. We learn that the lives and circumstances of others stand in need of more or less improvement. Let us notice how the text brings these thoughts before us. The apostles had been very intimate with Jesus. The standard of life inculcated by Him was an extremely lofty one; to have had that standard constantly before them must have shown the disciples how terribly everything around them fell short of it. But merely to see this great gulf, this awful difference, might lead them to despair. How was the chasm to be bridged? How was the actual to be made the ideal? It will help us to answer this question if we remember that St. Peter uttered the words of the text on the very day on which God poured out upon the apostles the great gift of His Holy Spirit. They had now received the promised gift, a new energy, a new life, the spirit of truth, the spirit of love. The spirit of truth put everything in its true light. They saw how dark, how sad, how imperfect, how sin-stained was life and conduct. But the spirit of love came with the spirit of truth, and impelled them at once to try to rectify what needed alteration. Notice, the method they employed was the same as that of their Master—first to teach, and then to put their teaching into practice. And with what sort of reception were they met? With very much the same kind that has generally fallen to the lot of the reformer. Men listened to them, and then derided them. They were regarded as idle visionaries, as wild and foolish dreamers. St. Peter steps forward as the apologist of his brethren. The present was but witnessing the fulfilment of an ancient Jewish prophet's prediction. Drunk the apostles were not—*mere* dreamers, *mere* visionaries they were not. But they had dreamt a dream, and seen a vision. They saw things as they were, and as they might be. They saw that to the great majority of their fellow countrymen religion was little better than a hollow mockery; something almost wholly external, and having little connection with their lives and

conduct. This they saw, but they also saw a vision and dreamt a dream of a better day, of a brighter, holier, and happier, future, of a more real religious tone, of a higher and nobler morality. They were not *mere* dreamers, *mere* visionaries—the dream and the vision were useful only as revelations of an ideal which they must endeavour to realise. To receive a vision of better things was only a call to turn the vision into a reality. The gift of insight issued in the call to repentance; the gift of foresight was the summons to work. It may have been the lot of some of us to have seen a vision made a reality; we may even have had the blessing and privilege to have been in some small degree instrumental in its realisation. We may have known one who was formerly intemperate, now living a sober life; one formerly impure, now feeling from experience the truth of the words, "Blessed"—that is, happy—"are the pure in heart"; one formerly dishonest, now getting his or her living by hard and honest labour, and able to look the world in the face. Yet if some little has been done, the unaccomplished is almost beyond measure. We must try to realise what humanity was meant to be, what Jesus would have it to be. The words of the old prophet can never be too often in our ears, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." To have realised that that awful threat was becoming verily the promise of a blessing, is in itself to have seen a vision. Man is indeed precious; each human soul, each human heart and character is infinitely precious in God's sight, for the Lord Jesus died to save it. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) **Your young men shall see visions.**—*A young man's vision* (missionary sermon):—1. Many visions have led to the most disastrous results. When Napoleon had a vision of a universal monarchy over which he should preside, he drenched the lands in blood. Many visions have been wretchedly delusive. Men have dreamed of finding the fairy pleasure in the dark forest of sin. Many dreams have been enervating. Many pass all their days building castles in the air. With fine capacities they have drivelled away existence: as their theory of life was born of smoke, so the result of their lives has been a cloud. 2. For all this, good and grand visions are not unknown which came from the excellent glory, and which, when young or old men have seen them, have filled them with wisdom, and grace, and holiness. Such visions are given to men whose eyes have been illumined by the Holy Spirit. 3. All Divine things, when they first come to men from the Lord, are as visions, because man is so little prepared to believe God's thoughts and ways, that he cannot think them to be real. They appear to us to be too great, too good to be real. It must be so while Jehovah's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. We must take care that we do not neglect heavenly monitions through fear of being considered visionary; we must not be staggered even by the dread of being styled fanatical, for to stifle a thought from God is no mean sin. 4. How much of good in this world would have been lost if good men had quenched the first half-fashioned thoughts which have flitted before them. Suppose Luther had taken the advice of his teacher when he said to him, "Go thy way, silly monk! and pray God, and if it be His will He will reform the abuses of this Church, but what hast thou to do with it"? And George Fox, that most eminent of dreamers, where had been all the testimonies for a spiritual religion, all the holy influences for benevolence, for peace, for anti-slavery, which have streamed upon this world through the agency of the Society of Friends, if the wild Quaker had been content to let his impressions come and go and be forgotten? These things, which nowadays are ordinary Christian doctrines, were considered in his day to be but the prattle of fanatics; even as the reforms which some of us shall live to see are denounced as revolutionary, or ridiculed as Utopian. 5. Many suggestions which come from God to men, are not so much visions to them as they are to the outside world. And need we wonder at this? Why, men of science and art have to endure the same ordeal. Stephenson declares that he will make a machine which will run without horse-power, at the rate of twelve miles an hour—and how the Tory benches of the House of Commons roared at the man as a born fool! 6. I, too, have seen a vision. I have seen missionary spirit in England, awakened, and revived. I have seen—the wish was father to the sight—the ardour of our first missionary days return. I. LET US JUSTIFY OUR VISION. That which we have dreamed of is—1. Evidently needed. There is a general flagging in missionary interest; and albeit that the funds may not much have fallen off, yet the annual recurrence of a debt, together with other matters, goes to show that missionary zeal needs rekindling. This results partly from the fact that the novelty of the thing has

gone off, and partly because we have had few very startling incidents of late to evoke a display of enthusiasm. That the missionary fire exists is certain, for the heart of the Church is alive; but it is slumbering, somehow. If there be any one point in which the Christian Church ought to keep its fervour at a white heat, it is concerning missions. How can we expect in such an enterprise that we shall ever succeed if any of our strength be left unused? Depend upon it, that the flagging of zeal at home acts like a canker abroad, and when the heart of Christianity in England does not throb vigorously, every single limb of the missionary body feels the decline. 2. It is very possible that it may be realised. It is not a thing too hard to look for. It is far harder surely to establish missions than to revive them. If we will but inquire into the causes of decline we shall not find them, I think, to be very deep, nor to be difficult of remedy. Lovingly correcting errors, carefully removing excrescences, and boldly advancing, the stone shall be rolled away from the sepulchre before we reach it, or if not, in God's name, and by His strength, we will roll it away ourselves. 3. It is very probable; for so it always has been. If ever God's Church has declined for a little while, unexpectedly there has been yielded a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. He is great at surprises: His best wine last amazes us all. When the devil is most secure upon his throne, then God springs a mine, and blows his empire into atoms. 4. It is solemnly required of us. What are our personal obligations to the Crucified? Did our Saviour slumber in His life-work? Was He tardy in His service for our redemption? Then might we grow lax. But He claims of us, according to our measure, the same steadfastness of resolve, and perseverance of purpose, and sacrifice of self. II. LET US PROCEED TO ELABORATE THE VISION. My dream seemed to take this shape. 1. In order that missionary work should be reformed, revived, and carried on with energy and with hope of success, it seemed necessary that especially among our young members there should be a revival of intense and earnest prayer, and anxious sympathy with the missionary work. The power of prayer can never be overrated. They who cannot serve God by preaching, need not regret it if they can be mighty in prayer. The true strength of the Church lies there. If a man can but pray, he can do anything. He that knows how to overcome the Lord in prayer, has heaven and earth at his disposal. 2. Next, if our young men who see visions will follow up their prayers with practical effort, then we shall see in our Churches a larger and more efficient staff of collectors and contributors. We should then find men who would give of their substance as a matter of principle, so that the kingdom of Christ should never have an empty exchequer. 3. Up till now my dream has been reasonable, you will say. I will now be more visionary. If we were all praying for missions, and all giving for their support, it might be very well asked of us, "What do ye more than others?" for what Romanist is there who is not zealous for the spread of his religion? What heathen is there who does not give quite as much as any of us give, ay, and a great deal more than we give, to his superstitions? But, supposing next to this, that there should be a number of young men who have been trained in the same sanctuary, nurtured in the same Church, who should meet together and say to one another, "Now, we are in business, and God is prospering us, but still we trust we are never going to permit ourselves to be swallowed up in a mere worldly way of living; now, what ought we to do for missions?" And suppose the inquiry should be put, "Is there one amongst us who could devote himself to go and teach the heathen for us? As we, most of us, may not have the ability, or do not feel called to the work, is there one out of twelve of us young men who feels called to go?" Let us make it a matter of prayer, and when the Holy Ghost saith, "Separate So-and-So to the work," then we, the other eleven who remain, will say to him, "Now, brother, you cannot stop at home to make your fortune; you are now giving yourself up to a very arduous enterprise, and we will support you; you go down into the pit, we will hold the rope, and bear the expense among ourselves." I wish we had such godly clubs as these. Why, on such a plan as that, I should think, they would give a hundred times as much as ever they are likely to give to an impersonal society, or to a man whose name they only know, but whose face they never saw. 4. Further, I have dreamed also that there would spring up in our Churches a very large number of young men who would count it to be the very highest ambition to give themselves up to the work of Jesus Christ abroad, and who will say, "The missionary society is in debt, and cannot take us; very well, send me out, and let me exercise my faith in God, only having this for my comfort, that you will stand at my back and give me what you can, while I will

only draw upon you for what I cannot get for myself." I set Paul before you, young men. He was a tent-maker, and he earned his own living. Are there no occupations in these days by which a man may earn his living, and yet preach the gospel? Are there not to be found physicians who, in China and in India, would not only procure a subsistence, but much more, and might proclaim the gospel at the same time? But are there no other occupations? I find men going out to India by scores, to make their fortunes, and ruin their constitutions. Have we no young men and women who will preach the gospel, intending to use their commercial pursuits as a means of introduction and support? III. THE REALISATION OF THIS VISION? It must be—1. By each individual's own personal piety mounting to the very highest degree of elevation. If holy work be a mere diversion for your leisure moments, you will do nothing; you must make a solemn occupation of it. When the Christian Church glows in this fashion, it will swell with an intense heat like a volcano, whose tremendous furnaces cannot be contained within itself, but its sides begin to move and bulge, and then after a rumbling and a heaving, a mighty sheet of fire shoots right up to heaven, and afterwards streams of flaming lava run from its red lips down, burning their way along the plain beneath. Oh! to get such a fire for God's cause into the heart of the Christian Church, till she began to heave and throb with unquenchable emotion, and then a mighty sheet of the fire-prayer should go up towards heaven, and afterwards the burning lava of her all-conquering zeal should flow over all lands. 2. By young men and young women feeding the flame of their zeal with greater information as to the condition of the world in reference to our mission-work. You may not have time to get through it all, but if you read some of it, I think you will feel a great accession to your zeal. 3. By keeping yourselves right in this matter by constant, energetic efforts in connection with works at home. Those who do not serve God at home, are of no use anywhere. It is all very well to talk about what you would do if you could speak to the Hindoos. You will be of no use whatever in Calcutta, unless you are of use in Poplar or Bermondsey. The human mind is the same everywhere. See what you can do for Jesus Christ in the shop, and in that little Bible-class of which you are a member. Rest assured that no missionary ardour really burns in the breast of that man who does not love the souls of those who live in the same house and neighbourhood. 4. But oh! do make sure that you are saved yourselves. Do make sure that you yourselves know the Christ whom you profess to teach. That missionary-box, what is it but an infamous sham if you put into it your offering, but withhold your heart? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The visionary aspect of Christianity (a sermon to young men):—There are two periods in human life to which dreams and visions belong—dreams and visions, at least, of any persistence and depth. Young men naturally see visions, and old men dream dreams. This visionary power is not to be neglected or thought lightly of. It is a beneficent power. It feeds practical efficiency. All the great enterprises we have were once visions in the brain of some man or men. It is the mighty dreamers who have become the great doers. In the listless, heavy eye of Chalmers there often seemed no power of volition. He was brooding over his visions; yet for all this brooding—nay, largely by virtue of it—he moved men, and swayed his time as no contemporary Scotchman did. It is the enthusiasm begotten in the region of visions that ultimately moves the machinery of the world. I. VISIONS THAT DO NOT COME FROM CHRIST. 1. There are visions that sense brings us, very bright and seductive at times. They are often dangerous, but we do not know that they are so, because we love the strong colouring in which they are put before us. The force of youthful life tends to the outward and sensible, and the sensible sometimes lowers into the sensual. As you love your souls, as you love purity, as you fear God and your conscience, put these dreams of the flesh away from you in whatsoever form they come. 2. Mammon again paints visions for a young man, and, of course, with unusual clearness and persistence in a commercial community like this of ours. It is foolish to speak disparagingly of money. It is a power which, wisely wielded, has almost no limits in its beneficence. But it is a very dangerous thing. Therefore, if you feel tempted to dream of bank-notes and shares and big speculations, to make these your visions, I beseech you for the sake of your higher nature to beware. They say that money nowadays can command anything, can accomplish wonders. It is quite true; but the most wonderful thing that it does is to metallise a human soul. 3. Closely allied to the dreams which Mammon weaves for us are the visions of success in life. But they are distinct. There are men who are not avaricious, and yet are ambitious; and a young man insensible for the most part to bank-notes

may long for distinction. He has brain force and nerve force, which give him a good hope of rising. Granting that such an ambition can be honourably pursued, is it fit to be our vision? What is the typical successful man generally like—tender, scrupulous, sympathetic? Is he true, large-hearted? I don't think so. 4. Many of us may have had visions of intellectual eminence, and these are sometimes very attractive. We dream of laying in stores of information, of mastering this subject or that. Or, it may be, we have become absorbed in social questions, in politics, in art. We feel our faculties expanding, and delight in their exercise. Well, those visions are high and fair, but again, are they the best? Have they power to lift our lives, to fill them to the very end? Do they bring light and healing in trouble or sorrow? 5. Then there are visions of domestic happiness. Such dreams rise before our minds if we have known what love and truth are. But is this sufficient? Are these best things of earth good enough for us? They are legitimate, of course, but not lasting. II. THE INSPIRED VISIONS. 1. Christ brings visions of purity. Until the world has blinded a young man's eyes so that he cannot see, there are now and then flitting before him images of unearthly purity. An unflecked garment in which to clothe the soul he feels is the most princely possession. Had he only singleness of eye, a nature true at the core, a mirror of thought from which the blots of foul fancy were all away, his heart would be strong. Christ comes to tell him that this purity which he sees glimpses of is no mere fancy, but a celestial vision which has had an embodiment on earth, one which may have it again. 2. Christ brings visions of strength and heroism. Nothing is fairer to dream of than the power to get out of ourselves and rise to higher ranges of courage and resolve. Christ brings before us a vision of exalted manhood, a dream of daring and doing what average men cannot do. Heroism is that quality of the soul by virtue of which a man can carry the movements of his thought and will away from the touch of mean, self-degrading motives, so that people cannot measure his actions by the standard of every-day life—by virtue of which a man can stand alone against the world, if need be, as Christ Himself stood alone against the world. This is a faculty Christ Himself gives to men. 3. But our better dreams have more than strength and manhood in them; they have self-conquest, self-denial. Amid the vulgar contentment and self-seeking of society, we sometimes envy a life like that of Livingstone, given for Africa and the slaves. But what will give to the faint outline of these dreams substance and shape? The approach of Christ will. He makes cross-bearing and the strain of the higher service an easy thing, so that those inspired by Him think it unnatural when they have not some difficulties for His sake to meet, some cross for His sake to bear. 4. Another vision that sometimes visits a young man is the vision of usefulness—the thought of exerting a wide, beneficent influence. When we do good we find we are blessed. But no man can rightly do good until Christ has taught him. Christ gives us ends, methods, power. 5. We dream of the future—not a future here merely, by beyond, elsewhere. We refuse to stop short at the barriers earth and time erect. Our visions project themselves past these. Such visions often get very faint as men grow older, and sometimes die away altogether. Thoughts that once soared towards the setting sun come down to earth like a bird grown weary of the wing. It is Christ alone who gives permanence to such visions. We get from Him sudden flashes of the glory of the new Jerusalem. He brings immortality to light in our hearts. (*J. F. Ewing, M.A.*)

Visions realised:—The vision of a pure England, of a temperate England, of an England without grinding poverty, heartrending distress, and free from crimes, the very mention of which make one's blood run cold, is a noble vision. Need it remain altogether a vision? Was the vision of the abolition of slavery in North America allowed to remain a vision? Was the vision of a system of universal education for our own nation allowed to remain a vision? Think again of the visions of the reformer, the scientist, the engineer—how many of these visions have been realised! Faith, energy, patience, and perseverance have wrought wonders. Why should not *our* visions also be realised? What is required is that we claim for ourselves a fuller measure of God's Holy Spirit—the spirit of love, hope, self-sacrifice, whereby we shall attain the substance of the things we hope for, and shall witness, possess, and enjoy the evidence of things as yet unseen by the natural man, but awaiting in all their glory to be revealed among us. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*)

Ver. 20.—**The sun shall be turned into darkness.**—*Downfall of Christianity*:—Solar eclipse is here prophesied to take place about the time of the destruction of

ancient Jerusalem. Josephus says that the prophecy was literally fulfilled. Christianity is the sun of our time, and men have tried, with the vapours of scepticism and the smoke of blasphemy, to turn this sun into darkness. Suppose the archangels of malice and horror should be allowed to extinguish and destroy the sun in the natural heavens. They would take the oceans from other worlds and pour them on this luminary, and the waters go hissing down among the ravines and the caverns, and there is explosion after explosion until there are only a few peaks of fire left in the sun, and these are cooling down and going out until the vast continents of flame are reduced to a small acreage of fire, and that whitens and cools off until there are only a few coals left, and these are whitening and going out until there is not a spark left in all the mountains and valleys and chasms of ashes. An extinguished sun. A dead sun. Let all worlds wail at the stupendous obsequies. Of course, this withdrawal of the solar light and heat throws our earth into a universal chill, and the tropics become the temperate, and the temperate becomes the arctic, and there are frozen rivers, lakes, and oceans. From the arctic and antarctic regions the inhabitants gather in towards the centre and find the equator as the poles. The slain forests are piled up into great bonfires, and around them gather the shivering villages and cities. The wealth of the coal mines is hastily poured into the furnaces and stirred into rage of combustion, but soon the bonfires begin to lower and the furnaces begin to go out, and the natives begin to die. The great volcanoes cease to smoke, and the ice of hailstorms remains unmelted in their craters. All the flowers have breathed their last breath. Child frosted and dead in the cradle. Octogenarian frosted and dead at the hearth. Workman with frozen hands at the hammer or frozen foot on the shuttle. Winter from sea to sea. The earth an ice-floe, grinding against other ice-floes. The archangels of malice and horror have done their work, and now they may take their thrones of glacier and look down upon the ruin they have wrought. What the destruction of the sun in the natural heavens would be to our physical earth, the destruction of Christianity would be to the moral world. The sun turned into darkness. Infidelity in our time is considered a great joke. I propose to take infidelity out of the realm of jocularity into one of tragedy, and show you what these men, if they are successful, will accomplish. It will be—I. THE COMPLETE AND UNUTTERABLE DEGRADATION OF WOMANHOOD. In all communities where Christianity has been dominant, woman's condition has been ameliorated and improved, and she is honoured in a thousand things, and every gentleman takes off his hat before her. You know that while woman may suffer injustices, she has more of her rights in Christendom than she has anywhere else. Now compare this with woman's condition in lands where Christianity has made little or no advance. The Burmese sell their wives and daughters as so many sheep. The Hindoo Bible makes it an outrage for a woman to listen to music, or look out of the window in the absence of her husband, and gives as a lawful ground for divorce a woman's beginning to eat before her husband has finished his meal! Her birth a misfortune. Her life a torture. Her death a horror. Now compare those two conditions. How far toward this latter condition would woman go if Christian influences were withdrawn? If an object be lifted to a certain point and not fastened there, and the lifting power be withdrawn, how long before that object will fall down to the point from which it started? Christianity has lifted woman up from the very depths of degradation almost to the skies. If that lifting power be withdrawn she falls back to the depth from which she was raised, not going any lower because there is no lower depth. And yet I have read that notwithstanding all that, there were women present at a meeting in a Brooklyn theatre at which Christianity was outrageously assailed and our Lord blasphemously maligned. II. THE DEMORALISATION OF SOCIETY. The one idea in the Bible that infidels most hate is the idea of retribution. Take away that idea from society, and it will begin very soon to disintegrate, and take away from the minds of men the fear of hell, and there are a great many of them who would very soon turn this world into a hell. I have heard this brave talk about people fearing nothing of the consequences of sin in the next world, and I have made up my mind it is merely a coward's whistling to keep his courage up; for when they came to die they shrieked until you could hear them far enough. The mightiest restraints to-day against crime of all sorts are the retributions of eternity. Men know that they can escape the law, but down in the offender's soul there is the realisation of the fact that he cannot escape God. Take this out of the hearts and minds of men, and it would not be long before our great cities became Sodoms. III. Suppose now these

generals of infidelity got the victory, they will first ATTACK THE CHURCHES. Away with those houses of worship. They have been standing there so long deluding the people with consolation in their bereavements and sorrows. Turn the St. Peters and St. Pauls and the temples and tabernacles into club-houses. IV. Next they SCATTER THE SABBATH-SCHOOLS, filled with bright-eyed, bright-cheeked little ones who are singing songs on Sunday afternoon and getting instruction when they ought to be on the street corners playing marbles or swearing on the commons. V. THEY DESTROY CHRISTIAN ASYLUMS, the institutions of mercy supported by Christian philanthropies. Never mind the blind eyes and the deaf ears and the crippled limbs and the weakened intellects. Let paralysed old age pick up its own food, and orphans fight their own way, and the half-reformed go back to their evil habits. VI. They come to THE GREAT PICTURE GALLERIES, and tear down the pictures, for they are Bible pictures—Claude's "Burning Bush," and Rembrandt's "Christ in the Temple," and Paul Veronese's "Marriage in Cana," and Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment." Down with the pictures; they are Bible pictures. And away with the oratorios of Handel and Haydn and Beethoven, for they speak of the Messiah and the Creation, and of Jephthah, and of Samson, and of other Bible heroes. VII. Now they come to THE GRAVEYARDS. Pull down the sculpture, for it means the resurrection. On, ye great army of infidels where you see "Asleep in Jesus," cut it away, and where you find a marble story of heaven blast it; and where you find over a little child's grave, "Suffer little children to come unto Me," substitute the words "delusion" and "sham"; and where you find an angel in marble strike off the wing; and when you come to a family vault chisel on the door: "Dead and dead for ever." The place of Christian burial turned into a place for the burial of the whole family of Christian graces. Prayer dead. Faith dead. Hope dead. Charity dead. Self-denial dead. Honesty dead. Happiness dead. VIII. They will attempt TO SCALE HEAVEN. On and on until they blow up the foundations of jasper and the gates of pearl. They charge up the steep. Now they aim for the throne of Him who liveth for ever and ever. IX. There is only one more height to scale. They assail THE ETERNAL FATHER and they want Him to feel the combined force of human and Satanic spite. A world without a head, a universe without a king. Orphan constellations. Fatherless galaxies. Anarchy supreme. A dethroned Jehovah. An assassinated God. Patricide, Regicide, Deicide. That is what they mean, and what they will have, if they can. Civilisation hurled back into semi-barbarism, and semi-barbarism driven back into Hottentot savagery. The wheel of progress turned the other way, and turned towards the Dark Ages. The sun turned into darkness. Has Christianity received its death-blow?" Yes, when the smoke of the city chimney arrests and destroys the noonday sun. Josephus says about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the sun was "turned into darkness"; but only clouds rolled between the sun and the earth. The sun went right on. At the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and light was, and light is, and light shall be. So Christianity is rolling on, and it is going to warm all nations, and all nations are to bask in its light, and all nations are to be kindled with its joy. Men may shut the window-blinds so they cannot see out, or they may smoke the pipe of speculation until they are shadowed under their own vapouring; but God is a sun. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**—*Salvation:*—I. ITS NATURE. 1. Deliverance from—(1) The guilt of sin. (2) The power of sin. (3) The punishment of sin. 2. Deliverance to—(1) Acceptance with God. (2) Conquest of evil. (3) Heaven. II. ITS CONDITION. Calling on the name of the Lord, involving—1. A sense of helplessness. A man in the water will not cry if he can wade to dry land, but only when he feels in danger of drowning without assistance. 2. A conviction of His power to help on whom we call. A beggar will not waste time in asking alms of another beggar; a sick man will scarcely rouse himself to seek medical help from one in the same condition. 3. An assurance that He on whom we call will help us when we call. This is faith. The call should be earnest and persevering. III. ITS SCOPE. "Whosoever." 1. Poor as well as rich. 2. Ignorant as well as learned. 3. Bad as well as good. What an encouragement to convinced sinners, Sunday-school teachers, preachers, and missionaries. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Calling on Christ:*—There is a story concerning the father of Thomas à Becket, who went into the crusades and was taken prisoner by the Saracens. While a prisoner, a Turkish lady loved him, and when he was

set free and returned to England, she took an opportunity of following him. But she knew not where to find him she loved: and all she knew about him was that his name was Gilbert. She determined to go through all the streets of England crying the name of Gilbert till she found him. She came to London first, and passing every street persons were surprised to see an Eastern maiden crying, Gilbert! Gilbert! And so she passed from town to town, till one day as she pronounced the name the ear for which it was intended caught the sound, and they became happy. And so, sinner, to-day thou knowest little perhaps of religion, but thou knowest the name of Jesus. Take up the cry as thou goest along the streets, and say to thy heart, "Jesus! Jesus!" And when thou art in the chamber, say it still, "Jesus! Jesus!" Continue the cry and it shall reach the ear for which it was meant. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The secret cry to God:*—Some years ago a young man was going home one night from the house of business in which he was engaged. The thought occurred to him that he was becoming more careless each year about his soul's salvation, and that he would soon become utterly hardened. And he said to himself, "Why should this be? Why not seek the Lord now?" So he lifted up his cry secretly as he walked through the street, "Lord, forgive me, and help me to love and serve Thee." The Holy Spirit, to whose voice he was then listening, inspired the cry for mercy; and the prayer thus offered was answered. The sleeper was awakened, and Christ gave him life. Let your conduct be like that young man's, for the Holy Spirit is calling you now. If hitherto you have rejected the message, now determine to hear and obey it. *An effectual cry:*—I heard of two millers who used to keep the old mill going day and night, and at midnight one miller would go down the stream, pull his boat up two or three yards above the dam, and the other miller would come along the other way. One night the miller was going down as usual, and he fell asleep, and when he awoke, it was the water over the dam that woke him. He knew that if he went over he would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. He seized his oars and he tried to pull back, but he found that it was too late. But he got hold of a little twig between the rocks. It began to give way; and if that twig had come away he would have been swept over the dam and lost; but there was just enough strength in the root to hold him; and so he sat there in that boat and held on, and he cried, "Help! help! help!" and he kept crying, until at last the cry of distress was heard by the brother miller, and he found out the situation, and he got a rope and threw it, and the man let go of the twig and laid hold of the rope, and they pulled him out of the jaws of death. He saved his life because it was an honest cry for help. And there is not a man or woman in this house to-night but that shall be eternally saved if he or she will send the cry up to heaven, "Lord, help me. Lord, remember me. Lord, save me, or I perish." "It shall come to pass that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Put the promise to the test. (*J. McNeill.*)

Vers. 22–36. **Ye men of Israel, hear these words.**—*Personal preaching:*—One of the old English worthies said that a great many sermons were like carefully written letters dropped into the post-office without any address written upon them. They were not intended for any one in particular, and they never reached anybody. *The effect of Pentecost upon Peter:*—If we see the effect upon Peter, we shall have a true idea of the effect of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the entire Church. Fix your minds, therefore, upon Peter. We know what he has been up to this time, ardent, impulsive, unbalanced, enthusiastic, cowardly. Since we last saw him he has been the subject of Pentecostal influence. We have therefore to look on that picture and on this; and upon the change discoverable between the two pictures you may found your estimate of the value of spiritual inspiration. Notice—I. HIS HEROIC ELOQUENCE. It is not enough to speak—you may teach an automaton to speak. This man is not only speaking words, he is speaking them with unction, with fire, with emphasis, never heard in his tone before. You have not the whole speech in the words. You must be enabled, by a kind of semi-inspiration of your own, to read between the lines, in order to get hold of all the force and weight of this burning oration: there are palpitations which cannot be reported, and tones which have no typal representation. It carries everything before it like a fire marching through dry stubble. II. Not only was he transformed into an orator, but into A PROFOUND EXPOSITOR OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN THE CREATION AND EDUCATION OF THE CHURCH. He speaks like a philosopher. He sees that the ages are not unrelated days, broken and incohesive nights, but that the ages are one, as the day is one, from its grey dawn to the time of the lighting of the evening star. This

always follows deep acquaintance with the mysteries of God and high fellowship with the Spirit of the living One; we are delivered from the vexation and torment of daily details, and are set in the great currents and movements of the Divine purpose, and thereby do we acquire the balance which gives us rest and serenity, which often glows into courageous joy. III. PETER SHOWS US HOW PROPHECY IS FULFILLED. The fulfilment of prophecy is not something which God has been arduously trying to do and has at last barely accomplished; it is a natural process, and it comes to express a natural end. Prophecy is not to God a mere hope, it is a clear vision of what must be, and of what He Himself will bring to pass. It is prophesied that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. It is not a mere hope, it is the sure outcome of the Divine way of doing things. Christ must, by the necessity of righteousness and light and truth, reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. Prophecy is God's note of hand that He will yet give His Son the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, signed in every ink in the universe, signed in heaven before the earth was formed, signed on Calvary by the blood-ink of the Cross. We must rest in this assurance; the word of the Lord will prevail, not by means of education, eloquence, or mechanical efforts on the part of the Church, but the world will be converted unto Christ because God has said it will be so, and when His word has gone forth it cannot return to Him void. IV. PETER STARTLED THE CHURCH BY BECOMING ITS MOST SOLID AND CONVINCING REASONER. Observe where and how Peter begins his address. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man," there is no appeal to theological bias or prejudice. Had he begun by saying, "Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate God," he would have lost his audience in his first sentence. He began where his hearers could begin, and he who begins otherwise than at the point of sympathy, how eloquent soever, will lose the reins ere he has time to put one sentence to another. Already, therefore, this inspiration is beginning to tell in the mental force and astuteness of this unlettered fisherman. He gives up the Deity of Christ, does he? Note the argumentative skill. Had Peter broken off his speech in the first sentence, the coldest Socinian could have endorsed his utterance, but Peter makes way through Scriptural quotations and through inspired exposition, until he concludes with this burning breath, "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." Notice, too, how Peter stands without equivocation upon the historical fact of the resurrection. He was not talking to people who lived a century after the reported rising again of Christ: he was talking to men who knew perfectly well what had happened. Does he put any gloss upon the matter—does he seek to make it a parable, a typal instance, a *quasi* resurrection? He talks with the absolute frankness of a man who is relating facts, which every child in the assembly knew to be such, and could instantly have contradicted the statements which he made, had they been false. Does Peter separate Christ from the wonderful manifestation of the Spirit which had been granted? On the contrary, he connects the Pentecost with the risen and glorified Son of God. This enables him to use another "therefore." I refer to these "therefores" in this connection because we are trying to show how inspiritedly argumentative the apostle had become. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted," &c. This is His last miracle, the spiritualisation of all the miracles, the marvel to which all signs and wonders were leading up, the capital without which the column would have been unfinished, the revelation of the purpose which moved His heart when He came to save the world and found His Church. V. IT WAS ALSO A GREAT EVANGELICAL SPEECH WHICH PETER MADE. He gave the house of Israel a new chance. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly"—it is as if Peter would say, "Now you have the opportunity of escaping all the past and beginning a new and glorious future." This is the continual speech of Christianity. Every morning Christianity says, "You can make to-day better than yesterday." Conclusion. 1. We have in Peter a standard whereby to measure ourselves. When the Holy Ghost falls upon us we shall go to the Bible with a new reading power, and we shall see wonders where before we saw nothing because of our spiritual blindness. Under the enlightenment of the Spirit we shall see that everything grand in thought, thrilling in poetry, tragic in experience, noble in heroism, is in the Bible. There is nothing in literature whose root is not to be found in the inspired volume. This is the Book out of which all other books are made, as the earth is the quarry out of which all its palaces have been dug, and as there are grander palaces in the rocks and woods than have yet been built, so there are more glorious visions in the Bible than we have yet beheld. 2. As the earth owes nothing to any other world but her

light, so God has made men that we carry everything in us but our own inspiration. He does not make us new men in the sense of losing our old identity, He makes us new by His inspiration in the sense of lifting us up to the full expression of His own holy purpose in our original creation. We cannot inspire ourselves. The Holy Ghost is the gift of God. We have wondrous faculties as the earth has wondrous treasures—all these are the gift of God, all these we hold in stewardship for God. But these will be in us so many weights and burdens, curses rather than blessings, unless there fall upon us the mighty Pentecostal Holy Spirit. Then shall we be our true selves, eloquent, wise, argumentative, strong, evangelical, sympathetic, new creatures in Christ Jesus, through whom the Holy Ghost has been shed abroad in our hearts. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The first Christian apology*:—1. The present confusion of theological opinion is not wholly to be regretted. It is sad enough, no doubt, if you look at it on one side, that men should still be asking the question, "What is Christianity?" and giving to that question the most contrary answers. Grave and able men tell us that the virtue of Christianity lies in an order of men, is transmitted by one man putting his hand on another man's head, and reaches the rest of the world through water, wine, and bread. Other men as grave and able assure us there is in the system no supernatural virtue at all, only certain religious instincts which long ago attached themselves crudely to a few more or less mythical facts, the real value of which we can hardly now make out. Betwixt them an infinite variety of not less inconsistent opinions finds room, and for each of them intelligent and honest advocates may be heard to plead. 2. But sad as this bewilderment is in some aspects, it surely betrays at least a desire to get at the heart of Christianity, and to do so by disentangling its essentials from its accretions. No one can pretend that such disentangling is unnecessary. Christianity, in the course of her nineteen centuries, has had her own central and proper truths so sorely overlaid by external forms of Church life; has seen her simple doctrines pressed into shapes determined by changing fashions of thought, speculated on, debated over, worked up into systems, and deduced into syllogisms; has entered also into alliance with so many other influences, with art, with politics, with social systems; that in no land of Christendom does she offer to us to-day the features she wore when she began her mission, or speak in the voice with which she first spoke when she won the world. To get at the kernel of our faith, and know it as it is, there is need for some unwrapping. And if the critical tendency which has thrown the theology of educated men into such confusion has any *raison d'être* at all, it is this, that it is bent on getting at the kernel of what we call Christianity. 3. It would be a blunder for the Church to suppose that criticism has only a hostile tendency. Men who hate our holy faith are to be found in this as in every age; and they take advantage of the prevailing uncertainty, as they would do of anything else, to create a prejudice against religion. But there are multitudes of inquirers who mean no ill to Christianity, and numbers more who revere and trust it as their only hope or guide in the perplexities of our present condition. 4. In these circumstances a timid distrustful clinging to traditional forms of truth, with a nervous desire to defend the farthest and most doubtful outposts of orthodoxy is an utterly mistaken policy. It is so, whether the criticisms we are called to face be hostile or friendly. (1) If it be hostile, it seems unwise tactics to spend our strength in defending outworks, which are either barely defensible or of inferior moment, when the enemy we fear is already thundering at the central citadel of the faith. The question which the Church must gird herself to answer is, whether there is any living Christ at all. For strategic reasons, therefore, the field to be defended needs to be contracted, that the strength of all gallant advocates of the faith may be concentrated on those main positions which are as a key to the whole situation. (2) Nor is a narrow dogmatism any better policy if our critics are friendly. It is better, surely, and hopefuller, to meet the new spirit with the frank admission that where human reason has manipulated things of God, and forms of words, beaten out in hot controversy, have been forged to set forth infinite truth, there something may need correction. 5. In what shape the religious faith of Christendom shall emerge after this time of doubt shall have worked itself out, no man can foretell. Yet the creed of the future is not likely to be very different in substance from the creeds of the past. There is, if any one care to look for it, a solid body of Christian verity which has been, with hardly any change, the possession and life of the Church at every period of her history, and the secret nutriment of her true life through her impurest periods—the "faith once delivered to the saints." 6. Whatever may be the issue within the Church of such revision

of her ancient belief, in our contest with outside scepticism we find ourselves thrust back upon our centre, and driven to do battle there for the first principles of our faith, just as the apologists of the earliest age of Christianity had to do. Not against the same sort of doubters, nor altogether with the same arguments, yet the essentials of the Gospel we must make good as they did. In this first Christian apology, and in all other reported addresses of St. Peter in the Acts, I find the gospel defended in its germ. Back to this earliest kernel of gospel fact and truth the controversy of our day is again pressing us. We may borrow a lesson, therefore, from the apologist of Pentecost. How does he conduct his defence? In this and the other sermons of that first period, the Christian cause is made to rest on two pillars of supernatural historical fact bearing on its Founder's life. These are not two isolated facts, however, but two periods of supernatural history. The first is His earthly life of ministry and passion, the supernaturalness of which was sealed mainly by the fact of resurrection after death. The second is the later celestial life of Jesus, the supernatural relation of which to human experience is proved by a series of spiritual facts which began at Pentecost and have not yet ceased. Of course, when the Church asserts this double claim for a continuous Divine history from her Master's birth, she is met by a denial from those who hold any direct intercourse betwixt highest God and us earthly men to be, on philosophical grounds, a thing impossible. But she has no right to be so met by the inductive science of our day. It is the boast of modern science to have no prejudices, but to accept without misgiving whatever is established on its proper evidence. It therefore cannot bar Christianity in her attempt to prove her facts. For the Christian apologist in the Acts, and all wise Christian apologists since, profess to establish the two supernatural facts on the self-same sort of evidence on which the most ordinary facts of a like order are established. (1) The audience whom St. Peter addressed were familiar with the main outlines of Jesus' life as recent and notorious events. We assume them also. We owe it to the historical criticism of late years that no one now doubts the existence of Jesus and the leading features at least of that biography which we have in the holy Gospels. It is when we try to look behind the external events, and to explain their spiritual value, that the Church's faith and the unfaith of our age part company. That the Jewish teacher of Nazareth whom the Romans crucified was in very literal deed, God, a Divine Person, come among us to do a Divine work; that on His life and death rest the hopes of every man to be redeemed from sin and recovered to the favour and likeness of our heavenly Father: this is the Christian theory for the explanation of such historical facts as all admit. For the truth of this theory the Church offers one test-proof—the resurrection. Virtually, St. Peter does so in these early sermons of his. Expressly, St. Paul, the ablest of all her defenders, does so in his second letter to Corinth. If God did raise Jesus from the dead, as no other man ever was raised, then Jesus was the Son of God as He claimed to be, His life as Divine as it professed to be. But if God did not raise this Man, the Christian advocate throws up his case, our faith is false, our fancied Saviour an impostor, and we are in our sins like other men. So the case stood when Peter preached and Paul wrote. So it stands still. But the question, whether a given man was dead and became alive again, is one which nothing can help us to answer but the witness of such as saw what happened. It is a question of evidence, and it has pleased God that this crowning seal put to His Son's life should be sustained and guarded by an amount of proof such as no other fact in history can boast; so that no honest searcher for truth might be left in doubt that Jesus of Nazareth has been declared to be the Son of God with power, has risen the first fruits of an innumerable harvest of Christian sleepers, and by His resurrection has begotten us also unto a living hope. (2) Even a Christ who became alive is not enough, if He has so withdrawn Himself that in His absence He cannot help us. Our Christ is not out of reach. We believe with St. Peter that the re-ascended Son has been exalted by God's right hand to receive of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and that by the special mission of this second Paraclete, He maintains a closer, more equal, and more effective contact with human souls now than ever. Say that there is no Holy Ghost, or say that He is not otherwise present in Christian men than we know He is in all natural human life; and the Church is a delusion, and the word we preach as powerless for the spiritual cure of men as any socialistic or other earth-born scheme for the improvement of mankind. But how is it to be proved that through Christian agencies there does work a veritable Divine Agent? We have here the advantage over an apologist so early as St. Peter. In proof that his

newly-departed Master had sent down the Holy Ghost, Peter had nothing to appeal to but one unique and startling phenomenon just happening in his hearers' presence. We have the gathered spiritual experience of eighteen centuries. Not an age has passed since without leaving somewhere tokens that to the gospel belongs a heavenly power. It is quite true that infinite discredit has been over and over again done to the Church's claims. But enough remains to us. Christianity is not now so new or so small a thing that it should be hard, for any man who tries, to track its working in detail on innumerable men and gather up even its secret fruits. Whoever honestly does this will satisfy himself, I think, of such facts as these: That where the gospel of Christ has been made known with tolerable correctness to numbers of men, it has been always followed, in the case of individuals, by spiritual and moral changes of a uniform type. Conclusion: To this ever-gathering evidence, each Christian must contribute. And you, who can bear no witness for Christ, because you have never let His Spirit in within your heart to change and cleanse you, be sure there is a risen living Christ who saves; be sure there is a present Holy Ghost who changes us; be sure the kingdom of God is come upon you. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) **Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you.**—*The gospel in its simplicity*:—We have here—I. A DISTINCT AFFIRMATION OF THE PROPER HUMANITY OF JESUS. "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man." Under this name He had been "among" them. They had not to think of Him as a recluse, but as one who had frequented the common walks of life. This would prepare the audience to think of His sympathy and compassion. But they knew that He had not been an ordinary man. Around His person had gathered most remarkable circumstances that had to be accounted for. Accordingly we find in the text—II. A DISTINCT ASSERTION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY CREDENTIALS OF JESUS. He had been "approved of God by miracles" &c. These had demonstrated Him to be what He professed to be. Such things revealed the mind of God, and Peter now affirmed that the life of Jesus was full of God. This was a new thought to some who heard it. It followed that certain impressions of Jesus had to be corrected. For the present it was enough to make the hearer feel that Jesus was God's messenger. More would follow. III. Peter declares THAT EVEN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST WERE INCLUDED IN THE DIVINE PLAN. He had been apprehended and nailed to the Cross by the lawless, the representatives of Roman power; but in delivering Him up the Jews had been the greatest criminals, and this charge was now urged home upon them. Yet, as Peter explains, this was only in accordance with the Divine decree. Observe, then, that men are held accountable though they do not act with uncontrolled power, and that there is no excuse for sin in the mysterious blending of the Divine and the human in the working out of God's decrees. If we could adequately survey all the facts, we might be able to remove the apparent disagreement between Divine sovereignty and human freedom: but we are ignorant. IV. PETER AFFIRMS THAT IN SPITE OF APPEARANCES JESUS HAD GAINED A COMPLETE VICTORY. "Whom God raised up." (*W. Hudson.*) **Miracles and wonders and signs.**—*Miracles*:—The first of these words, as more correctly rendered in the Revised Version, means "powers," or "mighty works." By Peter, therefore, the "miracles" recorded in the Gospels are referred to the three heads of "powers, wonders, and signs," and the same terms are used by Luke to represent those wrought by the apostles and early Christians in the name of Christ. The word "powers" intimates to us the source of miraculous gifts, and the superhuman power manifested in their exercise. The second term, "wonders," which corresponds more nearly with our word "miracles," intimates their effect in producing wonder or astonishment, leading to conviction and belief; and the third term "signs," indicates their value as proofs of a Divine mission. All these aspects may be more or less presented in different miracles, or may appear in different degrees in the same miracle, and in considering the relations of miracles to nature they should all be kept in view. More especially we should bear in mind that our word "miracle," derived from the Latin, and meaning merely something wonderful, does not express the whole nature of the Biblical miracles, nor indeed, perhaps, their most important feature. There may be great miracles which excite but little wonder or astonishment, though they may produce important effects, as, for instance, some of those miracles of deliverance wrought for the apostles, and little known or thought of among their contemporaries. On the other hand, there are many wonderful phenomena which are not miracles. A more important aspect is that of powers, or mighty works, which indicate the presence of superhuman power, capable of controlling natural agencies, and of modi-

fying or rearranging the laws of the universe. In this respect miracles bring us face to face with God as the only true miracle-worker. But, perhaps, the most important aspect of all, more especially in connection with the apostolic history, is that signs, or proofs, of the Divine character or mission of those who possess such powers, or to whom they are given. It is this aspect that they are most frequently referred to, and in which they approach most nearly to those moral and spiritual characters on which I am not to enter, any further than to say generally that miracles must conform in their natural relations to the higher moral and spiritual character of the message which, as signs, they authenticate. (*Principal J. W. Dawson.*) *The miracles of Christ appealed to on the day of Pentecost:*— These words contain—I. AN IMPORTANT APPEAL. It was addressed to the Jews, and its subject is the promised Messiah. 1. The name by which He is designated. "Jesus of Nazareth." 2. The character under which He is set forth. "A Man approved of God." 3. The conclusive manner in which His claims were established. "By miracles and wonders and signs." II. A SOLEMN CHARGE. "Him being delivered," &c. 1. The unparalleled crime of which they were guilty. 2. It was no extenuation of their conduct that what they had done accomplished the Divine purposes. III. A BLESSED ANNOUNCEMENT. It referred to the resurrection of Christ. 1. To whom this great event is here ascribed. "Whom God hath raised up." 2. The manner in which it was performed. "Having loosed the pains (or bonds) of death." 3. The necessity of its accomplishment. "Not possible that He should be holden of it." IV. A STRIKING QUOTATION. "For David speaketh concerning Him," &c. 1. The feelings evinced. Those of confidence and joy. 2. The grounds on which they rested. Because Jesus died and rose again. (*Expository Outlines.*) **Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.** — *Christ crucified according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God:* — I. WHO WAS DELIVERED? I. Jesus of Nazareth had at once a name of ignominy, and a name of renown. He was called a Nazarene by the Jews because He was brought up at Nazareth; and they availed themselves of that fact to fasten upon Him what they thought would be an indelible stigma. Jesus is a name of glory. It was, indeed, a human, a common name, borne by many before; but when it was once put on Him it never was put on any other. You do not hesitate to call your children by the names of the apostles, but no father dares to call his son Jesus, because God has called His Son Jesus. "This is the name to sinners dear, the name to sinners given," the name above every name. 2. The particular feature of His character here developed is the power of working miracles. A miracle has been defined—"a suspension or counteraction of the laws of nature." And what are the laws of nature? They are the agencies of God, by which He employs certain causes to the production of certain effects. What philosophers signify by the essential, inflexible, eternal laws of nature, is nothing but the will of God acting in a definite way; and these laws Jesus of Nazareth broke in upon, disturbed them when He pleased. He showed that He was the Author of nature, and that all these laws were of His own making; and, therefore, as He produced the effects apart from the usual associated causes He was the God of nature. His miracles are called wonders, because they filled the spectators with wonder; and signs, because they were indexes of the properties, and prerogatives, and character of Him that wrought them. II. TO WHAT WAS HE DELIVERED? To a death the most extraordinary in its nature, and the most dolorous in its circumstances, if you consider:—1. The place where He died. We all hope to die in our own homes and beds. But your Lord and Master died at Calvary, a place putrid with blood and bones—the atmosphere of which was impregnated with a blasphemous breath. 2. Among whom He died. He was crucified between two malefactors; He had the middle place as though He was worse than either of them. 3. The death itself. Crucifixion was the most lingering and painful mode of death, and the most infamous. "Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree." What part of His body was exempt from anguish? Was it His hands and His feet?—they were pierced with nails. Was it His temples?—they were punctured with thorns. Was it His back?—that was lacerated with scourges. Was it His side?—that was broken by the hostile spear. Was it His bones?—they were all as it were out of joint. Was it His muscles?—they were stretched upon the gibbet. Was it His veins?—they were deprived of their purple fluid. Was it His nerves, those canals of feeling, those rivers of sensation?—they were wrung with anguish. And all this was as nothing compared with the sorrows of His soul. Though He had been a

man of sorrows and a child of grief, yet, when He came to be delivered up, He said, "Now, *now* is My soul exceeding sorrowful." The weight of mental anguish may be alleviated by three sources. (1) The sympathies of affectionate friends. But when Christ died, His disciples forsook Him and fled; He was surrounded with grim guards—by hostile bands. (2) By the holy angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation; and perhaps the most important part of their ministration is rendered to us just when the immortal spirit is on the confines of eternity. Our Saviour had Himself, during His life, been ministered to by angels; but when delivered up to death, the angels afforded Him no sympathy. He drank the wine-press alone, with Him was none, neither man nor angel could sympathise with Him in His suffering. (3) By the consolations of our heavenly Father. But Jesus of Nazareth when delivered up to death was without these. The Father that had honoured His birth by a new star, and His baptism by the sonnd of a more than mortal voice from the excellent glory, that had honoured Him when He performed the miracles to which I have alluded, forsook Him upon the Cross. III. BY WHOM WAS HE DELIVERED? I notice—1. The human agents. It was the Jews that did it; their high priest had said it was expedient for Christ to die; it was their Pontius Pilate that condemned Him; it was their Judas that betrayed Him; their priests that plotted it; their Scribes and Pharisees that hailed it; their populace that shouted for it. But let not the Jews imagine that their guilt is at all diminished by the fact of the death of Christ being "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Their actions were not at all influenced by the determinate counsel of Jehovah; the apostle tells them they were not; he says, "Ye have done it." 2. But there is another agency in this transaction (a God appears in this amazing scene). Lift up the eyes of your mind to the throne of the heavens, to the Majesty on high, and see God delivering up His own Son to this accursed death. They could have had no power against the Son of Man except it had been given to them from above. The death of Christ was not casual, it was not accidental, it was according to the certain councils entered into between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the abyss of a past eternity. In these counsels it was agreed that one of the persons of the Trinity should become incarnate for lost human nature; that one should die for our guilty world. According to the contract entered into, Jesus of Nazareth was delivered up unto death. How amazing that such deliberations should be followed by such results! Hear the declaration of the apostle on the subject, "He spared not His only Son, but freely gave Him up for us all." IV. THE DESIGN ON ACCOUNT OF, AND THE END FOR WHICH, JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS DELIVERED. He was delivered up for what? for whom? Not for His own iniquity, for He had none; not for Himself, for He was no transgressor. He could challenge the bitterest of His enemies and say—"Which of you convinces Me of sin?" Now, we are only acquainted with the iniquity of angels and men, and the question is narrowed to this: If Jesus were not delivered for His own iniquity—having none at all—He was delivered for the iniquity of angels that sinned, or for ours. Now then, for which was it? He passed by the angels, He took not hold of their nature, He never was found in fashion as an angel. I love the angels, because, among other reasons, they do not envy man the grandeur and glory of his being redeemed by the Son of God, while part of their own species was not taken hold of by the Son of God. When Jesus of Nazareth was born the angels sang—"Glory to God in the highest"—and in hell peace? No; and because they could not sing in hell peace, did they refuse to sing on earth peace? They could not say, and they did not say, "Good will to devils," to our lost brethren; but could say, and they did say, "Good will to man." Jesus of Nazareth took hold of our nature and was delivered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Why He felt for us, rather than for angels that sinned, I know not. It is enough for me to know that He loves me, and loves you, and that He loves all our apostate race. Here comes in the old, good-for-nothing objection to the innocent suffering for the guilty. Why, then, did Christ suffer? Oh, they say, He suffered to give us an example of magnanimity and patience under suffering. And they talk about justice. Why, if there is injustice in His dying to save a world from the curse of God, there is a million times more monstrous injustice in His dying merely to teach us how to suffer. He died by His own consent. What bound Him to the Cross? Was it the nails? If He had never been fastened by anything but nails, He had never been fastened at all. It was love that led Him to go to the high altar, and it was love to us that fastened Him to that altar. Conclusion: It is not enough to hear of this Saviour, and of this salvation, and the love that prompted it; there

must be a personal appropriation of the benefit of the death of Christ. (*J. Beaumont, D.D.*) *The nature and quality of the death Christ died upon the Cross*:—I. THE KIND OR NATURE OF HIS DEATH. 1. It was a violent death in itself, though voluntary on His part (Isa. liii. 8; John x. 17). And indeed He must either die a violent death or not at all, partly because there was no sin in Him to open a door to natural death, partly because His death had not been a sacrifice satisfactory to God for us. That which died of itself was never offered up to God, but that which was slain when it was in its full strength and health. 2. A most painful death. Indeed in this death were many deaths contrived in one. The Cross was a rack as well as a gibbet. 3. A shameful death. One appointed for the vilest of men. 4. A cursed death (Gal. iii. 13; Deut. xxi. 23). 5. A very slow and lingering death. 6. A helpless death. II. THE REASONS WHY CHRIST DIED THIS, rather than any other kind of death. 1. Because Christ must bear the curse, and a curse by law was affixed to no other kind of death as it was to this. 2. To fulfil the types. All the sacrifices were lifted up from the earth upon the altar. But especially the brazen serpent prefigured this death (Numb. xxi. 9; John iii. 14). 3. Because it was predicted of Him (Psa. xxii. 16, 17; Zech. xii. 10). Inferences: Did Christ die the death of the Cross? Then—1. There is forgiveness with God, and plenteous redemption for the greatest of sinners, that by faith apply the blood of the Cross to their poor guilty souls (Col. i. 14; 1 John i. 7). Two things this will make demonstrable. (1) That there is sufficient efficacy in the blood of the Cross to expiate and wash away the greatest sins (1 Pet. i. 18; Acts xx. 28). On the account of its invaluable preciousness, it becomes satisfying and reconciling blood to God (Col. i. 20), and having enough in it to satisfy God it must needs have enough in it to satisfy conscience (Heb. x. 22). (2) As there is sufficient efficacy in this blood to expiate the greatest guilt, so it is as manifest that the virtue of it is intended by God for the use of believing sinners (Acts xiii. 39). 2. Though there be much of pain there is nothing of curse in the death of the saints. Death poured out all its poison and lost its sting in Christ's side when He became a curse for us. 3. How cheerfully should we submit to, and bear any cross for Jesus Christ. What feathers are ours compared with His! (1) We shall carry it but a little way. (2) Christ bears the heaviest end of it. (3) Innumerable blessings and mercies grow upon it. (*J. Flavel.*) **Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.**—*The resurrection*:—I. ITS CAUSE. It was such an action as proclaimed an omnipotent agent. Death is a disease which art cannot cure: and the grave a prison which delivers back its captives upon no human summons. To restore life is only the prerogative of Him who gives it. Physic may repair and piece up nature, but not create it. Neither is it in the power of a spirit or demon to inspire a new life; for it is a creation, and to create is the incommunicable prerogative of a power infinite and unlimited. But I suppose nobody will be very importunate for any further proof of this, that if Christ was raised, it must be by God who raised Him. The angel might roll away the stone from the sepulchre, but not turn it into a son of Abraham; and a less power than that which could do so could not effect the resurrection. II. THE MANNER BY WHICH GOD WROUGHT IT. With what propriety can God be said to "loose the pains of death," when those pains continued not till the resurrection, but expired in the death of His body? 1. Some have affirmed that Christ descended into the place of the damned and suffered the pains of hell. But this could not be; for if Christ suffered any of those pains it was either in His Divine nature, or in His soul, or in His body. But the Divine nature could not suffer as being wholly impassible: nor yet could He suffer in His soul; forasmuch as in the very same day of His death that passed into paradise; nor in His body, for that being dead, and consequently for the time bereaved of all sense, could not be capable of any torment. 2. Now can we make out the reason of this expression upon some other or better ground. The word rendered "pains," in the Hebrew signifies also a cord or band; according to which it is very easy and proper to conceive that the resurrection discharged Christ from the bands of death; besides "having loosed," is properly applicable to bands and not to pains. But—(1) The words contain in them a Hebraism, viz., the pains of death, for a painful death; as it is said (Matt. xxiv. 15), the abomination of desolation, for an abominable desolation; and so the resurrection loosed Christ from a painful death, not as if it were so at the time of His release from it, but in a divided sense it loosed Him from a continuance under that death; which, relating to the time of His suffering it, was so painful. (2) But though the pains of death ceased long before the resurrection, so that this could

not in strictness of sense be said to remove them; yet, taken in a metonymy of the cause for the effect, the pains of death might be properly said to have been loosed in the resurrection, because that estate of death into which Christ was brought by those foregoing pains was then completely triumphed over. Captivity under death and the grave was the effect and consequent of those pains, and therefore the same deliverance which discharged Christ from the one, might not improperly be said to loose Him from the other. III. ITS GROUNDS, which was its absolute necessity. 1. The hypostatical union of Christ's human nature to His Divine rendered a perpetual duration under death absolutely impossible. For how could that which was united to the great source and principle of life be finally prevailed over by death, and pass into an estate of perpetual darkness and oblivion? It was possible, indeed, that the Divine nature might for a while suspend its supporting influence, and so deliver over the human nature to pain and death, but it was impossible for it to let go the relation it bore to it. A man may suffer his child to fall to the ground, and yet not wholly quit his hold of him, but still keep it in his power to recover and lift him up at his pleasure. Thus the Divine nature of Christ did for a while hide itself from His humanity, but not desert it; put it into the chambers of death, but not lock the everlasting doors upon it. The sun may be clouded and yet not eclipsed, and eclipsed but not stopped in his course, and much less forced out of its orb. Surely that nature which diffusing itself throughout the universe communicates an enlivening influence to every part of it, and quickens the least spire of grass, would not wholly leave a nature assumed into its bosom, and, what is more, into the very unity of the Divine person, dismantled of its prime and noblest perfection. 2. God's immutability. Christ's resurrection was founded upon the same bottom with the consolation and salvation of believers, expressed in that full declaration made by God of Himself (Mal. iii. 6). Now, the immutability of God, as it had an influence upon Christ's resurrection, was twofold. (1) In respect of His decree or purpose. God had from all eternity designed this, and sealed it by an irreversible purpose. For can we imagine that Christ's resurrection was not decreed, as well as His death and sufferings? and these in the 23rd verse of this chapter are expressly said to have been determined by God. It is a known rule in divinity, that whatsoever God does in time, that He purposed to do from eternity; for there can be no new purposes of God, since he who takes up a new purpose does so because he sees some ground to induce him to such a purpose, which he did not see before; but this can have no place in an infinite knowledge, which by one comprehensive intuition sees all things at present, before ever they come to pass: so that there can be no new emergency that can alter the Divine resolutions. (2) In respect of His word and promise, for these also were engaged in this affair (Psa. xvi. 10). And Christ also had frequently foretold the same of Himself. Now when God says a thing He gives His veracity in pawn to see it fully performed. Heaven or earth may pass away sooner than one iota of a Divine promise fall to the ground. 3. God's justice. God in the whole procedure of Christ's sufferings must be considered as a judge exacting, and Christ as a person paying down a recompense or satisfaction for sin. The punishment due to sin was death, which being paid by Christ, Divine justice could not any longer detain Him in His grave. For what had this been else but to keep Him in prison after the debt was paid? Satisfaction disarms justice, and payment cancels the bond. Christ's release proceeded not upon terms of courtesy but of claim. The gates of death flew open before Him out of duty. 4. The necessity of His being believed in as a Saviour, and the impossibility of His being so without rising from the dead. As Christ by His death paid down a satisfaction for sin, so it was necessary that it should be declared to the world by such arguments as might found a rational belief of it; so that men's unbelief should be rendered inexcusable. But how could the world believe that He fully had satisfied for sin, so long as they saw death, the known wages of sin, maintain its full force and power over Him? Had not the resurrection followed the crucifixion, that scoff of the Jews had stood as an unanswerable argument against Him (Mark xv. 31, 32). To save is the effect of power, and of such a power as prevails to a complete victory and a triumph. 5. The nature of the priesthood which He had taken upon Him. The apostle (Heb. viii. 4) says, that "if He were upon earth He should not be a priest." Certainly then much less could He be so, should He continue under the earth. The two great works of His priesthood were to offer sacrifice, and then to make intercession for sinners, correspondent to the two works of the Mosaical priesthood. Christ, therefore, after that He had offered Himself upon the Cross, was to enter into heaven, and

there presenting Himself to the Father to make that sacrifice effectual to all the intents and purposes of it (Heb. vii. 25). Had not Christ risen again, His blood indeed might have cried for vengeance upon His murderers, but not for mercy upon believers. Ever since Christ ascended into heaven He has been pursuing the great work begun by Him upon the Cross, and applying the virtue of His sacrifice to those for whom it was offered. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The necessity of Christ's resurrection*:—It was not possible that death should hold our Divine Lord and Saviour. Why? I. WAS IT SIMPLY BECAUSE OF HIS POWER? Is the victory that He gained when He came forth from the grave only the prevalence of a stronger force over a weaker? The love of power, the delight in wielding it and in witnessing its exercise, the joy of battle, the elation of victory—how much of human energy finds vent in these great passions! Is this spectacle of the triumphing of Christ over death only another exhibition of strength? Doubtless we must see in the resurrection a proof of superhuman energy. "No man taketh My life from Me," &c., said our Lord. Here is the sign of a strength superior to nature; of an energy that is not confined by the uniformities of physical law; of a force that is stronger than the strongest of the forces with which our science deals. But is this all? No; this is the least of the truths disclosed to us upon the Easter day. Men had faith enough in physical power before Christ rose from the dead. Worshippers of power most of them were. Men believed quite enough in the power of God; as a revelation of the fact that there is a Will behind nature superior to nature, the resurrection was not needed. II. WAS IT LOGICAL? Does the apostle mean that Christ could not have been left in the grave, because the Divine plan and purpose made His resurrection necessary? Doubtless this is true. The success of His mission required Him to rise from the grave. It was necessary as a practical measure, for the confirmation of His claims, and the verification of His gospel. But is this all? No. III. THE IMPOSSIBILITY WAS MORAL. It was not might nor policy but love and right that conquered. 1. The apostle expresses in this phrase one of the strongest and most persistent of the instinctive moral feelings of man, viz., that virtuous being ought to continue. It is sometimes said that man has an instinctive faith in immortality, and it is doubtless true. But the feeling to which I refer is much deeper and more dominant than this. I am not speaking now of the testimony of revelation concerning future existence, but of the conclusions to which our own instinct and judgment would lead us. And I think that if we had to depend wholly on these for our light upon this great question, while each one might hope for life beyond the grave as his own inheritance, we should hesitate to affirm it confidently respecting all our neighbours. Here, for example, is one whose life has steadily gravitated downward; who has grown more sordid, sour, brutish, with every passing year. So he lives, and so living he goes down to death. If we had no other guide than our own reason and moral instincts, should we confidently affirm of such a man that there would be life for him beyond the grave? I do not think so. I think we should be more likely to say of him, pityingly and mournfully: "If there were any prospect that his character could be mended, then we would hope that he might have life beyond; but if his life is to go on in this strain, there is no reason why his existence should be prolonged. If this universe is built on righteousness, the continuance of such lives is illogical and inexplicable." That is what the moral reason would say about it. But here is another of different quality. His life has been full of faithful and loving service of his kind; the contact of his spirit made every man more manly and every woman more womanly. Steadily as the years have gone by his character has been ripening, and now in the midst of his years he suddenly falls, and among men no more is seen. Is not our feeling about such a man's departure quite different from that with which we noted the passing out of life of the other? Do we not say at once, that if this universe means righteousness such a man ought not to cease to be; that the discontinuance of such a life would be as illogical and inexplicable as the continuance of the other would be? Death has seized upon our friend, we say, but it is not possible that death should hold him fast. 2. In cases of many that we have known we have felt that this impossibility was strong, almost invincible; but how much stronger should it have been in the minds of those who had been the companions and disciples of Jesus Christ all their lives! Might they not have said, with far clearer emphasis, when the hand of death was laid on Him, "It is not possible that He should be holden of it"? Recall some faint outline of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Remember the clear truthfulness of His speech, His courage, His friendship for the outcasts and the despised, the grand

independence with which He brushed aside the conventional estimates, the tireless beneficence and boundless sympathy of His life. And now suddenly this life terminates. By wicked hands this Prince of Life is crucified and slain! Is it possible that such a life, so pure and perfect and benignant, should end like this? You could not affirm that it would reappear on this earth; on that point experience could give you no encouragement; but you could say that there ought to be and must be given to that life, somewhere, glory and immortality. 3. The force of this conclusion respecting all highest and noblest life it is hard to evade. The expectation of future existence in the abstract may be more or less shadowy; but the expectation that virtuous life will continue rests on the very foundation of our moral nature. And there is a great word of science that reaffirms this verdict of our moral sense. It is the fittest that survive, we are told. And, in a moral universe, it is the righteous, surely, who are fit to survive. You stand upon some elevated spot, where you can see, far down the valley, a railway train approaching. The pennant of smoke is lifted by the wind as the train draws nearer and nearer, bending round the curves, speeding swiftly along the straight alignments, its first faint murmur deepening into an audible roar, until it rushes past you swift, majestic, resistless, the very incarnation of motion and of might. Quickly, almost before your nerves have ceased to thrill with the onset of its power, it is out of sight behind an embankment, and out of hearing beyond a hill; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, it is gone. Would it be easy for you now to believe that that wonderful power has vanished out of being; that when it passed beyond your sight it suddenly ceased to be; that all which you saw and felt but for a moment ago is now nothing but a memory? No; that would not be possible. You are sure that the glory of going on still belongs to that wonderful mechanism, though it is now beyond your sight. And it seems to me that the reasons for believing in the persistence of a great moral force after it has disappeared from these scenes of earth are far stronger. Of such a power we say, more confidently than of any physical energy, "It cannot be blotted out; it must continue to be." 4. It was to strengthen this conviction, to demonstrate its truth and its reason, to give the world, in a great object lesson, the proof that virtue does not die, that our Lord came back to earth. It was not only to show His own Divinity; it was also to show that virtue and holiness are immortal. And as it was not possible that He should be holden of death, so neither is it possible that any of those who have His life in them should be detained in that prison-house. This is no arbitrary decree by which a future life is assured to the disciples of Christ; it is the law of the universe. Over such characters as His death has no power; and they who by faith in Him are brought into harmony with Him in this life can never be the prey of the spoiler. "He that believeth in Me," said the Master, "hath everlasting life." He who is one with Christ, who has the spirit of Christ, hath eternal life. What, to him, are all the vicissitudes and perils of our mortal state, all the sullen and ominous noises of the flood of years whose tides steadily gather round the narrow neck of land whereon he calmly waits? There is a hope within him that many waters cannot quench. His life is hid with Christ in God. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*) *The resurrection inevitable*:—St. Peter's way of accounting for Christ's resurrection is the first apostolic statement on the subject. And certainly, even if the point were only one of antiquarian interest, it would be full of attraction to know how the first Christians thought about the chief truths of their faith; considering the influence which that faith has had and still has on the development of the human race. But for us, Christians, concern in this matter is more exacting. Our hopes or fears, our depressions or enthusiasms, our improvement or deterioration, are bound up with it. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain." I. ST. PETER STATES THE FACT THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." He is preaching in Jerusalem, the scene of the death and resurrection, and to some who had taken part in the scenes of the crucifixion. Not more than seven weeks have passed. And in Jerusalem, we may be sure, men did not live as fast as they do in an European capital, in this age of telegraphs and railroads. An event like the crucifixion, in a town of that size, would have occupied general attention for a considerable period. It was then to persons keenly interested in the subject, and who had opportunities of testing its truth, that St. Peter states so calmly and unhesitatingly the fact of the resurrection. He states it as just as much a fact of history as the crucifixion, in which his hearers had taken part. Some twenty-six years later, when St. Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth, there were, he says, more than two hundred and

fifty still alive who had seen Jesus Christ after His resurrection. The number of witnesses to the fact, to whom St. Peter could appeal, and whom his hearers might cross-question if they liked, will account for the simplicity and confidence of his assertion. In those days men had not learnt to think more of abstract theories than of well-attested facts. Nobody, it may be added, who professed to believe in an Almighty God, thought it reverent or reasonable to say that He could not for sufficient reasons modify His ordinary rules of working, if He chose to do so. St. Peter then preached the resurrection as a fact, and, as we know, with great and immediate results. But how did he account for it? II. HE SAYS THAT CHRIST WAS RAISED "BECAUSE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF" DEATH. Thus St. Peter's first thought about this matter is the very opposite to that of many persons in our day. They say that no evidence will convince them that Christ has risen, because they hold it to be antecedently impossible that He should rise. St. Peter, on the other hand, almost speaks as if he could dispense with any evidence. In point of fact, he had his own experience to fall back upon (Luke xxiv. 34). But this evidence only fell in with the anticipations which he had now formed on other and independent grounds. It will do us good to consider the reasons of this Divine impossibility. 1. It was not possible, "for David speaketh concerning Him." Prophecy forbade Christ to remain in His grave. As to the principle of this argument there would have been no controversy between St. Peter and the Jews. When once God had thus spoken, His word, it was felt by Jews and Christians, stood sure. It could not return empty; it must accomplish the work for which God had sent it forth; since it bound Him to an engagement with those who uttered and with those who heard His message. Obviously enough, the true drift of a prophecy may easily be mistaken. God is not responsible for eccentric guesses as to His meaning. But where a prediction is clear, it does bind Him who is its real Author to some fulfilment, which, in the event, will be recognised as such. And such a prediction of the resurrection St. Peter finds in Psalm xvi., where David—as more completely in Psalm xxii.—loses the sense of his own personal circumstances in the impetus and ecstasy of the prophetic spirit, and describes a Personality of which indeed he was a type, but which altogether transcends him. The meaning of the Psalm was so clear to some Jewish doctors, that, unable as they were to reconcile it with David's history, they invented the fable that his body was miraculously preserved from corruption. David, however, was really speaking in the person of Messiah. And his language created the necessity that Messiah should rise from the dead. Observe, here, that St. Peter had not always felt and thought thus. He had known this Psalm all his life. But long after he had followed Jesus, he had been ignorant of its true meaning. Only little by little do any of us learn God's truth and will. And so lately as the morning of the resurrection, the apostles "knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Since then the Holy Spirit had come down, and had poured a flood of light into their minds and over the sacred pages of the Old Testament. And thus a necessity for the resurrection, which even Jews ought to recognise, was now abundantly plain. 2. A second reason lay in the character of Christ. Now, of that a leading feature was its simple truthfulness. He was too wise to predict the impossible. He was too sincere to promise what He did not mean. But Christ had again and again said that He would be put to a violent death, and that after dying He would rise again (John ii. 19; Matt. xii. 40, xvi. 21; Mark ix. 31, x. 32–34). Thus He was pledged to this particular act—pledged to the Jewish people, and especially to His own followers. He could not have remained in His grave—I will not say without dishonour, but—without causing in others a revulsion of feeling such as is provoked by the exposure of baseless pretensions. It may indeed be urged that the resurrection foretold by Christ was not a literal resurrection of His dead body, but only a recovery of His credit, His authority; obscured as these had been for a while by the crucifixion. The word "resurrection," according to this supposition, is in His mouth a purely metaphorical expression. Socrates had had to drink the fatal hemlock; and the body of Socrates had long since mingled with the dust. But Socrates, it might be said, had risen, in the intellectual triumphs of his pupils, and in the enthusiastic admiration of succeeding ages; the method and words of Socrates had been preserved for all time in a literature that will never die. If Christ was to be put to death by crucifixion, He would triumph, even after a death so shameful and degrading, as Socrates and others had triumphed before Him. To imagine for Him an actual exit from His tomb is said to be a crude literalism, natural to uncultivated ages, but impossible,

when the finer suggestiveness of human language has been felt to transcend the letter. An obvious reply to this explanation is, that it arbitrarily makes our Lord use literal and metaphorical language in two successive clauses of a single sentence. He is literal, it seems, when He predicts His crucifixion; but why is He to be thought metaphorical when He foretells His resurrection? Why should not His resurrection be preceded by a metaphorical crucifixion; a crucifixion of thought, or will, or reputation—not the literal nailing of a human body to a wooden cross? Surely He meant that the one event would be just as much or just as little a matter of fact as the other. Those who cling to His human character, yet deny His resurrection, would do well to consider that they must choose between their moral enthusiasm and their unbelief; since it is the character of Christ, even more than the language of prophecy, which made the idea that He would not rise after death impossible for His first disciples. 3. Not that we have yet exhausted St. Peter's reasons. In the sermon which he preached after the healing of the lame man, he told his hearers that they had "killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead." Remark that striking title. Not merely does it show how high above all earthly royalties was the crucified Saviour in the heart and faith of His apostle. It connects his thought with the language of his Master on the one side, and that of His apostles St. Paul and St. John upon the other (John xiv. 6, v. 26, 40, i. 4; Col. iii. 4). What is life? We do not know what it is in itself. We only register its symptoms. We see growth, movement; and we say, "Here is life." It exists in one degree in the tree; in a higher in the animal; in a higher still in man. In beings above man, we cannot doubt, it is to be found in some yet grander form. But in all these cases it is a gift from another: and having been given, it might be modified or withdrawn. Only the Self-Existent lives of right. He lives because He cannot but live. This is true of the Eternal Three, who yet are One. Hence our Lord says, "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Thus, with the Eternal Giver, the Eternal Receiver is Fountain and Source of life. With reference to all created beings, He is the Life—their Creator, their Upholder, their End (Col. i. 16, 17). This then is the full sense of St. Peter's expression, "The Prince of Life." How could the very Lord and Source of life be subdued by death? If, for reasons of wisdom and mercy, He subjected the nature which He had made His own to the king of terrors, this was surely not in the course of nature; it was a violence to nature that this should be. And therefore when the object had been achieved, He would rise, St. Peter implies, by an inevitable rebound, by the force of things, by the inherent energy of His irrepressible life. From St. Peter's point of view, the real wonder would be if such a Being were not to rise. The pains of death were loosed—not by an extraordinary effort, as in your case or mine—but because it was impossible that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of it. III. THIS NECESSITY, WHILE IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM STRICTLY PROPER TO HIS CASE, POINTS TO KINDRED NECESSITIES WHICH AFFECT HIS SERVANTS AND HIS CHURCH. Note—1. The impossibility, for us Christians too, of being buried for ever in the tomb in which we shall each be laid at death. In this, as in other matters, "as He is, so are we in this world." To us as to Him, although in a different way, God has pledged Himself. In Him an internal vital force made resurrection from death necessary; in us there is no such intrinsic force, only a power guaranteed to us from without. He could say of the temple of His body, "I will raise it up in three days": we can only say that God will raise us up, we know not when. But this we do know (Rom. viii. 11). The law of justice and the law of love combine to create a necessity which requires "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." Death is not an eternal sleep; the tomb is not the final resting-place of the bodies of those whom we have loved. The empty sepulchre at Jerusalem on Easter morning is the warrant of a new life, strictly continuous with this, and, if we are faithful, much more glorious. 2. The principle of moral resurrections in the Church. As with the bodies of the faithful so it is with the Church. The Church is, according to St. Paul's teaching, Christ Himself in history (1 Cor. xii. 12; Eph. i. 22, 23). But the force of this language is limited by the fact, equally warranted by Scripture—that the Church has in it a human element, which, unlike the humanity of Christ, is weak and sinful. Again and again in the course of her history large portions of the Christian Church have seemed to be dead and buried. But suddenly the tomb has opened; there has been a moral movement, a new spirit of devotion, social stir, literary activity, conspicuous self-sacrifice; and, lo! the world awakes to an uneasy suspicion that "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that mighty works do

show forth themselves in him." The truth is that Christ has again burst His tomb and is abroad among men. So it was after the moral degradation of the Papacy in the tenth century; so it was after the recrudescence of Paganism by the Renaissance in the fifteenth; so it was after the triumph of misbelief and profanity in the seventeenth, and of indifference to vital religion in the eighteenth. 3. What is or ought to be the governing principle of our own personal life? If we have been laid in the tomb of sin, it ought to be impossible that we should be holden of sin. I say "ought to be," because, as a matter of fact, it is not impossible. God only is responsible for the resurrection of the Christian's body, and for the perpetuity of the Christian Church; and therefore it is impossible that either the Church or our bodies should permanently succumb to the empire of death. But God, who raises our bodies whether we will or not, does not raise our souls from sin, unless we correspond with His grace; and it is quite in our power to refuse this correspondence. That we should rise then from sin is a moral, not a physical, necessity; but surely we ought to make it as real a necessity as if it were physical (Rom. vi. 4). 4. A real resurrection with Christ will make and leave some definite traces upon life. Let us resolve this day to do or leave undone some one thing which will mark a new beginning: conscience will instruct us, if we allow it to do so. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The inevitableness of Christ's resurrection*:—I. THE FACT HERE STATED. "Him hath God raised up," &c. Note—1. That Jesus did experience everything which death is able to inflict upon mortal man. It was not, as some ancient heretics pretended, the mere appearance of death, but the reality, which He underwent. He felt "the pains of death." And so fearful and rapid was the operation of His sufferings, that, of the three who were crucified together, He alone was dead, when the hour arrived for removing the bodies. And death had then full dominion over Him. 2. That He was set free from the power of death by being raised to life again. To all human appearance the hopes of His cause were for ever buried with Him. But at this point the power of death was broken, and the grave is robbed of its victory. "Death has no more dominion over Him." He is raised—not as the widow's son at Nain or Lazarus, again to die—but to wear for ever that scarred body which He has brought with Him out of the sepulchre. 3. That this event was effected by Divine power: "Him hath God raised up." This circumstance may excite no wonder in your minds; for who can raise the dead but God only? Unquestionably, He alone, who first "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life," can restore it after He hath taken it away. Call to mind, however, what He Himself had openly declared long before His death, "No man taketh My life from Me," &c. Scripture teaches us that each Person in the blessed Trinity took His share in effecting this glorious resurrection. (1) The Father (Heb. xiii. 20). (2) The Son (John ii. 19). (3) The Holy Ghost (Rom. i. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 18). These would be contradictory statements were it not for that mysterious doctrine, that our God is one God in three Persons. That doctrine reconciles all; while it still calls upon us to wonder and adore. II. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. Had Jesus so willed, death could not have taken hold of Him; nor could it keep its hold one moment longer when God commanded, "Loose Him and let Him go." The impossibility here dwelt upon, however, seems to mean something more than that arising from God's irresistible power. It could not be, because—1. Prophecy had long ago foretold that it should not be; "and the Scripture cannot be broken." 2. No good end would have been answered by the continuance of Christ under the power of death. All that He had suffered was in order to His being "the propitiation for our sins." Now those agonies needed not to be eternal, although they were an equivalent to that eternal punishment which is our desert. The Sufferer being infinite, the merit of His sufferings was so likewise. And for the same reason, the humiliation of the grave once submitted to was enough, since it was the infinitely glorious Son of God who condescended to endure it. Just as "one offering" sufficed for "the sins of many," so one short sojourn in the tomb of dishonour was sufficient to earn its infinite reward. More was not required—and God does nothing unnecessarily. 3. Satan's apparent triumph would then have been a real one. The chief end of Christ's coming was to "destroy the works of the devil." Of this, Satan himself was fully aware; and to prevent his own defeat left no effort untried. He assailed the mind of Jesus with temptations: he stirred up enemies against His life. Defeated in the former by Christ's holy nature, he appeared to succeed in the latter, and possibly began to boast that he had now triumphed over the only Redeemer of men. And had Jesus still lain in the corruption of the grave, who could have gainsaid this boast? St. Paul himself allows that it would have been the ruin of our

hopes (1 Cor. xv: 17). Jesus, therefore, must needs rise again. 4. He had still one perpetual work to perform on behalf of His people, which required His entire presence as perfect Man before God. As our Priest He had offered the sacrifice for sins; in the same character He had now to make continual "intercession for us." "He might have done this," you say, "in His Divine Person, or by His human soul in glory." Why not as well say He might have made atonement without a human body? No—the presence of that living body is indispensable, as an evidence of His merit, as the pledge of His claims. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Christ still escaping from entombment:*—Dead, and yet not able to continue dead. A stone sepulchre, and yet not equal to the strain of the strange body that was entombed in it. "Not possible" that He should be holden of it. It is just that "not possible" that we are going to think about. The world has never made a great deal of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the widow's son of Nain, or the ruler's daughter, or the Shunammite's son. There are two kinds of resurrection: there is a natural resurrection and there is an artificial resurrection. Something roused Lazarus. Elisha roused the Shunammite's son. Jesus has had His death-sleep out. Artifice *versus* nature. It never could have been said of the ruler's daughter that God raised her up, loosing the pains of death because it was not possible that she should be holden of it. It was possible, most possible. In the rending of the Lord's sepulchre we are dealing with a distinct matter. It is an event on another plane. At any rate, people have never pinned their hope of immortality to Lazarus' resurrection, and they have to the Lord's. And something of the core of the case lies in this particular clause we are upon: "Because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." We gain from Christ's instance a sense of resurrection power working from within outward; in other instances, the sense of resurrection power working from without inward. Here it is something indigenous. Here it is like the wheat-grain growing up out of the ground because there is intrinsic impulse making it grow up; resurrection inheres in its nature; it is not possible that it should be holden; rising is a part of its genius. The Lord's life was somehow in His own hands. His life was such a thing that limitations did not limit it; obstructions were no embarrassment to it; death was not fatal to it. Life under any circumstances, life of any kind is a wonderful thing, spiritual life, animal life, yea, even vegetable life. We cannot say much about it, only wonder at it. An acorn lying, for months, still, brown and insensible, with a slight change of environment, begins to become dimly conscious of itself; and waking up into a mighty tree that fills the air, greens and withers, and greens and withers while children grow old and generations pass away. It is a long way from the buried acorn cracking in the dark to the rending of the tomb of the Son of God in the morning twilight of the world's first Easter; and yet our thought to-day is upon the same feature in the two instances—the life element, vegetable in one, Divine in the other, but working out with an easy expanse, shattering confinement by the native tension of its own energy; with facile sufficiency disrupting its own confinement and crushing its own bonds. "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." It seems to me we can almost see the very steps of the transaction, Divine life in the grave unnerving the clasp of death and striving to fracture the meshes of fatality; and all of that, not by virtue of extrinsic reinforcement, but out of the abundance of its own easy sufficiency, the exuberance of its irresistible fulness of Divine life. Now all of that brings almost to our very senses the event of Divine resurrection which the great Church catholic on earth celebrates. But not only is there a great historic meaning in this resurrection emergence of Christ from the sepulchre, but it seems to me there is a picture in small of what Divine life on earth is everywhere and always doing. 1. That is the grand meaning of history, slow resurrection of the Divine life that is buried in it, and that every day strains a little more the gritty sepulchre; not because you and I try to drive into the enshrouding rock the wedges of our holy endeavour, not because liberating power is borne in upon it from any outward source; but because of the strengthening tension and growing push of its own resistless life that is eternally destined to break loose from the confinement of death because it is not possible that it should be holden of it. All the sin that is in the world, and the apathy and the obstinacy, and the ignorance and the hopelessness, what is it but so much vast, cold granite tomb in which the immanent buried life of God is working itself forth day and night, century after century, as the dawn slowly reddens toward the perfect glory of the full day and the ushered kingdom for whose coming we reverently pray. Oh, in how many ways the Divine Spirit of all truth has been working through all the ages of the world and giving

even pagan minds a presentiment and suspicion of the deep things of man and history of God! As geologists delight to lay bare the rocks and track the pathway upon them worn by the archaic forces of fire and flood, so it seems to me there is no grander effort of which human mind in the range of immaterial things is capable, than to trace the movements of human history, considering those movements always as being steadily marshalled by the generalship of God's ordering Spirit, and every advance toward freer living, truer thinking, sweeter acting, and holier worshipping as being one more blow with which the rising Lord of Life strikes the grim casing of His tomb, and shatters Himself a pathway out into the light and splendour of the world's final Easter. 2. Think again of this same confined Spirit of God, as struggling in quiet resurrection against the barriers of sin, ignorance, and prejudice that hinder the evangelisation of the world. Remembering how the claims of the gospel cut directly athwart the stalwart passions of every human heart, I cannot understand how any man, with a mind that is appreciative, and that has a grasp upon the history of the victories achieved by the Cross, can escape the conclusion of a God-Spirit striving in the midst of it all, and rending its way out like an entombed Jesus breaking forth into the light and liberty of full resurrection. There is no argument for the Divineness of Christianity like the steady, irresistible, onward march of Christianity. It is the same thing over again, a sepulchre entombing a waking Divine Lord, and it was not possible that He should be holden of it; antagonism compacted to granitic hardness; sin rolled as a stone against the door of the sepulchre and sealed with malignity and cruelty: cunning posted as a watch upon it. But the night is going by, it is a Divine presence that is straining at the grave clothes and struggling out from entombment, and every new tribe that has the gospel brought to it, every new island out in mid-ocean that is vocal to-day with Easter praises, every new dialect that this April spells out "resurrection" to the wondering eye of the untaught pagan, is one more blow with which the rising Lord of Life strikes the grim casing of His tomb and shatters Himself a pathway out into the light and splendour of the great world's Easter. 3. And then, again, an imprisoned Divine Lord is struggling to full resurrection within the entombing religion of the world. One of the unappreciated marvels of our very Bible is the way in which, from the beginning of it to the end, it marks the steady rise of that current of Divine truth which it channels. There is not a greater mistake made, nor a sadder one, than the habit of treating the Bible as a dead level of Divine revelation. Its first lessons are but the seed-corn out of which, through the successive seasons of four thousand years, the primary germ has been unfolding into to-day's blossomed and fruited Tree of Life. It was a Divine thing then; Divine in its inception as it is in its finish; just as the confined germ is as live a thing as the great air-filling elm after a growth of two hundred years. But away back there it was a Divine thing perpetually striving and struggling forth into unsepulchred life against the constraints and confinements that human small-mindedness and false-heartedness put upon it. Divine, but Divineness bandaged! Eternal Spirit, but Eternal Spirit in a vault. Four thousand years of resurrection in the domain of truth! The Word which in the beginning was with God and was God, breaking off year by year and century by century the coarse integuments of human stupidity and carnality with which, forsooth, even Divineness requires to come into the world encased. 4. The Lord, too, is sepulchred, and has always been most gloomily sepulchred, in the theology of His Church. To disparage theology is to forget the Divine Spirit of truth which the pettiness and faultiness of human conception encases; and to ignore or lightly to pass over the history of theologic thought for the past forty centuries is to be oblivious of the slow, steady process of resurrection through which the confined Spirit of God is straining and crushing, age by age, the tough integument by which He is so jealously guarded, the tomb of petrified opinion around which His lovers keep tearful vigil, and to which in the grey light of the early morning they gather with linen bandages and spices "as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Theological controversy thus, so far as it is the cracking away of archæological deposit and dogmatic stratification is but the emergence of the God-Spirit into freer air and wider liberty, and therefore can no more be stamped out or whistled down by a dogmatic constabulary than you could stop the growth of a California pine by girdling its trunk with cotton yarn, or than the resurrection of the Son of God at Jerusalem could have been delayed by piling more granite upon the roof of the sepulchre or posting more Roman police at its door. 5. And then, just in a word, the irrepressible Lord of Life is immured and struggling inside the

ethics of the world. There is nothing in the history of the human race more calculated to amaze us than its improvement in morals; especially when you remember that every step of such improvement is taken in the teeth of every man's native tendency and original passion. No man ever becomes better except as he has Divine power given him to trample on himself. And to deny that there has been moral improvement is to be ignorant of history or to give the lie to history. As I say, it is all of it a growth; and the hindered, entombed, struggling life of the Lord is the Divine sap that permeates that growth. History, from the beginning of it to the end of it, is all resurrection; the straining, tenser and tenser straining, of the immured life of God in the world. Here is our hope. We praise God for the irrepressible and irresistible life that is in His Son Jesus Christ. We celebrate the empty grave with songs of loud acclaim. But while in this we are memorially celebrating the past, we would also, O God, by the same act anticipate and celebrate that greater coming Eastertide, when every bandage that human pettiness and ignorance wind about our risen Lord shall be sundered, when the whole sepulchre of world-sin in which He is yet entombed shall be rent, and the Lord of Life move forth a free Lord over a free earth—a glorified Lord in the midst of a redeemed world. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Bonds which could not hold:*— 1. Our Lord felt the pains of death truly and really. His body was in very deed dead, yet there was no corruption. (1) It was not needful: it could have borne no relation to our redemption. (2) It would not have been seemly. (3) It was not demanded by the law of nature; for He was sinless, and sin is the worm which causes corruption. 2. But from the pains of death His body was loosed by resurrection. I. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BANDS OF DEATH SHOULD HOLD OUR LORD. He derived His superiority to the bondage of death—1. From the command of the Father that He should have power to take His life again (John x. 18). 2. From the dignity of His human person. (1) As in union with Godhead. (2) As being in itself absolutely perfect. 3. From the completion of His propitiation. The debt was discharged: He must be freed. 4. From the plan and purpose of grace which involved the life of the Head as well as that of the members (John xiv. 19). 5. From the perpetuity of His offices. (1) Priest (Heb. vi. 20). (2) King (Psa. xlv. 6). (3) Shepherd (Heb. xiii. 20). 6. From the nature of things, since without it we should have—(1) No assurance of our resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 17). (2) No certainty of justification (Rom. iv. 25). (3) No representative possession of heaven (Heb. ix. 24). (4) No crowning of man with glory and honour, and exaltation of him over the works of God's hands. II. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT ANY OTHER BANDS SHOULD HOLD HIS KINGDOM. 1. The firm establishment of error shall not prevent the victory of truth. The colossal systems of Greek philosophy and Roman priestcraft have passed away; and so shall other evil powers. 2. The scholarship of His foes shall not resist His wisdom. He baffled the wise in His life on earth; much more will He do it by His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. i. 20). 3. The ignorance of mankind shall not darken His light. "The poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 5). Degraded races receive the truth (Matt. iv. 16). 4. The power, wealth, fashion, and prestige of falsehood shall not crush His kingdom (chap. iv. 26). 5. The evil influence of the world upon the Church shall not quench the Divine flame (John xvi. 33). 6. The rampant power of unbelief shall not destroy His dominion. Though at this hour it seems to bind the Church in the bands of death, those fetters shall melt away (Matt. xvi. 18). III. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HOLD IN BONDAGE ANYTHING THAT IS HIS. 1. The poor struggling sinner shall escape the bonds of his guilt, his depravity, his doubts, Satan, and the world (Psa. cxxiv. 7). 2. The bondaged child of God shall not be held captive by tribulation, temptation, or depression (Psa. xxxiv. 19; cxvi. 7). 3. The bodies of His saints shall not be held in the grave (1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Pet. i. 3-5). 4. The groaning creation shall yet burst into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21). Conclusion. Here is a true Easter hymn for all who are in Christ. The Lord is risen indeed, and the happiest consequences must follow. Let us rise in His rising, and walk at large in His loosing. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 25-28. **For David speaketh concerning Him.**—*A prophetic panorama of the life of Jesus:*—These words of David show Jesus—I. IN HIS RELATION TO THE FATHER. 1. He had a constant recollection of God. "I saw the Lord always," &c. In His early life He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And when the end drew near He said, "I must work," &c. His

faithful people are in this respect like Him in their degrees. 2. He had a constant assurance of the Divine presence—"He is on My right hand." He could speak to the Father anywhere, and be sure that He was always heard. It is granted also to His true disciples to have like gracious freedom of access. 3. He fully accepted and entered into the Divine purpose as to His life. He was not to "be moved." The evils through which He had to pass would have shaken one less fixed in soul. So may each of us overcome in the day of conflict. II. IN A STATE OF DELIGHT. "Therefore did My heart rejoice." Of this delight note—1. That it was reasonable. "Therefore." Why? Because Jesus stood in a proper relation to God. Some seek delight when they are not right towards God. This is irrational. 2. Affected the whole man. The heart rejoiced, and the tongue was glad, and the flesh rested. So His servant Paul, though always sorrowful, was always rejoicing. Oh, blessed paradox! 3. Tinged the dark future with light. "My flesh also shall rest in hope." An unknown experience lay before Him in prospect, and He naturally shrank from it; but such was His delight that He could steadily go forward to His appointed lot. He knew that no evil could befall Him, though He must pass through the kingdom of the dead. So are His servants upheld and comforted in death by thoughts of heaven. 4. Was brought to its fulness by His resurrection and ascension. "Ways of life" were made known to Jesus by experience when He laboured among men. When men thought He had gone finally in the way of death, the way of victorious life was made known in His resurrection. Thus was His joy enhanced in ways and degrees known only to Himself. And that joy reached its fulness when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. "Full of joy with Thy countenance." His people are to sit with Him upon His throne, as He sits on the Father's throne. Then "they shall hunger no more," &c. Conclusion: See here—1. The unity of Holy Scripture. Christ is its chief subject. Its main purpose is the setting forth of the truth concerning Him. Peter pointed out allusion to Him where it had not been previously seen; and from His Person there shines a light in which many obscurities disappear. 2. The privileges of those who are complete in Christ. By His grace they are brought into proper relations to God, and have thenceforward meat to eat which the world knows not of. His salvation transcends all other good. (*W. Hudson.*) **Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.**—*Christ's descent into hell and rising again from the dead:*—St. Peter, in a short but notable sermon, demonstrates Jesus to be the Messiah. The Holy One of God, the Lord, the Christ. 1. From the miracles He did in His lifetime, they being witnesses of the same (ver. 22). 2. By the fulfilling of prophecy. In being not only rejected by His own, but crucified by them, according to the determinate counsel of God (ver. 23). 3. From the wonders He did, not in life only, but in death. He brake through the bonds of it; the grave could not detain His body, nor Hades His soul. And this according to prophecy and promise (Psa. xvi. 10), which is the apostle's quotation and my text. In discussing this doctrine, I will show—I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S SOUL BEING IN HELL? For, with respect to His Godhead, we may say of Him in the words of the Psalmist (Psa. cxxxix. 7, 8). But our discourse is of the soul of the Messiah, and that was for a while in hell; not in a state of torment. But the soul of the Messiah, when He gave up His ghost, passed into the receptacle of blessed souls, into that paradise where the redeemed and pardoned are lodged, and where with Him went the repenting thief on the cross (Luke xxiii. 43). It is this receptacle of good souls, this paradise for those that die in Christ, that is called Hades; that is, an invisible state, a being, though in a remote region, which eye cannot reach or penetrate. I confess it is a hard matter to beat out of the vulgar heads the gross conception of the word hell, which sounds to them no other than horror, and blackness of darkness, and fire and brimstone. "A place very improper to look for the soul of Christ when departed out of His body, for Him and His betrayer Judas to meet in the same place. He that had by death purchased heaven for others, Himself after death to descend into hell. This, therefore, cannot be; no, is not the meaning of the word hell where Christ went. He came not near that abyss, nor was at all among those reprobated crew." The true, easy, and natural sense of Hades is an invisible region. Objection: If Hades means paradise, why should Christ pray against His being left in Hades, as He hopes His body shall not see corruption? Answer: He doth not pray thus, as if it were not well with His soul in Hades, as to what He enjoyed. For His soul was the soul of the Messiah, the soul of a Redeemer, a soul that was to conquer death, and not to stay any considerable time from His body

born of the Virgin Mary. He had work to do which other souls had not; He was to rise for others' justification. He was to ascend into the holy of holiest, as the great High Priest of our souls; and therefore He must return to His body, that He may as God-Man in human flesh for ever enter into glory. As if He should say, Thou wilt not leave Me unto death; that is, My soul in separation. This would be the triumph of the devil. II. THE OCCASION AND REASON OF THIS ARTICLE BEING INSERTED IN OUR CREED. Not that it was there at first, but it came in afterward, and that occasioned by a new heresy that started up in the Church; and therefore to obviate that this article was added as a truth provable from Scripture, that Christ went into Hades. The error was this, that Christ had no proper intellectual or rational soul. Which heresy was begun and propagated by one Apollonius and his followers. That the Word or the Divinity supplied the place of a soul, and that therefore He was not properly dead when His body was in the grave. But in opposition to this error, the Christians assert that Christ had a human soul, that it underwent all the offices of one in the body and out of the body. And when He was crucified, and by the pains of that disposed for a resignation of His Spirit, He gave it up to God, and waited upon His disposal of it. For all souls are to return to the Father of spirits, to be consigned to the state or place they are meet for. And the soul of the Messiah went to the apartment of separated souls, that is, of good and righteous ones. 1. That we are assured that we are when we go hence. And the disciples of Christ go to Paradise, as He did. I do not say they go into the heaven of heavens, for that Christ did not Himself until He reassumed His body. But when they are not as to mortal eye they shall be. "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Thy soul and Mine shall go together to the assembly of the firstborn. The dissolution of our bodies shall not break off our being; the soul, the better part, is, even in the state of separation. They enter into rest, not a cessation of being or a rest of sleep. But they rest in hope, they live in a joyful expectation of a more glorious appearance. Our Saviour's return to reassume His body gave an ocular demonstration of the immortality both of body and soul. 2. A God incarnate takes actual care both of our bodies and souls, in every state after we come into the body; in life, in death, and after death. A God incarnate, I say; for so was the Lord of glory that was crucified for us, that died, and rose again from the dead (John x. 17, 18). And this power He exerts not only for Himself, but all His followers. He is with them in life, in death, in the body, and out of the body. He dwells with them by His Spirit while in the tabernacle of the flesh; and when out of the body they are with the Lord. He beams His light of glory into the regions they are in, for a while, as separate from the body. He never leaves them nor forsakes them. St. Stephen, under a shower of stones, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (chap. vii. 55). And some such like manifestations separate souls have of their glorified Saviour, which makes them wait with joy for a farther salvation. 3. That a separation hereafter will be ever made betwixt the righteous and unrighteous. Our Saviour in the state of separation had nothing to do with the damned; He gave them no visit. He went not into hell in this sense. 4. Nothing shall withhold us from returning unto the body when the time of reunion comes. III. THE INCORRUPTIBILITY OF HIS BODY. It was not to see corruption. Though the soldiers gave Him His death wounds, yet they did not fester, nor His body see corruption. The immaculate Lamb was without spot; He was pierced, but He was not putrified; He was butchered, but not blemished. His body was cast into the grave, but it did not see corruption. Worms were neither His brothers nor sisters. His body was of a purer make, and had none of that taint that could attract such vermin. I shall represent to you some considerations why Christ's body was not to see corruption. 1. Because He was in three days to reassume it, according to promise, and His own prediction. His body was not to be a mortal body as ours, to return to dust. That was the melancholy sentence passed on the posterity of Adam, but not to reach him that is the second Adam, who was though the son of Adam, as says St. Luke, yet not according to an ordinary generation. He had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again"; and He spake, says the text, of the "temple His body" (John ii. 21). 2. His body was not to see corruption because He was the second Adam, and was not under the guilt of the first. He was the Lord from heaven and the Lord of glory; and His body was to be a glorious body. His body was never stained by sin or sickness, and His death wounds only opened a passage for His Spirit; but the cabinet, though broken or bruised, was not disjointed. The

temple was destroyed without dislocation of any part. The first Adam brought in sin and death into the world; the second, life and immortality. An argument which the apostle pursues, in 1 Cor. xv. 47, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man is the Lord from heaven." Our natures, as derivative from a sinner, are decreed to death and dissolution, and must sink into the same principle of which they are compounded, but the second Man is the Lord from heaven—the Lord of life and immortality. And therefore, in ver. 45, the apostle styles Him a quickening Spirit, keeping His body tenantable, though He went out of it; and not only so, but He was Lord of His own body, and none other had power and dominion over it. None, nor anything, could assault His body laid up as in a repository for His returning. 3. His body was not to see corruption because He was, as the Christian High Priest, to enter into the Holy of Holiest, as the firstfruits of the dead. So our apologist, St. Peter, ver. 29, &c. This spiritual High Priest must enter into the Holy of Holiest, with all His body and soul clean, and clear, pure and perfect, radiant and glorious; the true regalia that adorned the investiture of this High Priest. The Christian High Priest was to be a freeman, not a prisoner. He was not to enter with shackles, but rather with the armature of a glorious Victor (Eph. vi. 13). The doctrinal part of this sermon speaks comfort to us all that should enliven us and fill us with joy in believing. 1. The same Lord Jesus that raised and reassumed His own body, shall raise ours, and make them like His glorious body (Phil. iii. 21). 2. Because Christ is our Lord, He hath redeemed our bodies by His precious blood, and He sacrificed His body for ours, and we have dedicated our bodies to Him, and He is Lord of our bodies. Not only our souls, but our bodies are redeemed by Him from the grave, and here is the state of the dead. 3. That Christ raised His own body. But I am not preaching to infidels, but believers: and we know that because Christ is risen we also shall arise, and our bodies shall be made like Christ's body. For—4. Christ will do this great work by taking away all those corruptible qualities and infirmities to which our bodies are liable, both living and dead. That this vile body may be refined, and free from decay, being made like the glorified body of Jesus after the resurrection. 5. The instrument by which our Lord shall effect this wonder, even by His omnipotence. "Why," says the same apostle, "should it be thought impossible that God should raise the dead?" 6. We conclude that a spiritual resurrection in this life must precede the blessed and glorious resurrection to eternal life. It is for the sake of a raised mind that the body shall be like Christ's glorious body; for we must not expect to have a part in the resurrection of the just, unless in this life we commence such men. (*W. Allen, D.D.*) **Thou hast made known to me the ways of life.**—*The experience and prospect of a real Christian:*—This exulting language (quoted from Psa. xvi. 11) may be adopted by those who believe in Christ, and have a lively sense of interest in His salvation. I. THE LANGUAGE OF DEVOUT GRATITUDE. "Thou hast made known," &c. Compared with such a communication, every other kind of knowledge is insignificant. The ways which are worthy to be called "ways of life" are "made known" by none except the Almighty. The "life" to which they lead us is the life of faith, holiness, and peace in the present world, and the life of inconceivable excellence and delight in the world to come. "The ways of life" may therefore justly be called "the ways of God." He has prepared these ways; in the gospel He reveals them; and, by the influence of His Spirit, He conducts into them. Nor are these "ways" merely "made known" to a Christian—he occupies them, and recommends them; they are his delight; in them he meets God, and communes with Him. Thus he grows in grace and likeness to the Divine image. II. THE LANGUAGE OF DEVOUT EXPECTATION. "Thou shalt make me," &c. 1. Christians already find that sin has lost its commanding influence; but they anticipate its entire extinction and their complete deliverance from all evil. 2. Christians anticipate a removal out of the world. 3. Christians anticipate the successful termination of their conflict with invisible principalities and powers. 4. Christians anticipate eternal intercourse with each other, and with all the angels of God. 5. Hence we are led to the richest view of the prospect with which Christians are indulged—they anticipate a vision all Divine. "Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance." (*O. A. Jeary.*)

VERS. 29–32. **Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David.**—*An anti-rationalist argument:*—Peter avers—I. THAT DAVID COULD NOT HAVE SAID OF HIMSELF THE WORDS HERE QUOTED. For this he states the threefold

reason, that David had died, that he had been buried, and that his tomb was still shown. No one had ever heard of his returning to life; his soul was still in the kingdom of the dead, and his flesh must long since have returned to dust. Yet he had spoken the truth in the words quoted. Then those words must refer to some other than himself. To whom could they refer? For an answer to this question Peter asks his hearers to consider—II. THAT DAVID WAS WONT TO THINK AND SPEAK OF THE MESSIAH. God had sworn to David, and told him concerning the Messiah —1. That He would be His descendant. The descent could be traced to the Lord's mother, who was now present. 2. That He would succeed him on the throne of Israel. David's line was to be restored and completed in Christ, though the disobedience of his posterity caused the kingdom to pass to another family for a time. 3. That He would die. This is assumed in the apostle's quotation, and must be included in the meaning of David's words. And therefore—4. That He would rise from the dead. For the prophecy points to a sitting on the throne of David which should follow the death and the resurrection of the Messiah. All these things had been foretold by David, with conscious reference to the promises of the covenant. We need not suppose that he saw the full meaning of what he said; but that which he said of himself, and which exceeded what was true concerning himself, was proper in allusion to Christ, and ultimately found its explanation in the events of His course. And Peter takes this position without apology. What is his reason for so acting? It is—III. THAT EVENTS WELL KNOWN HAD FULFILLED THE PROPHECY OF DAVID. The most striking event of the series is put forward in confirmation of the whole, and the vouchers for it are produced. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." They knew who "this Jesus" was, and what was His descent. They knew that He had died but a few weeks before at Jerusalem, and had been buried. Probably all the disciples now present had seen Him after His resurrection. All the mixed multitude now present were witnesses that His resurrection was affirmed by His friends, and that His enemies could not otherwise account for the disappearance of His body. They were all, therefore, God's witnesses. The inevitable conclusion was that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; and this conclusion involved His kingship and His succession to David. This last was the only point yet remaining to be proved. We admire the precision and steady progress of this argument. Conclusion: Let us pause here and reflect on Peter's way of disposing of rationalism. Those whom he addressed followed reason and judged by appearances. He met them by an appeal to facts. Whatever reason might have said beforehand, David, under Divine direction, had recorded certain predictions, and those predictions had been fulfilled. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." How else can the rationalism of this day be dealt with? 1. The character of Christ as sketched beforehand in prophecy is presented in the Gospels. 2. The course of Christianity as foretold by the Lord and His apostles has been witnessed thus far through the ages. 3. The promises made to those who repent and believe are clearly fulfilled from day to day. And in the character of Christ, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the Christian life, with its blessed fellowship with God and power of virtuous conduct, there are unanswerable "evidences" for Christianity. (*W. Hudson.*) **This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.**—*The witness of the disciples:*—The only possible issue to the life of our Lord was His standing up again in life, and His entrance visibly as a risen Man into the spiritual, eternal world. In that world He had lived while still a mortal Man. "The Son of Man which is in heaven" is the sentence which contains the key to the innermost shrine of His life. This life which on earth was lived in heaven, brought to bear on man's earthly state all the influences of the eternal world. And as the life of Christ could only fulfil itself in its most quickening core of force by resurrection, so in all His previsions and predictions about His death, He included the idea of resurrection. For precisely such a phenomenon our Lord's language should have prepared the disciples; and their record is the more significant inasmuch as He was wholly misapprehended by them, and only when they were compelled by overwhelming evidence to accept it as a historical fact, did they begin to realise the regenerative power with which it might be charged for the world. For the resurrection was entirely transcendent, though, like all Divine facts, when it was revealed it fitted the place in history which was vacant for it—it explained and completed the whole movement of the ages, and keyed the arch which, but for it, would have become a wreck. But the gospel is not a philosophy of resurrection, but a proclamation. It says nothing about antecedent probabilities, secular preparations, or aspirations and hopes. These we investigate and discuss,

and are right in so doing. But what the gospel proclaims is the historical fact of the resurrection, and through this proclamation the whole world of civilisation has come to believe it. But all rests on the original proclamation, the credibility and sufficiency of the original witnesses; the character and amount of the testimony which is behind the affirmation. We have a very clear and succinct statement of the evidence in the words of Paul (1 Cor. xv. 3–8), and it seems as complete as can well be conceived. The Epistle was written within the generation which followed the resurrection. The majority of the witnesses were alive when it was written. There is no question of the moral honesty of the testimony. This thing, remember, was not done in a corner. There was a powerful national party at Jerusalem whose very existence was staked on proving it a fiction. Any flaw in the harness, any weak link in the chain, keen eyes would have hunted out and exposed. But there is not a trace anywhere of an answer to the apostle's *précis* of testimony; not a hint that this argument on the resurrection had been answered by denying it as a fact. The witnesses are ample in number, character, and opportunity of knowledge, and their testimony is that of men who had not the faintest idea that there was any one who could raise a valid doubt on the subject anywhere about the world. This leads me to the features of the evidence. I. Surely the most prominent thing which strikes one about it is its PERFECT SIMPLICITY AND NATURALNESS. Pascal notes "the naturalness (*naïveté*) with which Jesus Christ speaks of the things of God and of eternity." With the same naturalness do the apostles speak of the resurrection. In the account of the meeting at the sea of Tiberias (John xxi.), the naturalness of their communion with the risen Saviour is the wonderful thing. Transcendently wonderful, as it was, they write about it quite as simply and naturally as about the Sermon on the Mount, or the journey to Jerusalem; and instead of spending all their strength on parading the evidence of it, they are more reticent and more artless about it than about many another far less momentous fact in the history of our Lord. The manner in which the resurrection brought itself at once so perfectly into the natural order of the disciples' lives, is to me an absolute proof that they knew they were dealing with a simple though profound and far-reaching fact. They write as if the restoration of their Lord to them, when they had once grasped the fact, was the most natural thing in the world. The only key to this is its truth. II. It is entirely the evidence of DISCIPLES, of those who had a deep personal interest in establishing the resurrection as a truth. Understand what the word "interest" means. The notion of a company of interested followers of Christ, conspiring for their own purposes to palm this tale upon the world, is abandoned on all hands as utterly inadequate. These were true men, whatever else they might be. The witnesses had the deepest interest in the truth of the resurrection, but it would have been quite worthless to them except as truth. They had nothing to gain but everything to lose by the proclamation, except in as far as the power of the resurrection as a fact lay behind it. They were the best of all possible witnesses; witnesses whose supreme interest is truth. We can, however, well imagine evidence of a different character, which we are tempted to think would have at once forced conviction home on every rational mind. If it had been proved, say to the full satisfaction of the Roman procurator, after a review of all the evidence for and against it, that would have immediately established it as an unquestionable fact in history, and the whole world would have been filled with wonder and adoration. But the actual evidence is a striking contrast to this. It made no attempt to impose itself as a fact forced by the overwhelming weight of evidence on an unwilling world. Like the Incarnation, it was to be a power, and not a portent. In this, too, the kingdom of heaven came not with observation; its mission was to open minds and believing hearts alone. The spirit which seeks a sign, and the faith which is nourished on a sign, are alike worthless in that spiritual order which the Lord came to establish. The spirit which is turned to God, by the word and the work of the Saviour, is inestimably precious in His sight, and is a power in His kingdom of heaven. The Lord put deliberately from Him through life the homage which He might have won, and the power which He might have wielded, by portents and splendours; and obeying the Divine necessity to trust to the truth alone, He put them from Him also in death and in resurrection. "My kingdom is not of this world," He said through all—birth, life, death, and resurrection. The fact, then, that the evidence is entirely of the kind described, the evidence of disciples, of men in spiritual fellowship with it, and on whose lips and in whose lives it would be not a portent but a power, is in entire and beautiful harmony with

the whole spirit and method of the Divine dispensations, and lies in the true line of the spiritual culture and development of mankind. III. Granting, then, that the evidence must be that of spiritual witnesses to a fact whose whole virtue was spiritual, can anything be more EXPLICIT AND COMPLETE than the testimony which they bear? We have not the witness of a single, possibly hysterical, or fanatical, follower. The evidence was offered again and again to individuals, to companies, to a great crowd of disciples, with opportunities of tactical satisfaction, leaving actually nothing to be desired. Words were spoken and are recorded which none but the risen Man could have uttered. And the demonstration is crowned by the actual effect of the resurrection, in the instant and complete transformation which it accomplished in the lives of the witnesses. We cannot read John xxi. and Acts ii. without the conviction that some such fact as the resurrection is absolutely needed to account for the contrast in the narratives. The disciples were not in a mood even to think about inventing such a fact. They accepted the decease as a death-blow to their hopes. Nothing was further from their thoughts than to lead a movement which would reconstruct and save society. And yet, in a few days, the work is in vigorous progress. As by the touch of some mighty creative Hand, these men are re-made. They are preaching the resurrection with a power which is to shake the whole structure of society, and they are kindling hearts like flame, in the very city where the events were transacted. Peter, heart-broken, going back bravely to his fisherman's toils—Peter, standing out as an incomparable teacher and leader of men, founding a Church which at this day is the strongest institution upon earth—Peter the disciple, who denied his Master, Peter the apostle, who won for Him the homage and worship of mankind—what links the two but the fact of the resurrection; the fact that a risen and reigning Christ was behind him, lending heaven's own force to every action, and heaven's own emphasis to every word? And what happened to them, through the resurrection, happened to the world. It began to work instantly as a tremendous force in organising and uplifting human society. It is said of a city, "There was great joy in that city when these evangelists came to it." It is the feature everywhere. Joy, strength, hope, vital activity, all by which men and societies grow, sprang up like willows by the water-courses, wherever the sound of that gospel of the resurrection was heard. For nearly two thousand years that order has been strengthening its foundations and widening its circuit, and its unquestioned, unquestionable basis has been and is the resurrection and reign of the risen Lord. And this you ask me to believe is an imposture or a delusion! Well, I may believe it when I am driven to believe that everything is imposture or illusion; that I am illusion; that the great world around me and the great heaven above me is illusion; that all which man holds noble and beautiful, all that he thinks worth living for, worth dying for, is illusion; and that a mocking demon is the master, the ruler, and the tormentor of the world. Till then I believe and preach Jesus and the Resurrection. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*)

The witness of the Church:—Nothing that our Lord did on earth was enough to establish a faith in Himself which should survive His death. At the end of His career, not even the Twelve retained their conviction. If the Lord had only left us the Sermon on the Mount and the memory of a martyrdom, there would never have been a Church. The risen and ascended Christ is the only intelligible account that can be given of the existence of our faith. From beyond the grave the living Master works. And how? By a Spirit. But for that Spirit to act firmly, enduringly, there must be given an instrument, an organic body, and the office of that body is clearly determined for it by the conditions of its existence. "The Spirit of truth proceeding from the Father shall bear witness of Me, and ye also shall bear witness," and so the apostles say, "We are witnesses of these things." I. THE CHURCH IS THE WITNESSING BODY; IT PROVES CHRIST'S CASE. 1. Before God the Father. It manifests His glory by justifying His method of redemption; it bears witness before God that He has not sent His Son in vain. 2. In the face of men. It is to convince, so that even an unbelieving world may believe that the Father sent the Son. II. IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS CONVERSION OF THE WORLD, THE CHURCH HAS TO PROVE AND TESTIFY. 1. That Christ is alive and at work to-day on earth, and that He can be found of them that believe, and manifest Himself to those that love Him. 2. That He is so by virtue of the deed done once for all at Calvary. III. WHAT PROOFS CAN THE CHURCH OFFER FOR THESE POINTS? 1. Its own actual life. Its one prevailing and unanswerable proof is, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." 2. This personal life of Christ in His Church verifies and certifies to the world the reality of His life, death, and resurrection. The fact

that the man at the Beautiful Gate has this perfect soundness—this makes it certain that God did send His Son Christ Jesus to be a Prince of Life. And therefore the living Church bears a book about with it, the gospel book, the witness of those who beheld, tasted, handled the Word of Life. "This book," the body of Christ, declares, "is true, and we know that these apostles spoke true; we are here to prove it, in that we have tasted the present power of that Word whose story they saw and recorded." 3. And again, the body carries with it the apostolic rite, the act commanded by the dying Christ to be done for ever as a memorial and a witness until His coming again. IV. BY BELIEVING IN A BODY, A CHURCH, OUR FAITH LAYS UPON US RESPONSIBILITIES. It gives us a call; it sets us each a task. And is not this just what our religion most lacks? There is so little sense of purpose in our religious life. Religion is a comfortable habit, a refreshment in weariness, a solace and security in the face of death. Yes, but is it the one thing that gives us a living reason for being alive? Is it that which sets us on an aim worthy and enkindling, for which it is well worth while to live? Does it come to us as something which lays upon us a service of delightful freedom under the eye of a Master who waits ever to say, "Well done, well done, thou faithful servant"? Is not this exactly what we lack? If Christ established a Church, this means that every member has, by believing, a definite, an urgent, a glad and proud task set before him. That task is to witness; and do you doubt whether you have any call to witness for Christ? For what is this witness? It is the evidence you can give by active personal union with your Lord, now alive at God's right hand, of the authority of the gospel record and of the gospel Eucharist. And is there no one, then, who needs that evidence from you? 1. Can you find no one near you who is struggling with doubt and perplexity as he reads that gospel story? It is your witness and your evidence that alone can recover him his footing. 2. Is there no one who looks out upon the scenery of this bewildered earth and who can see nothing but confused suffering and unjust penalties; who can but cry out his bitter protest, "Is God indeed to be found there? Is there a Divine Judge of all the earth? Where are the signs of His love?" What if your witness were ready at hand?—if you could but whisper, "I know that the love of God has been manifested to all who believe Christ Jesus, every one that so believeth hath the witness in him"? 3. Or you may find yourself standing by one whom some strong sin has fast bound in misery and iron. Now is your time to speak, to cry to him, to deliver your testimony—"My brother, you may be free, for Christ is not dead—He is risen; He the great breaker of bonds, He is strong as of old to set free the captives." Conclusion: It is for us to be sure that we know, by blessed experience, that Christ was manifested to take away our sins; and that is the message that you have to carry on your lips—"We know that it is true." It would be a miserable thing to find yourself standing over some brother, with your human heart indeed yearning to help him, and yet to find yourself speechless and impotent just because you had never taken the trouble to learn, when you had time, the happy lesson which would enable you to say to him the one word that can now save him. (*Canon Scott Holland.*)

Our witness to the resurrection:—Let us see whether it is not a fact that just after the same manner that the angel, the guard, the women, and the apostles did testify in the beginning to this cardinal truth of our holy religion, so in our own time like testimony is afforded. Daily an angel sitteth at the door of Christian hearts with the message that Christ is risen! Daily do the careless and indifferent among mankind find themselves forced to confess that there are thoughts of the future which, if they admit them into their minds, cause them to feel as dead men in the midst of all the business of the world. Daily do the godly who seek Christ rejoice in the sure signs and tokens of His resurrection. First, then, there is such a witness to the resurrection supernaturally present in our hearts. In all this assembly what man or woman can say they have never heard a voice whispering within their hearts the solemn assurance that Jesus hath risen, and that we shall rise with Him? To take an illustration. Are there not many here who have known what it is to miss from their home, from their daily walk in life, the face of parent, of brother, of friend, of husband, of wife, of child? And as you have bent with breaking heart over the sepulchre of your buried affection, has no angel spoken to you: "It is not here, the object of your tender love and sorrow. All that is true and real lives still! He is risen. Behold He goeth before you into the courts of the heavenly mansions, there shall ye see Him!" There is not a bitter sorrow that is not rolled away together with that stone from the door of the sepulchre of Jesus. And though the traces of our grief be left, though the earthly garments in which

we had wrapped all that was lovely in our lives are lying there in a place by themselves, yet do we know by that same angelic voice that the joys that we have experienced in the past we shall possess again in the future, and that in the land whither our Saviour Christ is gone before we shall know and be known once more! The dawn of hope which we see to succeed the dark night of sorrow in these deep water-floods of affliction enables us to perceive that the stone has been rolled away from the heart, and that an angel of God is seated upon it. In our hearts, then, there is a witness to the truth of the resurrection. This Jesus hath God raised from the dead, whereof our hearts are witnesses. But although God hath His own witness in the hearts of men, to His own Divine truth, yet (since He has ever been pleased to work through human instruments) it is manifestly required by Him that we should feel, every one of us—yes, the weakest, the poorest—that our whole life and conversation is intended to be a witness to the resurrection: that we should so live that men may know that we live, yet not we ourselves, but Christ liveth in us, and that the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. (*T. L. Claughton, M.A.*)

Vers. 33–36. **Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted.**—*The right hand of God:*—The phrase imports—I. THE UNSPEAKABLE FELICITY INTO WHICH CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE—for it is of Christ incarnate that this is said, and as the reward of His sufferings as a man—HAD NOW ENTERED; for "in Thy presence is fulness of joy," &c. (Psa. xvi. 11). II. THE GLORIOUS MAJESTY TO WHICH HE HAD REACHED (Heb. i. 3; viii. 1). III. THE FULNESS OF POWER WITH WHICH HE IS INVESTED who has declared, "All power is given unto Me," &c. (Matt. xxviii. 18). (See Psa. xx. 6; lxxxix. 13; Matt. xxvi. 64). IV. THE JUDICIAL THRONE ON WHICH HE SITS (Rom. xiv. 9, 10). (*D. Whitby, D.D.*) *The ascension and its meaning:*—Peter shows—I. THAT IT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY. Again the particular prediction is taken from David. It is a passage applied by Jesus to Himself, to the confusion of the Pharisees, whose silence was a confession of its Messianic character (Matt. xxii. 42–46). Its fulfilment was by the power of God. The hand is that part of the body by which man puts forth his strength, and the right hand is superior to the left; and God, condescending to human ways of speech, represents the exercise of His power as the work of His right hand. Creation was done by a word; but this concluding act of redemption demanded the putting forth of Jehovah's power. II. THAT IT HAD TAKEN THE REDEEMER TO HIS HEAVENLY CONDITION. He was exalted, that He might "sit at the right hand of God" (*cf.* Matt. xxvi. 64; Rom. viii. 34; Heb. i. 3, viii. 1). This condition is marked by—1. A continuous quiet dominion. (1) He has dominion, being "at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and that dominion involves "all authority in heaven and in earth." (2) But He rules in quietness and rest. Having finished His great work, He "sits." Angels, being evermore on duty (Heb. i. 14), stand about the throne. God says not to them, "Sit on My right hand." (3) This dominion will continue until its Mediatorship has answered its purpose. 2. Perfect happiness (Psa. xvi. 11). The great joy had been set before Him, and had sustained Him in sorrow. Let His consummate blessedness show us the good placed within the reach of man. 3. The subduing of His foes. The allusion is to the ancient custom of conquerors to set their feet upon the necks of the vanquished. Who are His foes? 1. The Jews, who were subdued when their nationality was destroyed. 2. The Romans, who were subdued when their empire was comprehended in Christendom. 3. The pagans, that still remain. These will be subdued when the gospel has been preached to all nations for a witness. 4. Men and women in Christendom who still reject Him. They also will see their folly and sin, and acknowledge Him either too soon or too late. 5. Sin and Satan, but these will be cast out. 6. Death. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." III. THAT IT WAS DECLARED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE BY EVENTS NOW TRANSPIRING. "He hath shed forth this," &c. These events—1. Showed that the Holy Spirit had been given. This Peter does not tire of repeating. Its importance demanded its repetition, and does so still. But Jesus had said that unless He went to the Father the Holy Spirit would not come. Therefore His manifest presence proved the ascension. 2. Were a fulfilment of the Father's promise. The promise made through the prophets had been repeated to Jesus, and by Him to the apostles; and He was now gone to receive what was promised. This was the simple, straightforward explanation of what was happening. 3. Were brought about by Jesus Himself. "He hath shed." During His ministry He had wrought unnumbered

miracles, every one of which displayed Divine power, and He was but continuing what He had begun (Eph. iv. 8). 4. Were in themselves wonderful. "*This* which ye now see and hear." Explanation was not attempted. What was seen and heard was enough to work conviction. IV. In the ascension Peter finds THE CONCLUDING POINT OF HIS ARGUMENT—viz., that Jesus was Lord and Christ. Then they had crucified the Messiah. No wonder they were pricked in the heart. In conclusion, see here—1. The means to be employed by preachers: the facts of history and experience, with interpretations from the Word of God. 2. The end to be aimed at by preachers—that personal conviction which prepares sinners to accept Christ. (*W. Hudson.*) *The exaltation of Christ*:—He is there at the right hand of God, above all principality and power, and every name that is named. He is not there among the patriarchs; He is higher up. He is not there among the martyrs; He is higher up. He is not there among the prophets; He is higher up. He is not there among the four and twenty elders; He is higher up. He is not there with the four living beings that are immediately surrounding the throne; He is higher up. He is at the right hand, in the midst of the throne, literally over all, God-blessed for ever. That throne will never be called the throne of God and the patriarchs, or the throne of God and the prophets, or the throne of God and the angels, or the throne of God and the martyrs, but it will evermore be called the throne of God and of the Lamb; for He that giveth not His glory to another has taken Him unto that throne, and at that throne He stands as the Lamb that was slain, bearing upon Him in the central seat of glory and brightness the dark tokens of death: the dear tokens of His passion still His dazzling body bears, and from that centre of authority He hath poured out, "He hath shed forth that which now ye do see and hear." (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) **He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.**—*The effusion of the Spirit*:—I. THE PROMISES OF THE SPIRIT, UNDER PRECEDING DISPENSATIONS. As the prophecies of Christ served to identify the Messiah on His manifestation in the flesh, and prove His Divine mission, so these predictions of the coming and agency of the Holy Ghost in the ancient Scriptures of the Jewish people, conspire, with the facts afterwards to be noticed as the accomplishment of them, to show that it is a Divine energy from on high which is now amongst us of a truth. II. THE COMMUNICATION OF THE HOLY GHOST FROM THE HANDS OF THE EXALTED REDEEMER. 1. The work of the Holy Ghost is essentially connected with the work of Christ. Of old the Spirit was given to foretell it, but His greater province was to attest and apply it. 2. This communication of the Spirit from the hands of the exalted Saviour makes distinctly manifest what is everywhere implied in Scripture—that the gift of the Holy Ghost is a purely gratuitous and gracious bestowment. III. WHAT IS STATED TO BE THE NATURE OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH. What were those manifestations thus dispensed from the hands of the Redeemer, of which we read in Scripture, and some of which are matters of observation or of consciousness still? 1. There were those supernatural endowments, called in Scripture "Spiritual gifts," which first proclaimed the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. 2. With this stands closely connected the inspiration of the apostles. The system of truth which the spiritual gifts were to attest was that of which they were the professed expositors; and it was in the train of their ministry that these manifestations appeared. 3. We have further to advert to that, to which all that we have been dwelling upon is but subservient, as means to the end—the manifestation of that new element of spiritual life which sprung up in connection with the exhibition of apostolic truth, and which is ascribed in Scripture to the application of that truth to the soul by the Holy Ghost. The first work of the Spirit, of which we have spoken, was chiefly for attestation; the second, for instruction; this third, for regeneration and salvation. And if the Spirit appears glorious in His gifts and diversities of miraculous working, and as the source of inspiration in the apostles and prophets, much more is it so when we view Him as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and as establishing "a law" within the renewed soul, which makes it "free from the law of sin and death." (*E. T. Prust.*) **Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**—*The Lordship of Christ*:—I. THE APOSTLE APPLIES HIMSELF TO HIS AUDITORY IN A FAIR, GENTLE MANNER. We have a word amongst us in familiar use—"compliment"; and for the most part in an ill sense, for the heart of a speaker does not always answer his tongue. But God forbid but a true heart and a fair tongue might very well consist together. He aggravates his condemnation who gives me fair words and means ill; but he gives me a rich jewel in a

choice cabinet, precious wine in a clean glass, who intends and expresses his good intentions well. II. So the apostle is civil here; but his civility does not amount to flattery; and therefore, though he gives his audience their titles, HE PUTS HOME TO THEM THE CRUCIFYING OF CHRIST. How honourably soever they were descended, he lays that murder close to their consciences. It is one thing to sew pillows under the elbows of kings, as flatterers do, and another to pull the chair from under them, as seditious men do. When inferiors insult over their superiors, we tell them they are the Lord's anointed; and when such superiors insult over the Lord Himself, we must tell them, "Though you be the Lord's anointed, yet you crucify the anointed Lord"; for this was Peter's method, though his successor will not be bound by it. III. When he hath carried the matter thus evenly between them, HE ANNOUNCES A MESSAGE. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly." Need the house of Israel know anything? Need the honourable to be instructed? Yes, for this knowledge is such that the house of Israel is without a foundation if it be without it. Let no Church or man think that he hath done enough or known enough. The wisest must know more, though they be the house of Israel; and then, though you have crucified Christ, you may know it. St. Paul says, "If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8); but he never says they are excluded from the knowledge. The wisest have ever something to learn; they must not presume. The sinfullest have God ever ready to teach them; they must not despair. Now the universality of this mercy God has extended very far, in that He proposes it even to our knowledge: "Let all know it." And therefore it is not enough for us to tell you except you believe all this you shall be damned, without we execute that commission before, "Go and preach"; and it is not enough for you to rest in imaginary faith and easiness of believing, except you know what, why, and how you believe. The implicit believer stands in an open field, and the enemy will ride over him easily; the understanding believer is a fenced town, and hath outworks to lose before the town be pressed—*i.e.*, reasons to be answered before his faith be shaked. Let all men know—*i.e.*, inform themselves and understand. IV. THE PARTICULAR WHICH ALL WERE TO KNOW was that this same Jesus whom they crucified was exalted. Suppose an impossibility: if we could have been in paradise, and seen God make of a clod a body fit for an immortal soul—fit for God the Son to dwell in, and fit for a temple of the Holy Ghost, should we not have wondered more than at the production of all other creatures? It is more that this same crucified Jesus should be exalted to the right hand of the glorious God. Let, then, sinners pass through their several sins, and remember with wonder and confusion that the Jesus whom they have crucified is exalted above all. How far exalted? Three steps carry Him above St. Paul's third heaven. 1. God made Him so, not nature. The contract between the Father and Him that all He did should be done so—this is what hath exalted Him, and us in Him. 2. God made Him Christ—*i.e.*, anointed Him above His fellows. 3. God made Him Lord. But what kind of Lord, if He had no subjects? God hath given Him these too (Rom. xiv. 9). (*J. Donne, D.D.*) *Jesus as Lord*:—We are apt to let this idea slip. As soon as we have apprehended Christ as Saviour, we suppose sometimes that the work is done; whereas it is but just begun. Christ is Saviour in order that He may be King. He saves us first, because that is the only effective way of ruling over us. He cannot capture man and bring him into subjection, except by laying hold of man's heart. It is love that changes, and love that rules. One of our best story-tellers has taken us into a Californian camp. They were a hard, fighting, swearing set, those gold-diggers. But a baby was born into the camp, and these rough men were allowed to go and look at the little babe; and there was one man put his finger down, and the baby's hand wound round it, and seemed to thrill his rough, coarse nature with a new love. The man was changed; the camp was changed. It was love that did it. Love is Christ's method; rule His end. If Christ does not rule men, He has failed in the purpose that called Him here. All living things need a ruling force. The body is useless without the brain to direct its movements; the family fail when father and mother die; an army is powerless when there is no one to give orders; a state is the home of miserable factions when there is no recognised authority; and humanity itself is but a series of disjointed individuals, until Christ is crowned Lord of man and King of the world. Christian men are forgetting Christ's world-wide Lordship and universal claims; and these claims must be pressed home on the hearts and consciences of men until they fully acknowledge Jesus as Lord. I. LORD OF MAN. 1. Ruling man's body, with its passions and inclinations. 2. Guiding man's mind, preserving

the intellect from sophistry, the conscience from error, the heart from corruption. II. LORD OF WOMAN. 1. Touching her tender heart with a deeper pathos for the sufferings of the world. 2. Making her man's helpmeet in all that is pure and ennobling. 3. Enabling her, with man, to deal with all that is evil in society and degrading in public sentiment. III. LORD OF THE CHILD. 1. Alluring the young life along paths of obedience and self-denial and thoughtfulness. 2. Yet filling the lap with buttercups and daises, and merriment and laughter. "Suffer little children," &c. IV. LORD OF THE HOME. Determining its—1. Expenditure. 2. Giving. 3. Habits. 4. Prayers. 5. Purposes, and binding parents, children, servants, into one holy fellowship. V. LORD OF THE CHURCH. Giving—1. Truth to feed the mind. 2. Grace to support the life. 3. Wisdom to guide the judgment. 4. Reverence to lift up the soul in worship. 5. Enthusiasm to inspire the work. 6. A peaceful spirit, binding all together by our golden chain of loving brotherhood. VI. LORD OF THE STATE. 1. Decreeing justice to all. 2. Bringing law into harmony with Divine teaching. 3. Lifting up the poor and abasing the proud. 4. Rebuking the evil doers, and overturning all iniquity. VII. LORD OF THE WORLD. 1. Driving back the darkness. 2. Destroying false religion and bringing in the true. 3. Making the world like heaven. Conclusion: That Lordship of Christ will not let us put on and put off religion with our Sunday clothes. It bids us take Christ with us, not merely to religious work, but so to take Him that all work should be religious. It calls upon Christians to be the subjects of Christ everywhere; to obey Christ in business, in the home, in politics, in reading, in talking, in laughing, in giving, in dying. There is a majesty about this name that men have not yet felt. (*S. Pearson, M.A.*) *The name above every name*:—These names, to us very little more than three proper names, were very different to these men who listened to Peter. It wanted some courage to proclaim on the housetop what he had spoken in the ear long ago. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" To most of his listeners, to say, "Jesus is the Christ" was folly, and to say "Jesus is the Lord" was blasphemy. I. THE NAME JESUS IS THE NAME OF THE MAN, WHICH TELLS US OF A BROTHER. 1. There were many who bore it in His day. We find that one of the early Christians had it (Col. iv. 11). Through reverence on the part of Christians, and horror on the part of Jews, the name ceased to be a common one. But none of all the crowds who knew Him supposed that in His name there was any greater significance than in those of the "Simons," "Johns," and "Judahs" in the circle of His disciples. 2. The use of Jesus as the proper name of our Lord is very noticeable. In the Gospels, as a rule, it stands alone hundreds of times, whilst in combination with any other of the titles it is rare. "Jesus Christ" only occurs twice in Matthew, once in Mark, twice in John. But in the later books, the proportions are reversed. There you have hundreds of such combinations as "Jesus Christ," "Christ Jesus," "The Lord Jesus," "Christ the Lord," and not frequently the full solemn title, "The Lord Jesus Christ." But "Jesus" alone only occurs some thirty or forty times outside of the four evangelists; and in these the writer's intention is to put strong emphasis on the Manhood of our Lord. (1) We find phrases like this: "Jesus died," "the blood of Jesus," which emphasise His death as that of a man like ourselves, and bring us close to the reality of His human pains for us. "Christ died" makes the purpose and efficacy of His death more plain; but "Jesus died" shows us His death as the outcome of His human love. I know that a certain school dwells a great deal too much for reverence upon the mere physical aspect of Christ's sufferings. But the temptation with most of us is to dwell too little upon it, to think about it as a matter of speculation, a mysterious power, an official act of the Messiah, and to forget that He bore a human life, which naturally shrank from the agony of death. (2) When our Lord is set before us in His humanity as our example, this name is used—*e.g.*, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith"—*i.e.*, a mighty stimulus to Christian nobleness lies in the realisation of the true manhood of our Lord, as the type of all goodness, as having Himself lived by faith, and that in a perfect degree and manner. Do not take poor human creatures for your ideal. Black veins are in the purest marble, and flaws in the most lustrous diamonds; but to imitate Jesus is freedom, and to be like Him is perfection. Our code of morals is His life. The secret of all progress is, "Run, looking unto Jesus." (3) We have His manhood emphasised when His sympathy is to be commended to our hearts. "The great High Priest" is "Jesus" . . . "who was in all points tempted like as we are." To every sorrowing soul there comes the thought, "Every ill that flesh is heir to" He knows by experience, and in the man Jesus we find not only the pity of a God,

but the sympathy of a Brother. The Prince of Wales once went for an afternoon into the slums, and everybody said deservedly, "right" and "princely." *This* Prince has "learned pity in the huts where poor men lie." (4) And then you read such words as these: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." How very much closer to our hearts that consolation comes, "Jesus rose again," than even the mighty word, "Christ is risen from the dead." The one tells us of the risen Redeemer, the other tells us of the risen Brother. And wherever we follow our dear ones into the darkness with yearning hearts, there, too, the consolation comes; they lie down beside their Brother, and with their Brother they shall rise again. (5) So again, most strikingly, in the words which paint most loftily the exaltation of the risen Saviour, it is the old human name that is used, as if to bind together the humiliation and the exaltation, and proclaim that a Man had risen to the throne of the universe. What an emphasis and glow of hope there is in, "We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus"—the very Man that was here with us—"crowned with glory and honour." So in the Book of the Revelation, the chosen name for Him that sits amidst the glories of the heavens, and settles the destinies of the universe, and orders the course of history, is Jesus. As if the apostle would assure us that the face which looked down upon him from amidst the blaze of the glory was indeed the face that he knew long ago upon earth, and the breast that "was girded with a golden girdle" was the breast upon which he so often had leaned his happy head. 3. So the ties that bind us to the Man Jesus should be the human bonds that knit us one to another, transferred to Him, and purified and strengthened. All that we have failed to find in men we can find in Him. (1) Human wisdom has its limits; but here is a Man whose word is truth, who is Himself the truth. (2) Human love is sometimes hollow, often impotent; it looks down upon us, as a great thinker has said, like the Venus of Milo, that lovely statue, smiling in pity, but it has no arms. But here is a love that is mighty to help, and on which we can rely without disappointment or loss. (3) Human excellence is always limited and imperfect; but here is One whom we may imitate and be pure. 4. So let us do like that poor woman, bring the precious alabaster box of ointment—the love of these hearts of ours, which is the most precious thing we have to give. The box of ointment that we have so often squandered upon unworthy heads—let us come and pour it upon His, not unmingled with our tears, and anoint Him, our Beloved and our King. II. THE NAME "CHRIST" IS THE NAME OF OFFICE, AND BRINGS TO US A REDEEMER. It is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Messias, both meaning the Anointed. I cannot see less in the contents of the prophetic idea of the Messias than these points: Divine inspiration or anointing; a sufferer who is to redeem; the fulfiller of all the rapturous visions of psalmist and of prophet in the past. And so, when Peter stood up amongst that congregation and said, "The Man that died on the Cross, the Rabbi-peasant from half-heathen Galilee, is the Person whom all the generations have been looking forward to," no wonder that nobody believed him except those whose hearts were touched, for it is never possible for the common mind, at any epoch, to believe that the man that stands beside them is very much bigger than themselves. Great men have always to die, and get a halo of distance around them before their true stature can be seen. And now two remarks are all I can offer. 1. The hearty recognition of His Messiahship is the centre of all discipleship. The earliest and the simplest Christian creed, which yet—like the little brown roll in which the infant beech leaves lie folded up—contains in itself all the rest, was this: "Jesus is Christ." He who contents himself with "Jesus" and does not grasp "Christ," has cast away the most valuable and characteristic part of the Christianity which he professes. Surely the most simple inference is that a Christian is at least a man who recognises the Christship of Jesus. And it is not enough for the sustenance of your souls that men should admire, howsoever profoundly, the humanity of the Lord unless that humanity leads them on to see the office of the Messiah, to whom their whole hearts cleave. "Jesus is the Christ" is the minimum Christian creed. 2. The recognition of Jesus as Christ is essential to giving its full value to the facts of the manhood. (1) "Jesus died! Yes! What then? If that is simply a human death, like all the rest, I want to know what makes it a gospel? What more interest I have in it than I have in the death of any men or women whose names were in the obituary column of yesterday's newspaper? "Jesus died." That is the fact. What is wanted to turn the fact into a gospel? That I shall know who it was that died, and why He died. "I declare unto you the gospel which I preach," Paul says, "how that Christ died

for our sins, according to the Scriptures." The belief that the death of Jesus was the death of the Christ is needful to make that death the means of my deliverance from the burden of sin. If it be only the death of Jesus, it is beautiful, pathetic, as many another martyr's has been; but if it be the death of Christ, then "my faith can lay her hand" on that great sacrifice, and know "her guilt was there." (2) So in regard of His perfect example. To only see His manhood would be as paralysing as spectacles of supreme excellence usually are. But when we can say, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example," and so can deepen the thought of His Manhood into that of His Messiahship, and the conception of His work as example into that of His work as sacrifice, we can hope that His Divine power will dwell in us to mould our lives to the likeness of His human life of perfect obedience. (3) So in regard to His resurrection and ascension. If it were only "Jesus," those events might be as much to us as the raising of Lazarus, or the rapture of Elijah—namely, a demonstration that death did not destroy conscious being, and that a man could rise to heaven. But if "Christ is risen from the dead," He is "become the first-fruits of them that slept." If Jesus has gone up on high, it may show that manhood is not incapable of elevation to heaven, but it has no power to draw others up after it. But if Christ is gone up, He is gone to prepare a place for us, and His ascension is the assurance that He will lift us too to dwell with Him, and share His triumph over death and sin. III. "THE LORD" IS THE NAME OF DIGNITY, AND BRINGS BEFORE US THE KING. There are three grades of dignity expressed by this word in the New Testament. The lowest is that in which it is almost the equivalent of "Sir"; the second is that in which it expresses dignity and authority; the third is that in which it is the equivalent of the Old Testament "Lord" as a Divine name; and all are applied to Christ. The central one is the meaning of the word here. 1. "*Jesus* is Lord"—*i.e.*, the manhood is exalted to supreme dignity. It is the teaching of the New Testament, that our nature in the Child of Mary sits on the throne of the universe and rules over all things. Trust His dominion and rejoice in His rule, and bow before His authority. 2. *Christ* is Lord—*i.e.*, His sovereign authority and dominion are built upon the fact of His being Redeemer and Sacrifice. His kingdom rests upon His suffering. "Wherefore God also hath exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name." It is because He bears a vesture dipped in blood, that on the vesture is the name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Because He has given His life for the world, He is Master of the world. Conclusion: Do not content yourselves with a maimed Christ. 1. Do not tarry in the Manhood; do not be content with an adoring reverence for the nobility of His soul, the wisdom of His words, the beauty of His character, the tenderness of His compassion. All that will be of small help for your needs. There is more in His mission than that—even His death for you and for all men. 2. Take Him for your Christ, but do not lose the Person in the work, any more than you lose the work in the Person. And be not content with an intellectual recognition of Him, but bring Him the faith which cleaves to Him and His work as its only hope and peace, and the love which, because of His work as Christ, flows out to the beloved Person who has done it all. 3. Thus loving Jesus and trusting Christ, you will bring obedience to your Lord and homage to your King, and learn the sweetness and power of the name that is above every name—the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 37–42. **Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart.**—*The effects of gospel preaching*:—1. Peter having explained the events of Pentecost, an immediate effect was produced. "They were pricked in their hearts." So the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them as He had been poured out upon the assembly of the Church. We see here, therefore, the double action of the Holy Spirit. He is poured out upon the Church to sanctify and to confirm in the faith; and upon those who are outside that He may alarm and quicken and direct to right conclusions. 2. This was the first Christian sermon that had been preached. Jesus Christ was no longer present in the body. Now we are curious to know how the truth will make its way upon its own merits, apart from that magnetic influence which attached to the audible voice of the Divine Master. Will the truth make its way by sheer force of its celestial beauty and grace, and comfort, or will it perish under other voices than Christ's own? So we wait, we hear the discourse, and when it is concluded we read—that when the people heard this they were pricked in their hearts. 3. Observe the peculiarity of that effect. Not, they were awed by the eloquence, excited in their imagination; gratified in their taste; the result was infinitely deeper and

grander. An arrow had fastened itself in the very centre of their life. In their conscience was inserted the sting of intolerable self-accusation. This was the grand miracle. Truly we may say this was the beginning of miracles of the higher, because the spiritual kind. Great effects are produced by great causes. 4. A reflection of this kind would, however, have a very remote interest for us were it confined to an ancient incident. As a matter of fact, the apostle Peter preached the only sermon that any Christian minister is ever at liberty to preach. This is the model sermon. No change must be made here or a corresponding change will be made in the effect. Men may be more eloquent, literary, technical, and philosophical; they may use longer words and more abstruse arguments, but the effect will be like other talk, pointless, and there will be no answer in the great human heart—no conscience will accuse, no eyes will be blinded with tears, none will cry, "What shall we do?" Let us look at—I. THE SERMON and see how it is made up. 1. It is full of Scriptural allusions, as is every sermon that is worth listening to. The reason why our preaching is so powerless is that we do not impregnate it with the inspired word. Peter did not make the sermon. He quoted David and Joel, the Psalms and the prophets, and set these quotations in their right relations to what had just happened, and whilst he was talking history he made history. Faithful to God's word, God's Spirit was faithful to him, and herein was realised "My word shall not return unto Me void." Peter's word would have returned void, but God's word is as a sower in the eventide bringing back his sheaves with joy. 2. It is full of Christ. But for Christ it never could have been delivered. From end to end it palpitates with the Deity and glory of the Son of God. 3. It is full of holy unction. It was not delivered as a schoolboy might deliver a message. The great strong rough frame of the fisherman-preacher quivered under the feeling of the sacred message which the tongue was delivering. 4. It is full of patriotic and spiritual tenderness, and all the while without art or trick or mechanical skill, it led up to a vehement and solemn demand. When that demand was thundered upon the people they did not applaud the man, they were concerned about themselves; they were not pleased, they were pierced; and they were not gratified, they were convicted. II. But even this great sermon of Peter's does not explain the full result. THE PREACHER must have had something to do with the effect. He had just received the Holy Ghost. An inspired doctrine demands an inspired ministry. The Book is inspired, but when uninspired readers read it they kill the very fire of heaven when it touches their reluctant tongues. It is there that the holy influence is lost. When the Holy Ghost is both in the doctrine and in the people who profess it, the mountains of difficulty will fly away like dust upon the mocking wind. III. Nor have we read the full account yet of the production of this mighty effect. THE PEOPLE were prepared for vital statement; anything that was beautiful in nature, or in music would not have satisfied them. They would have resented any discourse that bristled with merely clever allusions or curious conceits of expression. The fire fell upon prepared material, therefore the Word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. How can we preach to a people unprepared to hear? The work is too great for any man. A prepared pulpit should be balanced by a prepared pew, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." To the unthirsty man the Bible spring is without attraction, but to the thirsty traveller, sun-smitten and weary, how like the music of running streams! A very solemn reflection occurs here. Where the heart is unaffected, Christian service is more mischievous than beneficial. What if our notions be increased, if our motives be left unbaptized? And what if we have been flattered and cajoled and "daubed with untempered mortar," if the Word has not reached the very seat of the disease? Pray for a ministry that shall affect the heart. He who seeks after a comforting ministry only, and a restful one that shall give him no disturbance, wounds his own life. IV. THE EFFECT was grand in every aspect. 1. Three thousand souls were saved. And this will be the effect of Christian teaching everywhere under the right conditions. Again and again we read that the people who heard the apostolic preaching, "cried out." We have lost that cry: we have succumbed to the cold and benumbing spirit of decorum. And whilst it is perfectly true that there may be an irrational excitement which ought to be subdued and controlled, it is also true that there is a spiritual enthusiasm, without which the Church may be but a painted sepulchre. 2. The people continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers. (1) The flock kept well together for fear of the wolf. Were we ourselves in heathen lands we should realise the joy of keeping closely together. But living in a Christian land where Christianity has become

a luxury, or in some instances even an annoyance, what wonder that we do not realise the primitive enthusiasm, and enter with delight into the original fellowship and union of the Church? (2) The people continued in the right teaching. Until our teaching be right our life must be wrong. We must ask for the pure bread, the pure water, the undefiled Bible, and live on that; out of such nutritious food there will come proper results such as fellowship, sacramental communion, and common prayer. A man says, "I can pray by myself," that is perfectly true, but you should realise that you are something more than yourself; you are part of a sum total. A man is not at liberty in the Christian sense of manhood to detach himself from the common stock to which he belongs. Herein is the advantage of common prayer and common praise. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." There is inspiration in sympathy, there is encouragement in fellowship. It does the soul good to see the hosts gathered together under the royal banner stained with blood; to see the great army marching shoulder to shoulder under the blast of the great trumpet. "No man liveth unto himself" who lives aright. (3) They had all things common. This is the sternly logical outcome of true inspiration. But having regard to all the social conditions under which we live this mechanical form of union is impracticable. But having lost this form, which broke down under the eyes of apostles themselves, we still reserve the spiritual outcome and meaning. My strength is not my own, it belongs to the weakest child that I may see groaning under oppression. If I interfere, and the oppressor say to me, What have you to do with him—he is not yours? Christianity obliges me to say he is mine. If you see an animal ill-used and ill-treated, though it be not yours in any technical or legal sense of the term, you are called upon to interfere by an earlier right, and by a diviner law. Whoever has strength owns it for the benefit of those who have none. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Evangelical preaching*:—Preaching has ever been the principal means used for diffusing a knowledge of Christianity. It was the method adopted and enjoined by the great Author of our religion (Matt. iv. 17, x. 7; Mark xvi. 15). A striking instance of its early success is recorded in the chapter before us; and we are led by our text to inquire into the nature of that preaching which was so successful; and into the effects which followed such preaching. I. THE NATURE OF THE PREACHING may be understood from the context. 1. The subject was Christ. The preacher's name evidently was to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. 2. The subject was of the highest importance; it was perfectly suitable to the audience; 3. And the manner of treating it was excellent. The discussion was plain—concise—clear. The mode of address was courageous. 4. The preacher who thus conducted himself, demands our consideration. It was Peter, a late fisherman of Galilee, he was Divinely called to preach the gospel; and thus qualified, he preached; power from above attended the word. II. AND THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOWED well deserve our attention. "They were pricked in their heart." Hearers treat the Word preached with indifference; or feeling its force they resist it; or happily, like those whose case is before us, they yield to its convincing influence. The address was made to their understanding—their judgment—their conscience; and being accompanied by the power of Divine grace, they were rationally, Scripturally, and feelingly convinced of the error of their ways: and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" We may consider this as—1. The language of religious concern. 2. The language of religious distress. 3. The language of humble inquiry. Think on their former prejudices. Such was the preaching, and such were the effects. Our minds are farther led to the following improvement. 1. Christ crucified is, and ever should be, the grand subject of the Christian ministry. 2. There is salvation in no other—there is no other name whereby we can be saved (chap. iv. 12). 3. In religion, it is of the utmost importance that the heart be affected ("they were pricked in their hearts"); See Gen. vi. 5; Jer. xvii. 7; Joel ii. 13; Mark vii. 21; Prov. iv. 23; Psa. li. 10, 17. Sin hath its seat in the heart—there the change should begin. 4. Persons may be so affected on account of their sin and danger, that they cannot, in some cases, avoid strongly expressing what they feel. 5. The essential importance of Divine influence to render the word preached successful is another idea suggested by the circumstances connected with the text. (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *Conversion*:—I. REFERS TO WHAT THEY HEARD. They heard—1. An explicit statement of the truth. 2. Enforced by solid reasoning. 3. Brought home to their own consciences with fidelity. II. IT DESCRIBES WHAT THEY FELT—"They were pricked in their heart." The expression denotes a sudden, deep, strong, anguished feeling. 1. Agonised

astonishment—at this ignorance amid so much light—at the error committed against such evidence. They see that Jesus was no impostor. 2. Inexpressible conviction. They felt the guilt of rejecting a Divine Teacher. 3. Terrified apprehension. Could they forget their treatment of Jesus? Think of the alarm that now seizes them when the tumult of rage gives way to the conviction of guilt. III. IT RECORDS WHAT THEY SAID. 1. What shall we do? This explanation is the utterance of concern—concern which it is not in the power of language to express. 2. It is the utterance of ingenuous confession. 3. It is the language of surrender. They abandon unbelief. 4. The language of anxiety for salvation. (*Homilist.*) *The effusion of the Holy Spirit:*—"Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation. . . . They will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto Me; . . . yet thou shalt speak unto them, and tell them, thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; . . . and they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them." Thus God formerly forearmed Ezekiel against the greatest discouragement that he was to meet with in his mission, I mean the unsuccessfulness of his ministry. For they are not only your ministers, who are disappointed in the exercise of the ministry: Isaiah, Jeremiahs, Ezekiels, are often as unsuccessful as we. In such melancholy cases we must endeavour to surmount the obstacles, which the obduracy of sinners opposeth against the dispensations of grace. If "the angels of God rejoice over one sinner that repenteth," what pleasure must he feel who hath reason to hope, that in this valley of tears he hath had the honour of opening the gate of heaven to a multitude of sinners, that he hath "saved himself and them that heard him." This pure joy God gave on the day of Pentecost to St. Peter. In order to comprehend what passed in the auditory, we must understand the sermon of the preacher. There are five remarkable things in the sermon, and there are five correspondent dispositions in the hearers. I. We have remarked in the sermon of St. Peter that NOBLE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, which so well becomes a Christian preacher, and is so well adapted to strike his hearers. How much soever we now admire this beautiful part of pulpit-eloquence, it is very difficult to imitate it. Sometimes a weakness of faith, which attends your best established preachers; sometimes worldly prudence; sometimes a timidity, that proceedeth from a modest consciousness of the insufficiency of their talents; sometimes a fear, too well grounded, alas! of the retorting of those censures, which people, always ready to murmur against them who reprove their vices, are eager to make; sometimes a fear of those persecutions, which the world always raiseth against all whom heaven qualifies to destroy the empire of sin; all these considerations damp the courage of the preacher, and deprive him of freedom of speech. But none of these considerations had any weight with our apostle. And, indeed, why should any of them affect him? Should the weakness of his faith? He had conversed with Jesus Christ Himself; he had accompanied Him on the holy mount, he had "heard a voice from the excellent glory," saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Could he distrust his talents? The Prince of the kingdom, the Author, and Finisher of faith, had told him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." Should he dread reproaches and recriminations? The purity of his intentions, and the sanctity of his life confound them. Should he pretend to keep fair with the world? But what finesse is to be used, when eternal misery is to be denounced, and eternal happiness proposed? Philosophers talk of certain invisible bands that unite mankind to one another. A man, animated with any passion, hath in the features of his face, and in the tone of his voice, a something that partly communicates his sentiments to his hearers. Error proposed in a lively manner by a man, who is affected with it himself, may seduce unguarded people. Fictions, which we know are fictions, exhibited in this manner, move and affect us for a moment. But what a dominion over the heart doth that speaker obtain, who delivers truths, and who is affected himself with the truths which he delivereth! To this part of the eloquence of St. Peter, we must attribute the emotions of his hearers; "they were pricked in their heart." II. A second thing which gave weight and dignity to the sermon of St. Peter, was THE MIRACLE THAT PRECEDED HIS PREACHING, I mean the gift of tongues, which had been communicated to all the apostles. The prodigy that accompanied the sermon of St. Peter had three characteristic marks of a real miracle. 1. It was above human power. Every pretended miracle, that hath not this first character, ought to be suspected by us. But the prodigy in question was evidently superior to human power. Of all sciences in the world, that of languages is the least capable of an instant acquisition. Certain natural talents, a certain superiority of genius, some-

times produce in some men the same effects, which long and painful industry can scarcely ever produce in others. We have sometimes seen people whom nature seems to have designedly formed in an instant courageous captains, profound geometers, admirable orators. But tongues are acquired by study and time. The acquisition of languages is like the knowledge of history. It is not a superior genius, it is not a great capacity, that can discover to any man what passed in the world ten or twelve ages ago. The monuments of antiquity must be consulted, huge folios must be read, and an immense number of volumes must be understood, arranged, and digested. In like manner, the knowledge of languages is a knowledge of experience, and no man can ever derive it from his own innate fund of ability. Yet the apostles, and apostolical men, men who were known to be men of no education, all on a sudden knew the arbitrary signs by which different nations had agreed to express their thoughts. Terms, which had no natural connection with their ideas, were all on a sudden arranged in their minds. 2. But perhaps these miracles may not be the more respectable on account of their superiority to human power. Perhaps, if they be not human, they may be devilish? No, a little attention to their second character will convince you that they are Divine. Their end was to incline men, not to renounce natural and revealed religion, but to respect and to follow both; not to render an attentive examination unnecessary, but to allure men to it. 3. The prodigy that accompanied the preaching of St. Peter had the third character of a true miracle. It was wrought in the presence of those who had the greatest interest in knowing the truth of it. The miracle being granted, I affirm that the compunction of heart, of which my text speaks, was an effect of that attention which could not be refused to such an extraordinary event, and of that deference which could not be withheld from a man, to whose ministry God had set His seal. They instantly, and entirely, surrendered themselves to men, who addressed them in a manner so extraordinary, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" III. We remark, in the discourse of the apostle, AN INVINCIBLE POWER OF REASONING, and, in the souls of his hearers, that conviction which carries along with it the consent of the will. Of all methods of reasoning with an adversary, none is more conclusive than that which is taken from his own principles. But when the principles of an adversary are well grounded, and when we are able to prove that his principles produce our conclusions, our reasoning becomes demonstrative to a rational opponent, and he ought not to deny it. Christianity, it is remarkable, is defensible both ways. The first may be successfully employed against pagans; the second more successfully against the Jews. It is easy to convince a heathen that he can have no right to exclaim against the mysteries of the gospel, because if he have any reason to exclaim against the mysteries of Christianity, he hath infinitely more to exclaim against those of paganism. The second way was employed more successfully by the apostles against the Jews. They demonstrated that all the reasons, which obliged them to be Jews, ought to have induced them to become Christians; that every argument, which obliged them to acknowledge the Divine legation of Moses, ought to have engaged them to believe in Jesus Christ. St. Peter made use of this method. What argument can ye allege for your religion, said they to the Jews, which doth not establish that which we preach? Do ye allege the privileges of your legislator? Your argument is demonstrative; Moses had access to God on the holy mountain. Do ye allege the purity of the morality of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. The manifest design of your religion is to reclaim men to God, to prevent idolatry, and to inspire them with piety, benevolence, and zeal. But this argument concludes for us. Do ye allege the miracles that were wrought to prove the truth of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. But this argument establisheth the truth of our religion. What, then, are the prejudices that still engage you to continue in the profession of Judaism? Are they derived from the prophecies? Your principles are demonstrative; but, in the person of our Jesus, we show you to-day all the grand characters which, your own prophets said, would be found in the Messiah. Close reasoning ought to be the soul of all discourses. I compare it in regard to eloquence with benevolence in regard to religion. Without benevolence we may maintain a show of religion; but we cannot possess the substance of it (1. Cor. xiii. 1, &c.). In like manner in regard to eloquence; speak with authority, display treasures of erudition, let the liveliest and most sublime imagination wing it away, turn all your periods till they make music in the most delicate ear, what will all your discourses be if void of argumentation? a noise, sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. Ye may sur-

prise, but ye cannot convince; ye may dazzle, but ye cannot instruct; ye may, indeed, please, but ye can neither change, sanctify, nor transform. IV. There are, in the sermon of St. Peter, STINGING REPROOFS; and, in the souls of the hearers, a pungent remorse (ver. 22). And who can express the agitations which were produced in the souls of the audience? What pencil can describe the state of their consciences? They had committed this crime through ignorance. St. Peter tore these fatal veils asunder. He showed these madmen their own conduct in its true point of light; and discovered their parricide in all its horror. "Ye have taken, and crucified Jesus, who was approved of God." The apostle reminded them of the holy rules of righteousness, which Jesus Christ had preached and exemplified; and the holiness of Him, whom they had crucified, filled them with a sense of their own depravity. He reminded them of the benefits which Jesus Christ had bountifully bestowed on their nation. He reminded them of the grandeur of Jesus Christ. He reminded them of their unworthy treatment of Jesus Christ; of their eager outcries for His death; of their repeated shoutings. The whole was an ocean of terror, and each reflection a wave that overwhelmed, distorted, and distressed their souls. V. In fine, we may remark in the sermon of St. Peter DENUNCIATIONS OF DIVINE VENGEANCE. The most effectual means for the conversion of sinners, that which St. Paul so successfully employed, is terror. St. Peter was too well acquainted with the obduracy of his auditors not to avail himself of this motive. People, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of a personage so august, wanted this mean. St. Peter quoted a prophecy of Joel, which foretold that fatal day, and the prophecy was the more terrible because one part of it was accomplished; because the remarkable events that were to precede it were actually come to pass; for the Spirit of God had begun to pour out His miraculous influences upon all flesh, young men had seen visions, and old men had dreamed dreams; and the formidable preparations of approaching judgments were then before their eyes. Such was the power of the sermon of St. Peter over the souls of his hearers! Human eloquence hath sometimes done wonders worthy of immortal memory. Some of the ancient orators have governed the souls of the most invincible heroes, and the life of Cicero affords us an example. Ligarius had the audacity to make war on Cæsar. Cæsar was determined to make the rash adventurer a victim to his revenge. The friends of Ligarius durst not interpose, and Ligarius was on the point, either of being justly punished for his offence, or of being sacrificed to the unjust ambition of his enemy. What force could control the power of Cæsar? But Cæsar had an adversary, whose power was superior to his own. This adversary pleads for Ligarius against Cæsar, and Cæsar, all invincible as he is, yields to the eloquence of Cicero. Cicero pleads, Cæsar feels; in spite of himself, his wrath subsides, his vengeance disappears. The fatal list of the crimes of Ligarius, which he is about to produce to the judges, falls from his hands, and he actually absolves him at the close of the oration, whom, when he entered the court, he meant to condemn. But yield, ye orators of Athens and Rome! Yield to our fishermen and tent-makers. Oh, how powerful is the sword of the Spirit in the hands of our apostles! But will ye permit us to ask you one question? Would ye choose to hear the apostles, and ministers like the apostles? Would ye attend their sermons? or, to say all in one word, Do ye wish St. Peter was now in this pulpit? Think a little, before ye answer this question. Compare the taste of this auditory with the genius of the preacher; your delicacy with that liberty of speech with which he reproved the vices of his own times. One wants to find something new in every sermon; and, under pretence of satisfying his laudable desire of improvement in knowledge, would divert our attention from well-known vices that deserve to be censured. Another desires to be pleased, and would have us adorn our discourses, not that we may obtain an easier access to his heart, but that we may flatter a kind of concupiscence, which is content to sport with a religious exercise, till, when Divine service ends, it can plunge into more sensual joy. Almost all require to be lulled asleep in sin. Ah! how disagreeable to you would the sermons of the apostles have been! Realise them. Ah! methinks I hear the holy man; methinks I hear the preacher, animated with the same spirit that made him boldly tell the murderers of Jesus Christ, "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders, and signs, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Methinks I see St. Peter, the man who was so extremely affected with the sinful state of his auditors; methinks I hear him enumerating the various excesses of this nation, and saying, Ye! ye are void of all sensibility when we tell you of the miseries of the Church, when we describe those bloody scenes, that are made up of dungeons

and galleys, apostates and martyrs. (*J. Saurin.*) *The results of revivals not all known*:—A revival is as when a sportsman goes out with his gun, and sends its charge into a flock of pigeons. Some fall dead at once, and he sees and secures them; but others, sorely hurt, limp off and hide, to die among the bushes. The best part of this revival is, that while you can only see those who are shot dead, and fall down before you, there are, thank God, thousands in all parts of the land, being hit and wounded, to go off unnoticed to their own homes, and God heals them there. *Revival preachers*:—Revival preachers make their sermons like a lens, to concentrate the rays of truth, and exhibit them with unflinching hand, in near connection with the sinner, till they burn and inflame his heart. (*J. Jenkyn.*) *A sermon without an application*:—A sermon without an application does no more good than the singing of a skylark: it may teach, but it does not impel; and though the preacher may be under concern for his audience, he does not show it till he turns the subject to their immediate advantage. (*Bishop Horne.*) *The operations of truth*:—Divine truth exerts on the mind of man at once a restorative and a self-manifesting power. It creates in the mind the capacity by which it is discerned. As light opens the close-shut flower-bud to receive light, or as the sunbeam, playing on a sleeper's eyes, by its gentle irritation opens them to see its own brightness; so the truth of God, shining on the soul, quickens and stirs into activity the faculty by which that very truth is perceived. It matters little which of the two operations be first; practically they may be regarded as simultaneous. The perception rouses the faculty, and yet the faculty is implied in the perception. The truth awakens the mind, and yet the mind must be in activity ere the truth can reach it. And the same two-fold process is carried on in the whole subsequent progress of the soul. (*Professor Caird.*) *Awakened sinners*:—Peter's hearers—I. WERE IN A STATE OF DISTRESS. "Pricked to the heart." The Holy Spirit did this by means of—1. What they saw; the wrong and folly of their action towards Jesus. 2. What they felt; that their folly and wrong-doing were sinful in the sight of God. 3. What they feared; that they might have to endure dreadful consequences. II. UTTERED A CRY OF DISTRESS, which meant—1. That something must be done. The misery of self-condemnation must be ended by some means. It is a joy to an evangelist when hearers have this feeling. 2. That the apostles were able to tell them what to do. Peter had led them into that state, and it was natural to expect that he could deal with them in that state. 3. That they were ready to do what was required. The mark of true penitence is submissiveness. So long as a seeker lays down his own terms he is not fit to be saved. III. RECEIVED AN APOSTOLIC ANSWER. 1. Turn from your sins. They were already convinced of sin and sorry for it, and were therefore ready for the direction. 2. Openly declare that you have turned from your sins. At this time baptism meant a great deal, viz., that the service of Christ was chosen at the risk of certain suffering. 3. Fulfil the appointed conditions of pardon. "Repent &c. *with reference* to the remission of sins." So long as these are unfulfilled the sinner is morally unfit to receive pardon. 4. The Spirit who has given you this distress will give you joy. "Ye shall receive the gift," &c. The fulness of the Spirit's work always brings fulness of joy. IV. LEARNED THE GROUND OF THE ANSWER. "The promise is unto you," &c. How wonderful that their awful sin did not invalidate this promise. Who is not the subject of the Divine call? The call to repentance, faith and virtue comes by many means: by providence, the Word, the Spirit. Have you not heard it? V. RECEIVE A FINAL DIRECTION (ver. 40). 1. The generation was wicked. This had been abundantly proved. Is it not so with the present generation? What else mean the frauds, vices, and blasphemies of every class of society. 2. It was necessary for the followers of Jesus to be separate from the world. Reason, interest, and Christian philanthropy required it then and require it now. Jesus was separate from sinners; His kingdom is not of this world; and true Christianity and worldliness cannot coalesce. He, then, who wishes to be saved must renounce the world. 3. This direction, therefore, is properly the last to penitent inquirers. To leave the world is to give decisive proof of the genuineness of repentance and faith. (*W. Hudson.*) *The great question and the inspired answer*:—I. THE QUESTION. 1. To this question they were led—(1) by the Spirit; (2) by the Truth; (3) by their conscience—a view of sin leading to a consciousness of many. 2. This question indicates their—(1) feeling; (2) condition; (3) desire. 3. This question was—(1) honest, (2) searching, (3) inspired. II. A SUITABLE AND SIGNIFICANT ANSWER. 1. Consider who gives the answer—(1) apostles, (2) inspired, (3) speaking with authority. 2. The answer urges to—(1) repentance, (2) profession

of Christ, (3) yielding to the Spirit's control. 3. The answer rests—(1) not on human wisdom, (2) not on human goodness, (3) not on human efforts, (4) but on the promise of God (ver. 39), which is as wide as the world. III. To a right reception comes A BLESSED CONSUMMATION. 1. In personal experience—(1) peace, (2) goodness, (3) singleness of heart (ver. 46). 2. Relatively—(1) favours with God, (2) and man (ver. 47). (*J. M. Allis.*) *Rightly dividing the word of truth:*— 1. The word had wounded, now the word heals. A little religion is a painful thing, but more takes the pain away. The word is a hammer to break and a balm to heal. Its first effect is to convince a sinner that he is lost; its next to make the lost rejoice in his Saviour. 2. It is important to keep these two functions distinct. To preach a healing gospel when there is no wound on the conscience is like pressing cold water on those who are not thirsty. There is nothing sweeter to the thirsty; nothing more insipid to the satisfied. 3. The apostle rightly divided the word of truth. Peter's aim all through is to produce conviction of sin, and for this appeals to Scripture to bring home the guilt of the crucifixion. It was not with gladness that they received that word but with grief, shame, remorse. When the preacher saw that his first word had taken effect he delivered the second. He had succeeded in wounding; and at the cry of the suffering patient, he comes forward to heal. The old stem had been cut off and the tree was bleeding; he turns the knife, and with its other side inserts the new graft, that there may be a tree of righteousness the planting of the Lord. You pour some burning drops upon a sore; their first effect is to increase the pain; but knowing the sovereign power of the remedy you continue to pour, sparing not for the patient's crying. At length continued application of that which caused the pain takes all pain away. When the word wounds, still ply the word until the sword becomes a balm. Then, in this second stage, the hearer will receive the word with joy. He who really receives the word receives it gladly, for those who do not, will not long continue to receive it at all. 3. The believers were immediately baptized. It is clear that regeneration was not the result of baptism, but *vice versâ*. It was when they received the word with gladness they were baptized. The order of events is that which the master enjoined (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Peter and his companions first laid themselves out to make disciples. Then, when by the successive pain and gladness produced by preaching, they perceived that disciples were made, they baptized them. Lastly, the newly accepted members of the Church were taught to observe all the commandments, for they abounded in faith and love. 4. But a dash of sadness is thrown upon the happy scene. "Fear came upon every soul." But this points to the outer circle. The conversions startled the onlookers, and they were smitten with a sudden fear lest they should be left outside and perish. From the apostles view point, however, this was a hopeful symptom. The example of believers had begun to tell. It is a good sign when those living without God begin to be uneasy; especially when it is at the sight of multitudes pressing into the kingdom. When men are delivered from the horrible pit many shall see it and fear (Psa. xl.). The Christian community in the freshness of its first faith was suddenly thrown into society, and disturbed it by its unwonted presence. If a new planet should be projected into our system, it would make the old worlds stagger. Bodies in contact reciprocally affect each other, especially in respect of temperature. Pour hot water into a cold vessel; the water contributes to heat the vessel, but the vessel also contributes to cool the water. But if a constant stream of hot water is supplied, it will bring up the vessel to its own temperature. A process like this goes on continually between the Church and the world. Fervent disciples, particularly those in their first love, affect with their own warmth the society into which they are poured; but society, on the other hand, affects them with its own coldness, and being the larger body will soon cool the disciples' hearts, unless they maintain constant contact with Christ. 5. A word to those who are without Christ. I confess that the Church in contact with you is more or less cold. The disciples are not so manifestly like heaven as to send a thrill of terror through you lest you should fail to join their company. But if you stumble over their coldness, to blame them for their lukewarmness will not save you when you are lost. A man on inspecting a new house he was having built found one of the men lighting his pipe in the midst of dry shavings. So he said to him, "If my house is burnt the blame will rest on you." Thinking over what he had said, he added, "The blame will be yours, but the loss will be mine." He saw the risk, and went away and insured his house. Go thou and do likewise. The Church deserves blame; but the loss is yours. Hide your imperilled soul "with Christ in God." (*W. Arnot,*

D.D.) *On being pricked to the heart*:—I. WHEN WE HEAR GOD REPROVE SIN WE SHOULD BE PRICKED AT THE HEART. 1. So as to be sensible of sin. (1) The guilt of it (Psa. li. 3, 4). (2) Of our defilement with it (Psa. lvii. 5). 2. So as to be troubled for our sins. (1) Their sinfulness. (2) Their multitude (Ezra ix. 6). (3) Their greatness; as being—(*a*) Against knowledge (John iii. 19). (*b*) Against mercies. (*c*) After judgments (Isa. i. 5; Amos iv. 9). (*d*) Contrary to our promises. (*e*) Against the checks of conscience (Rom. ii. 15), the motives of the Spirit, the reproofs of the word. 3. Uses: Be pricked at your hearts when sin is reproved considering—(1) Who is it that reproves (Amos iii. 8; Jer. v. 21, 22). (2) Reproofs without this effect do more harm than good (Prov. xxix. 1). (3) God may reprove no more (Ezek. iii. 26; Hos. iv. 17). (4) You must answer for all the reproofs you hear. II. SUCH AS ARE PRICKED TO THE HEART SHOULD BE VERY INQUISITIVE WHAT TO DO. 1. We are all capable of holiness and happiness (Gen. i. 26). 2. But full of sin and misery (Eph. ii. 3). 3. It is one part of our sin and misery that we are not sensible of (1) sin. This appears—(*a*) In that we have not grieved for it (Ezek. vii. 16). (*b*) Nor fear to commit it (Psa. xviii. 23). (*c*) Nor strive to get it subdued (Psa. lvii. 2). (2) Misery. This appears—(*a*) In that we rejoice in it. (*b*) We do not strive to get out of it. 4. The first step to holiness and felicity is sensibleness of sin and misery. 5. There is none so sensible of this, but he will be very inquisitive what to do (Acts xvi. 30). This is essential because—(1) Our everlasting happiness depends upon it. (2) Unless we inquire we shall never know what to do. 6. Whom must we inquire of? (1) God. (2) The Scriptures (Luke xvii. 29). (3) Ministers. (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *Being pricked to the heart*:—Whitefield was preaching at Exeter. A man was present who had filled his pockets with stones to throw at the preacher. He heard, however, the prayer with patience, but no sooner was the text named than he pulled out a stone, and waited for an opportunity to throw it. But God sent the Word into his heart, and the stone fell from his hand. After the sermon he went to Whitefield, and said, "Sir, I came to hear you with a view to break your head, but the Spirit of God through your ministry has given me a broken heart." The man proved to be a sound convert, and lived an ornament to the gospel. *Heart-work God's work*:—Heart-work must be God's work. Only the great heart-maker can be the great heart-breaker. (*R. Baxter.*) *The gospel to be preached to the heart*:—"I have an ear for other preachers," Sir John Cheke used to say, "but I have a heart for Latimer." Here is a very clear and main distinction. Too often men hear the Word sounding its drums and trumpets outside their walls, and they are filled with admiration of the martial music; but their city gates are fast closed and vigilantly guarded, so that the truth has no admittance, but only the sound of it. Would to God we knew how to reach men's affections, for the heart is the target we aim at, and unless we hit it we miss altogether. *The truth the sword of the Spirit*:—It is not the drapery in which Divine truth may be clothed, nor the force and beauty of the illustrations with which it may be presented, but it is the truth itself—the bare, naked, unvarnished truth—that is the instrument of the Spirit's power. That is the sword of the Spirit; and it is the sword that does the work, not the scabbard in which it is sheathed. The scabbard may be finely fitted, and beautifully embellished, bound with the finest gold, and glittering with jewels of polished diamonds; but it is not the garnished scabbard, it is the drawn sword which the Spirit wields, and which, when wielded by Him, is quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. (*J. A. Wallace.*) *A famous conversion*:—1. It is remarkable in the very first order of it. It is the first conversion that was wrought by the apostles in the Christian Church; the first-fruits of the gospel; the first handful of ripe ears of corn offered up to God to sanctify the whole harvest; the goodly bunch of Eskol gathered by these first spies, the apostles, betokening the Church's fruitfulness. 2. It is remarkable for the time and season when these converts embrace the faith and profess religion. We all know it was a sad time of persecution. 3. It is remarkable in the condition and quality of the persons: a mixed, confused company of men, strangely disposed and affected before their conversion. They run together, and flock about the apostles, with no very religious purpose, but merely to gaze and wonder at them. Nay, worse than so, they fall a-scoffing and deriding the apostles. Oh, the greatness of God's mercy that He would, and, oh, the power of Christ's grace that it could, convert such converts as these! 4. It is remarkable in the great number and multitude of converts. Not a cluster, or two, but a plentiful vintage. Such was the power of religion in those primitive times; so mightily grew the Word, and pre-

vailed. 5. It is remarkable for the complete, entire fulness of their conversion. They are troubled for their sins, "pricked at their heart." They repent, believe, and are baptized. They are diligent in all the duties of God's service, and worship (ver. 24). Their religion is not confined to the Church only, but they are fruitful in all works of charity (ver. 45). They live together in all Christian love (ver. 46). Here is an exact pattern of a through-conversion, a complete and perfect frame of a holy Church. I. THE MEANS THAT WROUGHT THIS ANGUISH AND COMPUNCTION. It is St. Peter's sermon: "When they heard this." The text tells us of a wound that was given them, that pierced their heart. Here we see both the weapon that made it, and the place where it entered. In bodily strokes, he that means to hit the heart must take another aim, not run his weapon in at the ear; but he that means to wound the heart spiritually, his directest passage is through the ear. In this case there is an immediate conveyance from the ear to the heart. Men may as well expect good corn on their land without ploughing and sowing, as true sorrow and repentance without hearing and attending. The passage and entrance, then, is the ear; but what is the weapon St. Peter uses to pierce and wound them? 1. God's Word in the general, that is the means that works this compunction, that is the choice, sanctified instrument appointed by God for this sacred work. The speaking to exhortation and doctrine is the way to convince and convert souls. 2. It is *verbum convictivum*. St. Peter makes choice of that Word of God that was most fit to detect and convict them; and he doth manage it so that they could not avoid the edge of it. And this he does by a close application of it to their sinful condition. 3. It was *verbum convictivum de his peccatis*. He charges them in a special manner with these and these sins as those that are likeliest to perplex their soul and bring them to compunction. As, in course of law, general accusations will ground no action; if we come to accuse a man, it is not sufficient to lay to his charge that he is a malefactor, but we must charge him with particulars. So, would a sinner arraign his conscience before God's tribunal, he must frame an indictment against himself of his more notorious and personal impieties. If we trouble and disquiet and perplex your souls, we have our warrant from St. Peter's example. St. Peter was even now filled with the Holy Ghost, and so the first vent that it found is in this sharp reprehension. This kind of dealing is warranted by the great success that God gave unto it. Peter hath saved thousands with it, and Paul his ten thousands. This is to cast the net on the right side of the ship, as Christ directs Peter; he shall not miss of a plentiful draught. He that means to fish for souls, let him bait his hook with this worm of conscience, and he will take them presently. II. THE PAROXYSM ITSELF, THE ANGUISH AND COMPUNCTION THEY WERE BROUGHT INTO. 1. It is exceeding sharp; their soul is embittered in them. The Scripture sets out this compunction of spirit in terms of extremity (2 Sam. xxiv. 10; Prov. xviii. 14; Rom. ii. 9; Psa. li. 17). And it is the sense of God's displeasure causes this breaking by three apprehensions, as by so many strokes. (1) As most deserved and due to us. We eat the bitter fruit of our works. (2) As most heavy and unsupportable by us. Who knows the power of His anger? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? (3) As, of ourselves, unavoidable by us. How shall we flee from the wrath to come? A poor sinner, beset with these anxieties, tortures himself with these pensive thoughts: "What have I done?" "What danger have I run into?" "How bitter are mine anguishes?" "Whither shall I turn myself for ease and comfort?" 2. Consider the goodness of these men's compunction; and it will appear observable for our imitation in these four respects:—(1) Their compunction is the more observable, because it is wrought in them without the help and concurrence of any outward affliction, only by the dint of St. Peter's sermon. (2) Their compunction is the more observable because wrought into them by the hearing of one sermon of St. Peter; no sooner charged with sin but they are convinced presently, and cry out for sorrow. (3) Their compunction is the more observable as being wrought in them only by convincing them of sin, not by threatening or denouncing of judgments. (4) This compunction is the more observable because, ye see, it is a full yielding to the accusation. St. Peter charges them with horrid sin, and, without more ado, they plead guilty to all, confess the whole indictment. They are not enraged against the apostle for this sharp reproof. They take no exception against the accuser. They make no defence of the fact. They excuse it not. They demur not. None of all these shifts, but they accept of the accusation; they confess themselves guilty, and, with sorrow of heart, acknowledge they are murderers of the Lord of glory. (*a*) Such power and such strength was in the Word of God preached by Peter. His words are like sharp arrows in the hand of

a giant: they return not empty. (*b*) Such prevalency hath the Grace of God in the hearts of this people. Like a sovereign antidote that served to drive the poison of sin from the heart into the outward parts by an open confession. That is the second particular of the text—their anguish and perplexity; and it briefly affords us a threefold meditation. (i.) It lets us see the outfall of sin; the issue and end of it is sorrow and vexation. It may be sweet in the mouth, but it will be bitter in thy bowels. (ii.) It shows the inlet and first entrance of grace; it begins with sorrow and sharp compunction. The first physic to recover our souls are not cordials, but corrosives; not an immediate stepping into heaven by a present assurance, but mourning, and a bitter bewailing of our former transgressions. (iii.) It shows us the downfall of despair. Are these converts, whom God means mercy to, thus sharply tortured? How bitter are their torments whom He plunges into perdition! III. THE COURSE THEY TAKE FOR EASE AND REMEDY. They repair to Peter and the apostles, crave their help and direction: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And this course of theirs is qualified with three conditions. 1. They take a speedy course. As soon as the wound is given and felt, they presently seek for help and direction. They put it not off till some other time, as Felix did when he felt the first shiverings and grudgings of contrition. Nor think they that they shall outgrow it in time, that their hearts are like good flesh that will heal of itself. No; delays in this kind breed a double danger. (1) Good motions, if not cherished, will vanish away, and then the heart grows harder. (2) Hath God pricked thine heart? Take the wound timely, lest it grow worse. 2. It was an advised and proper course they make choice of St. Peter and the rest of the apostles. And the wisdom, shall I say, or the happiness of this choice will appear in four particulars. (1) They are spiritual men, physicians for the soul. A wounded spirit cannot be cured but by spiritual means. (2) They repair to the apostles. Why, Peter was he that wounded them! Best of all, none like him to cure them. What Hosea speaks of God is true of His ministers in a due subordination. "They have wounded, and they heal us; they have smitten, and they will bind us up." (3) They repair to Peter and the rest; they come to men of practice and experience. These apostles knew what it was to have a wounded spirit; these had crucified Christ; Peter had denied Him, the rest had forsaken Him, and it cost them dear ere they could be recovered. None like these to direct their conscience. They do it—(*a*) more skilfully, (*b*) more humbly, (*c*) more tenderly. (4) They are unanimous, all here in a joint consent and concurrence of judgment. 3. It proves successful, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It discovers a threefold effect that this compunction hath already wrought in them to help forward their conversion. (1) It represses their censoriousness. A man truly sensible of his own sins will have little lift or leisure to censure and judge, much less to reproach or slander others. It will make him judge himself, and condemn himself, and think worst of himself of all other men. (2) This compunction and perplexity makes them reverent and respectful to St. Peter and the other apostles. God's ministers are never in season with the world till men come to distress and perplexity. In the time of ease and jollity a minister is but a contemptible man; he and his pains may be well spared. But when sorrows surprise you, and your hearts are wounded, then one leaf from the Tree of Life to stanch the bleeding will be precious to you. This is the honour of our ministry to be able to help in such helpless times. (3) It makes them inquisitive. "What shall we do?" Surely it is the voice of anguish and perplexity. They speak as men at a loss; they know not how to shift. But they were men acquainted with the law; nay, devout zealots of the Jewish traditions (ver. 5); and yet we see they are now to seek how to ease themselves in that great perplexity. Whence arises this sudden amazement? Was it from the surcharge of sorrow that had overwhelmed their spirits and darkened that light which was formerly in them? It often proves so. It shadows out the insufficiency of the law to breed peace and comfort to us. It may perplex us, but it cannot quiet us; discover our sins, but not remove them. Or was it not they placed all their religion in some outward observations, without the life and piety of inward devotion. Rituals with substantials are the beauty of religion, but severed and divided will breed but cold comfort to us. 2. It makes them docile and tractable, willing and desirous to receive instruction. Compunction bores and opens the ear, and makes it capable of direction. 3. It begets a readiness to undertake any course that shall be prescribed for relief and comfort. In our ease heaven must fall into our laps, or we will none of it. If it put us to pains or cost it is too dear a bargain for us to deal withal. But when our souls are in perplexity we will

be glad to accept of mercy upon any terms; we will take heaven at God's price then. "I will do anything, Lord, I will suffer anything to get hell out of my soul now, and to keep my soul out of hell hereafter." (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *Life-wounds*:—1. Peter's sermon was not a fine display of eloquence. 2. Neither was it a very pathetic plea. 3. Nor a loud but empty cry of "Believe, believe!" 4. It was simple, a plain statement. and a soberly earnest argument. 5. Its power lay in the truthfulness of the speaker, his appeal to Scripture, the concurrence of his witnessing brethren, and his own evident faith. 6. Above all, in the Holy Spirit who accompanied the Word. I. SAVING IMPRESSION IS A PRICK IN THE HEART. To be cut to the heart is deadly (Acts v. 33): to be pricked in the heart is saving. 1. All true religion must be of the heart. Without this—(1) Ceremonies are useless (Isa. i. 13). (2) Orthodoxy of head is in vain (Jer. vii. 4). (3) Profession and a constrained morality fail (2 Tim. iii. 5). (4) Loud zeal, excited and sustained by mere passion, is useless. 2. Impressions which do not prick the heart may even be evil. They may (1) Excite to wrath and opposition. (2) Lead to sheer hypocrisy. (3) Create and foster a spurious hope. 3. Even when such superficial impressions are good, they are transient: and when they have passed away, they have often hardened those who have felt them for a season. 4. They will certainly be inoperative. As they have not touched the heart, they will not affect the life. They will not lead to (1) Confession and inquiry, nor (2) Repentance and change of life. (3) Glad reception of the Word, nor (4) Obedience and steadfastness. Heart-work is the only real work. II. WHAT TRUTHS PRODUCE SUCH A PRICK? 1. The truth of the gospel has often, by the power of the Holy Ghost, produced an indelible wound in minds sceptical and opposed. 2. A sense of some one specially startling sin has frequently aroused the conscience (2 Sam. xii. 7). 3. Instruction in the nature of the law, and the consequent heinousness of sin, has been blessed to that end (Rom. vii. 13). 4. The infinite wickedness of sin, as against the very being of God, is also a wounding thought (Psa. li. 4). 5. The exactness, severity, and terror of the judgment, and the consequent punishment of sin, are stirring thoughts (Acts xvi. 25–30). 6. The great goodness of God has led many to see the cruel wantonness of sin against Him (Rom. ii. 4). 7. The death of Christ as a Substitute has often been the means of revealing the greatness of the sin which needed such an atonement, and of showing the true tendency of sin in having slain One so good and kind (Zech. xii. 10). 8. The abundant grace and love revealed in the gospel and received by us are sharp arrows to wound the heart. III. WHAT HAND MAKES THESE PAINFUL PRICKS? 1. The same hand which wrote the piercing truths also applies them. 2. He is well acquainted with our hearts, and so can reach them. 3. He is the Quickener, the Comforter, the Spirit helping our infirmities, showing to us the things of Jesus: His fruit is love, joy, peace, &c. We need not utterly despair when wounded by such a tender Friend. 4. He is a Spirit to be sought unto, who acts in answer to His people's prayers. We turn for healing to Him who pricks. IV. HOW CAN THESE PRICKS BE HEALED? 1. Only One who is Divine can heal a wounded heart. 2. The only medicine is the blood of His heart. 3. The only hand to apply it is that which was pierced. 4. The only fee required is gladly to receive Him. Conclusion: Let us ask the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Let us then obey the gospel, and believe in the Lord Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Honest preaching*:—No doubt it is a high and difficult task to preach with success; far be it from us to teach that no pains should be used to gain men's ears; but the preacher who gains their ears should use his conquest to reach their consciences—and it is his business to give them pain. They are sinners, and they know it, even better than the preacher. He will not become their enemy by telling them the truth, and so telling it that their ears will tingle with shame and their consciences cry out with remorse. At all events, enemies made in that way may become the preacher's best friend; and if they do not, they will carry his credentials as stigmata burnt into their memories. A man riding with his friend past a country church fell to musing with himself, and presently said: "In that house, thirty years ago, I passed the most uncomfortable hour of my life. It seems but yesterday, and my pain seems as keen as it was then." The other laughed and said: "I suppose it was some coquettish maiden." "No. It was an honest preacher who got hold of my very soul." Such memories in the hearts of sinners are the best credentials they can give to preachers of the gospel. *Reaching the heart*:—Jerome used to say, "It is not the clamour of praise but the groans of conviction that should be heard whilst the minister preaches." And again, "The tears of the congregation form the highest praises of the pulpit orator." The anecdote of Dean Milner and Rowland Hill here is appo-

site. Dean Milner had a great objection against extemporaneous preaching, thinking that it warred against the precise and orthodox mode. However, being attracted by the great fame of Rowland Hill, he was led to indulge his curiosity by once going to hear him. After the sermon the Dean was seen forcing his way, in much haste, to the vestry-room, when, seizing the hand of the preacher, in his enthusiasm, he cried out, "Well, dear brother Rowland, I perceive now that your slap-dash preachers are, after all, the best preachers; it went to the heart, sir; it went to the heart, sir!" (*Scottish Christian Herald.*) *Powerful preaching*:—John Elias was called to preach a great association sermon at Pwllheli. In the whole neighbourhood the state of religion was very low, and distressingly discouraging to pious minds, and it had been so for many years. Elias felt that his visit must be an occasion with him. It may almost be said of that day that "he prayed, and the heavens gave rain." He went. He took as his text, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered." It was an astonishing time. While the preacher drove along with his tremendous power, multitudes of the people fell to the ground. Calm stood the man, his words rushing from him like flames of fire. There were added to the churches of that immediate neighbourhood, in consequence of the impetus of that sermon, two thousand five hundred members. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *Only God can heal the wounds He makes*:—When a man is wounded with a barbed arrow, the agonies he suffers will cause him to toss about in pain; but the harder he strives to release the weapon from his flesh, the more does it become entangled in his sinews, the wound becomes enlarged, and the torture increased. When, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a man is wounded on account of sin, and the arrows of the Most High tear his soul, he frequently tries to pluck them out with his own hand, but finds that the misery becomes worse, and the inflaming wounds at last cause faintness and despair. Only the Good Physician knows how to relieve the pain without tearing and festering the spirit. (*Handbook of Illustration.*) *A true saving conviction of sin*:—I. THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH IT WAS PRODUCED, namely, the preaching of St. Peter. The Holy Spirit was the Author, but He employed the preaching of the apostle. It is by the Word of God, and usually by the preaching of that Word, that the heart is awakened, enlightened, and impressed. See why Satan is such an enemy to the preaching of the gospel. He knows that it is the appointed instrument for overturning his kingdom. He would, therefore, gladly prevent preaching, but when he cannot do this he tries to keep men from hearing. II. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF A SAVING CONVICTION OF SIN. They "were pricked in their hearts." The Word of God, in order to be of any real use, must reach the heart. It is not enough that it enlighten the understanding, or please the fancy, or warm the affections. Nor is merely reaching the heart sufficient. It must touch it. And what is the way in which it touches the heart? We read of some who were "cut to the heart." Their hearts were deeply affected; but instead of any saving conviction being wrought in them, they were only the more exasperated and hardened against the truth. A prick in the heart, though a small wound, would be fatal. III. THE WAY IN WHICH SUCH A CONVICTION WILL SHOW ITSELF; namely, in an application for relief. Take notice to whom they made this application: to those very persons through whose preaching the wound had been inflicted. Not that the preacher, by his own power, can heal the wound, any more than he could at first inflict it. The same Holy Spirit, which alone produces conviction, can alone administer consolation. But in both cases He works by means. Attend, then, to the preaching of the Word, and you will find it a life-giving Word, mighty to heal as well as to wound, the power of God unto salvation. IV. THE HUMILITY PRODUCED BY A SAVING CONVICTION OF SIN. Such a conviction disposes men to use the remedy prescribed. "What shall we do?" indicates that they were not only in deep trouble as not knowing what course to take, but also that they were willing to follow any directions which the apostles might point out. To this question there is but one answer, that of Peter. (*E. Cooper.*) *We must preach to the consciences of men*:—Inspector Byrnes of New York says, "The great lieutenant of every police officer is that mysterious thing called conscience. You let a man try to deceive himself and lie to himself about himself, and that something comes knocking up against the shell of his body, and thumping on his ribs with every heart-beat, and pounding on his skull until his head aches and he wishes he were dead, and groans in agony for relief. It is the same conscience that makes a criminal 'give himself away,' if one only knows how to awaken it, or stir it into activity. I never let a man know for what he is arrested. He may have committed a dozen more crimes of which I know nothing. If I lock him up alone and leave

him to the black walls and his guilty conscience for three or four hours, while he pictures the possible punishment due to him for all his crimes, he comes presently into my hands like soft clay in the hands of the potter. Then he is likely to tell me much more than I ever suspected." So the conscience is the great lieutenant of every preacher of the gospel, and this is not a lesson for the pulpit alone, for one of the most suggestive features of the Pentecost revival is that the Church members were all preachers that day. This picture ought to lead us to have courage to expect immediate results from the faithful preaching of the gospel. One of the most dangerous errors that ever was propagated by the enemy of souls, an error that paralyses the tongue of the preacher and the prayer of the Church, is that Christianity is only a system of culture, and that souls are to be ransomed by gradual stages. (*L. A. Banks.*)

Ver. 37. **Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?**—*It is the preaching that pricks men's consciences that saves them*:—It may not be well that some of you should be pleased. Sometimes, when a man grows outrageously angry with a sermon, he is getting more good than when he retires saying, "What an eloquent discourse!" I have never yet heard of a salmon that liked the hook which had taken sure hold of it; nor do men admire sermons which enter their souls. When the Word of God becomes as an arrow in a man's heart, he writhes; he would fain tear it out; but it is a barbed shaft. He gnashes his teeth, he grows indignant; but he is wounded, and the arrow is rankling. The preaching which pleases us may not be truth; but the doctrine which grieves our heart and troubles our conscience, is, in all probability, true; at any rate, there are grave reasons for suspecting that it is so. It is not the way of truth to fawn on guilty men. I say, the Lord uses ministries of a cutting kind to make men uneasy in their sins, and cause them to flee to Christ for peace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Conviction of sin: its naturalness*:—If a man really saw an angel, or one "risen from the dead," we should expect that all consideration of bystanders would forsake him in the awe of the moment. And so, if in an instant a supernatural power opens the unseen world to the soul, with its one eternal Light, its heaven and its hell, although the view of these must be imperfect and confused, yet if it is a view, a sudden view, it must shoot fear, wonder, awe, through and through the soul, till man and man's opinion are as little thought of, as fashion by a woman fallen into a steamer's foaming wake. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Conviction of sin: instantaneous*:—An unconverted man sat down to read the Bible an hour each evening with his wife. In a few evenings he stopped in the midst of his reading, and said, "Wife, if this book is true, we are wrong." He read on, and a few days later said, "Wife, if this book is true, we are lost." Riveted to the book, and deeply anxious, he still read, and in a week more joyfully exclaimed, "Wife, if this book is true, we may be saved!" A few weeks' more reading, and, taught by the Spirit of God, through the exhortations and instructions of a city missionary, they both placed their faith in Christ. *Repentance*:—I. THE INQUIRY MADE. Men always want to know what they are to do when conviction of sin is on them. This was Paul's excited cry when on the way to Damascus, and that of the Philippian jailer. And until a sinner is willing to do anything that he may, if possible, undo what he has done amiss, little evidence of a contrite state of heart does he afford. But how blessed is God's plan of salvation. We have not to do or to undo; another has done for us what is required, and what we could not do. Jesus has died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. All left for us, therefore, is repentance which leads to the avoidance of sin in future, by submitting to His ordinances, and present realising, appropriating faith. "Men and brethren!" Previously any contemptuous terms were good enough for the followers of the Nazarene; but see how the change of heart affects the speech. A sinner under conviction will naturally become more guarded in language than before. How many ways has the Spirit of God of producing conviction; and how many ways has a convicted sinner of showing the conviction which is thus produced! Not only do men adopt new modes of action, but new styles of speech. II. THE REPLY GIVEN. How ready is the apostle to respond. 1. "Repent," as if he would say, do not go about to establish a righteousness of your own; do not suppose that by costly sacrifices or penal suffering you shall be saved. Hate your sin and flee from it. Repent; sincerely, instantly, earnestly; seek mercy, for it is awaiting you. 2. Be baptized, as an expression of your determination henceforth to be enrolled under the banner

of the Messiah, thus publicly admitting His claims, and showing your faith in Him, and obedience to Him. 3. Do this in reference to the remission of your sins; not supposing that baptism will save you, but rather that it will symbolise the regenerative power of the Spirit by which you have been awakened, and then you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (*W. Antliff, D.D.*) *Sham repentance:*—Confession of sin is not a mere abandonment of sin as a losing game. That was a shrewd but not a very flattering estimate found on record in the private thoughts of an old divine. "I believe," he says, "that it will be shown that the repentance of most men is not so much sorrow for sin as sin, or real hatred of it, as sullen sorrow that they are not allowed to sin." When any individual surrenders an iniquitous occupation because he perceives public opinion is setting against it, and that eventually he will be injured by its continuance, it is simple mockery for him to try to make moral capital out of the relinquishment. When a young man forsakes dissipation because it endangers his place with his employer; when a merchant gives up dishonest trade-marks because his tricks are becoming transparent, and honesty seems the best policy—this is not penitence for sin; it is only the hypocrisy of worldly wisdom. *The work of conversion:*—Conversion is a work of—I. ARGUMENT, for the judgment is gained by the truth. II. CONVICTION, for the awakened are pricked to the heart. III. ENQUIRY, for they ask, "What must we do?" IV. COMFORT, for its subjects have received remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. (*Joseph Sutcliffe.*) *Salvation:*—1. Men must be pricked in their heart before they can have the joy of salvation in their heart. 2. The conditions of salvation—how easy! Salvation has only to be accepted. 3. The conditions of salvation—how hard! Each one must repent; that is, turn from his sin; and that is no easy matter. 4. Salvation is accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Without His help, no one could conquer sin. 5. The promise of salvation and the help of the Holy Spirit is to all men of all peoples. 6. The promise of salvation is a family covenant, extending through the father to the children. 7. The exhortation, now as ever, is: "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (*Sunday School Times.*) *Converting power permanent in the Church:*—To suppose that it has been withdrawn is—I. TO SUPPOSE THAT THE ONE PRACTICAL END OF CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VOLUNTARILY ABANDONED. If Christianity cannot renew men in the image of God, she ceases to have any special distinction above other religions. Her mission here was to overcome Satan in the realm in which he had hitherto triumphed, to re-establish the empire of God. II. Not only would this practical end be abandoned, but THE STANDING EVIDENCE TO CHRISTIANITY WOULD BE DISCONTINUED. The miracles and prophecies are past, and no accumulation of arguments can demonstrate to our neighbours at this moment that Christianity is a power which can actually make men superior to their own circumstances and sins. The only real and effective evidence is living men who have been regenerated. Wherever men can be pointed to whose lives are a manifest example of salvation from sin, there is the standing evidence that Christianity is "the power of God unto salvation." Is it supposable that Christ has withdrawn or diminished that power which would show continually that He "saves His people from their sins"? III. The converting power is also THE CHURCH'S GREAT ATTRACTION. It is true that some would attract men by ceremonies, or talent, or the charms of architecture or music,—attract them that they may convert them; whereas the true order is, Convert, that you may attract. The one is the order of the charlatan, who trusts to factitious allurements for attracting the public, in the hope that he may cure some; the other, the order of the true physician, who trusts to the fact of his curing some as the means of attracting others. Whenever the Church sends into a family one new convert glowing with love and joy, she kindles a light which will, in all probability, give light to all that are in the house. Whenever she is the means of making one shopman turn from his sins, and exhibit to his comrades a picture of holy living, in all probability she will soon have others from that shop at her altars. Whenever she brings one factory-girl to sit, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus, very probably in a little while other Marys will be with her. IV. The converting power is also THE PRINCIPAL LEVER WHICH CHRISTIANITY CAN USE FOR RAISING THE STANDARD OF MORALS IN NATIONS. 1. Instruction is the basis of all moral operation; but instruction in morals, as in science, is of little force unless backed by experiment. One tradesman converted, and manfully taking ground among his companions against trade tricks once used by himself, casts greater shame upon their dishonesty than all the instructions they ever heard from pulpits; or, rather, gives an edge, a power, and an embodiment to them all. One

youth whom religion strengthens to walk purely, among dissipated companions, sends lights and stings into their consciences, which mere instruction could not give, because it shows them that purity is not, as temptation says, unattainable. And so with all the virtues; it is but by embodying them in the persons of men that they become thoroughly understood by the public mind. 2. Just in proportion as the number of converted men is great or small, will be the amount of conscience in the community generally. Each new convert adds somewhat to the existing moral influence, and weakens the ties which bind men to sin. Where no one is godly, moderately correct persons are almost ashamed of their lack of badness; where a tenth of the adults are godly, even ordinary sinners are ashamed of their lack of goodness; and where a fifth, or a third, of the adults are so, the hindrances to the conversion of the rest are as nothing, compared with those that exist where the great masses are still living in their sins. V. The converting power is also THE ONLY MEANS WHEREBY CHRISTIANITY RAISES UP AGENTS FOR HER OWN PROPAGATION. 1. That which is wanted in an agent, above all, is zeal, burning desire to save sinners. This zeal is never a matter of mere conviction, but always a matter of nature. It is "Christ in you." It is "the love of Christ constraining you." Agents with this nature we can have only by successive outpourings of the Spirit of God, by constant accessions of new converts. 2. When they who have been great sinners are themselves converted, having been forgiven much, they love much, and frequently become mighty instruments of winning others to Christ. When "numbers turn to the Lord," saying, "We have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins,"—then some will assuredly appear with plain marks that the spirit of the prophets is in them, and that they are called to spread, far and wide, the glorious salvation of which they themselves partake. 3. Nothing so re-animates the zeal of old Christians as witnessing the joy and simplicity, the gratitude and fervour, of those who have been lately born of God. While the old disciple is to the young one an example of moderation and strength, the young is to the old an example of fervour; the one shedding upon the other a steadying influence, while he receives in return a cheering and an impelling one. 4. It is also wonderful how much the occurrence of conversions heightens the efficiency of men already employed in the ministry, or in other departments of the work of God. The preacher preaches with new heart, the exhorter exhorts with revived feeling, he that prays has double faith and fervour; and the joy of conquest breathes new vigour into all the Lord's host. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Want of ministerial results to be deprecated*:—A farmer who all his lifetime has been sowing, but never brought one shock of corn safe home; a gardener who has ever been pruning and training, but never brought one basket of fruit away; a merchant who has been trading all his life, but never concluded one year with profit; a lawyer who has had intrusted to him, for years and years, the most important causes, and never carried one; the doctor who has been consulted by thousands in disease, and never brought one patient back to health; the philosopher who has been propounding principles all his life, and attempting experiments every day, but never once succeeded in a demonstration;—all these would be abashed and humiliated men. They would walk through the world with their heads low, they would acknowledge themselves to be abortions, they would not dare to look up among those of their own professions; and as for others regarding them with respect, pity would be all they could give. Yet, alas! are there not cases to be found wherein men whose calling it is to heal souls, pass years and years, and seldom, if ever, can any fruit of their labours be seen? Yet they hold up their heads, and have good reasons to give why they are not useful; and those reasons generally lie, not in themselves, but somewhere else,—in the age, the neighbourhood, the agitation or the apathy, the ignorance or the over-education, the want of gospel light, or the commonness of gospel light, or some other reason why the majority of those who hear them should continue unconverted, and why they should look on in repose, without smiting upon their breasts and crying day and night to God to breathe a power upon them whereby they might awaken those that sleep. Probably they have wise things to say about the undesirableness of being too anxious about fruit, and about the advantage of the work going on steadily and slowly, rather than seeking for an excitement, and a rush of converts. But while they are dozing, sinners are going to hell. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 38. **Then Peter said, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus.**—*Peter's directions*:—In getting the exact meaning of

Peter's directions to these inquirers, observe—(1) "Repent" is literally to perceive afterwards, and hence to change the mind, including one's view of life and truth, and hence one's purpose. Here it means an entire change of opinion respecting Jesus Christ, from regarding Him as an impostor to reverencing Him as both Lord and Christ; but it also includes all that change of inner life and purpose which follows thereon. The Roman Catholic translation, "Do penance," making the direction merely the observance of certain legal rites, is equally inconsistent with the original Greek and with the spirit of the entire passage. (2) "Be baptized" follows in order the direction to repent. Baptism is not a regenerating ordinance, but a sign and symbol of repentance, and a public confession of Christ. (3) "Each of you," shows that the repentance and baptism must be a personal act. The multitude could not have been baptized under this direction, as some of the converts under Xavier's preaching were baptized in India, by being sprinkled altogether in a multitude, or as some of the northern people were baptized in earlier times, by being made to pass through the river in a great host. (4) "In" (upon) "the name of Jesus Christ," is upon the name of Jesus Christ as the foundation of the baptism, *i.e.*, with an acknowledgment of Him in that act as being what His name means, the sinner's only hope, his Redeemer, Justifier, Lord, and Final Judge. (*Lyman Abbott.*) *St. Peter's prescription:*—I. THE MEANS HE PRESCRIBES. 1. Repentance; that is the first ingredient in the cure. It is the primitive original grace, even before faith itself, as it serves to justify. All the promises are made only to the penitent. (1) See the necessity of this spiritual medicine. As when a loving father shall command his sick child to use such a medicine to save his life, should the child refuse it, he sins not only as a disobedient child against his father, but as a desperate creature against his own life. Impenitency is the damning sin. All sins deserve damnation, but it is impenitency which doth actually cast us. As he that hath eaten poison hath done that which in itself is deadly; but yet there is an antidote that can cure it; now to refuse the antidote is more desperate. Other sins are against our duty; but impenitency is against our recovery. Still the Scripture promises this as a necessary condition for obtaining mercy (chap. v. 3). (2) It is a proper cure for sin this penitential sorrow. To speak truly, sorrow and remorse, it is good for nothing but to destroy sin. God, when He implanted this affection in our souls, intended it only for this purpose, to purge and cure our spiritual maladies (3) See the efficacy of this prescript, the strength and virtue of this balm of Gilead. It is able to work strange cures, to recover men of desperate maladies. As no sin is so small but it needs repentance, so no sin so great but may be done away by this grace of repentance. (4) Take notice of the seasonableness of this prescription. They were already deeply cast down with sorrow and anguish, they were pricked at the heart, pierced. One would think some other course were more seasonable. No, no; St. Peter is right, he sees their souls are in perplexity, and yet he calls upon them to repent; they are in sorrow, and yet they must sorrow if they mean to be eased. There is indeed a large difference betwixt that sorrow which they already felt and that penitential sorrow which St. Peter enjoins them. Their former sorrow, it was a legal sorrow, wrought into them by the terrors of God's law and the sense of their sin; but the sorrow St. Peter commends to them is an evangelical sorrow, a sorrow wrought by the gospel and a gift of Christ. (5) Their former sorrow and compunction, it was a pang and passion of sorrow that seized them, whether they would or no; but the penitential sorrow that Peter exhorts them to, it is a voluntary, willing sorrow to which they must stir up and provoke themselves. (*a*) Look upon it in the original, it is a grace, and that is seated in the will, it serves to enable it and to make it willing. (*b*) Look upon it in the exercise, so it is a duty; God requires and expects repentance. Now, God requires our actions. Sufferings are not commanded but inflicted; but duties are enjoined, and we must willingly perform them. (*c*) Look upon it in the use; so it is a condition upon the performance of which God doth covenant with us. A true penitent must provoke himself to sorrow, praying that he may sorrow; grieving that he cannot grieve, never repenting that he hath repented. (6) The sorrow they felt before, when their hearts were pricked, differs from the sorrow to which St. Peter exhorts them; that was *dolor*, the pain of the disease; but this he requires of them, it is the smart that comes by the cure and medicine. It is not every stroke of conscience, nor every pang of sorrow, that is true repentance; we may feel all these, and feel them in extremity, and yet the bitter pill of repentance must be taken down for all that. That is the first means, a spiritual purging. Come we

—2. To the second means which St. Peter prescribes them, that is a spiritual bathing; that is the sacrament of baptism. (1) The sacramental action; they must be baptized. This outward, external, bodily ceremony of washing in water, it is of Divine institution, and so necessary. Let the means be what it will, if Christ sends us to it, it shall be effectual. Purposely Christ uses these bodily means as special conveyances of spiritual grace; even amongst men we see outward evidences and seals are accounted strong assurances. We are not content to have estates passed over to us by bare word; but writings and seals, livery and seisin, are all requisite. Purposely God employs very mean instruments that our faith may only depend upon His power, and that our thankfulness may ascribe it only to His glory. In particular, Christ prescribes this sacrament of baptism, and washing in water, that element fitly resembling those spiritual effects which are wrought in baptism. (*a*) Water hath a force of drawing and killing and suffocating any breathing thing. And this quality of water is a fit resemblance of the grace of baptism. A sinner, coming to this sacrament, hath all his sins drowned and abolished. (*b*) Water hath a power of quenching; and such a spiritual virtue there is in baptism, it allays the heat of our natural concupiscence, quenches and extinguishes the boilings and inflammations of our sinful lusts. (*c*) Water, it is a cleansing element, it washes away filthiness, and so doth baptism; it purges a sinner from all defilements of flesh and spirit (Eph. iv. 26). (*d*) Water hath a fructifying virtue in it; it is a fruitful element, and makes other things fruitful (Gen. i. 20). So this sacrament by Divine institution and benediction, it is a fountain of living water, a font and laver of regeneration. See how abundantly these waters brought forth. Three thousand were baptized and renewed in one day. That is the action. Then—(2) The relation of it, which enlivens the action and makes it effectual, is that it must be done in the name of Jesus Christ. What means that? In His name, that is, by His authority. He alone can institute a sacrament, He alone can make the seal that must confirm His covenant. In His name; that is, be baptized in the faith of Jesus His name, through faith in His name (chap. iii. 16). A sacrament without faith is a seal to a blank. In the name of Jesus Christ, that is, in the solemn and holy profession of Christ into His religion, into the fellowship and communion of His holy profession. In baptism we take upon us Christ's cognisance and livery. II. THE BENEFITS WHICH UPON THE USE OF THIS MEANS HE DOTH ASSURE THEM. 1. Remission of sins. And this will appear—(1) A seasonable benefit. Men in their case and perplexity had rather hear of the pardon of their sins, then that all the goods of the world should betide them. This mercy, it is the sinful soul's city of refuge. Other means may stupefy and benumb our conscience, and lay it asleep; only this assurance can truly and effectually quiet and comfort it, Thy sins are forgiven thee. (2) This mercy here promised is a full complete comfort; it is remission of sins in the plural number. As in bodily cures, when Christ cast out one devil, He cast out all; seven devils out of Mary Magdalen; a whole legion of devils, left not one remaining. So when He pardons one sin He forgives all. (*a*) God's love, it is not partial and imperfect, pardoning some and retaining others. (*b*) And then repentance, though it be occasioned by some one sin, yet it bewails all, detests all, forsakes all. A good Christian will leave no sin unrepented of. (*c*) The grace of baptism doth not only seal up the actual remission of our by-past sins; but it hath a force even for the pardoning of the sins of our whole life. Not that all our sins past, present, and to come are actually all forgiven in baptism, but because in our baptism God seals up that covenant by which He assures us, He will pardon all our sins upon our repentance; and thus the force of baptism reaches to the pardon of future sins. 2. The receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. (1) Grace is a gift not inbred in us, not deserved or purchased by us. (2) We must receive it; we are only passive and receptive of grace. The Spirit is the only agent, we are but receivers of the gift of grace. To pass by these, consider only these two things: the order. Repent and be baptized, and then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. First, here is cleansing required, and then beautifying. The Holy Ghost abhors uncleanliness, will not come near to a defiled soul. The nature of this gift. The gifts of the Holy Ghost were of two sorts. 3. Those that are usually called gifts tending to edification of others; as tongues and other ministerial enablements. They were the gifts of this day, but not the only gifts. 4. Others are gifts of personal concernment, for the good of the receivers to further their salvation. And these were promised and bestowed on this day. (1) The grace of sanctification; that was the gift and benefit of this day. (2) The grace of obsignations and sealing, that was the work and gift of

the Spirit that came this day. This is one great office of the Holy Ghost to ratify and seal up to us the forgiveness of our sins and all the benefits of our redemption (Eph. i. 13, iv. 30). (3) The grace of consolation; that is another work and gift of the Spirit, that was also the gift of this day. (*a*) In regard of our sanctification, so the Holy Ghost is a gift of grace enabling us. (*b*) In respect of our assurance, so He is a seal confirming us. (*c*) In respect of comfort and consolation, so He is the kiss of love and peace to rejoice and comfort us. And this assurance that Peter gives them of their receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will afford us a threefold meditation. See here—1. His earnest desire to have the gift of the Spirit communicated to them. 2. The bounty of God; whom He pardons, those He enriches and stores with grace. 3. Learn here the duty and obligation of a penitent. If God bestows this rich gift on us, that very gift obliges us to use it. We must not be content to have our sins pardoned, but we must set ourselves to perform better obedience. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *The gospel*:—The crowd, convinced of sin and fearful of its consequences, cried out in an agony of remorse and despair, "What shall we do?" Meaning, of course, what the jailer meant in the full evangelical question. They wanted to know how they should escape the penalty incurred. Very full is this condensed reply of Peter's. The whole gospel of man's salvation is included in it. No director of a stricken and bewildered conscience can improve upon it. I. THE NATURE OF SALVATION. 1. Remission of sins. Sin had run them into danger; continuance in sin would involve them in ruin. The first thing, therefore, was that sin should be remitted. When a disease breaks out it exposes its victims to a possible or probable death. To check its ravages does not mean absolutely health; but there is no averting that fatality until the progress of the disease receives a check. In our case sin exposes us to punishment on account of its guilt; to death because of its power. To forgive the guilt and to counterwork the power is therefore the first requirement. It is not full salvation, but it is necessary to it. 2. The gift of the Holy Ghost. This is the positive side of that which remission is the negative side, and completes the idea of salvation. To receive the Spirit is for the sick soul to be restored to full health; it is to lay ourselves open to His gracious work, which is (1) Regeneration, the gift of a new nature. (2) Adoption, translation into the Divine family and acceptance in the Beloved. (3) The witness to our sonship. (4) Progressive sanctification. (5) The earnest of all the glory and the joy of heaven. II. THE MEANS OF OBTAINING SALVATION. 1. Repentance. Change of mind about sin, self, holiness, and God, with endeavours after a corresponding change in the life and conduct. This will involve a hatred of sin, a true measurement of our own weakness and unworthiness, an endeavour after holiness, a desire after God as the supreme good. 2. Baptism. Here the rite was a symbol—(1) Of trust in Christ. "In the name of Jesus Christ." (2) Of the purity to which the Christian is pledged. (3) Of confession of Christ before men. (4) Of separation from the old life of the world, and consecration to Christ. These conditions are as inexorable to-day as they were then. All that the baptism we have already enjoyed in infancy means is obligatory on every baptized man. Our baptism is vain and our salvation non-existent unless "the life we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God"; unless our lives are pure, unless our confession of Christ be unmistakable, and unless we are fully consecrated to our Master's service. Conclusion: 1. How simple the conditions on which God grants His greatest boon. 2. How essential that we should comply with them before the gift is withdrawn. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Repentance*:—This is a turning from sin to God. When genuine it is a fruit of the Spirit, and secures the further gift of the Spirit. In its widest sense it includes the whole process of conversion. It has been well defined to be "a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience." I. ITS MEANS. 1. From a due sense of sin. This includes—(1) A knowledge of sin. (2) A conviction of our own sinfulness. (3) A proper sense of our own guilt and pollution. The knowledge of sin supposes proper views of the holiness and justice of God, and therefore of the greatness of the evil of sin, and that we are absolutely at God's mercy. 2. It is with apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. Repentance is not possible as long as we think we are without hope. For despair excludes repentance. We must apprehend, *i.e.*, believe—(1) That God is merciful. (2) That He can consistently exercise His mercy. (3) That we are, or may be, its objects. (4) That this is through Christ; because out of Christ conscience and Scripture

teach Him to be a consuming fire. II. THE ATTENDING CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. Grief, *i.e.*, sincere sorrow for having sinned; including—(1) Remorse. (2) Self-abhorrence. (3) Self-condemnation. (4) Shame. 2. Hatred of sin, which includes—(1) Disapprobation. (2) Disgust. III. THE ACT ITSELF. 1. Turning from sin: from its (1) Approbation. (2) Indulgence. (3) Promotion. 2. Turning to God—(1) As an object of excellence. (2) As an object of enjoyment. IV. ITS EFFORTS. 1. Purpose. A decision of the will to obey God in all things. 2. Endeavour to do so. (1) Continued. (2) Sincere. (3) Effective. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Repentance: its nature:*—It consists in the heart being broken for sin and from sin. (*W. Nevins.*) *Repentance: its beginning and end:*—It begins in the humiliation of the heart, and ends in the reformation of the life. (*J. M. Mason, D.D.*) *Repentance: its double aspect:*—True repentance looks upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful eye. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Repentance, thorough:*—I pray you dig deep. Christ's palace-work and His new dwelling, laid upon hell felt and feared, is most firm; and heaven, grounded and laid upon such a hell, is sure work, and will not wash away with winter storms. (*S. Rutherford.*) *Repentance, universal:*—If a ship have three leaks, and two be stopped, the third will sink the ship. If a man has two severe wounds, and cures one, the neglected one will kill him. (*J. Spencer.*) *Repentance: a change of course:*—A captain at sea discovers that, by some mistake, the steersman is steering the ship directly for the rocks. How is the danger to be avoided? By scrubbing the decks, or setting the men to the pumps? No! these things are good enough in their own time, but if the ship is to be saved, one thing must be done—her course must be changed. So the captain utters a few quick words, and the ship turns and speeds away from the danger. *Repentance produced by God:*—You feel that you cannot repent, but cannot Jesus make thee repent by His Spirit? Do you hesitate about that question? See the world a few months ago hard bound with frost, but how daffodil, and crocus, and snowdrop have come up above that once frozen soil, how snow and ice have gone, and the genial sun shines out! God does it readily, with the soft breath of the south wind and the kind sunbeams, and He can do the same in the spiritual world for thee. Believe He can, and ask Him now to do it, and thou shalt find that the rock of ice shalt thaw, that huge, horrible, devilish iceberg of a heart of thine shall begin to drip with showers of crystal penitence, which God shall accept through His dear Son. *Repentance before joy:*—As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colours with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant colouring of delight. The glad news of the gospel can only be printed on wet paper. Have you ever seen clearer shining than that which follows a shower? Then the sun transforms the raindrops into gems, the flowers look up with fresher smiles and faces glittering from their refreshing bath, and the birds from among the dripping branches sing with notes more rapturous, because they have paused awhile. So, when the soul has been saturated with the rain of penitence, the clear shining of forgiving love makes the flowers of gladness blossom all round. The steps by which we ascend to the palace of delight are usually moist with tears. Grief for sin is the porch of the House Beautiful, where the guests are full of "the joy of the Lord." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The magnitude of repentance:*—Repentance is an old-fashioned doctrine, which in these days has been despised; but, if I stand alone, I will bear testimony for it. They say that repentance is nothing at all—that it is merely, according to the Greek, a change of mind. That shows what a little Greek they know. A little of such knowledge is a dangerous thing. A pity that they do not learn more. Repentance is a change of mind; but do you say that it is only a change of mind? That is a pretty big "only." A change of mind, a radical change of mind, from the love of sin to the love of holiness, is that a small affair? It is always attended with sorrow and regret for past sin: and, if there is a man here who thinks that he will get to heaven by a dry-eyed faith, he will be mistaken. He that never mourned for sin hath never rejoiced in the Lord. If I can look back upon my past life of sin and say, "I have no grief over it," why, then I should do the same again if I had the opportunity: and this shows that my heart is as perverse as ever it was, and I am still unregenerate. Dear Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that faith and repentance were his daily companions as long as he lived, and that, if he had any thought of regret at entering heaven, it would be to think that he might have to part with his dear friend Repentance as he went through the gate. (*Ibid.*) *A repentance not so earnest as it seems:*—The gondoliers at Venice, when we were sojourning in that queen of the Adriatic, frequently

quarrelled with each other, and used such high words and ferocious gestures that we were afraid murder would come of it; yet they never came to blows, it was only their rough way of disputing. Often and often have we heard men upbraiding themselves for their sins, and crying out against the evil which their follies have wrought them, yet these very people have continued in their transgressions, and have even gone from bad to worse. They barked too much at sin to fall to and destroy it. Their enmity to evil was mere feigning; like the sword-play of the stage, which looks like earnest fight, but no wounds are given or received. Let those who play at repentance remember that they who repent in mimicry shall go to hell in reality. (*Ibid.*) *Legal and evangelical repentance*:—There is many a wounded conscience that is wounded like a sheet of ice shivered on the pavement, which yet is stiff and cold. But let the sun shine forth, and the ice is melted, and melted completely; so is it with legal and evangelical repentance. **For the remission of sins.**—*Remission by God only*:—As the prince or ruler only has power to pardon treason in his subjects, so God only has power to forgive sin. As no man can forgive a debt but the creditor to whom the debt is due, so God only can forgive us our debts, whose debtors we are to an incalculable amount. *Remission for the greatest sinners*:—There was once a man who was a very great sinner, and for his horrible wickedness was put to death in the town of Ayr. This man had been so stupid and brutish a fellow, that all who knew him thought him beyond the reach of all ordinary means of grace; but while the man was in prison the Lord wonderfully wrought on his heart, and in such a measure discovered to him his sinfulness, that, after much serious exercise and sore wrestling, a most kindly work of repentance followed, with great assurance of mercy, insomuch that when he came to the place of execution he could not cease crying out to the people, under the sense of pardon and the comforts of the presence and favour of God, "Oh, He is a great forgiver! He is a great forgiver!" And he added the following words, "Now hath perfect love cast out fear. I know God hath nothing to lay against me, for Jesus Christ hath paid all; and those are free whom the Son makes free." (*J. Fleming.*) *Remission gives confidence under the accusations of the law*:—A man was once being tried for a crime, the punishment of which was death. The witnesses came in one by one, and testified to his guilt; but there he stood, quite calm and unmoved. The judge and the jury were quite surprised at his indifference; they could not understand how he could take such a serious matter so calmly. When the jury retired, it did not take them many minutes to decide on the verdict "Guilty"; and when the judge was passing the sentence of death upon the criminal he told him how surprised he was that he could be so unmoved in the prospect of death. When the judge had finished the man put his hand in his bosom, pulled out a document, and walked out of the dock a free man. Ah, that was how he could be so calm; it was a free pardon from his king, which he had in his pocket all the time. The king had instructed him to allow the trial to proceed, and to produce the pardon only when he was condemned. Now, that is just what will make us joyful in the great day of judgment; we have got a pardon from the Great King, and it is sealed with the blood of His Son. (*D. L. Moody.*) **And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**—*The gift of the Holy Ghost*:—1. Among the various reasonable grounds and ends of observing festival solemnities, the principal are these: (1) The occasion which they afford to instruct ourselves and others in the mysterious doctrines of our religion. (2) The engaging us seasonably to practise that great duty to God, the remembering and praising Him for His great favours and mercies. 2. For these purposes chiefly did God Himself appoint the Jewish festivals: *e.g.*, the Passover. In compliance with which design the Christian Church has recommended to her children the observation of her chief festivals, continuing the time and name, though changing or improving the matter and reason of those ancient ones. The effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost corresponded with the time when the Jews were obliged to "rejoice before the Lord," for the harvest newly gathered in, and the earth's good fruits bestowed on them; and then did God bountifully impart the first-fruits of His Holy Spirit. The benefit, therefore, and blessing, which at this time we are bound to commemorate, is in effect the publication and establishment of the evangelical covenant, the foundation of all our hopes, and claims to happiness; but more immediately and directly—I. THE DONATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND TO ALL ITS MEMBERS. 1. God's gracious design was to reclaim mankind from their ignorance, errors, and sins, and to reconcile them to Himself by

the mediation of His Son, whom He sent to instruct them in their duty. 2. To render this successful according to the capacities of human nature, it was requisite to provide convincing arguments to persuade men of the truth of these things; means to excite their attention to them; motives to accept them; and a power also to retain them firm in their belief, and uphold them in the performance of the conditions required. 3. To prevent, therefore, the disappointment of His merciful intentions, God to the ministry of His eternal wisdom adjoined the efficacy of His eternal love and blessed Spirit, the which not only conducted our Divine Saviour into His earthly tabernacle, but did continually reside with Him, and attend Him in the performance of His miraculous works, attesting the truth of His quality, commission, and doctrine, and exciting men to notice these things. Nay, farther, to induce them to comply with these gracious overtures, He faithfully promised that He would impart the same blessed Spirit, as the continual guide and comforter of all who should sincerely embrace them, and conform their lives to His righteous laws. 4. Now although the natural and ordinary manner of this Divine Spirit's operation is not by violent and sensible impressions, but rather in way of imperceptible penetration, hardly discovering itself except by its results; and though its proper and principal effects relate to the furthering our performance of the conditions of our salvation; yet more fully to satisfy the doubtful, confound the obstinate, and confirm the faithful, God was pleased, after our Lord's ascension, to dispense both to teachers and disciples more liberal and extraordinary communication of that Holy Spirit, attended with wonderful effects. 5. The Christian Church therefore obliges us at this time to commemorate that incomparable gift, then conferred more visibly on the Church, and still really bestowed on every particular member who is duly incorporated into it. It is so bestowed, that is, on each member; for the evangelical covenant extends to every Christian, and a principal ingredient thereof is the collation of this Spirit. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture, the doctrine constantly, and with very general consent delivered down in the Catholic Church. II. THE WORTH AND EXCELLENCY OF THIS DIVINE GIFT. That it is transcendently valuable, we may hence generally collect; that even in our Lord's esteem it did not only countervail, but in a manner surmount the benefit of His presence. "It is expedient for you that I go away," &c. But to take a more distinct survey of its benefits. 1. We owe to the Holy Spirit our spiritual state and being; our spiritual life, freedom, and honourable condition. (1) By virtue of this "quickening Spirit" we are raised from death to an immortal state of life, being "quickened together with Christ." (2) We are enfranchised from intolerable slavery, from "the spirit of bondage unto fear," &c. (3) We are also advanced to an honourable condition, ennobled with illustrious relations, and entitled to glorious privileges: for thence "we have access unto the Father, and are no more strangers, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." 2. Neither only relatively and extrinsically is our estate thus bettered, but we ourselves are answerably changed and amended by the same Holy Spirit; being "renewed in the spirit of our mind"; becoming "new creatures, created according to God in righteousness." Such doctrines, as that our happiness consists not in affluence of temporal enjoyments, but in a disposition of mind curbing our appetites and quelling our passions; in conformity of practice to rules distasteful to our sense; in gaining and retaining the love of an Infinite Being; that naked goodness is to be preferred before all the pomp and glory of this world, &c.; such doctrines are indeed hard and harsh to us, absurd to our natural conceits, and abominable to our carnal minds: of our own accord, without Divine attraction, we never should come to Christ. His own disciples struggled against such doctrines, and without the aid of the Spirit would scarcely have admitted many evangelical truths. As for the mighty sages of the world, "the wise men according to the flesh," they were far more ready to deride than to admit them. Though some few sparks of Divine knowledge may have been driven out by rational consideration and philosophical study, yet no external instruction, no interior discourse, could remove the mists of ignorance, and awaken the lethargic stupidity of their souls. Thus is the light of spiritual knowledge, together with a temper of mind disposed to receive it, communicated by the Holy Spirit. But farther than this, by the same Divine power is imparted vital heat and vigour, active strength and courage. Though our spirit should be willing, yet our flesh is weak: knowledge therefore and willingness to do good are not alone sufficient. 3. The continued subsistence and preservation of our spiritual being, and active powers, the actual use and exercise of them, all our discreet conduct, all our good practice, rely on the Holy Spirit. It is true of our

spiritual no less than of our natural life; "if He doth avert His face we are troubled," &c. On all occasions we need His direction, aid, and comfort; for "the way of man is not in himself," &c. We are vain and fickle in our purposes, slow in our proceedings; apt to faint and stumble in our practice; we need therefore this sure oracle and faithful friend, to guide, encourage, and support us; to guard us in trials; comfort us in afflictions; and impart to us joy unspeakable in believing and well-doing. So many and great are the blessings which He imparts to us. Conclusion. 1. Let us earnestly invite this Holy Guest unto us, by our prayers unto Him, who hath promised to bestow His Spirit on those which ask it, to impart this living stream to every one which thirsteth after it. 2. Let us willingly receive Him into our hearts, let us treat Him with all kind usage, with all humble observance. Let us not exclude Him by supine neglect, or rude resistance; let us not grieve Him by our perverse and froward behaviour towards Him; let us not tempt Him by our fond presumptions, or base treacheries: let us not quench His heavenly light and heat by our foul lusts and passions: but let us admit gladly His gentle illapses; let us hearken to His faithful suggestions; let us comply with His kindly motions; let us demean ourselves modestly, consistently, and officiously toward Him. (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *The gift of the Holy Spirit*:—I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO RENEW AND PURIFY THE MORAL FEELINGS. He awakens the conscience to a sense of guilt and danger. He opens the eyes to see the exhalted purity of the moral law, and to feel the justice of its righteous condemnation. He affects the heart with the tidings of a Saviour's love, and creates within the soul that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, needing not to be repented of. The work thus begun in the soul is carried on through the same Divine agency, for the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God. It is through Him that we die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, that the old man with his corrupt deeds is put off, and that the new man is put on, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Nor are these the only influences which the Holy Spirit exerts on man's moral nature. Our Lord has promised that He shall be present with His people under the endearing character of the Comforter. It is His special work to heal the broken-hearted, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to comfort all that mourn. II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO ENLIGHTEN AND GOVERN THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS. It should never be forgotten that the Spirit bestowed upon the first disciples was "the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"; and that He is promised to us also for these great ends that we may attain to a right judgment in all things, and have power to accomplish the will of God. It is thus that man is to present himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and is to become a temple of the Holy Ghost, consecrated in all his faculties to the glory of God, and yielding the powers of his mind, the energies of his body, and the affections of his heart, to the service of Him who is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Preserver of men, and to whom alone all honour, and power, and glory belong. (*W. Niven, B.D.*)

Ver. 39. **For the promise is unto you, and to your children.**—*Why Christianity has failed*:—1. One of the earliest and most vital errors into which the Church fell was the conception that the Church's power is proportionate to her wealth. 2. The second great error of the Church was made when it began to depend upon political power as a means of effecting spiritual ends. 3. The third great error which has delayed the realisation of the blessings of Pentecost by the Universal Church has been the conception that education and culture could do the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us consider briefly what were the different features foreshadowed in this promise. 1. First and foremost, undoubtedly, was what we may term evangelistic power, the power of leading men to Christ, of so influencing them that they should abandon their sins and put their trust in a crucified Redeemer. 2. Closely allied with this element in the promise, and yet distinct from it, is the power of conquest which it involves. It is a remarkable fact—in many respects an incomprehensible fact—that Judaism, with all its great revelations of the truth, with all its wonderful striving after righteousness and its profound reverence for the unity of the Godhead, nevertheless, was by no means an aggressive religious force, and its converts at no time in its history were an important factor in its life. Mohammedanism spread by the power of the sword, and owed its victory to material, rather than to spiritual causes. Christianity, on the other hand, has ever spread, and will continue to spread, in virtue of a special power bestowed upon its apostles in answer to believing prayer. 3. The next element in the promise is the element

of boldness. 4. It only remains, in concluding our consideration of this subject, to point out with all emphasis that this promise was not limited to the apostles and their proximate or remote successors. (*H. S. Lunn.*) *The three covenants*:—I. The NATIONAL covenant, "to you." II. The FAMILY covenant, "to your children." III. The UNIVERSAL covenant, "to as many," &c. How wide was the outlook of the gospel upon the day of Pentecost. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *The promise of the Holy Ghost*:—Every dispensation has its present duties and privileges: it has also its peculiar promise; and according as men have apprehended the promise and the privileges, has been the ardour of their devotion. 1. In the patriarchal dispensation men had the privilege of presenting to God an accepted service, and living under His guidance and protection. But their promise was that the seed of Jacob should inherit the land of Canaan. 2. After the chosen people had been brought into their possession they were blessed with the privileges of the Mosaic code, and God gave them the promise of the Messiah. It was the privilege of the Israelite to take part in the worship of God with the feeling of holy anticipation that He would come whom their rites symbolised. 3. When Christ came He said that the privileges of His disciples were greater than those of the greatest man of the former dispensation, and gave them the promise of the Holy Ghost. This is the last promise characteristic of the last times; beyond this dispensation there will be no other, and its promise will be succeeded by no other. Notice—I. ITS NATURE. It implies that the Holy Ghost should be given. 1. For the official qualification of the preacher. The words suggest the exclusive power and right of Divine selection. "I will pour out . . . of My Spirit." The selection includes teachers of different grades in society and of both sexes. And for their qualification the Spirit is absolutely necessary. It is universally recognised that whatever else a man may possess, talent, power, wealth, or learning, he must possess the Spirit. This was taught by Christ when He said, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem," &c. (1) The Spirit was to give them correct views of truth, "He will guide you into all truth." These right views are necessary to preserve men from heresy. All revivals in the history of the Church have been connected with the revival of spiritual truth. Witness Pentecost, Luther, the Puritans, Wesley, &c. The Word of God comes out with clearness and power, and error recedes before it. (2) Something more, however, is needed than to be saved from heresy. The teacher must have spiritual views in relation to the Word of God such as those suggested by the expressions, "lively word," "the lively oracles," "the unction of the Holy One." A man must not speak merely in a way free from inaccuracy; but his words must be clothed with energy breathed by the Holy Ghost, so that wherever they come they may communicate that power. (3) The affections must be touched. There must be a yearning for souls which will not let the preacher rest unless they are brought to God. (4) The Holy Ghost is necessary for the resistance of unworthy motives such as would lead men to court popularity and indulge spiritual pride. (5) He only again is an effectual preservative against bigotry. 2. To dispose the heart of the hearer to derive full advantage from spiritual teaching. He (1) convinces of sin. (2) Inspires living faith. (3) Regenerates. (4) Bears witness to the believer's adoption into God's family. (5) Preserves from sinning. (6) Sanctifies. (7) Consoles. (8) Guides. II. ITS EXTENT. 1. "To you." All piety is out of place if it be not first of all practised at home. Your own salvation is of more importance to you than that of any one else. To save others and after all be lost yourself would greatly aggravate your misery. 2. "To your children." These, next to yourself, should claim your most earnest attention. The man who devotes himself to others and neglects his own family inverts the order of things. It is a monstrous evil to be engaged from early Sunday morning to late at night in a constant succession of services, and to have not a single half-hour to spare for one's own children. 3. "To them that are afar off." (1) Morally. (2) Geographically. (3) Chronologically. (*S. D. Waddy, D.D.*) *Christianity a religion of promise*:—I. THE PROMISE SPOKEN OF. 1. The promise of Christ which includes—(1) The remission of sins through His atonement and merit. (2) Full justification. (3) Peace with God and our own conscience, "Christ is our peace." (4) Adoption into the family of God. (5) Eternal life. Think of these and other like blessings, and their connected hopes and consolations, and behold them all centred in Christ, Himself the great promise of the Old Testament, and then rejoice to receive Him for yourselves, and to recommend Him to others as the promise of revelation, the desire of all nations, and the consolation of Israel. 2. As Christ was pre-eminently the promise of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is pre-eminently the

promise of the New. We are not to look for that miraculous agency which was given in apostolic days. This was not even then intended to supersede that ordinary gracious influence, which the Scripture declares to be essential to every one for the state of salvation. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His"—"Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit," &c. Our Lord speaks of sending the Spirit as the promise of the Father. No promise can be more plainly expressed than this, "Ask, and ye shall have"; and it is in reference to the Holy Spirit that this promise is given. Christianity is the very dispensation of the Spirit; its whole life, energy, and beauty depend on the communication of spiritual influence. The promise of the Spirit, like that of the Saviour, includes many other promises. (1) Repentance. (2) Faith. (3) A new heart and a right spirit. (4) Strength in every season of weakness. (5) Comfort in every trial. (6) Joy amidst sorrow. (7) Patience under tribulation. (8) Perseverance amidst difficulty. Christianity is throughout a religion of promise. It began with the first promise to fallen man; its promises expanded, like the stream of holy waters in the vision of Ezekiel, till, when the fulness of time was come, they formed that river of life which is rolling its salubrious tide throughout a thirsty world. II. FOR WHOM IS THE PROMISE MEANT? 1. The Jews; for St. Peter's auditory consisted entirely of Jews. Our Lord confined His personal ministry to the Jews. "I am not sent," He said, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Sending forth His apostles at first, He said, "Go not in the way of the Gentiles," &c. After His resurrection, when He enlarged their commission, so that its extent was to be the world, yet they were still to begin at Jerusalem; and in every city were first to address Jews, and then to turn to the Gentiles. And is there not encouragement for us, from the circumstance, that the Jews were to have the first offers of the promises of the gospel? There is this: the history of the Jews is a history of a most perverse, ungrateful, and rebellious people, who at length consummated their guilt by crucifying the Lord of life; yet to them first was the promise sent. Now surely that fact speaks volumes as to the freeness of the promise, as to the mercy of our God, as to the efficacy of the Redeemer's merits. 2. "The promise is unto you." If these brought joy home to the hearts of the Jews who heard the apostle, then surely His next words, "And to your children," must have touched another like chord, or rather, the same chord over again; for hard must be that parent's heart that does not rejoice quite as much in benefit to his children as in benefit to himself. Christianity most fully recognises that principle of natural affection, which the God of nature implanted in breasts of parents. The God of nature and the God of grace is one and the same. No sooner do parents discover the promise sent to themselves, than it says to them, I am sent unto you and to your children, introduce me to them, and them to me. I come to tell them that their father's God is willing to be their God also. It is remarkable how the Scriptures throughout encourage the promotion of the training up of children in the knowledge and belief of the promises of God. For this Abraham was so commended, "For I know him, that he will command his children," &c. This was the determination of Joshua. "Let others choose as they may, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." This was the lamentation of David. "Although this mine house be not so with God." This was the pious study of the ancient Lois, and the maternal anxiety of Eunice, to train young Timothy in the knowledge of the Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation. This again was the care of Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul, immediately after to have them addressed to her household also. The same was the effect on the jailer. Thus these examples from the Old and New Testament show that God encourages efforts to make known His promises to the young. What, then, can we think of parents who are anxious enough that their children should be well off for this world, should be accomplished, or learned, or rich—should form good connections, shine and sparkle in society, be admired and venerated in this world, but who have no care for their safety and happiness in the next? 3. "To all that are afar off," this means the Gentiles. St. Paul, writing to Ephesians, gives the very best comment on these words of St. Peter, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh," &c. Thus the Gentiles afar off from God, from peace, from hope, and from salvation: but Christ hath broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. The same God over all, is rich unto all that call upon Him. The same promise which sounded in the ears of the three thousand Jews on the day of Pentecost is now gone forth to the ends of the world. It is the voice of the good Shepherd seeking after

His lost sheep; and is the promise of Himself and His Spirit to give us a full salvation. This promise is to be addressed to all; it has a message to every human being; and yet, though the outward call is thus general and universal, our text adds, 4. "Even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Hence it is necessary well to understand, that beside the general call to be addressed to all, there must be the gracious and effectual calling of God. What the minister speaks to the ear, God speaks to the heart. The general call is so large, so rich, and so free, as to leave all without excuse who rest in the mere hearing of it with the ear, and do not seek to enter into it with their souls. The general call should stir us up to pray much for the gracious call. (*J. Hambleton, M.A.*) *The children may be converted*:—There was in my ancestral line an incident so strangely impressive that it seems more like romance than reality. It has sometimes been so inaccurately put forth that I now give you the true incident. My grandfather and grandmother, living at Somerville, New Jersey, went to Baskingridge to witness a revival, under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Finney. They came home so impressed with what they had seen that they resolved on the salvation of their children. The young people of the house were to go off for an evening party, and my grandmother said, "Now, when you are all ready for the party come to my room, for I have something very important to tell you." All ready for departure, they came to her room, and she said to them, "Now, I want you to remember, while you are away this evening, that I am all the time in this room praying for your salvation, and I shall not cease praying until you get back." The young people went to the party, but amid the loudest hilarities of the night they could not forget that their mother was praying for them. The evening passed, and the night passed. The next day my grandparents heard an outcry in an adjoining room, and they went in and found their daughter imploring the salvation of the gospel. The daughter told them that her brothers were at the barn and at the waggon-house under powerful conviction for sin. They went to the barn. They found my uncle Jehiah, who afterwards became a minister of the gospel, crying to God for mercy. They went to the waggon-house. They found their son David, who afterwards became my father, imploring God's pardon and mercy. Before a great while the whole family were saved; and David went and told the story to a young woman to whom he was affianced, who, as a result of the story, became a Christian, and from her own lips —my mother—I have received the incidents. The story of that converted household ran through all the neighbourhood, from family to family, until the whole region was whelmed with religious awakening, and at the next communion in the village church at Somerville over two hundred souls stood up to profess the faith of the gospel. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **As many as the Lord our God shall call.**—*Effectual calling*:—From whence observe—I. THAT ALL MEN TILL CALLED BY GOD ARE AFAR OFF FROM HIM. 1. In regard of the knowledge of God in a true and saving way. They are as little children, no more apprehensive in a right manner of God than the children in the dark are perceiving of the things of reason. Even Christians by birth are also far off from God till they have this spiritual eye-salve; and therefore in two respects men may be said to be far off from God. (1) First, both in respect of inward grace and the outward means of salvation; and thus all the heathenish part of the world is afar off God. (2) Or secondly, in respect of the inward grace only. When men do enjoy the outward means of salvation, and in this sense of their duties are said to draw nigh to God, but in respect of any saving work of grace are as far off as heathens and pagans; and this is the condition, as is to be feared, of many thousands. They are nigh God in respect of the Christian faith they profess in respect of the duties and ordinancies they exercise themselves in, but in respect of their affections and heart, so they are at as great distance from God and His holy ways as heathen and publicans. This distinction must be attended unto, that we do not vainly deceive ourselves as the Jews did with "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." 2. In respect of God's special and gracious love to justify their persons to pardon their sins. Do not thou please thyself with the thought that thou hast free access to the presence and into the favour of great ones on earth; for if thou art far off from God, if He regard thee not, if His displeasure be towards thee, thou art in the state of gall and wormwood. 3. We are by nature afar off from Christ the Mediator between God and man. And this indeed is the foundation of all calamity; for as in Christ we are blessed with all heavenly blessings, so without Him we are cursed with all spiritual and temporal curses. 4. Such as are afar off have no hope. They are a hopeless people; which way soever they look everything curseth and condemneth

them; and no marvel, for, if without the promise, they have not the ground of hope, and if without Christ, the object of hope. 5. Such are afar off in respect of God and an universal constant obedience to His holy will. As God loveth not them, so neither do they love God. As God is not gracious in His promises to them, so neither are they obedient to His precepts. II. THAT NOT ALL OF MANKIND, BUT SOME ONLY, DOTH GOD CALL WITH A LOVING CALL. The apostle plainly makes a difference of these that are afar off, and this only to come from God; some are so afar off that they never hear the voice of God in the Word calling them to repent and believe in Christ. Others again have salvation brought unto their house; and if thou ask why God calls such and not others, do not curiously pry in this mystery; God's ways are just, even when they are hidden to us. Too much gazing on this Sun may quickly blind us. 1. That there is a general and common invitation even of all in the world by God; and there is a special gracious one. The former invitation is by the creatures, by the works of God. (1) This invitation and call by the creatures doth not nor cannot reveal anything of Christ, the only cause of salvation. (2) The call by the creatures is not saving, because it discovers not the way of salvation no more than the cause—viz., faith. (3) This call could not be saving, for the farthest and utmost effect it had upon men was only outwardly to reform their lives. But you may say, To what purpose is this call of God by the creatures and the work of His providence, if it be not to salvation? Yes, it is much every way. (*a*) Hereby even all men are made inexcusable. (*b*) God's purpose in these calls is to restrain sin and to draw men on further than they do. There is no man that hath no more than this remote and confused call that doth what he may do and can do. He doth not improve, no, not that natural strength that is in him. I do not say to spiritual good things; for so he hath no natural strength, but to such objects as by nature he might. He wilfully runneth himself in the committing of sins against his conscience and knowledge. Now God calleth by these natural ways to restrain him to put a bound to these waves. For if there were not these general convictions, no societies, no commonwealth could consist. 2. Take notice of a twofold saving calling. The one is only external and saving in respect of the ability and sufficiency; the other is saving effectually and in respect of the event. 3. That God doth not call all men with this saving, gracious call will evidently *de facto* appear if you consider the ways of God ever since there was a Church till now. 4. It is no injustice in God, though He does not give this universal call of grace to all men. (1) If we could not satisfy the reason and disputes of men in this Divine dispensation, yet if the Scripture be clear in this point we must all stop our mouths and not gainsay. Doth not the apostle (Rom. ix.) expressly bring these carnal reasonings? "Who hath resisted His will? and why then doth He find fault?" But see how he rebukes this unruliness in man, "Who art thou, O man, that disputest against God?" If then Scripture and experience saith thus much, we must conclude God's ways are just, though hidden to us. (2) Even reason enforced out of Scripture may satisfy us in many things; for it is no injustice in God if He had not called any man in the world with a gracious call; for seeing man by his fall had broken the covenant with God, all things became forfeited into His hand; He was not bound to set up man with a new stock after his first breaking. (3) There can be no injustice where all that is done is done wholly out of grace and mere favour. The devil he thinks God is gracious too much and calls too many; he is tormented with malice because so many escape out of his jaws. (4) Although God doth not call every man with this immediate call of grace, yet no man is damned merely because he wants this. The apostle saith, "That those that are without the law [viz., written and revealed to them], shall be judged without the law." And thus those that are without the gospel, that have not the means of grace they shall not be judged because they did not believe in Christ, because they did not submit to Him, but because they did not walk in the practice of those things they did know. (5) God is not unjust, no, not to those that are afar off, because none among them have done what they might do in a natural and moral way; for although no man hath power in a gracious manner to any spiritual good thing, yet they may restrain from the outward actings of many gross sins. (6) Though God do not call all men, and thereby they are wholly impotent and unable to any good; yet they do not sin so much because they want power as because they have a willing delight in it; and this indeed doth mainly remove all objections; for it is not a man's impotency so much as his wilful consent to sin that damneth him. (*A. Burgess.*)

Ver. 40. **Save yourselves from this untoward generation.**—*Much exhortation is needed*:—Concerning salvation, we need only preach one sermon by way of explanation, but men need *ten* sermons by way of exhortation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Save yourselves!*—Let the word of God be like one who, during the great flood in America, rode on a white horse down the valley, crying out, as he rode along, "To the hills, to the hills, to the hills!" The waters were following fast behind him, and he would have the people escape to the mountains, lest they should be destroyed. Oh, precious Book, thus bid me seek the hills! Ring the alarm bell in my ear, and compel me to flee from the wrath to come. Day and night, wherever I may be, may a word from the oracle of God sound in my ears, and keep me from sleeping on the bank of the abyss! May no enemy be able to steal upon us when sleeping in false security, for it is high time that we awake out of sleep, and this Book tells us so. (*Ibid.*) *Save yourselves—Why?*—1. Because of the danger in which every unforgiven sinner stands. 2. Because ample means have been provided for the salvation of every one. 3. Because the providing means are unavailing unless we use them. 4. Because in this important matter each one must act for himself. 5. Because if you suffer yourself to be lost it will be deliberate spiritual suicide. (*J. Z. Tyler.*) *Untowardness*:—Untoward is said of anything which will not go toward, that is straight onwards, but will go now on this side, now on that, making a crooked path. The beast that rebels against the hand of its driver, pushes now in this direction, now in that, instead of that in which he is required to go. The slimy serpent that crawls along, never in one line, but from this side to that side. The man who knows not his road, takes a path now to the right hand, now to the left, and goes not straight forward. The drunkard who reels and staggers from side to side, instead of going forward. All these are examples of untowardness. And now is not sin untoward? The path of the commandments of God leads straightforward, but their transgressor is not found in that path. He has the wilfulness and rebelliousness of the beast that will not be driven. He is a true and close follower of the crooked ways of the old serpent, and walks in his slime of sin. He is ignorant and blind with vanity, and chooses his own crooked road. He is drunk with pride and evil desires, and cannot keep the straight paths of godliness. Such is the character of an untoward generation. In it are found the drunkard, the unchaste, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the covenant-breaker, the forswearer; and not only these, but all who hold not the truth in righteousness, all who abide in any practice which (they know) is not according to the will of God; all who continue in the neglect of any known duty, all who give God but lip-service instead of life-service, all the careless, all the indifferent, all the selfish. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *Salvation from an untoward generation*:—I. PETER'S ATTESTATION. What is a generation? All that are contained in one list of time—fixed: Seridas under reckons it at seven years, but the ordinary rate is a hundred (Gen. xv. 16)—uncertain; so Solomon, "One generation passeth, another cometh." It is with men as rasps: one stalk is growing up, another grown, a third withered, and all upon one root. You see your condition; there is no staying here. Make no other account, but with David to serve your generation, and away. An untoward generation is one froward, perverse, crooked. Let us note—1. A negative frowardness. (1) No matters of belief. This is what our Saviour rebuked the two disciples for. The stiff neck, the uncircumcised ear, the fat heart, the blinded eye, the obdurate soul, are expressions of it. If these Jews, then, after the manifest proofs of Christ's Messiahship disbelieved and rejected Him, most justly are they a froward generation. And so is any nation that follows them in their peevish incredulity, shutting their eyes to gospel light, like that Indian tree, which closes itself against the beams of the rising sun, and opens only to the shades of night. It is neither shame nor wonder for those to stumble who walk in darkness, but for a man to stumble with the sun in his face is so much more hateful, as the occasion is more willing. (2) In action, *i.e.*, when a nation fails palpably in those duties of piety, justice, charity, which the royal law of their God requires. 2. Positive. In matter of faith maintaining impiety, heresy, superstition, atheism, and whatever other intellectual wickedness; in matter of fact maintaining idolatry, violation of God's day and ordinances, drunkenness, thefts, or any other actual rebellion against God. Whatever succession of men abounds in these is an untoward generation. That which makes a man untoward makes a generation so, for what is a generation but a resultarian of men? But let not our zeal make us uncharitable. Never time was so bad but God left some gracious remainders. But these few, if they give a

blessing to the times, cannot give a style. 3. Let me commend three emerging considerations. (1) The irreparable wrong and reproach that lewd men bring upon the times in which they live. It were happy if the injury of a wicked man could be confined to his own bosom; but his lewdness is like some odious scent diffused through the whole place where he lives. There were worthy saints in St. Peter's time, yet the apostle brands them with being "an untoward generation." It is not in the virtue of a few to drown the wickedness of the more. If we come into a field that hath plenty of corn, notwithstanding the poppies, &c., we still call it a cornfield; but if we come upon a barn floor, where there are a few grains among a heap of chaff, we do not call it a corn heap. Thus it is with times and nations, a little good is not seen amongst much ill; a righteous Lot cannot make his city to be no Sodom. A wicked man is a perfect contagion to his age. Hear this, then, ye glorious sinners, who brag that your heads, purses, hands, are pressed for the public good—are your hearts godless, your lives filthy? Your sins do more disservice to your country than yourselves are worth. "Sin is a shame to any people." (2) The difference of terms in respect of the degrees of evil. Never generation was so straight as not to be distorted with some powerful sins; but there are degrees in this distortion. In the first world there were giants (Gen. iv. 4) which, as our mythologists add, "bid battle unto heaven." In the next there were mighty hunters and proud Babel builders; after them followed beastly Sodomites. It were easy to draw the pedigree of evils through all times; yet some generation is more eminently sinful than another; as the sea is in perpetual agitation, yet the spring tides rise higher than their fellows. Hence Peter notes his generation with an emphasis of mischief; and what age could compare with that which crucified Christ? (3) The warrant of the free censure of ill-deserving times. It is a peevish humour that aggravates the evils of the times, which, were they better than they are, would still be decried. But it is the warrantable duty of Peter and his successors when they meet with a froward generation to call it so, although we may be called querulous Micaiahs. Well might Peter do so: his Master did it before him, and the Baptist before Him, and the prophets on every page. And why may we not follow Peter? Who should tell the times of their sins if we be silent? II. HIS OBTESTATION, "Save yourselves." The remedy is of a short sound, but of a long extent. The saving comprises in it three great duties. 1. Repentance for our sin. Surely those sins are not ours of which we have repented. The skin that is washed is as clean as if it had never been foul. The waters of our tears are the streams of Jordon to cure our leprosy, of Siloam to cure our blindness, of Bethesda to cure our lameness and defects of obedience. 2. Avoidance of sinners; not indeed in natural matters, such as breathing the same air, &c., nor in matters of business, nor in such spiritual matters as attending the services of God, but in their evil deeds (Eph. v. ii.). If we would save ourselves from the sin of the time we may not command it, counsel it, consent to it, soothe it, further it, share in it, dissuade it not, resist it not, reveal it not. 3. Reluctation to sin and sinners. We must set our faces against it to discountenance it, our tongues against it to control it, our hands against it to oppose it. III. OUR DISSUASIVE FROM THE DANGER IMPLIED IN THE WORD "SAVE," for how are we saved but from danger. The danger here is that of—1. Corruption. One yawning mouth makes many. This pitch will defile us. St. Paul makes that verse of the heathen poet canonical. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." 2. Confusion (Numb. xvi. 26). The very station, the very touch is mortal. If we share in the work, why not in the wages? "The wages of sin is death." (*Bp. Hall.*) *Saving ourselves from a crooked generation*:—A man ought not to be carried to hell by his surroundings. Many a man has lived in a crooked generation, and adapted himself to it most completely. And many a man has lived in a crooked generation, and kept straight all the way through it. If your generation is crooked, that is no reason why you should be. But if you would keep straight in this generation, or in any other, you have got something to do about it. Your responsibility is for yourself, in spite of your generation. If your generation is crooked, see that you don't crook with it. (*H. S. Trumbull.*)

Ver. 41, 42. **Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.**—*Marks of having received the Word*: 1. A public profession of faith. 2. A desire to fulfil all the ordinances laid upon them by our Lord. 3. A desire to unite in fellowship with other believers. 4. Continuance in the Word. 5. Prayer and study of the Word in order to growth in grace. 6. Conclusion: In proportion as those who

receive the Word are faithful, will godly fear fall upon others. (*S. S. Times.*) *Anxious for baptism*:—Mr. A. Wills, whose work for Christ was much blessed at Hang-Chau. He says: "I examined a poor sick man this morning, who is anxious to be baptized. He was first brought to hear the gospel through coming for medicine, about a year ago, and since then I have baptized his wife. He was examined some months ago, but the Church thought it best for him to wait a little for further instruction. His sickness has become worse, and now all hope of recovery is past, and he again asks for baptism. He said, 'I expect to die in a few days,' and upon my asking where he thought his soul would go, he promptly replied, 'To heaven.' 'Why?' 'Because Jesus on the Cross died to save sinners; I am a sinner, and I trust Him to save me.' 'But,' said I, 'if you die before you are baptized, do you then expect to go to heaven?' 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'because it is the blood of Jesus that saves the soul.' 'Then why do you in your weak and dangerous state wish to be baptized?' 'Because,' he said, 'it is the duty of every Christian to obey the commands of Jesus, and not be ashamed of Him. I worshipped idols for forty-two years, and was not ashamed of the devil's works; and now, before I die, I want to let my sons and neighbours know that I am not ashamed of Jesus Christ.' I asked him many other questions, one of which was, 'Are you not afraid of the cold water doing you harm?' He replied, 'Oh, no, I don't fear that, because I have prayed to Jesus to help me.' We baptized him, and a week later he was called up into the presence of his Saviour." *Safeguards of religious life*:—We have here a beautiful portraiture of primitive Church-life in its simplicity, its purity, and its fidelity. Now we have brought before us four safeguards of spiritual life. They are not in themselves religion, but they are protective of religion. We may see the husbandman build a circle of fencing around the tender sapling to protect it in its early growth. The fence is not part of the sapling, but it preserves it. Thus are these four things placed about religious life. Not as a barrier to confine: their mission is protective. You will notice these are, Christian teaching, Christian fellowship, Christian sacrament, communion with Jesus Christ and God. 1. One great safeguard of religious life is Christian instruction. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching." It is the glory of Christianity that it is a teaching religion. It offers men an open Bible, an open Church, an open way of redemption and an open means of access to God. We have read of men in ancient times who had two sets of doctrines, their esoteric and their exoteric truth, truth that was for the few and truth that was for the many, truth to be sought in secret to the privileged circle, and truth that was taught to the multitude of the people. Christianity has no privileged secrets. As far as mysteries are revealed they are revealed alike to all. Its invitations are invitations to all. The attitude of the apostles was that of men who had seen great light and found great blessing, and they yearned that other men might also see and share that which had become so precious unto themselves. You will observe, moreover, these first converts to Jesus Christ not only continued in Christian teaching, but in the teaching of Christ's apostles. They did not think each was qualified to teach the other. They turned instinctively to the instruction of those who were ordained for all time, the accredited teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostles were qualified to teach because they themselves were taught. They were the first learners. Their Christian education was not confined to one portion of their life, it continued on. Truth was added to truth. Light increased to greater light. Thus they were enabled to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. The quiet teaching of the great truths of God is one of the greatest blessings of religion. If we are to attain to right views of the Deity, right views of ourselves, right views of the world, we must be taught by a higher Power. Not fancy, but food is the first requirement of spiritual life. God has sent us many teachers to guide our feet in the way of His commandments. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding, the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, the gain thereof than fine gold. 2. A second safeguard of Christian life is Christian intercourse. They continued in the apostles' fellowship. There were doubtless special reasons which drew these early disciples into close spiritual communion. They lived in an age of hostility. In fellowship they found a powerful means of sustaining their common spiritual life. There are two forms of help which minister to Christian life in men, one which comes from within, another which comes from without. By that which comes from within I mean meditation, prayer, devotion, the power of the Spirit of God within us. By that which comes from without I mean the contact of mind with

mind, and heart with heart—the power of the Spirit of God ministering through agencies which are without us. Christian men need both. There is inspiration in true Christian fellowship. Faith strengthens faith. Love is quickened by love. Through Christian fellowship also they were able to make greater efforts for Christ's cause. Achievements are possible to organised life which are beyond the power of individual effort. Unity is strength. Co-operation is multiplied power. I know no habit more worth pleading for than this habit of meeting together in Christian fellowship. It has been the custom of religious men in all ages and in all climes. The patriarchs in their wandering life gathered their followers about them in religious fellowship. The people of God had their united gatherings, their feast days, and their solemn assemblies, when they joined together in offering their devotions to their God. The ancient Druids had their sacred enclosures—rough stones were the walls, the heavens the canopy above their heads, nature the silent witness of their devotions. And it has been the custom of the Christian Church in every stage of its eventful history for the saints of God to continue in Christian fellowship. How often has the first downward step of a wasted life commenced in the wandering away from the communion of God's people? If we cannot meet with God's people to get good, we can, at least, meet with them to do good. It is more blessed to give than to receive. 3. A third safeguard of Christian life is faithful observance of Christian ordinances. "They continued in the breaking of bread." The breaking of bread may symbolise three things which should not be forgotten. I see in it a link with the past. You may trace this rite step by step backward through the centuries, till you reach the little upper room where Christ was in the presence of His disciples. But by it all confess their devotion to Him and His relationship to them as Saviour and Redeemer, and Friend. I see in the breaking of bread also the sign and pledge of present grace. The broken body and the shed blood is for all men who will receive His atoning work. "Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you," is the language of the Saviour to every man, woman, or child, that lingers about His table. It is a personal bond of a personal Saviour. In it He seals us as His own. I see further in the breaking of bread a promise and a prophecy. This rite shall be observed on and on by generations yet unborn. 4. A fourth safeguard of Christian life is found in communion with Jesus Christ and God. They continued in prayer. They did not theorise about prayer; they prayed. Men have drawn near to God in sorrow that have left His presence with joy. Men have entered the secret closet with weakness that have left it with courage and strength. The sorrowful have felt the comfort in sorrow. The perplexed have found light in their darkness. The tempted and tried have found deliverance in prayer. Charles Kingsley has said, "What an awful weapon prayer is! It saved me from madness in the hour of my great sorrow. Pray day and night very quietly, like a weary child, to the loving and great God for everything you want in body as well as soul, the least as well as the greatest. Nothing is too much to ask God for. Nothing is too great for Him to give. Thus we have traced the four great safeguards of religious life. We need them as much to-day as these first converts needed them for their Christian life. I do not know one that can wisely be neglected in the spiritual discipline of Christian souls. We trifle with them at our peril. (*B. Bramham.*)

The first revival:—In the outpouring of the Spirit, we have the cause in our text—the characteristics of the first revival of the Christian Church. Note—I. PROFESSION OF FAITH—baptism. Inquire what are those modes of baptism which Scripture warrants; but do not pelt others who differ, seeing the principle of Christianity is not baptism, but communion with Christ. If you have received Christ, you are not to delay open profession. Young Christians may hear a whisper, "There is a lion in the way." What lion? A laugh, or an angry word anticipated, or like that in "Pilgrim's Progress," which, after all, was chained. Let every waverer look to God, and get strength to come out, as these Christians of an heroic age did! II. CONTINUANCE IN APOSTOLIC TEACHING. These young converts were but in the infant school, and, like children, would often say to the apostles, "Tell us again about the angels' song, the Infant in the manger, the storm on the lake, the crucifixion on Calvary"; and that telling was the apostles' teaching. I have read an account of the conversion of a scoundrel at a gospel meeting which took place at six o'clock, and at half-past six he was preaching; but these children in the apostles' infant school knew they had to learn before they could teach. Meanwhile, with some entreaty, they might say, Come father, come shipmate, come shopmate, and hear what these men have to say. III. GENEROSITY. "And all that believed were

together, and had all things in common," &c. The Socialist says, "Ah, there you see Communism is Christianity, and comes in along with the Lord's Supper and baptism." But no. The Communist says, "All your property is mine." "All my property is yours," says the Christian. The Communist says, "Stand and deliver!" The Christian says, "Brother, your trouble is mine, receive." There is nothing that fell from the lips of Christ to make this act a law. The circumstances were peculiar, and a special arrangement had to be made to meet them. The workman had left his work, and had nothing provided for a lengthened stay, and then had come the sudden conversion and consequent waiting for more teaching. The spirit was of Christ, but the action was an economic mistake. For see, presently, how the poor brethren had given away their independence, and looked on this generosity, not as an act of love, but as a right. They were pauperised. Notice how the Church at Jerusalem was so miserably poor as to be dependent on the churches abroad for support. Of a certain man you say, "No use helping him; it is like throwing money into a well." As to its motive, it was Divinely splendid; it was Jesus Christ in action through three thousand incarnations. We are to have the same glorious capacity for making such a mistake. The generous God will have a generous people. God will withdraw Himself from a synagogue of misers, as from a synagogue of the dead. IV. Joy. If we have like precious faith in the precious Saviour, like joy will follow. Jesus Christ is mine; and mine is the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled. Rocks of diamonds, mines of gold, are all as nothing compared to what the believer has in Christ. Can you say that, brother? If so, then you may eat at the same fir table, out of the same coarse delf, your poor fare; but it will be "with gladness," &c. What a change! These converts had been the wolves howling round the Cross. Now Christ might say to them, "Who is Master?" The Spirit in the Word transfixed them, and they shuddered and twisted like shot things; but now the balm has been applied to their wounds, the oil of joy and gladness has been poured into their hearts. V. DIVINE INCREASE (ver. 47). God adds to the Church the saved. Does God alone add to the Church? If you mean certificated members, then verily others add to the Church in plenty. Who added Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira? Who is that stealing on to God's farm in the darkness, sowing his tares? The devil. Yea, the devil adds to the Church diligently, to neutralise it, and make it like the world. How many were added to the Church last year? The proper question is not How many, but Who? Man adds the dry branch, which cannot grow or blossom into fruit. God adds the living branch, giving beauty and strength to the Church. Mr. Beckford built Fonthill, and thought one hill needed growth of wood to beautify the prospect. He found the soil so thin and the climate so bleak, that no trees would grow. Instead of sending again to the nursery, he sent to the foundry for cast-iron trees, had them painted green, and stuck them by long iron stakes into the ground. He could add to these trees daily, but they could not grow. May we never have such trees on this hill—iron hope, iron charity, iron love. Conclusion: In certain transatlantic climes, spring immediately succeeds winter. By gentleness it makes winter go, by kisses the sun unlocks the ice, and the river is sent forth to beautify the plain. May God give such a spring to all the world, when its ice and snow shall melt with the magic celerity of enchantment, and spiritual woodlands burst into song and rejoice in the newborn beauties of an imperishable spring. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *The newly converted*:—The actions of the converts proved that they had passed into a new spiritual state, and we may regard them as models for every age. They—I. OPENLY CONFESSED CHRIST. Opinions vary, and will vary, as to the mode of baptism; but all are agreed as to its symbolic meaning. The words appointed to be used in baptism declare the relation of the candidate to each person in the Godhead; the water symbolises the need of Divine purification, and the gracious provision which has made that purification possible; while the application of the water represents the process and conditions of personal salvation. In this baptism Christ was openly confessed. And He must be openly confessed in some way by all who are His. II. DILIGENTLY ATTENDED TO APOSTOLIC TEACHING. They were careful to hear what the apostles had to say, that their knowledge of the truth might increase. Instruction, then, followed baptism. We have not the apostles, but we have their writings, by which they still teach. Diligent attention to the New Testament is calculated to save men from infidelity and much mischief of other kinds. III. ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS. How would people who were drawn together by a common attachment to Christ act when together? All their conduct would be affected by their Christianity. When professing Christians, of choice, associate with the god-

less, their conduct belies their profession. And when they meet without any reference to the Master, they neglect a means of grace, and give ground for suspicion as to their sincerity or zeal. IV. DILIGENTLY USED THE MEANS OF GRACE. 1. "Breaking of bread" reminds us of the institution of the Eucharist. 2. "Prayers" show us that they were devout people, in which respect their example is important. When professors are too busy to pray, or indulge in conduct which makes prayer irksome, they are in great danger. If the first Christians had so lived, they would never have been charged with turning the world upside down. And since their day great wonders have been wrought by men and women of much prayer. V. MADE A DEEP AND SALUTARY IMPRESSION ON THEIR OBSERVERS. "Fear came on every soul." Those who had not become Christians were filled with solemn dread. They felt that God had sent among them a wonderful thing, which no creature could have produced. They seem also to have been afraid lest they should be smitten for standing in an improper relation to what was transpiring. Recollection of the past history of their nation would tend to deepen the fear. And ought not all Christians to make on those who watch them impressions of the presence of God? A holy man often makes the self-condemning observer miserable by his very silence. When will all professors thus give counsel and rebuke by the spirit which they manifest? Were they to do so, how soon would Christianity diffuse itself through all the world! VI. GOD DIRECTED PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM WHICH THESE CONVERTS HAD EMBRACED. "Many wonders and signs," &c. Attention was called by miracles to the doctrine and personal conduct of the first propagators of Christianity. Repeatedly we find in the Acts first a miracle, then a sermon. If the time for miracles has passed away, attention has already been called to Christianity. What is now wanted is the fearless preaching of the gospel, with that best of all commentaries, Christ-like living. In using such means, Christianity is its own witness. (*W. Hudson.*)

A new development of social life:—As the result of Peter's sermon, a form of society rises which had never appeared before. New forces act upon the social natures of men, and bring them together with new feelings for new engagements. I. THE INCORPORATING PRINCIPLE OF THIS NEW SOCIETY. The magnet that drew together and centralised into a loving unity these souls which a few hours ago were so discordant, were—1. The apostle's word—*i.e.*, Peter's sermon. 2. The apostle's word received. They were convinced of its truth, and accepted it as a Divine reality. 3. The apostle's word received gladly; for while it convinced them of enormous wickedness, it assured them of salvation. Christ, then, as He said, was the rock on which He built His Church. II. THE INTRODUCTIVE CEREMONY TO THIS NEW SOCIETY. Baptism is a symbolical ordinance, which expresses the twofold truth of the moral pollution of humanity, and the necessity of an extraneous influence to cleanse its stains. These truths these sinners felt under Peter's sermon; and, as the most proper thing, they were admitted into communion with the disciples by an impressive declaration of them. As to the mode, this is a trifle interesting only to those religionists who live on rites. When it is remembered that Jerusalem had only the fountain of Siloam as its water supply, that the three thousand were baptized in one day which had commenced its noon, and that they included both sexes, it is impossible that they could all have been immersed in water. However, the mode of the act is nothing, the spirit is everything. III. THE UNREMITTING SERVICES OF THIS NEW SOCIETY. They were "persevering" in—1. The teaching. After their conversion they had much to learn; so this new society became a society of students—they "inquired" in the house of the Lord. They regularly attended *the* teaching as distinguished from all other. 2. The fellowship. They appreciated the communion of saints. They regarded themselves as members of a brotherhood, whose rules they were bound to obey, and whose interests they were bound to promote. In this fellowship, like saints of old, they "spake often one to another," considered one another "to provoke unto love and good works," exhorted "one another daily," endeavoured to "edify one another," and perhaps confessed their "faults one to another." 3. The breaking of bread, in accordance with their Master's dying command. 4. The prayers, probably prayer meetings. IV. THE DISTINGUISHING SPIRIT OF THIS NEW SOCIETY. 1. Reverence. "Fear came upon every soul." Whilst they were happy, there was no frivolity. They felt God was near, because of the "wonders and signs." 2. Generosity. Selfishness had no place here. Their benevolence—(1) Inspired them to make sacrifices. The love of property gave way to love of man. The law of social Christianity enjoins the strong to help the weak, and all to bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of

Christ. (2) Adjusted itself to the occasion. The circumstances justified this particular effort. Many came from a distance, and were unprepared to settle down; and many of them, too, were poor. The benevolence of those who had property, therefore, was called out to meet the case. This, consequently, cannot be regarded as a precedent binding on future times, nor is there a word in the narrative to imply this. 3. Gladness. The rich were happy, for their benevolence was gratified in giving. The poor were happy, for their hearts glowed with gratitude in receiving. All were happy in themselves and with each other, because happy in God. 4. Simplicity. There was no pride, ostentation, self-seeking, hypocrisy among them; but all were childlike in spirit. 5. Religiousness. "Praising God"—a summary of the whole. V. THE BLESSED CONDITION OF THIS NEW SOCIETY. 1. Their influence was great. They had favour, not with a class—not with priests, Pharisees, Sadducees—but with all the people. 2. Their growth was constant. They were neither declining nor stationary; they were daily increasing. This was "the Lord's" doing. He only can add true men to the Church. 3. Their salvation was promising. "Such as were in the way of salvation." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.**—*Church life:*—The text tells us how the newly-baptized lived, in that first bloom and freshness of the gospel. They waited constantly upon—I. THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES. There was much for them to learn. They knew nothing as yet in detail of the doctrine of their new Master. The particulars of His life, words, character, work; how must the apostles have busied themselves in recounting these things to a congregation all but wholly ignorant of them, amidst breathless silence or murmured satisfaction!—the gospel story. We are too ready to imagine that we have nothing to learn now from public teaching. We sit in judgment upon our teachers, as though we had all truth and knowledge already in possession. And most unwilling would your ministers be to speak as though they had anything which you know not, or might not know, for yourselves from the pages of the Holy Book. Nevertheless, preaching is one of God's ordinances, and to it belongs the emphasis of that solemn caution, "Despise not prophesyings." It is still one mark of the true Christian that he waits stedfastly upon the teaching of appointed men, whose responsible office it is rightly to divide the word of truth. II. IN FELLOWSHIP—*i.e.*, in the formation and fostering of that brotherly spirit of Christian love which the Apostles' Creed calls "the communion of saints." The converts did not separate after their baptism, each to his home, to live a life of pious meditation. They set themselves resolutely to a life of fellowship. The Christian is one of a community; alone, he is but a limb cut off from the trunk; separately, he must draw his vital vigour from the Head, but that vigour must be used and manifested in a self-forgetting fellowship. He must never fancy himself the whole body, either in being independent of the Head or of the organised system. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." III. THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD. How instantly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper took its place among the marks and tokens of the true Church! From the very first it was understood that a Christian is one who observes all that Christ has commanded, and not least His dying charge, "This do," &c. Doubtless the Lord's Supper was a daily celebration. And do you suppose that any of the three thousand dared or wished to turn their back upon it? And yet how many of us are knowingly, wilfully, and throughout life, acting as if the charge, "This do," had never been uttered, or as if the apostles only had ever been addressed by it! And no doubt there are those who could not, without presumption or profaneness, attend on that breaking of bread. But does not that inability, of itself, startle them? Does it not sound in their ears the condemning sentence, "Thou art none of Christ's; thou art yet in thy sins"? IV. IN PRAYERS. No doubt they prayed in secret. No doubt it was a life of prayer. The charge which we treat as hyperbolical—"Pray without ceasing"—was to them, in its spirit, a literal precept. Their life was now above, hidden with Christ in God, and well might they exercise that life in offices of perpetual communion. Christ was to them not a name nor a doctrine, but a real and living Person, their Friend and their Saviour, their Lord and their God. They could not have too much of Him! Therefore a life of prayer was to them a life of happiness. But the particular place occupied by the word "prayers" in the text, leads us rather to think of the worship of the congregation than of the worship of the secret chamber. It was not then, as it is now, that any little fluctuation of feeling, or any passing accident of weather or of company, can thin a congregation almost to nothing. It was not then the case, as it is now, that everything is more attractive than worship; an additional half-hour's rest, a walk into the country, a

newspaper or a novel; nothing felt to be so little worth exertion as the opportunity of joining in the Church's prayers or listening to the Church's teaching. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Attachment to the Church:*—All of us here assembled profess ourselves members of this Christian community; we profess ourselves churchmen, as members of the Church of Christ; for every sincere and honest member of the Church of England values his Church for this reason, that it is a portion of the Church of Christ. The churchmanship which I am now inculcating is the churchmanship of our text, and the duties therein described are the duties which I earnestly press upon you, and which I now proceed to illustrate. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." 1. This description of the first Christians implies that the good churchman is stedfastly attached to the communion of his Church, cultivates a warm and constant affection for her, and uses all proper means for extending its influence, and carrying its beneficial influence to all who are ignorant of, or careless about, those invaluable blessings she contains within her sacred repository. This profession, entered into at baptism, and ratified at confirmation, leads the true member of Christ's Church courageously to assert and to maintain the doctrines of the Cross of Christ in all their genuine simplicity, and that not only when it can be done without incurring opposition, but also when their maintenance may be scorned by the world and assailed by the sceptic; the good Churchman knows from Scripture that these truths are the doctrines of the apostles. From these doctrines he has derived peace and consolation; and from them, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he feels implanted within him a principle, a life-giving principle, of holiness, which suggests the motives and dictates the acts of his daily conduct. These doctrines, when heartily embraced, are doctrines for the healing of the world of its sins and evils. The good Churchman remains immovable; he loves his Church for the truth's sake; if any of her sons act unworthily of her, if any abuse, any deformity for a time creep round her sacred battlements, the abuse, the deformity is lamented, and, if possible, removed; but the Church herself is his delight; he loves her for the blessings she conveys. 2. From our text, it is to be observed that the Christian who desires to act his part well in his duty and obligations to his Church, will stedfastly attend on its services and observe its institutions. The first three thousand Churchmen, than whom so good a sample has never since been met with, "continued stedfastly, as in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, so also in breaking of bread and in prayers." Indeed, the services of the Church form the main bond of fellowship with her. Most inconsistent is it for men, like the Jews of old, to exclaim, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when the temple is scarcely ever frequented, and they themselves never seen within its sacred enclosure! Calling themselves members of Christ's Church, but altogether neglecting its services, except as necessity calls upon them to join in them, and consequently as ignorant of their intent and meaning, as unmoved by any spiritual affection towards them or sacred pleasure from them, as though they were repeated in a language they understood not; boasting of their external fellowship by baptism, as though baptism were the sum-total of Church membership. The remark of Bishop Beveridge upon the character and behaviour of these first Christians is well worthy of universal attention: "They did not think it sufficient to be baptized into Christ, but they still continued in Him, doing all such things as He hath appointed, whereby to receive grace and power from Him to walk as becometh His disciples; and so must we also, if we desire to be saved by Him. It is our great happiness to have been by baptism admitted into the Church and school of Christ, and so made His disciples and scholars; but unless we continue to do what we promised at our baptism, our condemnation will be the greater, in that we do not only break the laws of God, but likewise the promise we made to Him when we were baptized." Of this state of things the consistent Churchman is fully aware, and by the grace of God he acts accordingly; hence his regular attendance on Divine ordinances is marked by internal devotion and external propriety. He is enabled to say of the temple and worship of the Lord, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (*J. C. Abdy, M.A.*) *Steadfastness:*—Recently, at Chicago, Bishop Whipple related the following incident as an illustration of the moral courage of Christian Indians: "One day an Indian came to our missionary and said, 'I know this religion is true. The men who have walked in this new trail are better and happier. But I have always been a warrior, and my hands are full of blood. Could I be a Christian?' The missionary repeated the story of God's love. To test the man, he said, 'May I cut your hair?' The

Indian wears his scalp-lock for his enemy. When it is cut it is a sign that he will never go on the war-path again. The man said, 'Yes, you may cut it. I shall throw my old life away.' It was cut. He started for home, and met some wild Indians, who shouted with laughter, and with taunts said, 'Yesterday you were a warrior; to-day you are a squaw.' It stung the man to madness, and he rushed to his home and threw himself on the floor and burst into tears. His wife was a Christian, and came and put her arms about his neck and said, 'Yesterday there was not a man in this world who dared call you a coward. Can't you be as brave for Him who died for you as you were to kill the Sioux?' He sprung to his feet and said, 'I can, and will.' I have known many brave, fearless servants of Christ, but I never knew one braver than this chief." *Revivals favourable to doctrine:*—A languid church breeds unbelief as surely as a decaying oak fungus. In a condition of depressed vitality, the seeds of disease, which a full vigour would shake off, are fatal. Raise the temperature, and you kill the insect germs. *Revivals unfavourable to unbelief:*—A warmer tone of spiritual life would change the atmosphere which unbelief needs for its growth. It belongs to the fauna of the glacial epoch, and when the rigours of that wintry time begin to melt, and warmer days to set in, the creatures of the ice have to retreat to arctic wildernesses, and leave a land no longer suited for their life. (*A. Maclaren.*) *Model Church:*—I. IT WAS MADE UP OF CONVERTS—that is, of such as had repented and put an unquestionable faith in Jesus Christ. It is possible, of course, that some slipped in who were either wilful deceivers or self-deceived, but that was not likely to be the case under such circumstances. None joined from social considerations or because others were doing so. II. THE MEMBERS OF THIS MODEL CHURCH "CONTINUED STEDFASTLY IN THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE." They received the truth as it came to them from inspired lips and were cordially faithful to it. They had a creed and were not ashamed of it. There were no heretics among them, walking about with feathers in their hats and vaunting their disloyalty to truth. We are told that Christianity is not dogma, but life. It is both, and to say that it is either at the expense of the other is to antagonise the clear teaching of Scripture. Christianity is neither dogma nor life; it is life founded on dogma; it is ethics growing out of truth; it is creed flowering into conduct. III. "THEY CONTINUED STEDFASTLY IN FELLOWSHIP AND IN BREAKING OF BREAD AND IN PRAYERS." The *rationale* of the Church finds its briefest expression in that word "fellowship." There is a notion abroad that the Church is an organisation of good people, such as think themselves a little better than their neighbours. This is a mistake; the very opposite is true. The Church is a mutual help association, made up not of good people, but of such as want to be good, who feel their weakness and their need of co-operative sympathy and prayer. The over-righteous, who are strong enough to get along by themselves, are outside of the Church. IV. THEY SURRENDERED ALL THEIR EARTHLY POSSESSIONS TO A COMMON TREASURY TO BE EXPENDED FOR THE COMMON GOOD. These people lived in the early morning, with the dewy memory of Christ upon them and hearts warmed by the baptism of fire; they had recently seen their Master caught up in the clouds of heaven and received an assurance that He would come again in "like manner." Thus memory and hope conspired to make their hearts unworldly, and in their fellowship we may reasonably expect to find the nearest approach to the Church of the millennium. In these days, when property rights so far eclipse the great verities, we may be excused for wondering how these people could be so foolish as to sell their possessions in this way and "hold all things common"; but by-and-by there will come a time when truth and goodness will outshine silver and gold, and then, perhaps, it will appear that these early Christians were not wrong after all, but only a little premature. The term "communism" is applied to so much of crack-brained fanaticism that we are in danger of overlooking the real truth at the centre of it. V. THE MEMBERS OF THIS PRIMITIVE CHURCH GAVE THEMSELVES WHOLLY UP TO THE WORK AND WORSHIP OF GOD: "They continued daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house." They were not content with mere Sabbath worship and the other perfunctory duties of a religious life. To these enthusiastic Christians every day was a holy day and every place was a sanctuary. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The faith and stedfastness of the early Christians:*—I. We have here, then, in the first place, A VERY FULL ACCOUNT OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. It is, in fact, a kind of full-length portrait, drawn by the pencil of inspiration, which we must analyse and examine for our own benefit. And here, first of all, we find it stated that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine." If you ask what this doctrine was, we refer you back to the clear outline of it which is presented to our minds in the sermon of the Apostle Peter. It was

the doctrine of a free and full remission of our sins, through the atoning sacrifice of our blessed Saviour, who was put to death for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. II. THE BLESSED EFFECTS. It is also asserted that these primitive Christians maintained a constant attendance on the means of grace. A man cannot walk alone and by himself on the path which leads to glory. As soon as his conscience has been awakened, his judgment convinced, and his heart subdued to the obedience of faith, he must become a member of that Church to which her Divine Master has entrusted the dispensation of those means of grace which He has provided for the advancement of the spiritual interests of His people. But we must also notice another characteristic feature in this infant Church. They manifested a noble and commendable attention to the wants of their poorer brethren; they "continued stedfastly in the fellowship," or, rather, as the original word implies, in the contribution, or in the generous and considerate extension of their temporal resources for the supply of the necessities of their poorer brethren: "They had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." And we cannot fail to notice the spirit of union and of Christian love that pervaded all the services and intercourse of these first disciples of our blessed Redeemer. There was an unity of faith, and, what was of more consequence, there was an unity of feeling amongst them, binding together into one happy family the constituent members of this infant Church. It might, indeed, be said of them, "Behold how these Christians love one another," so zealously did they endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." They "were together"; they did not frustrate the great purpose for which Christ has incorporated His people into a church by becoming hermits, but, feeling their mutual dependence on each other, they endeavoured by mutual encouragement to strengthen and to build each other up in the faith and hope of the everlasting gospel. (*D. Bagot, D.D.*) *The first Christians a holy family*:—I. THE KIND FATHER OF THE FAMILY: recognised in filial love and proved in daily blessings. II. THE LOVING MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY: the old ones of Pentecost and the new ones added to it. III. THE BEAUTIFUL ORDER OF THE FAMILY: doctrine and prayer, breaking of bread and care for the poor. IV. THE HOLY PEACE OF THE FAMILY. 1. Within among themselves. 2. Without in relation to the world. (*Gerok.*) *The first Christian Church*:—1. The faith which it testified. 2. The deeds which it performed. 3. The love which it evidenced. 4. The means of grace which it employed. 5. The blessedness which it enjoyed. (*G. Florey.*) *The blooming garden of God in the primitive Church*:—1. The delightful sunshine of Divine grace which it enjoys after the Pentecostal rain. 2. The lovely spiritual blossoms and fruits of grace which increase under such a Divine blessing—faith, love, hope, humility, meekness, purity, alms, prayer, &c. 3. The strong wall by which God's garden is protected from the wasting of the enemy. (*C. Gerok.*) *Christian doctrine*:—The New Testament was not yet written, yet there was a coherent system of Christian faith and truth, and by an instinct these people knew it. The truth had not yet been formulated into a creed, but the essentials of a creed existed in the minds of both preachers and hearers of the gospel; and say what we may about creeds and the use which has sometimes been made of them, Christian doctrine is and ever has been essential to the integrity and the triumphs of the Christian Church. Note—I. THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DEPENDS PARTLY UPON THE SOUL'S CONVICTIONS AS TO THE CHARACTER OF GOD. 1. This life is derived from God, and is developed in the soul. There are inscrutable influences of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the inward change. There are also undefinable influences of godly friends or preachers, but none of these can be effectual unless there be a truth or fact through which the Holy Spirit works. How does a parent move his child towards a godly life? By force of character? Yes; but character is the product of Christian truth; and the parent was holy because, among other things, he read his Bible and believed his Saviour. 2. You might as well try to account for the life of a flower apart from the seed as to account for spiritual life apart from spiritual doctrine. You can predict the character of the flower from the nature of the seed; so from your knowledge of religious systems you can foretell the forms of character that will be developed from them—Mohammedan, Buddhist, Socinian, &c.; and our spiritual life will depend on the tenacity with which we cling to true convictions of the character of God. St. Paul was one of the most spiritual and self-denying of men, and again and again he traces his inner life to the power which Christian truth had over him—over his heart, of course, but over his intellect as well. 3. It is a shallow and often a hypocritical cry that asks us

for a Christianity without doctrine. You cannot have it. God is—that is a doctrine. God loves you—that is a doctrine, and so on. Feed your mind on these and kindred facts, and yours shall be no puny life. II. THAT A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST BE DRAWN TOGETHER BY AFFINITIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. 1. If the unit of spiritual life depends for its existence and sustenance on truth, so does the community; if one child needs food, so do all the children; and though differences may be made to suit various appetites, yet chemical analysis shows that the foods are the same in their primal elements. And all spiritual communions must find a common spiritual basis. Feeling is too shifting for this basis, conduct too indefinite, negation too cold and unsubstantial, ceremony too formal and outward, and those combinations which are formed by the sinking of convictions are immoral and hollow. No; the first requisite for Christian union is that there shall be a due regard to Christian conviction. 2. We sometimes talk of truth as though it were in the air, in documents, in the mystic utterance of the whole body of believing people. Yet ultimately it must be found in the individual soul. This is where error is, and not merely in magazines and lectures. A number of individuals, then, tenaciously holding the same beliefs, constitutes a spiritual community, and no Church is so destitute of the first principles of common sense as to seek fellowship apart from understood and common beliefs. The Unitarian may say, "We do not lay down any doctrinal basis for our fellowship," yet a preacher who proclaimed the atonement or Divinity of Christ would have but a sorry welcome. 3. Churches exist for the very purpose of proclaiming Christian truth. If truth has gone, their mission has gone, and thirsty souls will go to them and find no living water. III. THAT FOR CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE WE ARE DEPENDENT ON REVELATION. God did not leave men to find out the truth concerning Himself; He revealed it. When He revealed it He did not leave it to take care of itself. Both the revelation and the record are monuments of God's special love to man. The idea of the supernatural is particularly obnoxious to "advanced thinkers"; they are consequently ever on the look-out for evidence that Christianity was only a product of the human mind, and so on a level with all other religions. But Christianity professes to be a new and supernatural departure in the history of religion, and the apostles are the Divinely appointed media of the Divine revelation. Their "doctrine" concerns the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, and who so competent as they to deliver it, and who shall contest it as it comes from their lips or pens? Matthew was a chosen companion of Christ's; Mark was a convert of Peter's, and a comrade of Paul's; Luke had "a perfect understanding of all things from the first"; John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and "we know that his testimony is true." Peter was an eye-witness of His majesty, and did "not follow cunningly devised fables." To Paul the risen Christ appeared as to one born out of due time, and "he received of the Lord that which he also delivered" to his converts. If we want trustworthy guides, these are the men to help us. IV. THAT THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES LIES, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, IN THEIR ADHERENCE TO CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES. If men want to be strong and aggressive, they must not be easily moved by the threatening sounds of modern unbelief; they must know their own minds and the mind of Christ. In moral conflicts convictions are the only forces that will do lasting service. (*S. Pearson, M.A.*) *The disciplined life of the Church*:—"They continued steadfastly." The word seems to imply a double action; first, that of stretching out the hand to grasp firmly; and having done this, to adhere strongly to the object in our possession. They were perseveringly devoted to—1. The apostles' doctrine; the great, deep, broad fundamental truths and principles upon which the whole catholic faith is founded, and according to which the lives of the members of the Church must be regulated and conformed. Before we proceed to teach a truth, before we even profess to embody a truth in life and conduct, we should have a clear conception of the same. And before we ask others to frame their life and conduct according to these principles, we must see that upon them and according to them we frame and fashion our own. A profession without practice will never tend to the conversion of others, it can only bring ridicule and contempt upon ourselves. 2. The apostles' fellowship. Besides the community of principle, there was a community of life. Nothing tends to give principles so much force as seeing and feeling them embodied, not merely in the lives of isolated individuals, but in the life of a society. The power of a small united body of men is many times greater than that of each separate unit multiplied by the whole number. Let us remember that the wisdom and teaching of the Church is more perfect than that of any individual within it. Let us culti-

vate a spirit of watchful obedience; and let us be careful to check in ourselves or in others a spirit of self-wisdom, which, could we only regard it in its true light, would be seen to be little more than the spirit of selfishness. 3. The breaking of the bread. They were careful to be regular communicants. The most familiar name of that sacred service reminds us that it is meant to be a bond of union; those who neglect to partake thereof are, by absenting themselves from it, guilty of encouraging divisions in the Church. In the Holy Communion God calls us to rejoice with Him over the celebration of the closest union between the Divine and the human. It is the spirit of selfishness which causes us to disobey that call. But the Holy Communion is more than the chief bond of unity in the Church. It is in worthily partaking of the blessings offered there that the Christian soldier receives his chief support; there he gains the strength he needs in the day of battle; there he re-equips himself for active service. 4. The prayers. As they had a common creed and a common life, as they joined together in the participation of the Holy Communion, so they took part in a form of common prayer. The principal feature of the prayer-book upon which I would now dwell is this—it teaches regular, systematic, common and public prayer. Nothing ministers more surely to the unity of faith and the unity of life than the unity of worship. That we think the same thing, that we aspire towards the same ideal, that we ask the same blessing, the prayer-book is ever reminding us. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) *Steadfastness in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship*:—Proofs of the reality of alleged conversions are always desirable. No man ought to feel offended if both the Church and the world demand such proof. If the change is real, the evidence will be forthcoming. Profession will not do, for without corresponding life it is mere assertion. For a man to say he is a Christian does not make him one. The only satisfactory evidence is that given by these Pentecostal converts by stedfastness in—I. THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE. 1. Sudden conversions are not always lasting. Many causes may bring about a change of view. It is difficult even for a man of calm self-possession to retain the mastery of his emotions and keep himself free from the influence of that strong sympathetic feeling which, like an electric current, runs through a crowd. Thus by the able orator or the artful demagogue marvellous effects are often produced, and many a so-called conversion has been so effected. For the moment it is undeniably sincere, but the impression is due to passing sympathy with an earnest soul rather than with the truth declared; and the sequel often is unstedfastness in the doctrine of Christ. The cause ceases, and the effect disappears. The sympathy dies out for want of fresh stimulus. Like a house without a foundation, the assumed Christian profession may be swept into ruin by the first tempest. It is like a human body whose spinal column has been materially damaged; artificial props are necessary to shore it up and prevent its collapse. 2. One test, then, of sincere adhesion to Christ is stedfast adherence to His teaching—a life in accordance with His precepts. This proof of conversion these converts had. With us it is not a difficult thing to make a profession. In certain circles this is a badge of respectability. But then it was to incur serious peril. These converts were true converts, and therefore became assiduous scholars in Christ's school, and when the day of cool reflection or hot persecution came, they were not moved from their stedfastness. The more they knew of the doctrine, the more they deemed it worth the sacrifice. II. IN FELLOWSHIP. The disciples were no longer a mere family, but a community. They had now ceased to be the private followers of a man; they stood before the world as a church, a living body, all whose members were in fellowship. And so we come thus early to the root idea of the Church. It is a brotherhood conferring privileges upon, yet demanding duties from, every one of its members. Each is a partner in a firm, and as such is bound to promote the interests of the concern. But it is a concern that can neither conduct its operations with borrowed capital, nor permit the presence of any sleeping partners. It is a living body, whose graceful movement is as much impeded by an inactive member as is the action of the body by a diseased limb. The rich are to help the poor, and the strong the weak; the wise are to be the advisers of the ignorant, &c. The converts at Pentecost recognised all this, and thus proved the reality of their conversion. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (*W. M. Arthur, M.A.*) *The use of fellowship*:—The community of spirit suggested in the word here rendered "fellowship" must have grown out of the instant recognition of the rule, "A place for every man, and every man in his place." One of the most successful preachers in modern times, being asked how he was able to accomplish so much good in the course of a year, replied, "It is not I that do it, but the

Church I serve; I preach as hard as I can on Sunday, and then I have seven hundred members who go out and preach every day of the week afterwards." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The primitive fellowship at Jerusalem* was:—I. FOUNDED ON A NEW DOCTRINE. 1. This doctrine was in harmony with and fulfilment of the old, but yet it was new. Its subject was the life, death, &c., of Christ, and the salvation which His work had brought to man. 2. This doctrine, received by faith and applied by the Holy Ghost, became spirit and life to the hearers. There were, of course, no church buildings; the meetings, therefore, could only be held in the Temple courts or in private houses. Wonderful evenings must those have been which were spent in the spacious apartments of such as, being wealthier, kept open house—evenings not only of hearing the doctrine, but of worship, mutual converse, frugal feasting, and winding up with the Lord's Supper. But it was to learn about Jesus that mainly brought them together. II. INSPIRED BY A NEW LIFE. 1. This life began in repentance and faith, and broke out of cloud into sunshine, and from embryo into active and joyous expression through the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the soul of the new fellowship, the spring of its development, the source of its tendencies and laws. 2. This new life, like the new doctrine, was one with the old, but so much fuller, and more intense and glorious, that it may justly be called new. Moreover, it was poured forth with so free and wide a bounty that it may well be called the donation of a new life to the Church, and through it to the world. 3. This new life belongs to every penitent believer, and there is no "higher life" than this, although it has its stages from the "babe" to the "father" in Christ. It is in fact that "life eternal," which is to "know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." 4. This new life made all things new. 5. Its secret and its relations to Divine truth and holy duty are summed up in 1 Pet. i. 22, 23. Faith is obedience to the truth; the new life develops itself in holy love. III. EXPRESSED AND SUSTAINED BY NEW MEANS AND DEVELOPMENTS. 1. Fellowship meetings from house to house, where speech and prayer were free to each, were the ordinary means of common edification, and appear for some time to have been the only specific and characteristic means maintained in the Church at Jerusalem. There was neither ritual nor organisation, but the primary germ cell was there in the fellowship meetings, and we are thus shown what is the true substratum of Church organisation and life. Without this a so-called church is not a living Christian community. However complete its organisation may become, it is bound to retain its character as a spiritual commonwealth, instinct with free life. 2. This new life grafted on its new means new developments of mutual care. The converts did not say that anything was their own; they acknowledged themselves to be not proprietors, but stewards. There was a vast number of pauper Jews, and we may be sure that the fountain of Pharisaic beneficence would be sealed against them when they became Christians. It was therefore incumbent upon their believing brethren to make provision for their necessities. And in that hour of loving enthusiasm their generosity knew no bounds. This was no new principle. It lay at the root of all Bible ethics, but it had never been fully acted on by a whole community before. IV. SEALED BY NEW SACRAMENTS—baptism and "the breaking of bread." The latter was a natural and beautiful finish to their social meals and sacred exercises. As multitudes were continually joining the Church, we may believe that at each gathering, house by house, there were fresh converts. To these the seal of the Holy Communion would rightfully be given as consummating their union and fellowship with the company of believers. V. MAINTAINED IN HARMONY WITH THE EARLIER ORDINANCES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP AS ESTABLISHED IN THE TEMPLE SERVICES. "The prayers" were the daily prayers of the Temple. Thus in the providence of God it was ordered that the Christian Church should take root, and partially unfold its form and glory within the ground of Judaism. The unity and continuity of the Divine dispensations was thus to be set forth. (*J. H. Rigg, D.D.*) *Christian fellowship*:—I. ITS HINDRANCES. 1. Exaggerated individualism. (1) It is a grand truth that religion lies between the solitary soul and God, and that no priest has any right to intermeddle with it. Alone we were born into the new world; alone we have to wrestle in it; alone we shall die. (2) But we have exaggerated this principle, and thrown the idea of the Church into the shade. The lonely pilgrim travels to the Cross, but to find there "the general assembly and Church of the first-born." Yet there are those in our churches who do not share, or only feebly, this common life. To them public worship differs only from private in being offered publicly. They eat their portion alone, and come and go, knowing only the man who preaches, and the man who collects pew rents. It may be they are constitutionally shy, or self-absorbed, or

unhappy. But they are spots in our feasts of charity, and icebergs which chill the gulf stream of the Church's life. (3) We need to be reminded that the Church is not a club, hotel, or a mere voluntary association, but a home, and that they can no more denude themselves of their spiritual than they can of their natural relationships. 2. Social distinctions. (1) It is a dark day for any Church when it declares its special mission to be to any one class, or when a Church consists of any one class. This is a danger which menaces modern Church life. The rich gravitate to the suburbs, the poor crowd into the towns, her great gulf yawns between. (2) The ideal relation is when rich and poor meet together on the same common level—before the Lord, the Master and Redeemer of them all. We need to be reminded that squire and labourer, master and clerk, mistress and maid, have committed the same sins, felt the same penitence, been redeemed by the same sacrifice. If the life of the Church is not strong enough to perfect this union, and enable men to rise above such things, seen and temporal, as distinctions of rank, to things unseen and eternal, it is time we consider how to recover the diviner spirit of earlier days. 3. The caste of culture. Superior persons who are acquainted with all the scientific objections to Christianity look down upon the uninitiated as Philistines. Then there are those half-time Christians who contend that their spiritual culture can be promoted quite as well by private reading as public worship, and attend once a day merely for example. Such forget that the Saviour was the Friend of publicans and sinners, and thanked God for hiding things from the wise and prudent, and for revealing them unto babes. 4. The spirit of faction. "Mark them which cause divisions among you." How many are they! On what slight grounds and paltry pretexts they disturb the peace of the Church! With what arrogance do they judge and condemn brethren whose lives are as pure as theirs! II. PRACTICAL REMEDIES. 1. We must train our young members, and inculcate upon them the duties as well as the privileges of Church fellowship. 2. Our churches must be organised for work. There must be no drones in the hive. No member ought to secure exemption by money payment from personal service. It was when the people had a mind to work that the walls of Jerusalem rose. Pastor Oncken, of Hamburg, gathered a church of three thousand, the distinctive feature of which was that each was pledged to personal service. In our churches the most beautiful and spiritually operative brotherly love is found among those who, in Sunday-schools, tract societies, &c., are associated in effort to advance the cause of Christ. 3. Meetings of the Church might be held distinct from those for business, for mutual conference, after the pattern of Methodist class meetings, where "whosoever hath a psalm, a doctrine, a revelation, an interpretation," might feel at liberty to impart it. The patient sufferings of the sick and poor, their quiet trust in God's love might rebuke our discontent, and teach us the meaning of Divine support and consolation. The rough honest speech of a working man telling the story of his difficulties might give the well-to-do an insight into hardships which they are in danger of forgetting, while a business man frankly telling his difficulties might remind the poor man that the prosperous have temptations from which he is spared. Such conferences would create a mutual trust and affection fruitful in a thousand acts of brotherliness. (*A. Wilson, B.A.*) **In prayers.**—*Prayer meetings as affecting the prosperity of the Church:*—If we regard prayer meetings merely as expedients appointed by men and having no sanction from the Word of God, we may, perhaps, be disposed to treat them lightly. And it is very much to be feared that this is the view taken by many of prayer meetings, because—1. They are generally so thinly attended. 2. They are so disparaged—"It is only a prayer meeting." Let us show, then—I. THAT PRAYER MEETINGS ARE SCRIPTURAL. We find here that when those who gladly received the Word had been baptized, they "continued stedfastly," not once or twice or occasionally, "in prayers," in fact as stedfast as in "doctrine," &c. Social prayer is placed on a level in point of importance with apostolic doctrine and the Lord's Supper. Why, then, should the one be comparatively lost sight of by the churches, whilst the others are regarded as essential to the profession of Christianity? Those who neglected "the assembling of themselves together" were denounced by the apostle, and the continuance of fellowship is here associated with continuance in prayer. Now if we look at any other part of the Word of God, we shall find the same thing uniformly brought before us as the practice of the Church. In chap. i. 14–15 we find that such was the practice before the outpouring of the Spirit. We come next to chap. iv., and after Peter and John had been dismissed we find, in ver. 33, they reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. Then there was a prayer meeting, and the prayers offered were honoured

with a remarkable reply from heaven (ver. 31). In chap. xii. Peter was apprehended and kept in prison. The Church, however, had prayer meetings on his behalf. And the prayer was granted before the prayer meeting was broken up. I have not quoted passages in the Epistles where supplication and prayer are enjoined on the churches, but, glancing generally at these exhortations, are you to suppose that they ask for the prayers merely of individuals as such? When they call upon the Church to do anything, do they not call upon the Church to do it as a public body, and in a public way? Taking this view of the matter, you will find all the apostolic exhortations to supplication bearing upon the apostolic practice, and then the evidence that prayer meetings, properly so called, were a part of the practice of the apostolic churches will be found to be complete. II. WHAT BENEFIT WILL ACCRUE FROM SUCH MEETINGS. 1. Union of feeling must arise in the Church. When the same minds are before the same throne of grace; when the same acknowledgment is made of common transgressions, and the same faith is exercised in a common Saviour; and when the whole mind of a combined people is consecrated by the solemnity of their common supplications, surely there must be the elements of a union far surpassing any other that can exist. It is this very circumstance that frequently leads people to think highly of unions by no means scriptural in their character. 2. As that united feeling becomes sanctified prayer meetings will also tend to strengthen spiritual devotion in the Church. Devotion may be regarded as an ardent feeling in connection with religious matters; with or without scriptural light and authority the latter may be created in a variety of ways. The solemnities of high mass create that feeling in the Church of Rome. The splendour of its statuary and its paintings; the richness of its structures; the grandeur of its rites; the elevating influence of its music, all will be found having a tendency to create an ardent feeling in connection with religious matters. But this is not religious feeling accompanied with scriptural light and scriptural sobriety. In the midst of the thrilling influences to which they are subject, remind them that these structures were raised by a system that destroyed the souls of men, and took away liberty as regarded their bodies. Tell them to observe that such places were never intended for instruction. Let them afterwards look at the plainer structures which were evidently intended for instruction. It is very clear that the feeling I have described is not to be found there; but at the same time the light of scriptural truth will be found operating, and the calm and practical influence of genuine Christianity will be found to have superseded the feeling of excitement and religious awe. Now, if we look at devotional feeling in both these points of view, where are we to find that which is really scriptural so clearly exhibited as in prayer meetings? Go to the humble prayer meeting; let there be no influence there but the influence of heaven: let there be no power but the power of the Spirit of God; let the mind be directed by scriptural light and by scriptural desires, expressed in scriptural petitions, and you have there the exhibition of a plain and practical Christianity, which, while it has fellowship with the Father and with His Son, exercises a sufficient command over the physical economy to prevent that extravagance which deludes in the manner that I have described. 3. Prayer meetings are calculated to promote the spread of God's glory in the Church. We know that they bring the glory of God before the supplicants with a degree of spirituality and power unknown in any other circumstances, and that therefore they are best fitted, best armed, for the field in which God calls upon them to act when they have received common refreshment at the footstool of the Majesty on high. 4. Prayer meetings are calculated to raise the Church above the secular influence and spirit by which churches are often divided. If individuals belonging to a Christian Church are habitually separated from one another; if they know little or nothing about one another; when any question arises in that Church, how ill provided are they to treat it in the spirit of Christian devotion. In such a state of things every man feels that he has to seek his own will in reference to the question, and there is likely to be a conflagration of feeling in the Church. But let them come from the throne where they have often asked for that help by which they may work together in the spirit of Christian charity; let them come from the place where God has often been felt to be present; and let something then be suggested that may for a moment lead to debate, and you will see the whole Christian brotherhood acting as those who know what it is to feel together the sanctifying influence of devotion. The peace of the Church, therefore, is involved in prayer meetings. 5. When prayer meetings are conducted spiritually, the Church itself will be found to exhibit to the world more of the spirit by which the Church must be actuated before the gospel can triumph. If the Saviour prayed that His

people might be one, as He was one with the Father, in order "that the world might believe that He had sent Him"; *i.e.*, made their union evidence of the truth of Christianity; and if the Saviour, at the same time, held up His people as a praying people, and promised that whatever they should ask in His name He would bestow; the world finding all this laid down in our statute book, will look to see how far it is carried out in our practice. Let them see, then, that prayer meetings are duly attended; and they will be ready to acknowledge that God is "among you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 24). III. WHAT ARE THE REAL OBJECTIONS? The only objection that I know is that people cannot give two evenings in the week. You have, then, to take the prayer meeting and the meeting for public assembly, and to ask which is the more important of the two; or you have to compare the two meetings with your other employments, and to determine to which you shall give the preference. Is the business to which you have to attend on the two evenings, or on one of them, more important than the assembly or the prayer meeting; then attend to that business. The very same remark will apply to the Sabbath day. (*J. Burnet.*)

And fear came upon every soul.—*Church life*:—Note—1. THE EFFECT PRODUCED UPON BEHOLDERS WITHOUT. "And fear came upon every soul." One explanation of this may be found in the clause which follows. Proofs daily witnessed of the Divine presence could not fail to strike fear into the hearts of those who looked on without obeying. But there is more than that. The effect upon the wicked Herod of the character of the Baptist was fear, little as was the ground for it in an earthly sense. So it was here. Christians do not always know their own power. What fears do young Christians often experience in the prospect of opposition or ridicule! Let them go forward in the path of duty, and they will find that "Greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world." So far from having anything to fear, you have all of you the power of striking a wholesome and perhaps a saving fear into the enemies of Christ by a bright and consistent example. That is a testimony which men cannot gainsay. All else they may laugh at: your persuasions, warnings, arguments; but your example will make its way into their consciences. That is the one weapon which a woman, which a child may wield, and which no coat of mail is close enough to evade or strong enough to parry. II. THEIR UNION AND BENEFICENCE (vers. 44–45). In the first ardour of their new conviction they obeyed literally the direction to "lay up for themselves no treasures on earth"; to "sell that they had, and give alms"; to "forsake all and follow Christ." They could not bear to have while another wanted. Nothing but a real community of goods could satisfy their Christian instincts. It was an example for all times. 1. Not, however, in form. There is no inspired rule, applicable to all cases, for this. We find St. Paul, *e.g.*, recommending a liberal contribution, according to the circumstances of each man, to the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem; and in another, advising that on the first day of each week every one should "lay by him in store" for this purpose "as God had prospered him." This could not have been done if in the Church of Corinth there had been a community of possessions. How different was this example from anything which the world has since witnessed! It has been the dream of theorists to see all distinction of ranks levelled, and a whole congregation, or nation, living in brotherly concord upon the common property of all. But every such scheme has been based upon assumptions hasty in themselves and mischievous in their consequences. In Christian bodies the attempt to establish a system of communion has led more often to the exclusion than to the consideration of the poor. Among political speculators the principle of communism has been too often absolutely anti-Christian; and a hatred of subordination has been the secret spring of much professed zeal for the rights of man, and of much declamation upon the interests of society. The example before us was of a widely different kind from either of these. It was the spontaneous, natural, and temporary effect of a fresh faith, a lively hope, and a genuine charity. In its form it was not and it could not be permanent. While it continued it was a wonderful testimony to the strength of the new religion in the hearts of those who believed. "See how these Christians love," might well be the comment of those who looked on upon a scene so unlike the world of common life. Judge ye what there is, in heaven or in earth, which would have made any one of us go and do likewise. 2. And though the form of that entire self-sacrifice may vary—and we believe that our Master designed that it should vary with the varying circumstances of the world and of His Church—let us not forget that the spirit of this life must be ours. If it be the best on the whole for the true welfare of society that each man be the possessor of the fruits of his own toil, and the uncontrolled

steward of his own resources; if many high and Christian purposes are answered by that gradation of ranks and that variety of fortunes which is the form of society under which God has placed us; yet let us not forget that one end, perhaps the chief end, to be answered by this arrangement, is, that each man, "working with his hands the thing that is good," may thereby "have to give to him that needeth"; that every one may be able to exercise his individual judgment upon various objects of piety and charity proposed to him; but certainly not that any one may be at liberty to say, I prefer keeping to myself, and to my own, all that I possess. III. THEIR PRIVATE AND DOMESTIC LIFE (vers. 46-47). 1. The life of a true Christian ought to be and will be a happy life. His very food has a blessing. He praises God over it. He partakes of it in gladness. It is to him the token of a Father's love. He receives it, as out of God's hand, in his own. And the heart which is glad is described as a "single" or a "simple" heart. The word denotes properly smooth or level; it is the epithet of a field or a road out of which the stones have been carefully gathered, so that it presents no impediment to the plough of the husbandman or the feet of the traveller. A stoneless heart is one which has no impediments or obstacles in it; one out of which the roughnesses of temper and the stumblingblocks of sin have been removed by grace, so that it is now level and even, smooth in its course, and gentle in its contact. 2. And this may explain how it should be that a life which inspired fear was also one of "favour with all the people." A Christian life is a witness against sinfulness and carelessness. It awakens slumbering consciences, testifying of realities above not to be forgotten without danger. In this aspect it inspires awe. But in another it is altogether lovely. It is written of Jesus that, as He "increased in wisdom and stature," He increased also "in favour with God and man." So is it with His people. Men often show their religion in unattractive or repulsive forms, and then regard their own unpopularity as a proof of the world's hatred against religion. Let them exhibit their religion in its aspect of a world-wide charity, and they will find it otherwise. They will find that, while it inspires awe as God's witness, their religion wins love also as the friend of man. IV. THEIR INCREASE (ver. 47). There is nothing here of a Divine selection fixing by an arbitrary sentence who should and who should not be heirs of salvation. The words themselves say, "those who were in the course (in the process) of salvation." Salvation, if in one sense a single act, is in another a course of acts. A man may forfeit salvation; he may grieve and quench the Holy Spirit; he may fall away and never be renewed. And while these things are possible, it is as much as we can say of any man that he is in course of salvation. And a great thing it is to be able to say this. We cannot say this of a man who is trifling, or is a despiser of the means of grace, or is cherishing any known sin. 1. It is "the Lord" who adds. Without Him, without His Holy Spirit, what would be Paul or Apollos or Cephas, much more we poor, erring, uninspired men? It was He who "opened the heart" of Lydia "that she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul." And it is He who opens hearts now to attend to the things spoken by His ministers. We want new converts, and who can add these to our number, save the Lord only? 2. It is "to the Church" that the Lord adds. It is not only secret desires, resolutions, prayers, that we need awakening in us; there must be an adding to the Church. We ought to be not only a pious people, fulfilling life's duties and satisfying life's relations in the fear of God; but also a people honouring God, and walking to heaven together, together serving Christ, and working righteousness. 3. These additions were "day by day." The course of this world is a transitory, rapid thing; we are here to-day, and to-morrow there. In the meantime can we say that there is a daily Church progress? "The Lord's arm is not shortened," &c. Then why this pause and intermission in the work of grace? Why is it that a minister counts himself happy if but one or two souls are gathered into the Church below? What has become of the word "daily"? Can we afford, any better than the primitive Christians, to lose time in this work of adding? The world stops not for our loitering; life and death stop not while we linger; God of His infinite mercy make us feel the value of time, and count each day lost that has not added to His Church one that shall be saved! (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 44-47. **All that believed were together, and had all things common.**—*The primitive Christians*, as here depicted—I. PRESENTED A NEW SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, marked—1. By community of goods. 2. By judicious distribution to the needy. Poor people had, of course, been relieved before, but not in the systematic way

which is here seen to mark the beneficence of the early Church. 3. By a new and separate place of worship. Religious exercises were conducted "at home" as well as in the Temple. Thus the disciples were both conformists and nonconformists. II. EXHIBITED NOTABLE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS. 1. They were strongly attached to one another. 2. They kept a good conscience, "singleness of heart." 3. They lived in happiness, "gladness." 4. They mingled devotion with all their actions, "praising God." III. COMMANDED THE ESTEEM OF OBSERVERS, "having favour with all the people." IV. WITNESSED THE CONSTANT EXTENSION OF THE WORK OF GOD (ver. 47). (*W. Hudson.*) *The communism of Christianity* :—To those whose eyes are opened wide, because their hearts are truly loving, there is no time in God's whole year that is equal to this (Whitsuntide) time of fullest bloom. The soul of man is greatened by promises of the future, and he walks the earth in gladness because of the glorious bloom around him. But it is sad when autumn comes to see the pitiful harvest. I have seen that of a hundred blossoms on a given tree only one came to perfection. There is pathos and tragedy in that, for I see in it human life. Of a thousand babes that are born—God's holiest blossoms—how many come to manhood? Why this waste? Yet God knows best. It is His law that the bloom shall be plentiful, and that some may remain for fruit. Some must fall, but the few that remain are a prophecy of what shall be, and man must learn that a little fruit of God is worth a great waste of bloom. "All that believed were together," &c.: the doctrine was received into gladsome hearts. The spring heat was come, the winter had vanished. But what became of it? When a man looks round the world nowadays, what a strange blossom that seems to be! Who would try to gather it? When lovers, newly entranced, are scarce able to see common daylight, or to comport themselves with common sense, what are they to do? Bloom, blossom! But the blossom will not last. It is so like that outbreak of communism—and we know that did not last. But it will come again ultimately. It is the Word of God, the end of civilisation, the aim of all holy souls, that the holy city, the New Jerusalem, shall descend to earth. Here, then, is this first blossom of Christian faith, which was the natural outbreak of loving hearts. But these blossoms could not last, because the blossoms of love have to blow out in the cold, and be tried by the storm, as the blossoms of the tree must have the wind to nip them—but they prophesied as they died. Watching a little child's life, what glorious blossoms of unselfishness we see sometimes! But they don't last. The cynic sneers at this, but the wise man rejoices, for these blossoms tell him of what man may come to under more perfect conditions. And so these men got scattered, and by degrees the old world resumed its sway over them. Nevertheless, there yet remains the ultimate outcome of the Christian faith. We smile at these men, but only as a loving father smiles upon his little child who cries for the moon, because his ambition is so lofty and its realisation so impossible. Yet the Christian religion is making progress, and having its effect in working out of us what is evil and low, and what it is working out of us it will ultimately work out of the whole world. For what else mean the various efforts to put all things at the service of all men? Some of you who are much given to admiring the pictures of saints can now have a library full of the souls of the ancients; for far beyond all the saints you can paint on windows are those shelves filled with the books of the men of olden time. For in these books are the spirits of the fathers—of John Milton, of William Shakespeare—the thoughts of the wise, the songs of the minstrels, the gathered honey of all nations. And over all this is written "Free Library"—holy words which the Holy Ghost Himself might have inspired. By and by education too shall be like the gospel—free to all, crying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," and "he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Since I was a boy what has not been done to restore Pentecost? I have long given up the dream of my youth—that all men could do as these men did—live in a community. Robert Owen tried it; thousands have tried it, but they have given it up. All attempts at communism, in any practical form, have died out, gone into history, but the fruit remains. At every point we are winning—hours of leisure, places of recreation, free libraries, free roads, free churches, free speech, cheap books. Therefore when I hear that the National Gallery is opened free to the public my soul is glad. For the beautiful works of art of the nation are there; they are not now shut up in rich men's houses, but belong alike to all. What has God to do with the rich? Did He send His sun to shine simply for the rich? Nay, but for the beggar also. The Spirit of Christ is always toward the Pentecostal blossom; but that it may become golden fruit there must be large loving; all thought of self

must be consumed by the love of God. God's gifts are many; strive as far as possible to have all things common, especially the greatest things. I smile when I see men saving a little property of their own, and keeping apart from one another; for the best and greatest things are fast passing into the hands of every one. Books are cheap, and when books are cheap the inspiring things of God belong to all. High price of books means Pentecost impossible. Let every man judge his own heart to what degree the love of God has entered it, for in that degree he will be willing that all things should be common, especially the highest and greatest things. Some men smile at this doctrine, and think that we mean the dividing of money or property. No, keep your money! Free libraries, picture galleries, churches, &c. —all these we have won, and we shall win more yet. So you may keep your old purse. Those blossoms that did stop on the tree are now bearing rich and golden fruit which shall last for ever. Christianity is the death-blow of privilege, the scorner of pedigree, the ridiculer of fine linen. It turns its back on all these and says, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor," &c.; for the Christian religion means the opening of the gate of heaven to all men. It is the religion whose first miracle was to turn water into wine for humble people, and is slowly bringing back the Pentecostal spirit; not with a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire, but with the sweetness of charity. You would do well to get it into your plans of daily life, that the day will come when all the nations of Europe shall be Pentecostal, for they shall have passed from feudalism to federalism, and the custom-house shall be abolished, and all nations shall be "together and have all things common." (*Geo. Dawson, M.A.*) *Communism*:—What about this so-called communism in the early Church? What was it in nature and extent? The passage describing the community of goods is critical. Social reformers, not always Christian, point to this as the ideal state from which the Church has wandered. 1. The arrangement was purely voluntary. What any man put in was still his. The sin of Ananias was not that he had kept back a portion of his estate by fraud, but that he lied about it. It was still in his power after the sale as before. The community of property flowed out of the new spiritual life. (See chap. iv. 32–37.) "In point of fact, their experiment was simply the assertion of the right of every man to do as he chooses with his own; and they chose to live together and help each other. It was a fraternal stock company for mutual aid and protection. No man was bound to come into it unless he wished; but if he did come in, he was bound to act honestly." 2. It was a spiritual result, and not a social experiment. It cannot be explained except on the spiritual basis. It must be studied in its true setting. The Brook Farm, "Utopia," and all kindred institutions, have been social experiments. Bellamy's "Looking Backward" Society is allied with them. They have arisen for lack of the Holy Spirit. This sprung up spontaneously because of Pentecost. 3. The community of goods seems to have been a community of use, not ownership. Nobody said that aught that he possessed was his own. They were of one heart. The circumstances were peculiar. Many of the people were away from home. All had to be cared for. No one should suffer. 4. The plan was local. Jerusalem was the only city where it was tried. No trace of it is to be found in any other Church. It evidently did not commend itself to other churches as a wise plan. The other churches took up collections just as now when a case of need was presented. (See 1 Cor. xvi. 2; 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.) 5. It was temporary. It lasted while the circumstances in which it arose continued. 6. It did not relieve poverty. It was not devised for that purpose. Many writers insist upon seeing a close connection between this incident and the subsequent poverty in Jerusalem. Thus Meyer: "And this community of goods at Jerusalem helps to explain the great and general poverty of that Church. It is probable that the apostles were prevented by the very experience acquired in Jerusalem from advising or introducing it elsewhere." Thus Gulliver: "Under such sublime inspirations it is easy to see that a communism, impossible to ordinary human nature, might temporarily flourish. But it is as easy to see that it would gradually settle to the level of ordinary motive, and would be subjected to the disturbances of inevitable inequalities in capacity and industry, as well as in piety. The Plymouth Pilgrims were, perhaps, the most single-minded men of modern times. Yet it was not till the community of lands and goods which obtained in the early years of their settlement gave place to farms in severalty, and to private property protected by law, that the annually recurring danger of absolute starvation in their colony disappeared. The lesson of such a history is, therefore, not solely the lesson of Christian consecration. It includes the utility and the sacredness of the personal control of property. It places before

us the problem of combining the largest Christian benevolence with the strict maintenance of proprietary rights." 7. It was not modern communism. Says Gerok: "That holy community of goods proceeded from love to the poor; but that which is now proclaimed is the result of a hatred to the rich." And Van Dyke: "Of late years the communistic doctrine has begun to preseut itself in another shape. It has laid aside the red cap and put on the white cravat. It invites serious and polite inquiry. It quotes Scripture and claims to be the friend, the near relative, of Christianity. So altered is its aspect that preachers of religion are discovering that it has good points, and patting it on the back somewhat timidly, as one might pat a converted wolf who had offered his services as watch-dog." There is a fundamental and absolute difference between the doctrine of the Bible and the doctrine of the communiser. For the Bible tells me that I must deal my bread to the hungry; while the communiser tells the hungry that he may take it for himself, and if he begins with bread there is no reason why he should draw the line at cake. The Bible teaches that envy is a sin; the communiser declares that it is the new virtue which is to regenerate society. The communiser maintains that every man who is born has a right to live; but the Bible says that if a man will not work neither shall he eat; and without eating life is difficult. The communiser holds up equality of condition as the ideal of Christianity; but Christ never mentions it. He tells us that we shall have the poor always with us, and charges us never to forget, despise, or neglect them. Christianity requires two things from every man that believes in it: first, to acquire his property by just and righteous means; and, secondly, to look not only on his own things, but also on the things of others. (*W. F. McDowell.*)

The equalities and inequalities of human lots:—The infant Church, from the nature of the case, was composed mainly, though not exclusively, of the less prosperous classes. The work it had to do at Jerusalem brought together a number of persons whose homes were elsewhere, and whose ordinary occupations were suspended, and it became necessary to face the all-important question of their simplest food and lodging. For this purpose a common fund was instituted, to which those who had money or other property might contribute for the temporary support of those who had none. There is no evidence that these were anything but voluntary offerings. There follow, for example, repeated references to the existence of rich and poor side by side in the same Church, and to the need and duty of almsgiving. Had there been any system in force, tantamount to a "community of goods," neither of these things could possibly have survived. It might seem, indeed, superfluous to argue such a point were it not for two reasons—one, that there are always to be found well-meaning persons who, believing that the earliest type of Church, before corruption entered and human frailty overthrew Divine institutions, was and must be the best, and the one we ought to seek to restore, look back with yearning upon a state of things so different from our own, and resolve that our faces ought to be firmly set towards reviving the primitive usage. Imagining that true Christian equality involves equality of conditions and advantages, they see in the phenomena of our modern Church only the most terrible of inconsistencies. Many of these objectors are genuine friends and adherents of Christianity, and as such demand our warm sympathy. But there are others, I need not say, hostile to our religion, who in all times have made useful capital out of these alleged discrepancies. We cannot but notice that one chief grievance against Christianity in our day is that it does not tend to rectify human inequalities; that while it professes to hold all men equal in the sight of God, it seems quite content that they should remain unequal in their own. But though the objection is put as one against religion, it is obvious that the grievance is really one against Providence, or rather (since this form of socialism is almost always atheistic) against fate, which has allowed one man to enter the world better equipped than another for the struggle of life. Hence this form of socialism, which we see more and more asserting itself, is not merely atheistic, it is bitterly antitheistic, since it chiefly resents inequalities, due not to defective laws, but to natural, inborn, inherited differences. Such socialism demands, as the first right of humanity, that society should aim at compensating the feeble for their feebleness at the expense of the strong; or rather, that arrangements should be made that neither weak nor strong should be at any expense; that society should be restored to one level, and that of universal prosperity and comfort. This, it asserts, a reform in the world's laws might and would effect. Religion, it alleges, is a failure; civilisation is a failure; legislation is a failure, seeing that all these have so far failed to bring about an equalisation of human lots. Those who use this language and lead captive many willing listeners are at least

thus far justified in that Christianity has beyond question failed to bring about the result they desire; and they might even go further and object that Christianity does not start from any such assumption as the equal rights of human beings. From first to last the Bible nowhere teaches this kind of equality among men; nor their equal right, nor the right of any individual among them, to prosperity and comfort. It does not even regard these things as the aim towards which human effort should be directed. Its millennium is not in any sense a millennium of an equally distributed prosperity. Every counsel and command addressed to the rich and strong is, on the contrary, framed on the evident expectation that inequalities of condition would always exist. It must be frankly admitted that Jesus Christ accepted such inequality as a fact of human existence, and addressed His teaching to show how that fact might be made the best of—how it might minister to the discipline of man's nature, and its preparation for the kingdom of God. Christ's teaching abounds in denunciations of the rich. But it is never for being rich, but for not recognising and accepting the responsibility of riches. He enunciated no fixed and rigid rules for the regulation of society. He enjoined no pouring of the world's wealth into a common stock, from which the once rich and the once poor should be endowed anew on one uniform and unchangeable scale. He never offered to put back the clock of time, and to start all men on the race of life afresh. He took society as it existed in His day, and propounded the law and the spirit by which it might be made ever sounder and sounder, even while the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, lived and worked side by side. A vulgar Socialist, aiming first at winning adherents, might have preached vaguely how all this would speedily be at an end; how no one should suffer much longer from his present disabilities, but that all should share and share alike when new laws should be passed in the Constitution he would frame and establish. But Jesus promised no such thing; He introduced no such topic. He dealt, indeed, persistently with the subject of equality. He called all men, without distinction, His brethren; He spoke of them all as alike dear to the heart of God, and as equally invited to the highest blessings that God confers. He appealed to all who were weary and heavy laden to come to Him (Jesus) and He would give them rest. And, before all things, He insisted that in that kingdom there is no such thing as caste. The first upon earth might be the last in that kingdom, and the lowliest on the earth the highest and greatest there. Who can doubt that it was this Christian doctrine of equality—this form of Christian Socialism ("fellowship," "membership in one Body," He preferred to call it) that fell like music on the wearied spirits of that motley crowd? No religious caste—no intellectual caste—no social caste—each man's acceptance of the responsibilities of sonship; each man's faithful cultivation of the talent entrusted to him—this, the one way of working out his own salvation, and entering upon eternal life. This was the one only equality that Christ recognised and proclaimed. As to inequalities of human fortune, so-called, and their methods of equalisation, it apparently did not enter into His plan to speak. On such subjects as a man's right or duty to "better himself" in his earthly position He said nothing. He neither commanded nor forbade a man to do his utmost in that kind. There is a common sneer against religion that it looks with coldness upon the ambition which natures, not apparently vicious, are aware of, to rise in the world, and to win fame, position, and wealth by the effective use of the talents confided to them. Whatever can be reasonably inferred from the Bible's teaching is to the very opposite effect. A gospel which enjoins its followers to cherish and improve every talent committed to them is in itself a command to excel, and therefore to advance, in whatever the hand, or the intellect, findeth to do. And to excel, and to advance, means and implies (let us not be afraid of the word) competition. If, of two men to whom talents are entrusted, one cultivates them and the other neglects them, what power that we can even guess at can prevent one of these men outstripping the other in the course of pre-eminence? If one man rises through moral character and fidelity to the talents given him, and another sinks through moral weakness and indolence, who can deny that in that contrast is witnessed a survival of the fittest? And the gospel of Christ did not interpose to remove such inequalities. But the primary purpose of the revelation of God to men was to change their conceptions of success and failure; to alter the world's standpoint as to happiness. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And who can fail to observe that whichever be cause and which effect, the decay of belief in a God, and the assertion of every man's right to be prosperous, always appear together? It cannot be

otherwise; for belief in the God whom Christ revealed is not consistent with a belief that we have all, or any of us, a right to any blessing or comfort save one, the greatest and most blessed of all. We have no rights as against God: we have only obligations. The very things that difference us from other men are our talents. We are forgetting to thank God for what He takes away. Prosperity—equal prosperity—and the gradual extinction of bodily pain and mental distress—this is the earthly paradise to which thousands are now being taught to look forward. Does it harmonise well with the teaching of Him who claimed to be the Elder Brother of the race, whose appointed life was suffering and self-denial, and whose death was the death of the Cross? The cure for discontent is to turn our thoughts to the noblest, purest, best Friend of our spirits; and then, recalling what He has been to us in the past, and what things He has prepared for us in the future, we may well feel that with all our unworthiness, all our weakness and disappointments, our profoundest sorrows and anxieties, we are more than conquerors; that having received this pledge of victory, we may indeed scorn to "change our state with kings." (*Canon Ainger.*)

The apparent communism of the infant Church:—Under the shadow of a great calamity, or the strain of a great excitement, the lines that divide classes or limit possessions vanish like snow-wreaths in the noonday sun. "All ye are brethren" is the word of the great occasions that stir and shake society to its depths. It is an easy step to the conclusion that that which associates men lies deeper in their nature and in the nature of society than that which divides them. It is a tempting step, though a false one, from this position to the principle that that which creates and maintains the differences cometh of evil, and is to be fought against as evil. This is the conviction out of which the nobler idea and form of communism spring; that which is rooted in love of humanity, in the desire for human progress, and the realisation of a condition in which society will not have to weep tears over the miseries of the poor. Whether the communistic conviction and plan of working out the regeneration of society have any root in the nature of things, or the Word of God, is one of the most profoundly important social questions of our times. Let us consider—I. THE REMARKABLE APPEARANCE OF A COMMUNISTIC ORGANISATION IN THE CHURCH. Nothing can look more like communism on the outside. Make this arrangement universal, a communist would say, and the social millennium will come in. It will help us to estimate the countenance which Christianity lends to communistic ideas to consider—1. How far was this universal in the Church? It seems to have been born and to have died at Jerusalem. There appears to have been no attempt even to extend it in the Church. It was a beautiful outburst of heavenly charity and zeal; but it bloomed, flourished, and faded, so to speak, in an hour. Churches were planted everywhere, but there is not the faintest attempt to repeat the experiment. Further, it was not universal even in Jerusalem. In chap. v. 1–4 St. Peter recognises that Ananias was free to adopt the plan or to decline it; and it appears from chap. xii. 12 that some members retained their property, and had their households, children and servants, round them as before. It would appear that it was but a partial and temporary arrangement even in the Church which adopted it, growing out of a moment of pressure, and quietly dying away. But—2. How far are we justified in regarding it as an arrangement or organisation of the infant society at all? Both terms are misapplied. Organisation implies a definite principle of action for a definite purpose, adopted by competent authority, and binding upon all over whom the authority extends. We find nothing of this kind in the action of the apostles and of the Church. It was a spontaneous outburst of feeling—nothing like a plan. The man who had the best right to speak for the community expressly disclaims any plan or arrangement binding on the members of the community; he recognises their entire freedom. Far from making this a primary law of the Church of Jerusalem, it was in no sense a law at all, but simply a voluntary action on the part of individuals; beautiful, heavenly in its inspiration, but valid only while the inspiration lasted, and having no beauty, no virtue apart from the spirit which gave it birth. 3. The light cast upon the institution by the legislation of the apostolic age. Remember that the Church had before it the very problems with which communism professes to be able to deal—the wrongs of oppressed classes and the miseries of the poor. No literature of communism is so charged with passionate sympathy for the oppressed and the wretched, such burning indignation against strong-handed wrong, such tender, cherishing compassion for the poor and helpless, as those Old Testament prophecies to which Christ appealed to explain His mission (Luke iv. 18–21). "The poor have the gospel

preached unto them" was the very crown of miracles in the Saviour's judgment; and the words—"Only they would that we should remember the poor"—tells us how sacredly the mission was cherished in the Apostolic Church. It was through no oversight of this its great function, to save the poor and so to begin at the right end the salvation of society, that the apostles suffered this institution to drop out of the habit of the Church. They were as intensely eager to enfranchise the enslaved, to deliver the oppressed, to comfort and to elevate the poor, as the most passionate of social reformers; and yet, having to deal with three great classes whose woes and wrongs were rending society in pieces—the slaves, the women and the poor—instead of proclaiming universal emancipation and community of possessions, they deliberately left the slave to the Christian brotherhood of his master, the woman to the Christian fellowship of her husband, and the poor to the Christian justice and charity of mankind. There was no attempt at a rearrangement of society, save as it might grow naturally and healthfully out of better and holier spiritual relations between class and class, and man and man. Thus they addressed themselves to the terrible social problems of their times: on this basis they sought to work out their solution. They showed themselves, like Christ, studious to maintain the existing order against violent disturbance or readjustment from without. When hardy Galileans would take Christ by force, and make Him a king, giving Him, as they dreamed, the grand opportunity to work out His glorious plans, He withdrew Himself to a desert place and prayed. The only power which could regenerate the world must come from that fountain. The Church sought to redress the wrongs, to adjust the inequalities, to heal the maladies and the miseries of society, by proclaiming the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God, revealed in Him who is the Elder Brother of the poorest, the most crushed of the human race. You may say in answer, "Look round and see what it has wrought! Look round in Lambeth, in Bethnal Green, on burning Paris, on luxurious, dissolute New York. Is this salvation?" I feel the full pressure of the question. "How long, O Lord, how long?" is the cry that is ever rising from watching, breaking hearts. But I see also this, that the selfish lust and passion which make the day of the Lord so long, and the progress of the kingdom so slow, would bury in wreck or drown in blood every poorer and weaker attempt to work out more swiftly and vehemently the salvation of society. II. BUT, WHAT THEN WAS THIS, "THEY HAD ALL THINGS COMMON"? WAS IT A MISTAKE? 1. On the contrary it was an inspiration; an outlet of love and joy when man's heart was bursting with them; and a holy and beautiful prophecy of what Christianity will one day accomplish for the salvation of the poor. There is many a beautiful, elevating, purifying action of the spirit in its intercourse with spirits, which if it were organised into an institution would be fatal to society. This action of the Church belongs to the same sphere as the holy waste of Mary. The money might have been saved and given to the poor, and the Master none the worse. But the prompting of the spirit which found that expression held within its glow more benediction to the poor in the long run, than the pence that might have been saved a thousand times told. 2. This action was an irrepressible outburst of joy and thankfulness. Travellers meeting in the heart of a great desert are ready to make "all things common" under the human sympathy which the new and glad experience kindles within. A shipwrecked company gathered on the shore of a desert island is ready to make "all things common," through the joy of deliverance, and shame that any of the saved should want. There are crises when all that leads a man to say that anything is his own vanishes; when the sense that one great human heart is beating everywhere, and that we are but limbs of one great body, whose private use and pleasure is nothing, whose ministry to the whole is all, possesses us. These are our moments of inspiration, of rapture. They come to us laden with the breath of a purer, brighter region, which, organised as we are, it would waste us to live in, but the breath of which, mingled with our grosser air, lends a more vivid glow to the vital flame in our hearts, and in the heart of society. 3. And it was beautiful as a prophecy. The miracles of Christ were prophecies. And this shone out as a sign, that forces were there at work, whose fountain is the heart of Christ, which will one day, after a Divine fashion, establish—(1) Liberty, the liberty of a soul and a society under the law to Christ. (2) Equality, not of lot or of function, but of use and of honour. (3) Fraternity, not of rights and of claims, but of ministries and loves. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Christian and anti-Christian communism*:—That Christian communism said, What is mine is thine; modern anti-Christian communism says, What is thine is mine. Among those Christians it was said, Take what I have; modern com-

munists say, Give me what thou hast. That holy community of goods was founded on a spirit of love to the poor; this now preached rests on a spirit of hatred to the rich. (*C. Gerok, D.D.*) *Christian communism distinguished from unchristian*:—I. ITS SOURCE. Not an external law or bare power, but the free impulse of love. II. ITS OBJECT. Not general equality, but general welfare. III. THE WAY TO EFFECT THIS OBJECT. Not by a community of goods, but by a community of hearts. (*Ibid.*) *Man's willingness to trust everything to God but money*:—Once in a most lively prayer-meeting the preacher who was presiding prayed: "O Lord, help all of us to trust Thee with our whole souls!" And a hundred voices responded, "Amen!" Some also shouted, "Lord, grant it!" and "Amen, amen," all over the room. Encouraged by such sympathy, he went on: "Help us all to trust Thee wholly with our bodies!" And then the people cried, "Amen!" as heartily as before. Now the exalted sense of consecration rose to its height, and he prayed again: "Oh, help us to trust Thee wholly with our money!" And it is actually reported in private circles since that not a man had a word to say then. (*E. S. Robinson.*) **And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple.**—*Characteristics of the primitive Christians*:—See—I. Their CONSTANCY—they continued. II. Their FERVOUR—daily. III. Their UNITY—with one accord. IV. Their AUDACITY—in the temple. V. Their CHARITY—breaking bread from house to house. VI. Their FAMILIARITY—did eat their meat. VII. Their ALACRITY—with gladness. VIII. Their SINCERITY—with singleness of heart. (*E. Leigh.*) *Public worship*:—I. WE OUGHT TO WORSHIP GOD IN PUBLIC. 1. It is obvious to the natural reason of mankind that this is a duty. (1) Even those whose "foolish heart was darkened," &c., were not so blind as not to see the fitness of their honouring with public worship those whom they accounted Deities. The heathens have their temples to which they resort for the celebration of some rites, whereby they think their idols honoured. (2) God has formed our nature for society, is it not, then, a dictate of nature that we should associate ourselves for the most important purposes of religion as well as for the lesser purposes of the natural and civil life. (3) Our Creator has made us capable of signifying to all about us the sense we have of His perfections, and of our obligations to Him. Should we not, then, employ our best powers after that manner in His service, to which they are so wisely fitted? "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the firmament showeth His handiwork. How excellent is His name in all the earth!" And is it not fit that intelligent creatures should show forth His glories by the most open acknowledgment of them? The law of God written in the heart (Rom. ii. 15) obliges them to the performance of social public worship. 2. God has in His Word given plain significations of His will that men should publicly worship Him. (1) Public worship was practised long before we have any account of its being required. The light of nature directed men to assemble themselves together for the worship of God; perhaps, therefore, He did not see it needful expressly to reveal His mind till their natural notions of religion were greatly corrupted by idolatry. Then it pleased God to give a law according to which worship was to be regulated (Exod. xxiii. 17). But though Israel were to offer sacrifices only at the tabernacle or temple, yet they did meet together in other places, where they did engage in some parts of Divine worship. This appears from the account given us in Scripture of synagogues (chap. xv. 21). (2) Jesus Christ, while He was here on earth, did not only go to Jerusalem at the great feasts, but also attended constantly to the service of the synagogue (Luke iv. 16). His example lays a strong obligation upon His followers. (3) The disciples of Jesus, in the early days of Christianity, discharged their duty in this matter with great diligence, but in process of time the love of some began to cool, which appeared in their neglect of the duties of public worship. To prevent the spreading of this great evil the apostle admonished them (Heb. x. 25). II. THE ENDS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. 1. The glory of God. As He made all things for Himself it is highly reasonable we should principally design the glorifying of His name in all that we do. Now when God is worshipped by His creatures, they own His being, His all-sufficiency, His infinite understanding, that to Him belongeth power and mercy; and the more public their worship is the more clearly they spread abroad the honour of His name. The house of God, where He was publicly worshipped, is called "the place where His honour dwelt" (Psa. xxvi. 8), perhaps because He was there honoured in an eminent manner by the social worship of His people. For this reason, as we may justly suppose, the Lord is said to love the gates of Zion (Psa. lxxxvii. 2). This chief end of Divine worship cannot be so well answered by private devotions. The honour of God's name is more propagated in the congregation than it can be in the family. Though our

Saviour far exceeded those in knowledge who officiated in the Jewish synagogue, yet was He stated in His attendance there, for He knew that by so doing He "glorified His Father." 2. Our spiritual benefit. God has connected our advantage with His own glory. He dispenses to us blessings in that way wherein we show forth the honour of His name. He promised His people of old that in all places where He should record His name he would come unto them and bless them (Exod. xx. 24). There is no appointment of any particular place under the gospel, but our Lord has said that "where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20; Rev. i. 13). God delights to honour the ordinances of His public worship by making them means of grace (Psa. lxxxvii. 5). Most commonly it is by the means of public worship that sinners are awakened and converted; it is hereby that the saints are for the most part edified and comforted. All the private instructions which the psalmist enjoyed were not effectual to remove a very perplexing temptation. But when "he went into the sanctuary" so much light was imparted to him there as cleared his difficulty (Psa. lxxiii. 17). Upon which he concludes (ver. 29) that it was good for him to draw near to God, *i.e.*, in the sanctuary. David expected that the clearest and most engaging discoveries of God would be made to him in His house, therefore he was very desirous of having his stated abode there (Psa. xxvii. 4, xcii. 12–14). 3. Communion with one another in the great concerns of religion. The Scripture represents believers as one in God and Christ (John xvii. 20, 21). They are spoken of as "members one of another" (Eph. iv. 25). They have one God and Father, the same Mediator and Saviour; they are animated by one Spirit; they belong to the same family, and they are travelling towards the same heavenly habitation. Now, when as many of them as conveniently can assemble together to partake of the ordinances of the gospel, they hereby denote the oneness. III. THE SEVERAL PARTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP as mentioned in the context. 1. Prayer. The house of God is called "the house of prayer" (Matt. xxi. 13). We have all our common wants and weaknesses. Is it not, then, proper we should present our joint supplications to God for supplies and helps? (Matt. xviii. 19). 2. Praise (Psa. xlviii. 1, xxxiv. 3). We are never in such destitute circumstances as not to be obliged to bless the name of God, therefore are we commanded to add thanksgivings to our supplications (Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17, 18). It is proper here to consider that particular method of praising God by singing. It is natural for the joy of men's hearts to break forth into songs, and it is most fit they should express the delight they take in the perfections and mercies of God by singing His praises (James v. 13; Eph. v. 19, 20; Col. iii. 16; 1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15; Rev. xv. 3). 3. Hearing the Word of God. Under the Mosaic constitution the priest's lips were to keep knowledge, and the people were to seek the law at his mouth (Mal. ii. 7). Our Lord Jesus Christ has appointed ministers "who are to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word; to be instant in season and out of season" in preaching of it. Therefore, certainly it is the duty of Christians to be instant in season and out of season in hearing the gospel (Eph. iv. 11–13). 4. The Lord's Supper. This is meant by "breaking of bread" (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). Application: 1. How thankful should we be for our liberty to worship God in public. 2. It is matter of great lamentation that there is so much indifference among us to the public worship of God. 3. Let us have a care of "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." In order to press you hereto, consider—(1) That an indifference to the duties of public worship is a dangerous step towards apostacy. (2) Persons of the most eminent piety have expressed the greatest value for the public worship of God. (*S. Price.*) *Importance of daily prayer*:—Great pianists carry the dumb piano with them, which is simply a mechanical keyboard for the exercising of the fingers. Rubenstein uses it, and on a recent occasion he said, "If I neglect practice a single day, I notice it, and if for two days, my friends notice it, and if for three days the people notice it." Some Christians leave off practising their religion. First they notice it themselves, then their friends, then the world. Every Christian has his dumb piano on which to practise. True it gives no sound that the world can hear, but it nevertheless accomplishes much; it is the instrument of silent prayer. McCheyne once expressed the belief that no one who prayed daily to God ever became a lost soul. It is well to recall this at times whenever the habit of silent prayer is neglected. Use the dumb piano. *Constancy in the performance of holy duties makes them easy*:—It is easy to keep that armour bright which is daily used; but hanging by the walls till it be rusty, it will take some time and pains to furbish it up again. If an instrument be daily

played upon, it is easily kept in tune; but let it be but a while neglected, and cast in a corner, the strings and frets break, the bridge flies off, and no small labour is required to bring it into order again. And thus, also, it is in things spiritual, in the performance of holy duties, if we continue them with a settled constancy, they will be easy, familiar, and delightful to us; but if once broken off, and intermitted, it is a new work to begin again, and will not be reduced to the former estate but with much endeavour and great difficulty. *Constancy in the performance of holy duties:*—It is observable that many who have gone into the field, have liked the work of a soldier for a battle or two, but soon have had enough, and come running home again from their colours, whereas few can bear it as a constant trade. War is a thing that they could willingly woo for their pleasure, but are loath to wed upon what terms soever. Thus many are soon engaged in holy duties, easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and as easily persuaded to lay it down. Like the new moon, which shines a little in the first part of the night, but is down long before half the night be gone, are lightsome professors in their youth, but whose old age is wrapt up in thick darkness of sin and wickedness. Oh! this constancy and persevering is a hard word! This taking up the cross daily, this praying always, this watching night and day, and never laying aside our clothes and armour, indulging ourselves to remit and unbend in our holy waiting upon God, and walking with God. This sends many sorrowful from Christ; yet this is the saint's duty, to make religion his every day's work, without any vacation from one end of the year to the other. **And breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness.**—*The holy communion a feast of love:*—Love, as it is undoubtedly one of the most natural and general, so is it likewise one of the most agreeable and delightful emotions of the human heart. Whoever therefore promotes love, at the same time promotes happiness; and the firmer, the purer, the nobler that love is, the more solid is this happiness. And where shall we find a more perfect doctrine of happiness than in Christianity? Tend not all its doctrines, all its precepts, all its promises, all its rites to kindle and inflame the purest, noblest love towards God and man? Such is its whole design; this is the distinctive character of the noble few by whom it is actually attained. 1. The holy communion is a feast of the love of God. Here we see the love of God, our heavenly Father, in all its lustre; here enjoy it in its full measure. Here we draw nigh to Him, not as slaves, not as criminals, trembling at the sight of their judge, but as children, favoured, eminently endowed, meet together in His house, at His table, and rejoice and glory in His being our Father. Here we are truly blessed in the enjoyment of all the benefits wherewith He has favoured us through His Son Jesus. 2. In like manner is the holy communion a feast of love to Jesus our Lord. This holy feast emphatically reminds us of that sublime, disinterested, unprecedented love to the wandering wretched race of mortals that brought Him from a throne to the condition of a servant, to the Cross and to the sepulchre! And here we enjoy the fruits and effects of this love of our Lord. The effulgence which He brought with Him from heaven enlightens and shines round us; the virtue and the efficacy that are gone out from Him, vivify us; the serenity, the hope which He prepared for mankind reanimate us; the prospects into better worlds which He opened to them are our comfort and joy. 3. Lastly the holy communion is a feast of Christian brotherly love. Far hence away, all such as harbour malice, all cold and selfish hearts, all the slaves of envy, hatred, and revenge! Far hence, every the slightest suggestion of vanity and pride, whereby one exalts himself above another, and one in comparison of himself despises another! Do we not here rejoice and glory in our common deliverance, forgiveness, elevation, and happiness? Come, let us show ourselves glad in Jesus Christ by our love, by our mutual endeavours to become ever more humane, ever more bountiful and generally useful. Let us all rejoice in one another, as He rejoices in us all. Let us serve and assist one another, as He has helped and still helps us all. (*G. J. Zollikofer.*) *The soul's atmosphere:*—This passage points out the characteristic fact of the cheerful social dispositions of the early disciples. The Jewish religion was the only one which ever organised joy as an integral and important part of its services. Christ and the apostles were Jews, and the same joyous spirit came with the new faith; and although they entered upon the organisation of the new life under circumstances calculated to make men bigoted and bitter, yet all the early periods of Christianity were sweet and calm. The earliest Christian art has not a single emblem of suffering or distress. All the representations were those of hope and cheerfulness. Subsequently philosophy almost destroyed this temper, and wrought an atmosphere of stoical hardness and moroseness which was

not characteristic of true Christianity. Note:—I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN ATMOSPHERE. We all know how, in the physical world, that a dull, heavy atmosphere is unfavourable to pleasure or labour. We bear with it, fight our way through it; but it is the clear, bright, genial day that affects our spirits favourably, facilitates our work, and makes things grow. So the soul has an atmosphere of one kind or another. Discouragement, sadness, obscurity of soul makes it hard for a man to live, to be social. It is especially mischievous in religious life; for all the higher graces are such as spring up and bloom only in most genial atmospheres, just as many of our plants can only blossom in a long warm summer. The characteristics of this atmosphere are—1. Good-nature—a grace not mentioned in Scripture because Paul did not speak English. This is better than genius, property, or honour. When Baxter spoke of marrying a woman who was of a good disposition rather than one who was eminently pious, he said that the grace of God could dwell with many persons that he could not live with. This good disposition is enjoined in "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love," &c., and is that charity which is "not easily provoked," &c. Now good-natured people are often not geniuses; because to have genius one must have nerves; but men whose nerves are well covered, are relieved from many exasperations and exaggerations which annoy people; but where men have not this protection and still are good-natured, it is a peculiar grace. 2. Cheerfulness—a hopeful state of life under any conditions; a shining state which amounts to more than contentment. 3. Faith—not simply that act which accepts Christ, but that which includes the whole action of the imagination. A practical, matter-of-fact man is like a waggon without springs—every single pebble on the road jolts him; but the man who has imagination has always the power of glancing off from hard facts, and of overcoming the world. 4. Humour. The sense of the ludicrous is a distinct peculiarity of man as lifted above the brute creation. If it calls to itself an element of distinctiveness it becomes sarcasm. When it holds up a man as an object of mirth it becomes ridicule. When it has a certain element of suppression then it developes humour. It sees things in a funny light. Blessed are the men who are able to put this cushion between themselves and all the sharp edges of affairs—who know how to see something that will convert sorrow into a source of pleasure. A man who has it is always able to call to his side good-nature and happiness, and troubles are not so troublesome, nor cares so sharp to him as they would be if he had no such faculty. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. He who is cheerful, imaginative, humorous, has a summer of the soul, and whatever he has to do he will do better in that than in any other atmosphere. This atmosphere favours—1. Earnestness and courage. It has been thought to tend to frivolity, but that is not the case. When Napoleon was crossing the Alps, and the strength of the men had almost given out, and there was hesitation, he ordered the band to strike up a cheerful air. The sound of the drums rolled through the mountain passes, and the men, catching exhilaration from the music, applied themselves with renewed earnestness to the task. Now, when we are called to disappointments, if under the influence of imagination we can but feel cheer and good-nature, that temperament of the soul will enable us to hold on our way. What kills men is discouragement. It is sitting down under trouble that destroys men; it is standing up and mocking it that enables men to go through it without harm. "I have thee, O man," says the Gorgon of disaster. "Not yet," says the man of hope, with a smiling face, and eludes his grasp. 2. Charity—that which seeks the well-being of men. A man who is without good-nature always judges harshly; but the man who has cheerfulness and humour is at peace with other men. The most difficult people to manage are those who never see a jest or develop a smile; they carry gashing angles to the end of life. And unfortunately among them there are only too many professing Christians; so that men say that if they wanted sympathy in distress they would rather go to their drinking companions than to members of the Church. But a man who is really a Christian is a "light of the world"—a man whose temper and disposition make him luminous. Sweet emotions give light to the face, and bitter emotions make it dark. And a man whose face is lit with joy and hope carries among his fellow-men that good will which takes away the friction of life and gives joy to the sorrowful and hope to the sinful. 3. Patience under difficulties. The world is a great deal larger to a man of imagination than to a "Gradgrind"—a man of mere facts—a man of miles who treats the world as though it were a football. The former takes cognisance of things invisible which help him to see that the troubles of to-day are the instruments of the joys of to-morrow. The man of facts sees only the cloud; the hopeful

man sees the sun behind and the fruitful showers after the cloud. 4. Realisation of the presence of God and trust in Him. The trouble with men in this world is that they have no God. A present help in time of trouble is God, and if there be no help for you it is because you have no God that you know how to use. A man might live to the age of Methuselah and never know what music was, if he did not know how to handle the instrument; and a man may live with God around him and yet be without God because he does not know how to use Him. And the soul's atmosphere is the medium through which a man discerns God more easily than through any other. In conclusion—1. You ask, "Does not this tend to relax conscience?" Perhaps it does, and that is the best thing about it so far as some consciences are concerned. A man may be conscientiously wrong and cruel as were Saul of Tarsus and Loyola. What is needed of conscience is that it should act in the sphere of love. Love being the summer atmosphere of the soul, let any faculty act in it, and it will act right. 2. But do not many lack the capacity for such cheerfulness? Yes, but cripples are not to be held up as models of humanity. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The atmosphere of a church*:—There ought to be such an atmosphere in every Christian church, that a man going there and sitting two hours should take the contagion of heaven and carry home a fire to kindle the altar whence he came. (*Ibid.*) *Christian festivity*:—1. When you ascend from the post-apostolic to the apostolic days, you seem to emerge from a stifled, airless cave, where all manner of fungous growths luxuriate, into the open field, where fresh breezes play and sunbeams glitter and dew-besprinkled flowers shed their varied perfume on the air. In the Acts you find not only a purer religion but more of common sense and manliness than in the history of the fathers. 2. We make a great mistake if, while we seek in the Scriptures and by prayer for direction in matters of faith and in the larger turning-points of life, we leave smaller affairs, such as our feasts, to the arbitrament of chance or the example of the world. "In everything by prayer and supplication," &c. Only on the great things may the stranger approach the king, but in everything is the appeal of the child welcome to the Father. The disciples did eat their bread—I. WITH GLADNESS. 1. A preliminary to this was a liberal contribution to their poorer brethren—a necessary ingredient in all glad Christian festivity. 2. These ancient Christians were not hermits, they enjoyed their food all the more by enjoying it together. The sight of a friend's face, and the sound of his voice while we eat, are as good gifts of God as food. A convivial meeting is an object of dread to Christian parents, but it is not in itself evil: in as far as it retains its etymological meaning—eating together—it is good. 3. A good reason for eating with gladness is that we have something to eat, and a self-acting machinery which reminds us when nourishment is needed, and compels us to take it at the proper time. 4. In the case of a Christian the Giver of food is recognised, and therefore he has more gladness than other men. II. WITH SINGLENESS OF HEART, as well as gladness, and that without which gladness soon disappears. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Simplicity is destroyed and gladness lost—1. By burdensome and irrational luxury. The cares of the meal are sometimes as heavy as the management of the estate. Instead of singleness, doubleness of a very troublesome type is the occupant of the heart. One half of the mental vision squints aside to calculate the estimation in which the elaborate festival is held by the guests. Simplicity may be marred, too, by the cost of the entertainment; and some approach to it might both replenish the coffers of charitable institutions and facilitate the settlement of tradesmen's bills. The Christian should "add to his faith courage" here. 2. By immoderately late hours. To turn night into day is not simplicity, and cannot promote gladness. It is like the opinion within lunatic asylums that people should lie in bed while the sun shines, and be active under gaslight during the night. What would you think of the gardener who should cover your greenhouse till noon, and make up for the deficiency of light by burning lamps beside the flowers till midnight. Treat yourselves as you treat your gardens. Young men and women would be more like the lilies in freshness and beauty if they considered and imitated them. 3. The free use and vile abuse of intoxicating drinks. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The bright side of life*:—There are two sides to every street and to every life—the bright and the dark. The man who deliberately chooses the latter must look to himself for companionship, but the man who elects the former will not lack society. The double attraction of his circumstances and his example will prove irresistible. 2. The bright side exists not only in spacious avenues fringed with lordly mansions, but in narrow lanes flanked by lowly cottages. The

cheerful Christian draws satisfaction from, and shows it in, not only life's great occasions, but in life's commonplace acts. You can form no judgment of the spirit of a man when he is being united to his bride, when successful in business, or when on a holiday. Watch him at the table, or in some ordinary duty, and you will be able most accurately to gauge his character. I. THE BRIGHT SIDE OF LIFE IS ILLUMINED BY A TRIPLE LIGHT. 1. Gladness. We like to see a man—particularly if he be a guest—thoroughly enjoy his meal. To see him daintily picking over half of it, and sending the other half untasted away, grieves the generous host, and excites commiseration for the man who cannot relish wholesome food. The illustration may be expanded so as to embrace the whole of life. The good workman is glad with his work and glad to do it. There is no gladness for a good mother like that excited by and indulged in home and children. And for the good Christian perfect gladness is only to be found in the blessed work that God has given him to do. But insipidity or disagreeableness in any of these relations is invariably attended by poor if not bad effects. 2. Singleness of heart—a word only occurring here in the New Testament—means soil from which all stones are cleared; and hence even and smooth, presenting no obstacle to the object passing over it. So these good people did not wait till conscience thundered that while they were feasting others were starving. Nor had they to clear away a number of prudential considerations, and make a number of troublesome calculations before their beneficence could find free play. All hindrances were already swept away by the fresh vigorous tide of charity which resulted from the copious baptism of the Holy Ghost. Surely this singleness of mind is wanted everywhere. What trouble is caused by anxious thought about the future at home and in the market place. What energies are paralysed when the thought of interest is allowed to mingle with the single thought of duty. How many Christians are kept back from joyous Christian service by allowing the disturbing thought of what other people will think or feel to upset the simple conviction that God's will ought to be done. Get these thoughts swept out of the mind by the power of the Spirit, and then let the current of activity flow straight forward, and life will be bright. Otherwise it will be gloomy—a mixture of light and darkness—or hopelessly dark. 3. Thankfulness. He was a happy man who wrote that 103rd Psalm. The unthankful man is never happy, and cannot be. Selfishness and discontent kill all joy. II. THE BRIGHT SIDE IS THE ATTRACTIVE SIDE. The disciples had "favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the Church." Thus God blesses those who walk on the bright side, and gives them their heart's desire, which is success—the gathering to themselves of a like-minded company. Religious increase is brought about in two conceivable ways—by compulsion and by attraction. The first produces hypocrites, the second only true Christians. It is only when Christians win favour that God adds. Apply this to—1. Families. How many children have simulated godliness when forced upon them only to cast it away with disgust when the time of independence comes; but how many have risen up to call God blessed by the winsome piety they have seen at home. 2. Society. The estimate which worldly men and women form of religion is derived from what they see of professing Christians. And, alas! much of it is wholly and naturally unfavourable. The time has come to re-try the Pentecostal experiment; not in form but in spirit, a spirit that shall work through established social usages—showing how a Christian can comport himself joyously everywhere, and society will not long remain unchristianised. 3. The Church. So-called Christianity has tried force, indifference, and means calculated only to repel. Let Christians try that which will have favour with the people, use means in the best sense popular, and watch the result. (*J. W. Burn.*) **Gladness and singleness of heart.**—*Gladness of heart springs from singleness of heart*:—They were glad at heart because they were single in heart. Their hearts were not divided between God, or Christ, and the world, and, being wholly the Lord's, they rejoiced in the Lord. I. Their gladness was the effect of their SINGLENESS OF HEART TOWARDS GOD, towards God in Christ, whom they called Lord and God, and into whose name they had been baptized for forgiveness of sins, with the promise of receiving from Him, if they repented, the gift or baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was the proper fruit, that is to say, of that awful fear of God, tempered and softened by filial confidence and grateful love, which we see characterised in the context as the habitual frame of mind in which these primitive disciples walked with God, in the exercise of living faith in Jesus Christ. In proportion as they knew God, or knew the gospel of Christ, they saw that He was all in all, that of Him, and through Him, and to Him were all things. They connected all things,

little and great, with God. All things were thus to them full of God, and since they rejoiced in God, full of the joy of God. This was the secret of their happiness, this the source, this the sum. And in proportion to the singleness of their hearts towards God, so that He was all in all, and of Him, through Him, and to Him, all things, did the gladness of their hearts become more full and ecstatic, or rise nearer to the blessedness of saints in heaven. Their joy was, then, first of all the joy of godliness and gratitude. II. Again, this gladness proceeded from the SINGLENESS OF THEIR HEARTS TOWARDS THE WORLD, from the victory over the world, to which they were crucified by the Cross of Christ. A half-hearted Christian, if such a man there be, a worldly-minded professor of Christianity whose heart is divided between God and the world, or rather is not yet given to God, is miserable when he is called to surrender his worldly possessions, and feels his happiness to consist in giving as little as possible to the cause of Christ. But not so the man who with singleness of heart has said, "I am not mine own; I am bought with a price," therefore must I glorify my Redeemer with all that is mine. The more he can do for God, the more he can contribute to the cause of Christ, the more is his joy made full. His heart being single, his final aim being one, in the fulfilment of that aim, in the extent to which he can contribute by his exertions or possessions to its fulfilment, he is glad. III. There was, however, another element in the joy of these Christians, for there was another distinguishing feature of their character. Theirs was THE JOY OF MUTUAL LOVE—the sweetest joy which earth can boast. Their hearts were united in the bond of perfectness, charity, and therefore they were glad. That man might well consent to part with the world who, with the world as the price, could purchase a friend, could win to himself the pure love of one purified heart. No wonder they were glad at heart. They loved one another with a pure heart fervently. Their singleness of heart in their attachment to one another made them glad. Love is the proper fruit of the gospel, for faith, which is the reception of the gospel, worketh by love. Love is happiness; pure love is pure happiness; Christian love is Christian happiness, or life eternal in present possession, the life of heaven upon earth. Theirs was therefore the gladness of love free from selfishness, and as free from sectarianism. IV. But there was one other characteristic of this gladness of heart which must not be omitted, since it points to its source, and is the thing by which it was distinguished from all other joy. This gladness was THE JOY OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. In all its elements it was the fruit of that faith. Their godliness, their gratitude, was the godliness of faith and the gratitude of faith. Their victory over the world was also the victory of faith: "For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." And their love to one another was love in the Lord, love of faith's producing, for "faith worketh by love," which is the believer's life. They were glad at heart, because they believed with all their heart. What, then, is the gladness of faith, as it is described here, compared with other joys? Need I show that it was a joy peculiar in its character, and pre-eminently pure and exalted? Need I show that it was an independent, and uniform, and habitual joy? not arising from circumstances of a variable kind, not like the joy of wealth, or of honour, or of pleasure, which may come in a night and depart in a night, which return only at intervals, and soon pall and cease to please, the sooner the oftener they return. Faith may flourish whatever fades; and this joy is as independent and as uniform as is the exercise of faith. Need I show that it is a perpetually increasing joy, a light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Every view of God increases it, if we see Him as He is in Jesus Christ. All our intercourse with the world calls it into exercise, and gives it, if we overcome the world, renewed strength. And love produces love. By loving we learn to love, as by walking we learn to walk. (*R. Paisley.*)

Ver. 47. **Praising God, and having favour with all the people.**—*At once godly and popular*:—I. PIETY. "Praising God." Behold the natural history of regeneration. Those who are bought with a price are constrained to glorify God. Thanksgiving is a constituent element of prayer without which it is ineffectual. In the case of these converts as in the case of Israel redeemed from Egypt it was spontaneous, and could not be restrained. The gratitude that comes through prompting is not gratitude. II. POPULARITY. "Having favour," &c. In the first stage of their progress these converts were not persecuted. Two opposite experiences alternate in the history of the Church: sometimes the world admires and sometimes reviles. This is necessary. If godliness were always to obtain the favour of the world, counterfeits would spring up; if it were always to bring down the world's enmity,

the spark of Divine truth in humanity would be quenched. God holds the balance, and permits as much of the wrath of man as suffices to praise Himself and purge the Church, and then He restrains the remainder. This method, as exemplified in history, we see to be the best. When a spark is imbedded in the flax, and it begins to smoke, a blast would blow it out, and therefore the blast is restrained. But after the fire has fairly caught, the blast will spread the flame, and therefore it is permitted to blow. III. INCREASE. 1. The Lord added them, and yet they added themselves. The Good Shepherd carried the sheep home, but the prodigal walked home. The two are one showing the Divine and human sides of the same transaction. At one place the saved are "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord"; at another they are "As many as the Lord shall call." When I know myself to be like a withered leaf that flows to a sea of perdition, it is sweet to think that help is laid on One that is mighty, and to hope that the Lord adds me to His Church. My comfort arises from the fact not that I hold Him, but that He holds me. But woe to the man who with no liking for God's presence or the company of His people dares to comfort himself that he has no power till God puts forth His strength. The Lord is now ready to do it, if you are willing that it should be done. 2. Every day some were added. There is no blank in the birth registers of God's family. The Lamb's Book of Life has a page for every day, and names on every page, although some pages are more crowded than others. 3. He added the saved to the Church: added them in the act of saving, saved in the act of adding. He does not add a withered branch to the vine; but in the act of inserting it makes the withered branch live. When pure water is drawn from the salt sea, it is added to the clouds in heaven. It is thus that the Lord adds the saved to the Church, winning them from a sea of wickedness and leaving their bitterness behind. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **And the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved.**—*The relation of the Church to the individual:*—I. IT SEEMS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT ALL BELIEVING MEN WILL AS A MATTER OF COURSE ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH THE CHURCH. 1. This is prompted by the very nature and fitness of things. (1) It is the moral duty of every individual to give society an account of his convictions. No man is perfectly sincere to his fellows except as his whole life—his thoughts as well as his conduct—is open to their inspection. Respect for his fellow-men, himself and his God alike demand this. Therefore not to do this in matters of religious conviction is to withhold from society that to which it has a moral claim, for religious belief lies at the foundation of all moral conduct; and therefore of all social confidence. To profess to belong to society, and yet conceal our religious principles is a moral fraud. (2) An evasion of religious profession does as much wrong to the spiritual life of the believer as it does to the community. He does as much violence to his spiritual nature as he would to his social nature were he to become a recluse. Such separation renders the development of one's entire nature impossible—social instincts, sympathies and capabilities. And just as the domestic feeling finds development in the family, the mercantile in the company, the political in the club, so the religious feeling finds its proper development in the Church. Standing aloof, therefore, our personal piety must suffer, wanting that mutual encouragement and help that it requires. For the Church is "the garden of the Lord"—the place of rapid and healthy growth. "They that be planted in the house of the Lord," &c. Standing aloof from our fellow Christians, moreover, there is a large class of holy and beautiful feelings that are never called into exercise. It is as if the members of a family were to live separate—the tie of relationship would be the same, and the affection might be in their hearts, but it would find but imperfect expression in the life. (3) Church association is, moreover, needful for the advantageous application of spiritual power. The units are added into one sum; the drops collected into one stream; the strands twisted into one cable; the parts "fitly framed together" into one potent engine. What separated believers cannot do the Church easily can. For other purposes, the advancement of literature, science, commerce, &c., men spontaneously unite, and so should believers in the work of God. For each Christian to do "what is right in his own eyes" is as if soldiers were to disperse themselves through a country for the purpose of subduing it. (4) One prime part of the practical expression of religious principle is in public worship. God will have His people render Him sanctuary service—the chief way in which the "profession of Christ" is to be made. We might be pious without it, but our piety would be to ourselves, not to the world. 2. This natural necessity of the Church is further insisted upon in the New Testament. The injunctions of Christ and His apostles are not mere arbitrary directions, but recognitions of our spiritual nature. We have passages—

(1) Recognising the Church as a legitimate fact. "Tell it to the Church," "They assembled with the Church," &c. (2) Of injunction, expostulation and promise. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves," "These be they who separate themselves," "Where two or three are gathered in My name." (3) Where the necessity of professing Christ (of which Church membership is the chief way) is insisted on. We are to "come out and be separate," to "confess the name of the Lord Jesus." So imperative was this that the early Christians submitted to persecution for the maintenance of it. Half the martyrdoms of the Church might have been avoided had Christians been content with an isolated religion. And the great solicitude of the apostle in writing to persecuted believers is that they should "hold fast their profession without wavering." II. WHAT DOES THE CHURCH REQUIRE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A CONDITION OF ITS COMMUNION? Ver. 42 embodies the natural principles of associated Christian life, and St. Luke distinctly traces the passage of the individual to the social Christian life. Membership with Christ first, then membership with His Church. All social life is made up of individual lives—each member enters as an individual not to receive life from it, but to add life to it. The spiritual life of the Church, therefore, is the sum of individual lives. In none of our relationships can we lose our individuality. As individuals we are born, live, die, and give account of ourselves to God. Of the individual, therefore, the Church may require—1. Moral conversion. A purely spiritual society can admit none but spiritual members; and can include none that are unregenerate. Of course the Church has not omniscience, but it is bound to exercise the most vigilant jealousy. And it cannot receive a more deadly injury than an unsanctified member. A society is worth no more than it possesses of the quality for which it exists. A scientific society, whatever other qualities its members may have, is worth no more, as such, than it has science. And so the Church is worth no more than the spiritual life that is in it. Wealth, intellect, energy, are of incalculable value, if their possessor bring spiritual life also, but they are a curse if he do not. Hence the Church is invested with the power of discipline, like all social bodies, and therefore St. Paul censured the Corinthian Church for not excommunicating the incestuous person. Christian churches must be churches of Christians. 2. Intellectual agreement with its distinctive ecclesiastical principles. An Episcopalian, *e.g.*, cannot and ought not to be allowed to take part in a Congregational administration. His membership would involve either a tacit denial of principle on his part or an exposure to constant embarrassment on the part of the Church. While we welcome him to all our spiritual privileges, we must deny him participation in our government. 3. Active and cordial co-operation in religious functions—participation in worship, communion and service. Every member, therefore, enters into a moral contract with the Church, and as far as he holds aloof is as dishonest as a mercantile servant who absents himself from his occupation. Of course we claim no legal hold, and can use no compulsion, and would not if we could. But these are the lowest constraints, and Christianity refuses to employ them. But if you will not discharge its duties the Church has a right to ask you to withdraw from a fellowship to whose enjoyment and efficacy you add nothing. III. THE CLAIM OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE CHURCH. He may expect not the extinction on the part of its members of social rank, nor the sacrifice of individual claims. Membership warrants no rude familiarity, establishes no social equality. But Church members, though not one in rank or wealth, are yet one in Christ, and each in his spiritual and temporal need may expect such help as Christian brotherhood may prompt in his sorrows, brotherly interest and sympathy; in his assaults or perils, brotherly assistance and rescue; all that is involved in the great law, that we "love one another." (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Graduality and divinity of human salvation:*—Dean Alford's version of the words is, "The Lord added to their number day by day them that were in the way of salvation." Dr. Samuel Davidson's version we think better: "The Lord was adding to the Church daily those who were being saved." The authors of the New Testament Revised Version have adopted Dr. Samuel Davidson's translation, and read, "the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." Not those that had been saved, or those who would be saved, but those who were being saved. The words in their connection teach two great facts in relation to man's salvation. I. IT IS GRADUAL IN ITS PROCESS. The popular impression is that this great event is instantaneous. But the nature of the work and the testimony of the Scriptures give no sanction to such an impression. Consider—1. The nature of the work. Salvation may be said to involve a twofold change. (1) A change in condition. The soul is represented as lost, it has lost its normal condi-

tion and its original character. We say that a thing is lost when it has failed to realise the object for which it was produced. Thus a chronometer is lost when it becomes incapable of keeping time; a vessel is lost when it is unfit any more to plough the ocean; a family portrait is lost when all the lineaments are so discoloured or defaced as to be incapable of giving any faithful idea of the subject. In this sense the soul is lost; it does not answer the end of its existence. It involves—(2) A change in character. We often say of a man when his character is gone that he is lost. Whether you consider salvation as consisting in the restoration of a lost condition, or a lost character, graduality is implied. The chronometer cannot be restored at once, nor can the unseaworthy vessel be repaired at once. Skilful and persistent effort in all cases of restoration is required. It is so with the soul. The rebellious does not become obedient at once, the malign benevolent at once, the selfish generous at once. The same in relation to character. Character is not something formed at once. Character is made up of habits, and habits are made up of numerously repeated actions. Consider—2. The testimony of the Scriptures. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Kept through faith unto salvation." "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." "He that shall endure to the end shall be saved." The various figures employed to represent the Christian life indicate the same graduality. It is a building, a planting, a race, a fight, &c. II. IT IS EFFECTED BY GOD THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF PREACHING. It is said, "The Lord added." He did it, but how? Everywhere in nature He works by means. This is the means by which God effects human salvation. Christ is the Gospel, and the gospel preached is Christ exhibited. Conclusion: 1. Infer not from this that salvation does not imply a crisis. There is a point when everything begins. There is a point when the dead seed receives the first touch of life. The heavy clouds charged with electricity reach a point when they flash into flame and break into thunder. There is a point in disease when it either becomes incurable or yields to a restorative touch, and we say the disease has taken a turn. It is so with the salvation of the soul. Conversion is a turn. But the mere turn is not salvation; the starting point is not the goal; incipient germination is not fruitage. The mariner may turn his barque from the direction of a northern port to a southern port, and yet the southern port he may never reach. 2. Infer not from this that other elements apart from the gospel may not contribute to human salvation. Wholesome literature, philosopbic truths, scientific facts, and rational speculations we disparage not these, they may render important service, but they cannot do the work of the gospel, they cannot save souls. Put the best seed into the best soil, let the choicest showers come down upon it, and the most genial airs breathe about it. It will never spring to life without something else, they are useless without the sun. Add to them the sun, and the work is done. Add to all the elements of nature the sun, and it will start majestic forests on the barren hills. So with the gospel. Add to all other truths, natural and moral, the gospel, and they will render service, but not otherwise. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Additions to the Church*:—I. WHAT ABOUT THEM? 1. It was the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the Church. From that fact, I feel persuaded that—(1) They did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, "I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul. Can I not go quietly to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?" Yes; but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ. We shall not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will carry spices to the grave of Jesus, or beg His body. Neither of these two brethren were cowardly after the Cross had been set up, nor ashamed to identify themselves with Christ crucified. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its maturer days. The promise of the gospel is "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of Him, shall be saved." (2) They did not try to go to heaven alone. There has been a great deal said about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular church. But these people joined the Church at once. I daresay that, had they criticised the Church, they would have found faults in her, certainly within a few weeks great faults had to be remedied; but these converts felt that the society at Jerusalem was the Church of Christ, and, therefore, they joined it. If you wait for a perfect Church, you must wait until you get to heaven; and even if you could find one they would not admit you, for you are not perfect yourself. Find out those people who are nearest to the Scriptures, and then cast in your lot with them. If it would be right for you to

remain out of Church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer, and then there would be no visible Church at all. 2. The persons who were received at Pentecost were added to the Church by the Lord. Does anybody else ever add to the Church? Oh, yes, the devil. Who was it that added Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas? Who was it that stole forth by night and sowed tares among the wheat? Moreover, the Church itself cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. Mr. Hill met a man who hiccuped up to him and said, "How do you do, Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts." "Yes," said Rowland, "I should say you are, but you are none of God's, or else you would not be drunk." Converts of that sort are far too numerous—converts of the preacher, of friends, or of a certain fashion of making profession, but not true-born children of the Lord. 3. Additions to the Church of a right kind are described as "those who were being saved." Those in whom the work of salvation is really begun are the proper candidates, and these are spoken of in ver. 44 as "believers." So let the question go round—Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have, the process of salvation within me is going on, I am being delivered from the reigning power of sin each day; I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I shall be kept and presented at last spotless before the presence of God with exceeding joy. We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be. 4. Such were really "added." I am afraid certain persons' names are added, but not themselves. They are added like figures on a slate, but they do not augment our strength. If you want to add to a tree you cannot take a dead bough and tie it on; that is not adding to it, but incumbering it. To add to a tree there must be grafting done. A true Church is a living thing, and only living men and women are fit to be grafted into it, and the grafting must be made by the Lord. Some members are only tied on to the Church, and they are neither use nor ornament. When I see disunion and disaffection among Church members, I can well understand that the Lord never added them; but it would be a great mercy to the Church if the Lord would take them away. 5. There were additions to the Church every day. Some churches, if they have an addition once in twelve months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg. Now, in the early Church they would not have been contented with that. II. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT THEM ON A LARGE SCALE? Turn to the chapter and we shall have our answer. We may expect additions to every church of God on a large scale—1. When she has a Holy Ghost ministry. Peter was no doubt a man of considerable natural abilities, and just such a man as would have power over his fellow-men; but for all this Peter had never seen three thousand persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Ghost. I fear that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. They judge a minister by his style, or culture. The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. A Holy Ghost ministry, if Peter be the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, persuasive, and chooses Jesus for its main theme. He did not speak to them about modern science and the ways of twisting Scripture into agreement with it. He cared nothing for Rabbis or philosophers; but he went right on setting forth Christ crucified and Christ risen. When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to them and said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. 2. When she is a Holy Ghost Church—a church baptized into His power, and this will be known by being—(1) "Steadfast in the apostles' doctrine," &c. (ver. 42). (2) United. The Sacred Dove takes His flight when strife comes in. (3) Generous. I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy church. There are churches where more is paid per annum for cleaning the shoes of the worshippers than for the cause of Christ; and where this is the case no great good will be done. (4) Ready to make home a holy place. The converts did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they left off eating their common meals, and when they began eating the supper of the Lord. No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families. To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most evil course of action. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of Divine worship.

Are we not all priests? (5) Devout. They did not forget any part of the Lord's will. (6) Joyful. (7) Grateful. III. WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THEY BRING TO US? It is our duty—1. To welcome them heartily. 2. After welcoming them we must watch over them. Of course no pastor is equal to this alone. Let the watching be done by the officers of the church first, and then by every individual. 3. Setting them a good example. 4. Giving them work to do. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The saved added to the Church*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE CHURCH? The English is from the Greek *kuriake*; but the word here is *ecclesia* used in the New Testament sometimes for—1. The place where the disciples met to worship God (1 Cor. xi. 22). 2. The assembly met together to worship God. Any particular congregation of saints (Col. iv. 15; Rom. xvi. 3, 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). If the apostle had meant their private family he would have expressed it so (Rom. xvi. 10–15; 2 Tim. iv. 19). He means therefore the congregation usually met in some part of their house consecrated to the service of God. 3. The whole body of saints in any city or country a church: as the Church at Jerusalem (chap. viii. 1); Antioch (chap. xiii. 1); Caesarea (chap. xviii. 22); Thessalonians (2 Thess. i. 1). 4. The body collective of all Christians in the world whereof Christ is Head (Col. i. 18; Eph. i. 22, 23, v. 23, 25). Thus Christ uses the word (Matt. xvi. 18), and thus it is understood in the Creed and in the text. II. WHAT ARE THE PROPERTIES OF THIS CHURCH. It is—1. One—(1) As having one Head and built on one Foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 19, 20). (2) As agreeing in one faith (Eph. iv. 5). (3) As led by one Spirit (Eph. iv. 3, 4). 2. Holy. (1) Negatively. (*a*) Not as though there were no unholy persons in it, for Christ compares it to a floor, wheat and chaff (Matt. iii. 12); a field, good seed and tares (Matt. xiii. 24, 25; a casting-net, good and bad fishes (Matt. xiii. 47, 48); a house, vessels of honour and dishonour (2 Tim. ii. 20). (*b*) Not as if any were perfectly holy in this world (1 John i. 8). (2) Positively. The Church is holy because—(*a*) It calls men to holiness (2 Tim. i. 9). (*b*) It engages men to holiness (2 Tim. ii. 19). (*c*) In it many are sincerely holy (Tit. ii. 14). (*d*) It brings them to a perfect holiness hereafter, when the Church will be all holy (Eph. v. 26, 27). 3. Universal: as—(1) Spread over all places and ages (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Rev. v. 9). (2) Teaching all necessary truths (John xvi. 13). (3) Enjoining universal obedience, and the exercise of all graces (1 Pet. i. 15). III. SUCH AS ARE SAVED ARE BROUGHT INTO THE CHURCH BY GOD. 1. The Lord brings or adds them to the Church (John vi. 44; Acts xvi. 14). 2. They that are saved are thus brought by the Lord into the Church (chaps. iv. 12; xvi. 31). Use 1. Thank God for being brought into the Church (Matt. xi. 25). 2. Continue in the Church and live up to its doctrine and discipline (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12). Unless ye do this, it will avail you nothing. If you do you will get to the Church triumphant (Heb. xii. 22). (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *A pure Church an increasing Church*:—The principal alterations in the Revised Version are the omission of "the Church," and the substitution of "were being saved." The former suggests that at this period the name of "the Church" had not yet been definitely attached to the infant community, and that the word afterwards crept into the text at a time when ecclesiasticism had become a great deal stronger than it was at the date of the writing of the Acts. The second suggests that salvation is a process going on all through the course of a Christian man's life. Notice—I. THE PROFOUND CONCEPTION WHICH THE WRITER HAD OF THE PRESENT ACTION OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST. "The Lord added," &c. 1. Then the living, ascended Christ was present in, and working with, that little community of believing souls. And the thought of a present Saviour, the life-blood of the Church, and the spring of all its action, runs through the whole of this book. The keynote of it is struck in ver. 1, which implies that the Acts is the second treatise, which tells all that Jesus *continued* to do and teach. It is He, *e.g.*, that sends down the Spirit; whom the dying martyr sees ready to help; who appears to the persecutor on the road to Damascus; who sends Paul to preach in Europe; who stands by the apostle in a vision, and bids him be of good cheer, and go forth upon his work. Thus, at every crisis it is the Lord who is revealed as the ascended but yet ever-present Guide, Protector, and Rewarder of them that put their trust in Him. So here it is He that adds to the Church. 2. Modern Christianity has far too much lost the vivid impression of this present Christ. We cannot think too much of that Cross by which He has laid the foundation for the salvation of the world; but we may easily so fix our thoughts upon that work which He completed when he said, "It is finished!" as to forget the continual work which will never be finished until His Church is perfected, and the world is redeemed. 3. Notice, the specific action which is here ascribed to

Him. He adds to the Church, not we, not our preaching, our fervour, our efforts; these may be the weapons in His hands, but the hand that wields the weapon gives it all its power. 4. It is His will, His ideal of a Christian Church, that continuously it should be gathering into its fellowship those that are being saved. Does our reality correspond to Christ's ideal? If it is not, wherefore? II. Let us see if we can find an answer. Notice how emphatically there is brought out here THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF AN EARNEST AND PURE CHURCH. 1. My text is the end of a sentence. What is the beginning? "All that believed were together," &c. Suppose this Church bore stamped upon it, plain and deep as the broad arrow of the king, those characteristics—fraternal unity, unselfish unworldliness, unbroken devotion, gladness, and transparent simplicity of life and heart—do you not think that the Lord would add to you daily such as should be saved? Wherever men are held together by a living Christ, and manifest in their lives the features of that Christ, there will be drawn to them—by the gravitation which is natural in the supernatural realm—souls that have been touched by the grace of the Lord, and souls to whom that grace has been brought the nearer by looking upon them. Wheresoever there is inward vigour of life there will be outward growth. Historically, it has always been the case that in God's Church seasons of expansion have followed upon seasons of deepened spiritual life on the part of His people. 2. And just in like manner as such a community will draw to it men who are like-minded, so it will repel from it all formalists. And I come to you with this appeal: Do you see to it that this community be such as that half-dead Christians will never think of coming near us, and those whose religion is tepid will be repelled from us, but they who love the Lord Jesus Christ with earnest devotion shall recognise in us men like-minded, and from whom they may draw help. 3. Now, if all this be true, it is possible for worldly and stagnant communities to thwart Christ's purpose. It is a solemn thing to feel that we may clog Christ's chariot-wheels, that there may be so little spiritual life in us, that He dare not entrust us with the responsibility of guarding and keeping the young converts whom He loves and tends. Depend upon it that, far more than my preaching, your lives will determine the expansion of this Church. And if my preaching is pulling one way and your lives the other, and I have half an hour a week for talk and you have seven days for contradictory life, which of the two do you think is likely to win in the tug? And remember that just as a bit of sealing-wax, if you rub it on your sleeve and so warm it, develops an attractive power, the Church which is warmed will draw many to itself. III. THE DEFINITION GIVEN HERE OF THE CLASS OF PERSONS GATHERED INTO THE COMMUNITY. 1. In the New Testament salvation is represented—(1) As past, in so far as the first exercise of faith in Jesus Christ the whole subsequent development is involved, and the process of salvation has its beginning then, when a man turns to God. (2) As present, in so far as the joy of deliverance from evil and possession of good, which is God, is realised day by day. (3) As future, in so far as all the imperfect possession of salvation prophesies its perfecting in heaven. But all these three points of view may be merged into this one of my text, which speaks of every saint on earth, from the infantile to the most mature, as standing in the same row, though at different points; walking on the same road, though advanced different distances; all participant of the same process of "being saved." 2. The Christian salvation, then, is a process begun at conversion, carried on progressively through the life, and reaching its climax in another state. Day by day, through the spring and the early summer, the sun is longer in the sky, and rises higher in the heavens. And the path of the Christian is as the shining light. Last year's greenwood is this year's hardwood; and the Christian, in like manner, has to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. So these progressively and, therefore, as yet imperfectly saved people, were gathered into the Church. 3. Now if that be the description of the kind of folk that come into a Christian Church, the duties of that Church are very plainly marked—(1) To see that the community help the growth of its members. There are Christian Churches into which, if a young plant is brought, it is pretty sure to be killed. The temperature is so low that the tender shoots are burned as with frost, and die. I have seen people coming all full of fervour and of faith, into Christian congregations, and finding that the average round about them was so much lower than their own, they have cooled down after a bit to the fashionable temperature, and grown indifferent like their brethren. (2) And if any hold aloof from Christian fellowship for more or less sufficient reasons, let me press upon them, that if they are conscious of however imperfect a possession of that incipient salvation, their place is thereby determined, and they are

doing wrong if they do not connect themselves with some Christian communion, and stand forth as members of Christ's Church. Conclusion: Salvation is a process. The opposite thing is a process too. "The preaching of the Cross is to them who are in the act of perishing, foolishness; unto us who are being saved, it is the power of God." These two processes start, as it were, from the same point, one by slow degrees and almost imperceptible motion, rising higher and higher, the other by slow degrees and almost unconscious descent, sliding steadily and fatally downward ever further and further. And in each of us one or other of these processes is going on. Either you are slowly rising or you are slipping down. No man becomes a devil all at once, and no man becomes an angel all at once. Trust yourself to Christ, and He will lift you to Himself; turn your back upon Him, and you will settle down, down, down, until you are lost for ever. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Church membership not the measure of Christianity*:—It is a joy to me to know that the Christians within the communion of this church are not all the Christians to be found in the congregation. We are richer than we appear to be. Here are growing pear-trees, apple-trees, cherry-trees, and shrubs, and blossoming vines, and flowers of every hue and odour; but I am glad that some seeds have blown over the wall, and that fruit-trees and flowers most pleasant to the eye are springing up there also. And though I wish they were within the enclosure, where the boar out of the wood could not waste them, and the wild beast of the field devour them, yet I love them, and am glad to see them growing there. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Church membership does not ensure final salvation*:—Many men seem to think that religion consists of buying a ticket at the little ticket-office of conversion. They conclude that they will make the voyage to heaven. They understand that a man must be convicted and converted, and join the Church; and, when they have done that, they think they have a ticket, which, under ordinary circumstances, will carry them through. Their salvation is not altogether sure. A man may be cast away upon a voyage. But still they say, "I have got my ticket, and, if no accident occur, it will carry me to my destination safely; and all I have to do is to have patience and faith." And they are like a man that is riding in the cars, who, every time the conductor comes around, shows his ticket. They say, "I was awakened, I saw that I was a sinner, and trusted my soul in the hands of Christ." Yes: you have trusted it there, and there you have left it ever since you were converted. Are there not hundreds and thousands who are living in just the same way? (*Ibid.*) *Success*:—I. DIVINE IN ITS SOURCE. "The Lord." 1. It was instrumentally Divine. Through the labours of the good. 2. It was voluntarily Divine. Omnipotence did not coerce. 3. It was beneficently Divine. None deserved to be influenced. 4. It was impartially Divine. No respect of persons. 5. It was unostentatiously Divine. The virtual energy and blessing came from the Lord, but He was hidden in the instrument. 6. It was mediatorially Divine. "The Lord"—Christ, operating not as Creator, but Redeemer. II. SOCIAL IN ITS FORM. "To the Church." This implies—1. Separation from the world. New maxims, motives, aspirations, activities. 2. Public profession of attachment to Christ. 3. Supreme sympathy with, and love to, the associated friends of the Saviour. Like draws to like. 4. Co operation with advocates of organised Christianity. III. CONSTANT IN ITS OCCURRENCE. "Daily." 1. Repeatedness. 2. Gradualness. 3. Continuity. 4. Accumulativeness. Each day added to the advance of the others. IV. REDEMPTIVE IN ITS BLESSINGS. "Such as should be saved." 1. Saved from sin and its contaminations. 2. Saved by the Spirit through the blood of Christ. 3. Saved for a life of holiness and usefulness. 4. Saved unto eternal gains. Rest, victory, purity, fellowship, happiness. (*B. D. Johns.*) *Church membership: its importance*:—An old sea-captain was riding in the cars towards Philadelphia, and a young man sat down beside him. He said, "Young man, where are you going?" "I am going to Philadelphia to live," replied the young man. "Have you letters of introduction?" asked the old captain. "Yes," said the young man, and he pulled some of them out. "Well," said the old sea-captain, "haven't you a church certificate?" "Oh, yes," replied the young man, "I didn't suppose you would want to look at that." "Yes," said the sea-captain, "I want to see that. As soon as you get to Philadelphia, present that to some Christian Church. I am an old sailor, and I have been up and down in the world, and it's my rule, as soon as I get into port, to fasten my ship fore and aft to the wharf, although it may cost a little wharfage, rather than have my ship out in the stream, floating hither and thither with the tide." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Converts should join the Church*:—At first Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides were dressed anyhow and everyhow; but in the *mêlée* with the Cavaliers it some-

times happened that an Ironside was struck down by mistake by the sword of one of his own brethren, and so the general said, "You wear red coats, all of you. We must know our own men from the enemy." What Cromwell said he meant, and they had to come in their red coats, for it was found essential in warfare that men should be known by some kind of regimental. Now, you that are Christ's, do not go about as if you were ashamed of His Majesty's service. Put on your red coats: I mean come out as acknowledged Christians. Unite with a body of Christian people, and be distinctly known to be Christ's. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Church membership: its value to the young*:—Griffith John, the celebrated missionary to China, was admitted to Church-membership at the exceedingly early age of eight. His testimony is, "Had I not taken that step then, I doubt whether I should ever have been a missionary, if a member of a Christian Church at all." (*J. Morley Wright.*) *Church members: wrong and right sort of*:—Now, many people go to church as a rich man goes to an hotel. He has his big boxes, his trunks, his wife, his children, and plenty of money, and he wants to find commodious apartments. Many people think that if they have clothes, and a good supply of money, and are well-appearing and good-paying boarders in the hotel of the Church, they are just the kind that we want. We do not want any such folks. We have too many of them already! This, in respect to a man's qualifications for entering the Church, falsifies the fundamental idea of Christianity; for we look upon men, and know that they are fallible, imperfect, and that by the force of evil passions from within, and the pressure of temptations from without, imperfection has wrought itself into sins in innumerable instances. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1–11. **Now Peter and John.**—*Peter and John*:—The union of the two brings the narratives of the Gospels into an interesting connection with the Acts. They were probably about the same age (the idea that Peter was some years older than John rests mainly on the pictures which artists have drawn from their imagination, and has no evidence in Scripture), and had been friends from their youth upward. They had been partners as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee (Luke v. 10). They had been sharers in looking for the consolation of Israel, and had together received the baptism of John (John i. 41). John and Andrew had striven which should be the first to tell Peter that they had found the Christ (John i. 41). The two had been sent together to prepare for the Passover (Luke xxii. 8). John takes Peter into the palace of the high priest (John xviii. 16), and though he must have witnessed his denials, is not estranged from him. It is to John that Peter turns for comfort after his fall, and with him he comes to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection (John xx. 6). The eager affection which, now more strongly than ever, bound the two together is seen in Peter's question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John xxi. 21); and now they are again sharers in action and in heart, in teaching and in worship. Passing rivalries there may have been, disputes which was the greatest, prayers for places on the right hand and the left (Matt. xx. 20; Mark x. 35); but the idea maintained by Renan, that St. John wrote his Gospel to exalt himself at the expense of Peter, must take its place among the *delirantium somnia*, the morbid imaginations, of inventive interpretation. They appear in company again in the mission to Samaria (chap. viii. 14), and in recognising the work that had been done by Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 9). When it was that they parted never to meet again, we have no record. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Peter and John*:—In natural disposition, Peter and John did not very exactly correspond with each other; but diamond polishes diamond, and these two precious stones may have advantageously polished each other. (*Rieger.*) **Went up together into the temple.**—*Public worship*:—The Christian has to regard this—I. NEGATIVELY. 1. Not as a legal yoke. 2. Not as a meritorious work. II. POSITIVELY. 1. As a good and useful discipline. 2. As a thankworthy opportunity for increase in goodness. (*Lechler.*) *Love for worship*:—"I have in my congregation," said a minister of the gospel, "a worthy aged woman, who has for many years been so deaf as not to distinguish the loudest sound; and yet

she is always one of the first in the meeting. On asking the reason of her constant attendance, as it was impossible for her to hear my voice, she answered, "Though I cannot hear you, I come to God's house because I love it, and would be found in His ways; and He gives me many a sweet thought upon the text when it is pointed out to me: another reason is, because I am in the best company, in the most immediate presence of God, and among His saints, the honourable of the earth. I am not satisfied with serving God in private: it is my duty and privilege to honour Him regularly and constantly in public." *We should have set places for the worship of God:*—The song-birds in our fields have a chosen branch on which they continually perch for their morning and evening songs. In time of encampment Washington reserved to himself a thicket where he could pray undisturbed. Bishop Leighton frequented a grove in a public park which was at last left to him as his own property. In the story of "The Path to the Bush" is an account of the beaten track through the forest to the praying huts of the native converts, and the faithful girl hinting to her sister that "the grass grew on her path." *The house of God:*—A new student had come to the university and called to see Professor Tholuck. The latter asked him where he went to church. "Oh," said he, "I do not attend preaching. Instead of confining myself to the four walls of a building I go out into the green fields, and under the lofty arches of the forest trees I listen to the singing of the birds and the countless melodies of God's creatures, where everything that hath breath praises the Lord." Then the professor asked him, "But what do you do when it rains?" Conformity to God's plan is best. *Why do Christians go to church?*—Is it chiefly in order that they may give or receive, through the services and their own part in them? These questions would be answered very differently by different persons. Some go, out of a glad and grateful heart, to show and to express their gratitude to God, and to bear a part in His public worship. Others go in order to gain some personal advantage through what they see and hear and feel while there. The one sort are pretty sure to accomplish what they go for. They swell the service of prayer and praise, and by their countenance and evident appreciativeness they cheer the heart of the preacher, and give added force to his preaching. The other sort often find their church-going a failure. The singing is not what they hoped for; the prayers fail to meet their wants; the Bible selections are poorly timed to their requirements; and as to the sermon, "it does not feed" their souls. It is a great pity that there are comparatively so few of the first class of Christian worshippers, and that there are so many of the second class. And it is a noteworthy fact that those who go to church to do what they can to make the church service a success, grow steadily in character and in intellectual power; while those who go there with a chief desire to be the personal gainers by their going, shrink and dwindle in their personality. The poorest specimens of church-goers are those who are constantly complaining that the preaching "does not feed" them. Hearers of that sort are like Pharaoh's lean kine; the more they swallow the leaner they look. In this sphere, as well as in every other, the words of our Lord Jesus are true, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **At the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.**—*Hours of prayer:*—The ninth hour was 3 p.m., the hour of the evening sacrifice (Jos. *Ant.* xiv. 4, § 3). The traditions of later Judaism had fixed the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours of each day as times for private prayer. Daniel's practice of praying three times a day seems to imply a rule of the same kind, and Psa. lv. 17 ("Evening and morning and at noon will I pray") carries the practice up to the time of David. "Seven times a day" was, perhaps, the rule of those who aimed at a life of higher devotion (Psa. cxix. 164). Both practices passed into the usage of the Christian Church certainly as early as the second century, and probably therefore in the first. The three hours were observed by many at Alexandria in the time of Clement (*Strom.* vii. p. 722). The seven became the "canonical hours" of Western Christendom, the term first appearing in the rule of St. Benedict (*ob.* A.D. 542) and being used by Bede (A.D. 701). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The proper hour of worship:*—Rowland Hill well knew how to seize the best opportunity for reproving culpable habits in his hearers. One of them, who, to his great annoyance, avoided coming to chapel in time for the prayers, and arrived only just soon enough to hear the sermon, complained to him of partiality in a magistrate. He gave him one of his most searching looks, and said with an emphasis and manner peculiar to himself, "Then why do you not come to public worship in proper time to pray that God would 'grant all magistrates grace to execute justice and maintain truth'?" *The hour of prayer:*—1. The com-

panions. This first verse reveals, as by a flash-light, the spirit of these companions. Peter and John together. What antipodes! Peter, impulsive, bold, energetic, daring; John, meditative, timid, loving, trustful. What ground in nature for fellowship between them? Yet, like Luther and Melanchthon in the crisis of a later age, they were joined in the strength and beauty of a friendship in Christ that gave to each supplemental grace and energy. 2. "Going up into the temple," though the vail had been rent and the lesson of the spirituality and universality of worship had been taught them! Peter and John had reverence for sacred places —that reverence which is a mark of depth and spirituality in the religious life. These early disciples did not spurn religious custom, though it was a custom of a decadent Jewish Church. To their devout souls history and sacred associations meant something. Character that is strong has roots. These grow deep and take hold of institutions representing thought and life and history. Luther was loth to leave the old Catholic Church, Romanised and corrupt as it was. Wesley always clung to the Church of England. Superstition you may call this clinging to the venerable and historic. Well, if the choice is between irreverence and superstition, give me superstition. Irreverence weakens conscience and blunts the spiritual edge of character. Superstition, as the devout Neander has well said, often paves the way to faith. God's plan was not to obliterate Judaism at a stroke, but to transform it. 3. "At the hour of prayer" went these devout men. But what need had they for prayer, just fresh from the open revelation and spiritual excitement of Pentecost? By this act they teach that prayer is apostolic; that special seasons of illumination and sanctification are a special call to prayer. Though men may not need more fire, yet need they more grace. Religion means daily duty, not occasional ecstasy. "Suspect any inspiration that makes you contemptuous of ordinary religious duties." After your Pentecost be found "going up into the temple at the hour of prayer." (*W. P. Thirkkield.*) **And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried.**—*Spiritual lameness*:—I turn to the story because it brings before us very vividly the whole problem that lies before you and me; the whole problem that lies before the Church; the whole problem that lies before our Master. When you see that lame man carried daily and laid in all his helplessness at the gate of the temple, you get a very vivid picture of the whole problem. Do not let us gather round this impotent man in a questioning, philosophical way, and ask, "How did he become so?" Let us not start vain, seemingly wise, but at bottom foolish questions. The real problem is not, How did we come here? Why are we (the grace of God apart) such wretched creatures? Why is there in London and everywhere else such moral and spiritual impotence? Why is there in the East End, and not less in the West End—only it is better dressed and covered up—that which is so powerfully represented by this helpless man, that squirming misery, that loathsomeness, that wretchedness, that godlessness which no power of art or æsthetics can in the least alleviate? With all our culture, with all our philosophy, with all our fine speeches, and all our fine talking, to this hour there is the situation of things: human nature weary, abject, dejected, sick of itself, utterly loathsome, useless, and helpless; and the problem is not as I have said, "How did he come there?" but "How is that man to be got up?" not "How did you fall into the sea?" but "How are we going to get you out?" Let us turn to this story, then, to see how the great problem that baffles man's wisdom and love even at its best, how the great problem is solved by Jesus Christ and by His humble servants in His name, working in immediate contact with an absent and uncrowned Lord. Man or woman here who objects to this description of human nature, disprove what I am saying; rise in the might of your own goodness, rise in the might of your own morality, rise in the strength and dignity of human nature, which you think I am talking against, and display it in this fashion: Walk in your own strength into God's presence. Come, you cannot. The more you try it the more you prove you are an impotent man. This man saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, and he asked help. "And Peter, fastening his eyes on him, with John, said, Look on us." I would we preachers could learn more thoroughly to do after them, for we do not find that the impotent first of all looked at them, but it certainly is strikingly curious that Peter and John fastened their eyes upon him. He saw them. They might have gone past. He looked at them for ordinary help just as he looked at any others, but the point is that Peter and John did not go past that man. They challenged him. Let us challenge the world's need. We are blamed—it is the deepest part of the charge against us in newspaper and magazine articles, and there is too much truth in it, and the sting

of it lies in its truth—that we are walking past the problem. Peter and John might have been so busily engaged in talking—talking, it may be, about Jesus Christ and the resurrection—that they would have swept past this man. He was not a very attractive sight to look upon, and it would have been very convenient, would it not, for them to have gathered up their garments and swept into the temple past him to engage in the worship of God, and to engage in high and holy converse on the mighty things which were, of course, within their ken? Is there not a good deal of church-going which is just that to-day? Let me ask you point-blank, face to face, what is your church-going very often but just that walking past, and turning your blind eye to the squirming wretchedness all around you? When did you put out your hand to alleviate it? When did you utter Christ's almighty name over it? Aye, this is far too true, that the worship of God with many of us is a denial of God; it is a useless, blind, formalistic, stupid, heartless thing. It has no power towards God or towards man. It is in ourselves and belonging to ourselves—a mere thing of dress, and of Sunday parading to the temple and home again. And the misery of the East End, and of the fat, well-fed, but still wretched West End, is utterly untouched by our Christianity. Not so with Peter and John. Do we believe after all at bottom the conclusion of the whole matter is this: sin is here not to defeat us, but to be defeated by us, to be changed into life and holiness by the power of Him who sits enthroned above the stars of God, even Jesus Christ. It is time that we did, whether we do or not—more than time. Peter and John fastened their eyes upon him and looked at him. They did not go past him. What a lesson for preachers! There are teachers abroad, let me tell you, who do not want to see you; you are a hard nut for them to crack. Why, when you were better off they could speak to you, and you go to them, but since these hard days have come upon you you have dropped going there. When comfort was needed they were too cold. Now, you are right for the gospel. Christ Jesus is here for the sake of this impotent man, and He has lifted up you and me, if we are lifted up, that we may go and fetch the others who have not been brought yet. This is really the whole scope and purpose of the mighty work which God has done upon you, and I rather fear that you are forgetting it. Think of Peter and John stepping forward there. Try to catch the light in their faces as their eyes burned like twin lamps, when, not only they, but Christ, the loving Saviour, in them and through them, bent down and stretched out a hand and looked into the very despairing soul of that helpless creature. And then let me understand, and let you, O Christian worker, understand how much is needed to be, indeed, in this wretched world a servant of Jesus Christ. Oh, if we are able to bring ourselves and our Christ into naked, palpitating contact, let us do so. Let us stand over the perishing as though we meant to take a two-handed grasp of them, and by our own power to lift them right off the sodden bed on which sin has stretched them. Ah, we need an eye in our head, and a tongue in our mouths, and a hand at the end of our arm which has in it some tingle of everlasting love, and we need a heart working behind all three which has been kindled from the heart of Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation took flesh and died upon the Cross. "And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." That is something. The man gave heed. I do not like a man to hide behind his fingers and peep at me. I have not much hope of that. When the audience looks broadly and frankly up into the preacher's face things are looking hopeful. "He gave heed to them." What followed? "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none." What an inconsequential, disappointing word! What an anti-climax to all that had gone before! "Silver and gold have I none." Can you imagine the poor man's eyes? All the delight going out of them, and his long face getting still longer and blacker, and perhaps his tongue uttering indignant words, as he might have said, "Sirs, if you have neither silver nor gold do not add insult to my wretchedness. You might have passed on, and left me unnoticed and unchallenged." Ay, there are men who just say that to us. I read a book not long ago with a very fine title by a very learned man. I do not question his learning. He just broadly said this—that we preachers can do nothing for this helplessness that is represented here, that we are only talking. They level against us the objection that was levelled against Jesus Christ, when another helpless man was laid at His feet, and instead of curing his physical wretchedness He went first to what was first in importance—his spiritual wretchedness, and said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." It is virtually the same thing still. It is a great blessing for that poor man himself that he was not impressed by it when Peter and John said

"Silver and gold have I none." I do not know that we are keeping as faithful to our own wares as Peter and John did. I am not sure that we are not getting to be too much impressed by the thought that what the East End needs is coals and blankets, and boots and shoes, and stockings for itself and its wife and its bairns. But suppose we fed the wretchedness of the East End, and suppose we clothed them; after all, what have we done? At the most and best we have only soothed their passage to the grave. Silver and gold can do much, and far more of the silver and gold that belongs to those who call themselves Christians ought to be spent in this blessed way. But there is an end to the power of silver and gold, and the Church was never better in possession of her true wealth than when she was represented by a couple of penniless fishermen, from the crevices of whose hands I am not quite sure that the fish-scales had yet been dried. You who have got silver and gold, who have come to Jesus Christ, come as humbly as you can. Forget your silver and gold. "Silver and gold have I none." As I have said, on the surface how disappointing that was! Yet it was well said, and it was better done. "Such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Now here that poor fellow in a moment, but very truly and also very suddenly, was himself put to solve a very trying problem. Those of us who have been at college know the weary days we spent on what is called *summum bonum*—"What is the highest good?" It is not a mere vague question of philosophic schools. It is a very practical question, and that poor man lying there that day had to solve for himself very speedily. Virtually this question was put to him: "What is the highest good? Is it silver and gold?" And quicker than my tongue can tell it he came to the swift conclusion: "There is something here that can come to me which is better than anything that silver and gold can do." Have we got that length? Young fellow, you are toiling, you are trying to reach the *summum bonum*. Put it philosophically or non-philosophically, that is what we are all trying to do. Now, what is your highest good? Does it not lie in the direction of silver and gold, in the direction of all that is covered by these gilded, these very comprehensive terms, both in their notation and in their denotation? Through the grace and working of God's Word and God's Spirit—aye, and through the hardships of life—are not some of us beginning to get an insight of what flashed upon that poor man: "Here is the greatest blessing that I could have, a blessing that I feel I am capable of receiving, a blessing that I feel I greatly need. I have been looking for it in a wrong direction, the world cannot give it." Those of you who have plenty have said to yourselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Thou hast got the *summum bonum;* take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." And you cannot. Silver and gold are utterly failing. They are cheating; God grant that you may find out the cheat in time. Now listen. It is for men and women when they come to that pass that the preacher of the gospel is here. It is not because we are poor preachers; it is because you are poor stuff to preach to. When we get into contact with those who are ripe for spiritual blessing, when they are brought to that condition by the stress and disappointment of life, then the gospel preacher becomes wonderfully eloquent, simply because your ears are getting bored and your heart is getting adapted to the message that is spoken. "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. Having thus spoken, he took him by the right hand." There must be immediate contact between Christ and you, and, more than that, between the preacher and you. That is one reason why I object to this historical pulpit—just simply because in here a great deal of that magnetism that was present with Peter and John is lost. How Peter stooped down and uttered that mighty name! Never go without uttering that mighty name of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter stooped down to grasp that man by the hand, and I see him yielding to the power of omnipotence. Up he came. Hallelujah! Christ is the power that Peter expected Him to be. Heaven has won, hell is baffled. The tide has begun to turn. From this One learn all. There is One who has power over every form of the enemy's malignant triumph as it extends in all its vastness. Do you not see that it needs all that supernatural work to be wrought upon your impotent soul before you can enter into the temple to appear before God in any profitable way to yourself or in any way that will bring praise and glory to His name? Now what do you know about worship? This is the road to the church, this is the way to the temple. This gospel cannot be preached, and no signs following. Peter and John did not stand over that man for half a day, saying, until it became a dull, stale, flat, unprofitable, weary word: "In the name of

Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk! Rise up and walk! Rise up and walk" while he lay and lay as helpless and as supine as ever. They risked everything, and they were justified in it. And the times are ripe for us to do the same thing still. Sinner, backslider, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up! (*J. McNeill.*) *A picture of sin and salvation*:—I. Find A PICTURE OF THE SINNER. The external world is a reflex of the spiritual. That lame man crouching at the gate and unable to enter it is a type of the sinner's condition. 1. He was a cripple, not a sound, complete man. So is every sinner. In him there is a miserable distortion of character. 2. He was a beggar. Sin is want. 3. This man was shut out of the temple. From certain texts in the Old Testament and certain passages in old Jewish writings the inference has been drawn that deformed people were not allowed to enter the temple. Though it is not certain, such was probably the Jewish law. Such is every sinner's condition. He is not merely outside the visible church, but he has no part in the spiritual fellowship of God's people. II. Find also as a contrast to the above A PICTURE OF THE DISCIPLES. There are two men standing before the lame man. They show us the privilege of Christ's followers. 1. They have fellowship with each other. Notice how close was the intimacy between Peter and John, and how often they are named together. They were very different, yet they enjoyed the communion of saints with each other. 2. They have a love for God's house. They are going up to the temple, not as formal worshippers, but full of the Holy Ghost, and enjoying an intimate communion with God. To them all the service has a new meaning, since they have known Christ. He is the Lamb laid on the altar; He is the Theme of the psalm; He is shown in the vestments of the high priest. They worship Christ while others gaze at the spectacle. 3. They have sympathy for the needy. The love of Christ awakes in the Christian heart a love for every man. Others passed by the cripple with a glance of contempt or with a shudder of disgust. These men looked at him with love, for in that distorted form was a soul for whom Christ died. 4. They have power to help. As Peter looks on the man he feels a consciousness of Divine power to heal him. It is not in himself, but through Christ, that he can lift him up to health and strength. We cannot bring healing to men's bodies, but we can bring salvation to men's souls. III. Find in this scene A PICTURE OF SALVATION. 1. In the salvation of every soul there is a human instrumentality. God does not save men alone and directly, nor through the agency of angels. There is always a Peter through whom the power of God comes to a needy soul. 2. There is in every lifetime one moment of special opportunity. No one knows how long the lame man had been lying at the gate; but one day he met his opportunity. So the Samaritan woman met hers at the well, so Matthew met his at his table, so the Ethiopian met his in the desert. Success is to grasp at the opportunity; failure is to let it pass. 3. In this miracle the power lay not in Peter's hand, but in Jesus's name—that is, in Jesus Himself, invoked by name. Only a Divine power could heal the cripple, and only a Divine power can make the sinner whole. 4. There was effort required on the part of the man himself. If he had not responded to Peter's strong clasp of the hand with an effort of his own he would have remained a cripple still. That effort was faith. IV. Find in this scene A PICTURE OF THE SAVED MAN. See how aptly he represents the soul just after the new birth in the image of Christ Jesus. 1. We behold the transformation. A moment ago he was a crouching cripple; now he stands and leaps upon the marble floor. Look at a greater change in every converted sinner. 2. We notice his privilege. His first act is to enter through the Beautiful gate into the temple. 3. We notice his gratitude. Every saved soul should make confession of what God has done for him. 4. We notice his prominence. At once the remarkable event attracted attention. Every converted man becomes at once an object of interest and an evidence of Jesus's power. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The first apostolic miracle*:—The date of this miracle is not quite certain. It appears to be reported as a specimen of those wonders and signs referred to in chap. ii. 43. Note—I. THAT IT WAS WROUGHT ON A LIVING MAN. In all our Lord's miracles there was an exhibition of benevolence. This was the case here, for the miracle was wrought—1. On an afflicted man. He had been lame from his birth. Every man is afflicted from his birth with an evil which nothing but the grace of God can remove. 2. On a poor man. How could one so circumstanced find employment? He was then hopelessly poor; but "man's extremity was God's opportunity." 3. On a man dependent on his friends. This followed from his affliction and poverty. And it seems that those friends could only put him in the way of receiving help from strangers. Thus the necessities of

nature led up to the manifestation of God's mercy. To how many has affliction been a means of salvation! 4. On a man known to many from the fact that he had been carried there for years. This enhanced the significance of the miracle and promoted its evidential purpose. In like manner does the conversion of the notoriously sinful bear witness to Christianity. II. THAT IT WAS AN EXHIBITION OF ACTIVE CHRISTIANITY. It was fitting that being the first, it should have this quality. It shows—1. A desire to do good on the part of Christian men. If men have no such desires, and yet call themselves Christians, their words and characters do not agree. 2. The effort which arises out of the proper desire to do good. Peter did not "consider the case," "promise to do the best he could for him," he took him by the hand and lifted him up. True Christianity turns desire into deed, and makes a missionary, a preacher, or a generous contributor of the man who desires the conversion of the heathen at home or abroad. 3. The course of the working of the gospel in the individual who receives it. (1) Special attention was awakened. "Look on us." The man had already looked in an ordinary way. So the hearers of the gospel have to give it more than their usual attention if they would be saved. (2) Hope was aroused. He "expected to receive something"—what he did not know. So those in whom the gospel is "mixed with faith" when they hear it are made hopeful before they have very distinct views of the joys of personal salvation, and their faith is strengthened until they can apprehend the blessings offered them. (3) Healing was administered. It came in the name of Jesus Christ, and immediately: so does salvation. (4) The healed cripple became a witness. The changes in the man's conduct told observers that he had received a great blessing from God, and was constrained to declare it. So Christians are constrained to bear witness by lip and life. (*W. Hudson.*) *The miracle at the Beautiful gate*:—The spiritual lessons we ought to learn are—I. IT IS WELL FOR CHRISTIANS TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH WHAT IS GOING ON "AT THE GATE," over the borders of our serene and comfortable lives; we must look after those who dwell on the outside. II. OPPORTUNITIES OF DOING GOOD LIE IN OUR WAY EVERY DAY and hour, if we really desire to improve them. One slight turn of the eye across the temple-area, where we pass on our way to prayers, will introduce us to two entirely different and totally distinct worlds of feeling, thought, and history. III. CHRISTIANS OUGHT NOT TO LOSE TIME IN SIGHING AFTER NEW SPHERES OF CONSPICUOUS SACRIFICE. Like Peter and John, we ourselves, children of the covenant, are apt to be jostled against those who are ignorant, poor, feeble, and in pain. But it does not follow that all of them are certainly vicious and unworthy of help; some of them may actually have "faith to be healed." IV. WORKING HANDS AND WILLING VOICES OUGHT TO GO WITH WEEPING EYES WHEN WE KNOW THE WANTS OF THE LORD'S POOR. Poverty at hand, weakness close beside us, are quite unromantic; it is distance which lends enchantment to the view in many cases as we converse about heathenism. But our home-heathen must not be absolutely neglected because they are so near. Many men, and some women, will shed tears over the painted picture of a Neapolitan boy begging, who would speak most savagely to the same lad if they met him alive in New York streets; they would quote with vigour the first part of Peter's little speech, and leave off the rest of it; and they would not put out their hands at all. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The miracle at the Beautiful gate—as a fact.* If there be history in any writing, these verses in their simplicity and minute details are a history. There is nothing here approaching the parabolic or the mythical. See here—I. POOR MEN BECOMING THE ORGANS OF OMNIPOTENCE. How often has this been the case. Moses, Elijah, and the apostles are examples. II. A WRETCHED CRIPPLE MADE THE OCCASION OF GREAT GOOD. Thoughtful men have often asked, Why, under the government of a benevolent God, such cases should occur? Why men be sent into the world without the use of their limbs, eyes, or reason? But note—1. That those who come into the world in this state, being unconscious of physical perfection, feel not their condition as others. Men who have never seen know nothing of the blessedness of vision. Hence persons of constitutional defect in form or organ often display a joy or peace at which others wonder. 2. That such cases serve by contrast to reveal the wonderful goodness of God. In nature those parts that have been shattered by earthquakes, or lie in black desolation, serve to set off the beauty and order which generally reign. And so a cripple here, or a blind man there, only set off the goodness of God as displayed in the millions that are perfect. These are a few dark strokes which the Great Artist employs to set off in the picture of the world the

more striking aspects of beauty; a few of the rougher notes which the Great Musician uses to swell the chorus of universal order. 3. That they serve to inspire the physically perfect with gratitude to heaven. In the poor idiot, God says to us, "Be thankful for reason," &c. 4. That they afford scope and stimulus for the exercise of benevolence. Were all men equal in every respect there would be no object to awaken charity. III. CHRISTIANITY TRANSCENDING HUMAN ASPIRATIONS. This man wanted alms, "silver and gold"; but in the name of Christ he received physical power, a blessing he had never ventured to expect. Thus it is ever: Christianity gives man "more than he can ask or think." "Eye hath not seen," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Miraculous faith*:—"A miracle is the dearest child of faith." I. Faith PERFORMS the miracle—Peter and John. II. Faith EXPERIENCES the miracle—the lame man, who, although not before the miracle, yet after it, appears as a believer. III. Faith COMPREHENDS the miracle—the believing hearers. (*C. Gerok.*) *The impotent man*:—I. THE PERSON HEALED. 1. He was impotent, carried by others; and where they left him they were sure to find him. He was not so by any accident, as Mephibosheth, but from the womb; and therefore his case was the more deplorable, and a cure the more improbable. This is a fit emblem of the unregenerate, who are not only spiritually blind, and deaf, and dumb, but lame too; so that they cannot tread the paths of wisdom, or stir one foot in the way to heaven. Good men may be ready to halt, and their feet well nigh slip; but these are always halting and slipping; for their legs, like those of the lame, are not equal. It is not legs and feet that they want, but the right use of them; and this has been their case from their birth. Blessed be God for the promises made to such! "I will assemble her that halteth, and gather her that is driven out. The lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." 2. His poverty added to his distress. If help was to be obtained by medicine, he had not wherewithal to procure it, for he had to beg his bread. And thus it is with sinners. The saints want many things in the present life; but wicked men want everything that is worth having; and the want of a sense of this is perhaps their greatest want. Give me leave to add, that those to whom God shows mercy are also oftentimes like the impotent man, poor in temporals. The poor, says Christ, have the gospel preached to them. Those who are destitute of outward ornaments and comforts are inwardly beautified with Divine grace, and filled with Divine consolations. 3. He had continued long under his disorder, which made his case the more deplorable. Let this afford encouragement to old and accustomed sinners, if they have a sense of the evil of their way, and are in good earnest seeking relief, let them not despair of obtaining it. He who cured old diseases can save old sinners. 4. He was nevertheless in the way of a cure; for he lay at the Beautiful gate of the temple, where the charitable might relieve him, the pious pray for him, and the intelligent afford him their best advice. Thus the impotent sinner should watch daily at wisdom's gates, remembering that God commands deliverance out of Zion, and is there known for a refuge to His people. II. THE NATURE OF THE CURE. 1. It was unexpected, and therefore the more welcome. And thus it is in the conversion of sinners. Mercy comes as it did to Zaccheus, to Saul, and to this man: unsought and unimplored! 2. It was instantaneous. Peter does not put him upon a long course of medicine; but takes him by the hand, and lifts him up. Thus, however gradual the work of grace may appear in some converts, yet the implantation of grace is instantaneous. God new creates the soul, as He created the world. He says, Let there be light; and there is light; Let there be life! and there is life. 3. As Omnipotence took it in hand, so it was an easy cure. No violent methods were used: his distorted limbs were not reduced to their proper place by any painful operation. And so the actings of Divine grace upon the soul are as mild and gentle as they are powerful and effectual. 4. It was a real and permanent cure. Thus it is when God heals the broken heart, or cures the distempered soul. The one is a miracle of power, the other of grace: and as the former, so the latter is no deception. III. THE EFFECTS OF THE CURE. 1. "He leaped up." Thus it is with the sinner recovered by Divine grace. The word of the Lord, the way of the Lord, the joy of the Lord, and especially the Christ of God, is his strength; and this strength he employs for the purposes for which it is bestowed. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Earnestness and intentness of mind is also implied. He not only exerted himself, but did it to the utmost of his power. Thus when a sinner is capable of acting, especially in the warmth of his first love, he will act with all his might. 2. "He stood." Formerly he could not stand without leaning and trembling. He stood ready for

action, as one that would hereafter get his livelihood by working, and not by begging. He also stood to show himself to the people. 3. "He walked." This was a new exercise to him. Thus, by the power of Divine grace, those that are spiritually lame are made to walk with God, and before Him; honestly and uprightly, in newness of life; in the light, in the truth, and at liberty. The Spirit is their guide, the Word their rule, the excellent of the earth their companions, glory their end, and Christ their way. 4. "He entered with the apostles into the temple." At the gate of it he had got many an alms from man: now he would enter into it to get an alms from God. From this part of his conduct we may learn—(1) What place the saints make their chosen residence, the house of God. "My feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" Especially when recovered from disorder, and released from confinement. The first place they will visit is the temple, there to pay those vows which they made in the time of their distress, and present their humble and thankful acknowledgments unto God. (2) What persons they choose for their companions. Those whom God has made useful to them, as hoping still to receive the benefit of their prayers and instructions. Thus the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house, and Lydia constrained them to abide in her house. 5. Still "he walked and leaped," like one in an ecstasy and transport, and "praised God." Whence we may observe, that though he loved the instruments, yet he did not praise them. He gave the praise where it was due. Improvement: 1. Let awakened sinners take encouragement from this wonderful instance of Divine grace. 2. Let the saints imitate the example here set before them, in the warmest gratitude and most affectionate praises. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The lame man at the gate of the temple* (hospital sermon):—I. THE LAME MAN. 1. Many become lame through accident or sickness; but this man was born a cripple. Luke, who was a physician, gives us to understand that his lameness was owing to a weakness in, and perhaps malformation of, the ankle-bones. But that hardly suffices to describe his helpless condition. Many lame men are able to move about with the help of artificial supports. But this man was so utterly helpless that he was obliged to be carried. Not that there was any weakness in his body, all the weakness was in his ankles. Raphael seems to have seized this feature. He has drawn at a little distance from him another deformed man, who, however, is able to hobble along by the help of a crutch. But I think Raphael was mistaken in drawing his legs in a stiff, rigid form; it was not rigidity in the ankles he was suffering from, but extreme weakness. "Immediately his feet and ankles became firm." 2. And not only was he lame, he was a cripple and a beggar too. It is difficult to conceive a more pitiable condition. 3. There were several reasons why the gate of the temple had been selected as a propitious place for begging. Crowds of people were coming and going through it at least three times a day. Besides, the people who were coming in and going out were the best men and women in Jerusalem. It is the cream of society that frequent places of worship. Moreover, men in going to and coming from church are in a better mood for considering the poor and supplying their wants than in the tumultuous whirl of business. And it is a fact that almost all the alms of the world are administered at the gates of the temple, that charitable institutions are dependent for their support and success on them that go up to the temple at the hour of prayer. I never was honoured with a letter from the Lord Mayor of London till he thought money was required to carry out his humane object. Maybe that every man of science and of business also received a letter from him, which I doubt; but I am sure every minister did. Do I find fault? No; I look upon it as a great compliment to Christianity. Some time ago a daily paper warmly advocated private contributions towards the relief of the famine in India. So far, good. These papers which are going to supersede the pulpit, and do away with preaching, ought to do that. But the money did not come. As a last resort, the paper with its "largest circulation in the world" proposed to have a collection in the churches, forsooth. But where were the readers of the paper? Where the "largest circulation in the world"? Could not the "almighty press" squeeze a little money out of its numerous readers? Do I find fault? Oh, no; it is a high compliment to Christianity and to the ministers who teach their hearers what the papers fail to teach their readers. But Christianity is dying fast, the world can do without the churches? No, my friends, not as long as there are lame to help and hungry to feed. The beggars sometimes sit at the gates of Trade, but they are sternly told to "move on"; and at the gates of Pleasure and of Fashion, but none save the dogs deign to take notice of them. The beggars know that the temple is the great almshouse of the world. 4. There were about

ten gates to the temple, all of them very costly and superb. The Jews did not as a rule grudge the most lavish expenditure upon the adornments of the temple. But there was one gate far surpassing all others in material and design. God's house should always be the most beautiful house in the neighbourhood, and God's people ought to contribute towards its adornment. If our congregations increase in wealth, God expects a part of it to flow to the sanctuary. Trade must do homage to religion, and "offer unto it gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh." When the Church was in a state of comparative poverty, a mound of earth served for an altar and was acceptable in the sight of God. But when the Church increased in numbers and refinement, the altar of earth was justly superseded by an altar of shittim wood overlaid with brass; instead of the rude mound, there was to be a little artistic work. Finally, when the Church had increased in numbers and possessions, God required an altar overlaid with fine gold. Do Christians increase in wealth? Let a portion of it flow to the sanctuary of the Highest; let there be built a gate called the Beautiful. And at the gate let there stand a sister of mercy to administer alms to the helpless and forlorn. However beautiful was the gate of the temple, more beautiful in the sight of God were the hands which gave alms to the cripple. Beauty of stone and of metal is not to be compared with beauty of disposition and of character. II. THE CURE OF THE LAME MAN. 1. Peter and John went up to the temple. The apostles did not abruptly sever themselves from the old dispensation; sudden ruptures never take place in the kingdom of God. First, there is a division *in* the Church, then a division *from* the Church. That was the case at the establishment of Christianity; first, a division in Judaism, next a division from Judaism. That was the case at the time of the Protestant Reformation. That was the case in the history of the Establishment in our own country. The heathen who adopted Christianity were called upon to break off at once their connection with idols; but the Jews who adopted Christianity were only gradually weaned from Judaism. One could not be an idolater and a Christian; but one could be a Jew and a Christian. 2. As they were about to enter, their attention was called to the impotent man who asked an alms. He had long ago ceased hoping for anything else. Forty years of helplessness and beggary will kill ambition in the most sanguine heart. We have known people who had been lying on a bed of suffering for years. If you spoke to them at the close of the first year, you would discover a shade of discontent—they had a strong desire to get up and walk. But at the end of ten years the most fiery spirit is quite tamed. 3. They fastened their eyes on him. A characteristic feature of Christianity is that it fastens its eyes on the destitute and the sick. Science fastens its eyes on inanimate matter; art on the "gate called Beautiful"; but Christianity on the poor cripple. Science seeks out the secrets of the world; art its beauties; but Christianity its ills. There is a great deal in a look. The sympathising eyes of Peter caught the wondering eyes of the beggar, and the latter felt a strange sensation, like a stream of electricity, thrilling his entire system. 4. The man sought alms; but the apostles gave him what was better—health. Health without money is infinitely better than money without health. Moreover, by endowing him with health they were conferring on him the ability to earn money. In this the miracle was a "sign." The gospel does not directly aim at improving men's circumstances; it aims at improving men themselves. But no sooner does it that than a noticeable improvement is seen in their surroundings. The gospel converts the man; the man converts the house. The gospel does not directly aim at increasing the material riches of a nation; it aims at increasing its funds of spiritual health; but no sooner does the nation feel new blood palpitating in every limb and member than it shakes off the lethargy of centuries, and marches fearlessly forward in the upward path of discovery and enterprise, and, as a natural consequence, riches flow in plentifully to its exchequer. The gospel came to a crippled world. It said unto it, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and forthwith it began a career upward and forward, and Christianity has indirectly added enormously to its material riches. Which are the most flourishing nations in our day? England, America, and Germany, the countries that have received most abundantly of the life and health that are lodged in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Utilitarianism says, Give men better houses, higher wages, purer air, more wholesome water, and by improving their circumstances you will improve their constitutions. But what says Christianity? I will strive to improve men, for I know that no sooner will men feel beating within them new and potent energies than they will set about to improve their external condition. Men need better houses, and

purer air, and more wholesome water; but the great want of men is life—more life; and I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. Utilitarianism *does* men good, Christianity *makes* them good. 5. The Apostolic Church had no silver and gold, it had only health to impart. But it is in the power of the modern Church to give both money and health. There are in this huge city over eighty hospitals, and you will find on inquiry that every hospital is well-nigh full of people who have not the means to pay for professional attendance at home; and it is a duty incumbent on the churches to maintain these institutions in a state of high efficiency. Hospitals in a special sense are the earliest and mellowest fruit of our holy religion. Where was the first hospital founded? In Ephesus, the home of John, the beloved disciple who taught that "God is love." And by what name were hospitals first known? Lazarettoes; the very name bears on its forefront the stamp of the gospel, from the touching story of Lazarus sitting at the rich man's gate. And who founded and endowed the great hospitals of this metropolis? Christians. *Saint* Bartholomew's, *Saint* Luke's, *Saint* George's, with a few exceptions the hospitals are all saints! They are the precious legacies of the Christianity of the past; they have a strong claim on the Christianity of the present. 6. But I also trust that in acquiring money we have not lost what is of incomparably greater value, the faith and the courage to say to poor humanity, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Hundreds who go into hospitals founded by Christian philanthropy and supported by Christian charity come out "able to stand and to walk." But I trust that in a still deeper sense it is true. Have we not witnessed the power of the gospel in our own midst, giving strength to the weak and life to the dead? Men dead in trespasses and sins have risen in newness of life; men crippled in the spiritual nature have received strength; men weak in their feet and ankle-bones have received fresh power—they now enter the temple, they run in the way of the Divine commandments, they leap for joy like harts on the mountains of spices. The Church is fast increasing in riches; let us pray that it may also increase in the power to impart health to men "lame from their mother's womb." (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The cripple and his healers:*—I. THE COMPANIONS—"Peter and John." 1. Their destination—"the temple." Those who have been the greatest blessing to mankind through all the ages have loved God and frequented His temple. The theory that a man who is able to go to church can serve God at home, and never go, is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. 2. Their harmony—"went up together." Nothing like Pentecostal power to harmonise opposite temperaments, and hold in check possible discordances and selfish tendencies in human nature. 3. Their look. Christianity is the only system in the world that knows how to "fasten its eyes upon" the afflicted and destitute, the guilty and the lost. 4. Their devotion—"at the hour of prayer." If any men were justified in supposing that they could dispense with the ordinary routine of religious worship, "Peter and John" were surely those men. But no men in Jerusalem were more consciously indebted to the means of grace, or more utterly dependent upon God. The more religion a man has, the more he will love "the temple" and "the hour of prayer." 5. Their poverty—"silver and gold have I none." Then a child of God may be poor. Then God may be specially honouring men, and fitting them for extraordinary careers of usefulness, who are without worldly means or influence. In this materialistic age, when men are judged of by their money, and not by their character—by what they have, and not by what they are, it is well to emphasise the fact that manhood and money are not interchangeable terms. The power that lifts and heals a crippled world is not carried about by men in their pocket-books, nor does it grow out of their bank accounts or social standing. It comes through the right relationship of the soul to Jesus Christ, and absolutely without regard to a man's worldly condition. 6. Their power—"Rise up, and walk." That is the main power the Church lacks just now to make her ready for the conquest of the world; and that is the power for the exercise of which a crippled world fastens its eyes upon us. Neither wealth, nor education, nor social influence can atone for the want of this Divine afflatus. II. THE CRIPPLE—"A man lame from his mother's womb." 1. His location—"At the gate of the temple." Then this cripple was no fool. He understood the philosophy of benevolence. The kindest and most sympathetic people in the world are praying people. Persons who obey the first table of the law are most likely to obey the second. Nine-tenths of all the money raised for benevolent purposes, and for the support of our charitable institutions, comes from the pockets of those who go "up to the temple at the hour of prayer." 2. His attitude—"Lay at the gate." We

have seen thousands of lame men who could go almost anywhere, through the aid of artificial supports. But this man was obliged to be carried. 3. His vocation—"To ask alms." Both the place and time selected by this cripple to ply his vocation indicate that he was a shrewd, thoughtful man. 4. His cure. (1) It was instantaneous. (2) It was thorough—"Walked and leaped." 5. His gratitude. The accession of strength was sudden, and his manifestation of it was equally sudden. There was no timid shrinking, lest he should overtax his new strength. The man that God blesses and saves need not be afraid of overdoing, and bringing on a relapse, by anything his heart prompts him to do, in the shape of letting others know what has happened. The want of the times is a joyful, happy, triumphant Christianity. III. THE CROWD—"All the people." 1. Their evidence —"Saw him." 2. Their recognition (ver. 10). He had sat at the gate so long that everybody knew him, and that may be the reason why he was favoured with this miraculous cure. 3. Their excitement. They wisely argued that the change could only be effected by a Divine cause. Extend this reasoning, and you have one of the most unanswerable arguments in favour of Christianity. The transformations wrought by it in society prove it to be Divine in its origin. 4. Their emotions—"Wonder and amazement." Strange that they should be so affected by this miracle, after having witnessed so many by the Master. Application: 1. Let us imitate Peter and John in our appreciation of the means of grace. 2. Let us not disturb the services by coming in late; but, like them, let us try to be punctual; "at the hour." 3. Pentecostal blessings of yesterday cannot supply our need of God's inspiration and blessing to-day. 4. It is the duty of the unconverted to "fasten their eyes" upon spiritual matters, to yield to right influences, to allow themselves to be carried daily to the gate of right feeling and conduct. If this lame man had rebelled that morning against being carried "to the gate of the temple," he might never have been healed. 5. Learn that, though the eyes of the sinner may be fastened upon the servant, the Master only can heal. (*T. Kelly.*)

The lame man healed:—You will not see the whole beauty of this paragraph unless you connect it with the chapter preceding. 1. You remember the infinite excitement of that chapter. There had never been such a day in the Church before. Life was raised up to a higher level than it had ever attained, and the people were praising God from morning till night. Surely the millennium had come! After this there will be no more common-place. Who would willingly come out of the blue heavens to walk again on the pathways of ordinary life? But read the opening words of the third chapter. After the excitement of Pentecost, is not this of the nature of an anti-climax? Two men, former partners in the fishing trade, "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." Then see that the ecstatic hours of life ought to be succeeded by quiet worship, for that alone can sustain the heart with true nourishment. God grants unto His Church hours of enthusiasm, days when the whole horizon opens like an infinite door into the upper places of the universe; but after such peculiarly solemn manifestations of power and grace, He expects us to go up into the temple to pray, as He knows such visions make all other life ordinary and common. Whatever luxuries you may enjoy occasionally, you must have bread permanently. We cannot always live in the extraordinary; for by the very fact of its being always extraordinary, it would cease to be other than usual. 2. But were not the men inspired? Yes; yet the two men "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." The clock was not altered; the great Pentecostal storm had rushed across the heavens, and had left behind it showers of blessings. Still the quiet clock ticked and travelled on to the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and Peter and John were not so transported by special ecstasies as to forget their daily and customary engagements with God. Suspect any inspiration that makes you contemptuous of ordinary religious duty. Inspiration never lessens duty. Any supposed inspiration that has withdrawn men from the temple and poisoned them with the delusion that they could sufficiently read the Bible at home, is an inspiration coming otherwhere than from heaven. You were not made to live at home always. There is in you that which finds its completion in public fellowship. It does every man good to be now and then in a crowd; public assembly has an educational and social influence upon the individual life. Standing alone, a man may seem to be very great, important, self-complete; it is when he enters into a crowd that he realises his humanity, his littleness, and yet the very greatness that comes of that contraction of individuality. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Peter and John did not. Are we not wrong in supposing that prayer can ever be of the

nature of common-place? What is prayer? Is it not communion with God. The apostles had not lost their inspiration, as is evident by what they did. Verily, these men then had not lost their inspiration, or they never would have taken this course with the suppliant at the Beautiful gate of the Temple. They could work this miracle. Let that be taken as a proof of the continuance of their inspiration; and yet we see that, notwithstanding, they are going up like ordinary humble worshippers to pray in the temple. Beware of any inspiration that leads you away from apostolic practice. Your ambition may be easily excited, and you may not require a very expert tempter of the human mind to say to you that perhaps you may be a genius, that you need not submit to take upon you the yoke of religious custom. When such temptation seduces you, give it the lie. The law would seem to be that every great effort of human life should be followed by a religious exercise; every outgoing of the soul should have its compensatory movement in silent communion with God. After you have been striving arduously and valiantly in the fight, plunge into the bath, so to say, of Divine meditation and heavenly communion, and therein leave your weakness and recover your strength. 3. This incidental conversation with the poor lame beggar at the Beautiful gate of the Temple gives us some particulars about the apostles themselves, and those particulars are the more valuable because of the way in which they are introduced into the narrative. I. IT IS PERFECTLY EVIDENT THAT HAVING ALL THINGS COMMON HAD NOT ENRICHED PETER AND JOHN. Apostolic communion was no priest's trick; it was no attempt to enrich the apostolate at the expense of the Christian public. "Silver and gold have we none." So much the better for them! Woe unto the apostle who spends one half of his life in getting silver and gold, and the other half in watching that they do not run away from him. What had they then? Divine energy, spiritual life, social sympathy, and hearts to bless those who needed benediction and assistance. The poverty of the apostles was in material substance only; and therefore it was no poverty at all. He is the poor man who has nothing but money. He is rich who has high ideals and noble sympathies, and who lives in the presence of God and in the service of truth. Have your riches in your mind, in your heart, in your thoughts, in your purposes, in your beneficent plans. II. THIS ACTION SHOWS HOW POSSIBLE IT IS TO BE GIVING LESS THAN OTHERS, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO BE GIVING MORE. "Silver and gold have I none." "Then he could give nothing" would be the swift and shallow reasoning of those who read the surface only. "But such as I have give I thee." That is the giving that does not impoverish; the more given the more left. The sun has been giving his light for thousands of years, and yet he is as luminous as when he first looked out upon the darkness which he dispelled. Give mechanically, and you will weary of the exercise; but give spiritually, and you will increase your possessions by the very giving of your alms. III. A MAN MAY PRAY NONE THE LESS PRAYERFULLY BECAUSE HE HAS AIDED SOME POOR CREATURE BEFORE HE ENTERED THE SACRED PLACE. We should have enjoyed the service many a time much more keenly if before coming to it we had made some sorrowful heart glad. That is the preparation for prayer. If you want to come up at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice with glowing, thankful hearts, ready to receive any communication God may make to them, spend the intervening hours in doing good to those who sit in solitary places. Then you will come, not in a spirit of criticism, but in a spirit of sympathy, and from the first note to the last there shall be a shining forth and revelation of the Divine presence. IV. CHRISTIANITY NOW, AS THEN, MUST PROVE ITS DIVINITY BY ITS BENEFICENCE. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Peter did not preach a sermon to the man. To the excited multitude he expounded the Scriptures; but when he came face to face with the man, he preached no sermon, except as the mention of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is always a sermon, but bade him rise up and walk. Here is the sphere in which Christian argument may yet secure its highest triumph. Words can be answered by words, phrases beget phrases, and the easy trick of recrimination is the favourite amusement of mere controversialists; but a Church seeking out the lowly, helping the helpless, healing the sick, teaching the ignorant, standing by the cause of righteousness, defying the oppressor, and suffering and working for the right, is a Church whose beneficence is its noblest attribute, and whose character is the only vindication it requires. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The healing of the lame man*:—Look at the miracle in the light of what has just taken place. There is great enthusiasm in the Church. The Divine life is, so to speak, at its highest point. We should consider, confining ourselves within the limits of the Church, that the age of human

unity and love had come in all its golden glory. We are now invited to go beyond the Church line, and at our very first step we find a man who appeals to our sympathy in his pain and helplessness. See how world lies within world, and how misleading are all the inferences drawn from a limited set of facts. 1. The man who has access to every means of mental and spiritual culture may think all the world as highly privileged as himself. 2. The healthy and prosperous family may forget that other households are afflicted and depressed. Look beyond your own sphere. You have not far to look; there is but a step between thee and the world which is either higher or lower than thine own. The lesson has a double application; the prosperous man is to look down that he may help; the unsuccessful man is to look up that he may hope. I. THE SOCIAL SIDE of this incident. 1. We may be able to carry the cripple when we are unable to heal him. Do what you can. Human helplessness is a continual appeal to human power. There are secondary services in life. We cannot always do the great deed; nor can we always stand in the full light, that we may be seen of men. Sometimes we can only carry. We cannot restore. 2. The commonest minds, as well as the highest, have always associated the idea of charity with that of religion. This is right. This is a high compliment to any form of religion. See how it has been paid to Christianity above all! The theology that has no philanthropy is its own vain god. 3. Look at the compensations of the poorest life. The man was carried daily by friendly hands, and had the temple as his daily hope. The sun shines even on the poorest lot. II. THE APOSTOLIC SIDE. 1. The apostles never attempted to do without public worship. Such worship has its distinct advantages. (1) Provocation of thought. (2) Development of sympathy. 2. They never neglected human want in their anxiety to render Divine worship. Some people are one-sidedly religious. 3. They never attended even to physical necessities in their own name. Conclusion: The incident suggests two questions. 1. Are we too pious to be philanthropic? 2. Has the name of Jesus lost its power? (*Ibid.*) *The first miracle:*—Viewing the Acts as a type of what all Church history was to be, and a Divine exposition of the principles which should guide the Church in times of suffering as well as of action, we can see good reasons for the insertion of this particular narrative. I. THIS MIRACLE WAS TYPICAL OF THE CHURCH'S WORK, for it was a beggar that was healed, and this beggar lay helpless and hopeless at the very doors of the temple. The beggar typified humanity at large. He was laid, indeed, in a splendid position—before him was extended the magnificent panorama of hills which stood round about Jerusalem; above him rose the splendours of the building upon which the Herods had lavished the riches and wonders of their gorgeous conceptions—but he was nothing the better for all this material grandeur till touched by the power which lay in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And the beggar of the Beautiful gate was in all these respects the fittest object for St. Peter's earliest miracle, because he was exactly typical of mankind's state. Humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, lay at the very gate of God's temple of the universe. Men could discourse learnedly, too, concerning that sanctuary, and they could admire its beauteous proportions. Poets, philosophers, and wise men had treated of the temple of the universe in works which can never be surpassed, but all the while they lay outside its sacred precincts. They had no power to stand up and enter in, leaping, and walking, and praising God. This miracle of healing the beggar was typical of the Church's work again, because it was a beggar who thus received a blessing when the Church roused itself to the discharge of its great mission. Christianity is essentially the religion of the masses. Its Founder was a carpenter, and its earliest benediction pronounced the blessedness of those that are poor in spirit, and ever since the greatest triumphs of Christianity have been gained amongst the poor. Here, however, lies a danger. Its work in this direction must be done in no one-sided spirit. Christianity must never adopt the language or the tone of the mere agitator. A Christianity which triumphs through appeals to popular prejudices, and seeks a mere temporary advantage by riding on the crest of popular ignorance, is not the religion taught by Christ and His apostles. But yet, again, the conversion of this beggar was effected through his healing; and here we see a type of the Church's future work. The Church, then, as represented by the apostles, did not despise the body, or regard efforts of the bodily blessing beneath its dignity. Schools, hospitals, sanitary and medical science, the dwellings and amusements of the people, trade, commerce, all should be the care of the Church, and should be based on Christ's law, and carried out on Christian principles. II. THIS MIRACLE WAS THE OCCASION OF ST. PETER'S TESTIMONY BOTH TO THE PEOPLE AND TO THEIR RULERS.

His discourse has two distinct divisions. It sets forth, first, the claims, dignity, and nature of Christ, and then makes a personal appeal to the men of Jerusalem. St. Peter begins his sermon with an act of profound self-renunciation. When he saw the people running together, he said (ver. 12). The same spirit of renunciation appears at an earlier stage of the miracle (ver. 6). One point is at once manifest when St. Peter's conduct is compared with his Master's under similar circumstances. St. Peter acts as a delegate and a servant; Jesus Christ acted as a principal, a master—the Prince of Life. St. Peter's words teach another lesson. They are typical of the spirit which should ever animate the Christian preacher or teacher. They turn the attention of his hearers wholly away from himself, and exalt Christ Jesus alone. Earthly motives easily insinuate themselves in every man's heart, and when a man feels urged on to declare some unpleasant truth, or to raise a violent and determined opposition, he should search diligently, lest that while he imagines himself following a heavenly vision and obeying a Divine command, he should be only yielding to mere human suggestions of pride, or partisanship, or uncharitableness. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *The apostles and the beggar a model of Christian care of the poor*:—I. THE PROPER DISPOSITION from which Christian care for the poor should flow. 1. Love to God. The apostles were on their way to the temple. 2. Love of our neighbour. They regard the poor man with sympathy—John feeling, Peter helping. II. THE PROPER MEANS which Christian care of the poor should employ. Silver and gold is not the chief concern. Alms quickly thrown to the poor costs little, and bears little fruit. But—1. Personal and living intercourse with the poor. "Peter looked," &c. 2. Evangelical counsel and comfort from the Word of God. "Such as I have," &c. III. THE PROPER RESULT in which Christian care for the poor should delight. 1. Bodily restoration—he could rise up and walk. 2. Spiritual health—he praised God. (*C. Gerok.*) *Spiritual co-operation*:—It is seldom that the co-operation of both parties—the doer and the receiver—is so clearly seen as here. I. IN THE LOOKS OF BOTH PARTIES. Peter looking on the lame man with sympathising love, ready to help and to heal; and the lame man, at the order of the apostle, regarding him and John steadfastly with a petitioning and hopeful spirit. II. IN THEIR BELIEVING APPREHENSION OF JESUS. Peter speaking and commanding in the name of Jesus; and the lame man, also hopeful and susceptible, with his whole soul attaching himself to Jesus. III. IN THEIR SPIRITUAL AND BODILY EXERTIONS. Peter stretching forth and taking the man by the right hand; and the man, with miraculous strength of will and muscle, lifting himself up. The name of Jesus, the person of Jesus, His grace and Divine saving power is the centre; in Him the souls meet, the men reach forth their hands, and find spiritual and bodily strength in giving and receiving. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *Alleviations of the hardest lot*:—It would not be fair to say even this limping beggar had no alleviations to his lot. He was not blind; he could see the Beautiful gate, with its wonderful pillars of brass overlaid with vast plates of gold and silver. He was not deaf; he could hear the priests' trumpets on the feast-days; he could even listen to the singing of the daily psalms and the chanting of the evening prayers in the courts of the loveliest edifice under the sun. He was not dumb; he could ask for alms as a beggar, he could cry for mercy as a sinner. He was not forsaken; he had a circle of patient friends to bring him to his wonted place every afternoon. Discontented poor people might as well count up their manifest mercies now and then. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.**—*The gate Beautiful*:—In our ignorance of the topography of Jerusalem and the temple, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty which of the many gates of the temple was distinguished by this name. According to Josephus, "There were nine of the gates that were overlaid with silver and gold. But one without the temple, or sanctuary, made of Corinthian brass, far excelled those of gold or silver." This gate is supposed to have been the east entrance to the women's court, and was sometimes called the Corinthian Gate, from the material of which it was made. It was also known by the name of Nicanor's gate. Others, however, suppose the Beautiful gate to be that called Shushan by the Rabbins, probably from the bas-relief lily work in brass around the capitals of the columns (1 Kings vii. 19). It is derived from an unused root signifying "white," white and beautiful being convertible as in Shushan (Esther i. 2), the white or beautiful city (as *Beograd—Belgrade*—in Slavonic). This gate was on the east side of the court of the Gentiles, and close to Solomon's

porch. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The gate Beautiful:*—The temple of religion has a beautiful gate in it; but in one important respect it differs from the Beautiful gate of the Jewish temple. On the pillars on either side of that gate were engraved in Greek letters the words, "Let no stranger pass beyond this on pain of death." But through the beautiful gate of the gospel every one is free to enter into the holiest place. And that at all times. In each of the great churches of Rome there is what is called the Porta Santa, or Holy Door. It is made of a peculiar marble, and is sealed up for fifty years, so that no one during all that time can obtain admission through it to the high altar. In the jubilee year the reigning Pope knocks at this door with a silver hammer; and immediately it is pulled down and a breach made through which the Pope, followed by a splendid procession, can pass and minister in the most sacred place. But not like this Porta Santa is the beautiful gate of the gospel. Not at long intervals is it opened. To every one who knocks, however feebly, and at whatever time, it swings back at once and gives admission. All that is needful to entitle any one to admission is faith and love. It is a beautiful gate by which you enter into God's kingdom. The everlasting doors are lifted up that you may pass through, and the salvation wrought for you is a great salvation worthy of the greatness of your nature. The ancient Romans had a strange law which required that when a man returned from captivity in a foreign land he should not enter his house by the doorway. He could not recover his right of possession and citizenship unless he entered his house through the roof; and then he was supposed never to have been out of it. Not thus is admittance to be obtained into the kingdom of heaven. There can be no make-believe that the redeemed sinner has always been in the Father's house. The captive, the wanderer, dead in trespasses and sins, must return by the one living Way, and enter in by the one living Door open to all—viz., a simple faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But, while the gate of the temple of Christ's religion is thus beautiful to all, it is especially beautiful to the young. You are to enter the temple of religion by the gate of innocence, before you have had any experience of the dark sins and trials of the world. Youth is the most beautiful door by which to enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have the qualities of faith, hope, and love required of those who enter in. They are easy and natural, as it were, to you; and you have only to exercise them, not towards earthly, but towards heavenly things. And how beautiful is this gate of youthful piety—beautiful as all first things are—first love, the first light of the morning, the first flowers of spring, the dawn of human history in Eden, the golden age of the world; beautiful as all pure things are that have no alloy or base mixture of evil in them! You ask how are you to get this beautiful religion? In a very beautiful way! Not only is the temple itself beautiful, but the gate by which you enter it is beautiful. It is like the beautiful fruit of the orange-tree which you get through the beautiful and fragrant orange blossom. Jesus says, "I am the Door," &c. How beautiful and costly is that living Door! What a wonderful death of self-sacrificing He died! And Jesus becomes a door to you such as your nature requires. He suits His long step to your short step, and narrows His octave to the stretch of your little fingers. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *The Beautiful Gate:*—It is hardly a figure to say that in our human life there are gates we may well call "beautiful," ever opening and inviting us to enter on new experiences and duties. But the special thought I want to emphasise is that at every one of these gates we need a helping hand, human or Divine, to put us on our feet, and prepare us for the new phase of life into which the gate opens. 1. To begin with the first gate—the gate of infancy and childhood. It is a beautiful gate, indeed. What fond hopes wreathe every cradle! What possibilities are wrapped up in that little bundle of helplessness and want called the baby? This bundle of weakness and want laid at the beautiful gate of life, asking alms of all, having nothing but capacity, needing everything—care, watching, sympathy, love, wisdom—everything to feed and clothe the body, to quicken and nourish the mind, and train a young immortal for the mortal and immortal life. And what can do this like mingled affection and faith akin in spirit to that which looked out through the illuminated eyes of Peter and John upon the lame man at the temple gate? And what this foundling at the gate of life needs is the touch of a loving hand and the faith of a loving heart. This is sure to carry with it healing and strength. And it is no less Divine on what is called the natural than what is called the supernatural plane. Are not the mingled affection and faith with which a true Christian mother broods over her child, nurturing into life body and mind in what we call the natural order, just as truly of God as was the power

that healed the lame man at the temple gate? See how she puts herself into affectional *rapport* with her child. She looks into its eyes, finds its soul, talks with it in the soul's language, which mother and child both know, smiles upon it, gives strength to its ankle-bones by holding them in her warm, motherly hands, and, finally, tempting the child to rise up and walk by the confidence that shines through her eyes, and by the outstretched hand ready to save from falling or to lift up again and again and yet again, till at last the child walks and leaps and praises God, in childish fashion, by its innocent gladness. All this affection may do, is continually doing, in all true homes. But there is a higher work to be done for the child, a deeper nature to be reached, a life within a life to be waked; and this calls not for affection only, but faith—faith in the reality of this interior life, faith in God as the Infinite Good, and in the reality of His Holy Spirit's influence, faith in Him as the constant inspiration and life of the soul. This faith must crown affection, or the deepest wants of the child's soul can never be met It is this sweet, calm, holy influence filling the home, as the balmly odours of pine groves fill the surrounding air, that gives to the home atmosphere a healing, a strengthening, a life-giving power. It is better than silver or gold. But by and by the child is grown, and the home is left for the "wide, wide world." 2. Here opens another gate—the gate of early manhood. This, too, is a beautiful gate, especially when the gate of childhood has been a fitting preparation for it. If it ever seems to rest in shadow, it is because the higher nature has not been waked, but sleeps, while the lower nature is alive and active. What in all this world is more beautiful than a young man—and man means woman—well furnished mentally, morally, spiritually, passing out through the beautiful gate for the great work of life! What fond hopes centre in him! But all such hopes are not realised. Why is it? But one reason for the failure may safely be ascribed to this: an undue sense of self-sufficiency. In the pride and strength of young manhood, one is slow to perceive that he is lame or undeveloped, or weak in any part of his nature. He is no cripple at the gate, to ask help of anybody. Is there no lameness, no weakness, no need of the touch of a helping hand? Even if the need be not felt, it does not follow that it is not real. It may not be felt, because the greatness of life is not felt. Where life is regarded only as a vigorous scramble for the main chance, for business success, or pleasure, without aspiration for anything above the beaten paths of dust and ashes, then, indeed, any man with good legs and arms and a thimbleful of brains may feel quite equal to the undertaking. But for one who looks on life from the standpoint of spiritual possibility—such a one, comparing his ideal with his actual, the glorious possibility with his own sense of inability, will need no argument to convince him that, however strong his ankle-bones, his spirit is in pressing need of the healing and strengthening touch of a faith and hope that makes the deepest and truest things of life the most real. He who helps me to faith in eternal realities, honour, right, integrity, self-sacrifice, and lifts me to a plane of life where the difference between noble and ignoble living is most clearly seen, is my greatest benefactor. It is this spirit which lifts, guides, and liberates the soul for noblest living. It is inspiration for the life eternal here and now. "Silver and gold" Jesus had none. Such as He had He gave—Himself, a soul enkindled with the love of God and man. 3. But manhood hastens on to old age. May we call that, too, a beautiful gate? Yes, if faith and hope, like Peter and John, stand at the gate to look into our eye and take our hand as we pass through. At first the gate of old age seems anything but beautiful. One of the brightest and most cheerful of our American poets calls it an "Iron Gate." At first, they were almost ashamed to be found fairly inside the gate and unable to get back. But by and by, as they get adjusted to the new condition, and find themselves still in good company, rather select withal, the gate does not seem so dreadful. Approaching it, it did look like iron; but seen from the inside, with faith and hope shining upon it, it becomes beautiful—just as beautiful as the gates of childhood and manhood. The gate of childhood faces the sunrise. The gate of manhood lies under the mid-day sun. The gate of old age "looks toward sunset," indeed; but it is a sunset that carries with it the promise of an immortal day. They are all beautiful gates of life. Which is the most beautiful we will not venture to say till we see them all from the higher standpoint we hope to reach by and by. But, even here and now, old age, with all its infirmities, has its blessings, which youth and manhood cannot know till they pass through the gate—the blessing of rest after toil, the blessing of sweet companionship with those with whom we have passed through all the beautiful gates, the living over again with them the scenes of the past, to which "distance

lends enchantment": the looking forward in glorious hope to higher fellowship, where youth is renewed as the eagle's. These and the like lift the shadow from old age, and let God's sunshine in to brighten and warm. But this implies a touch of the healing hand. And now, especially, as in life's morning, the help is none the less, but all the more Divine, if it comes through the eye, the heart, the hand of affection and faith mingled, assisting us tenderly and lovingly to rise up above the gathering mists and shadows, and pass trustingly through one more beautiful gate to the other mansions. 4. And is death, too, a beautiful gate? One would not think so by the hard names given to it—"Grim Tyrant," "Great Destroyer," "King of Terrors," and the like. But God never gave His white-winged angel such names. These, then, are some of the beautiful gates of life. All beautiful gates! built not by the wealth or workmen of Herod, but by the All-Beautiful, who created man in His own image, for the beauty of holiness. And at each gate God's messengers, in some form, wait to give us the healing touch and put us on our feet. Oh! were we always conscious of the brooding spirit of Divine Love standing at every gate, looking into our eyes, seeking to find our souls and call forth responsive love, should we not all leave our sins, our weakness, our doubts, and stand on our feet, walking and leaping and praising God by a life in harmony with the Divine will? (*W. P. Tilden.*) *The grace of beauty*:—Observe—I. THE CLOSE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND BEAUTY. The gate Beautiful was a temple gate. The Puritans depreciated beauty. In their excessive spirituality they ignored the true and proper uses of the visible, and disparaged the body. Jesus Christ manifested in human flesh the Divine glory, and by the resurrection of His body has given a type and pledge of the exaltation of man and nature. All material things may be transformed by the spirit of man. The beautiful in form, colour, and sound has been created by love, patriotism, and genius. But the higher inspiration of beauty is in religion, which touches with firmest finger the faculties out of which the graceful arises. Art, poetry, architecture, and music owe their finest products to Christianity. As religion has inspired æsthetic creations, so the way to religion should be by the paths of beauty. God's worship should be no bald offering of utility, but should be associated with the most perfect in architecture, music, and oratory. The ways by which the young are drawn to Christ should be festooned with loveliness, and not be a *via dolorosa*. All the qualities of the Christian character may be rendered in attractive forms. When religion and beauty are wedded, science, industry, and citizenship will also be drawn into the goodly fellowship. II. But the highest beauty, and the largest gateway to heaven, is SPIRITUAL BEAUTY—the beauty of the Lord revealed in Christ. The cripple was not healed by the beauty of the temple gate, but by the beauty of Christ—the glory of His love, sympathy, and helpfulness. Visible beauty brings us to the threshold only; we must enter to behold the uncreated beauty. It is this which transforms the man and changes him from glory to glory in its image. When possessed it must not be hidden, but must, in imitation of the altogether lovely, be manifested in beautiful words, acts, life. As Christ would have us reproduce His beauty, so we must aim at making spiritually lame and ugly people radiant with the same loveliness. (*J. Matthews.*) *The beauty of religion*:—The temple represented the Jewish religion, and the gate by which you entered was called Beautiful. The way of the beautiful is the way of entrance into the sanctuary, if only we understand what is meant by beauty. 1. With one or two exceptions the word beauty is not mentioned in the whole New Testament. On the other hand, it is mentioned often in the Old. The most remarkable contrast among nations in antiquity was that between the Jew and the Greek. The Greeks are always instanced as the nation that had the genius of beauty and the love of it; but among the Greeks it was essentially physical; and although moral qualities were sometimes brought down and represented in it, it was in order merely to enhance the physical beauty. On exactly the other side stood the Hebrew, who was forbidden to have much that was physical in his worship. And so art never took root nor flourished in Palestine. But, on the other hand, there arose in the minds of the old Hebrew seers and lyrists a sense of the beauty of conduct, character, and moral quality that never represented itself in sensuous form. I think that if we were to look into the modern schools of beauty we should find that they follow the Greek and not the Hebrew. Now, in the New Testament, though it does not mention beauty as the Old Testament does, nevertheless we have a specification of qualities of thought, and feeling, and exhortations to beautiful conduct. One by one Christ takes up the things that are transcendentally beautiful in their kind, although they are not so to men. When a diamond is first found it is like a rough

stone, without form or comeliness, and only when it has been ground does it become glittering; and so almost all the precious stones are found—in seams and ledges, and under circumstances where their beauty does not appear until they have been dealt with. "Blessed be ye, when persecuted." Blessed be the rapid-running stone that grinds the gems—not, perhaps, in the process, but in the result. 2. In all the earth no spire, cathedral front, nor temple is so beautiful as the form of man and woman when brought out in all the lines and lineaments of Christian culture. And the New Testament says, "Let your light so shine." Some have interpreted it, "Let your gloom so shine that men think you are very serious-minded." No, but let your light shine. Let the things that shine out be, as the apostle otherwhere says in regard to them, "Whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is true, whatsoever is of good report, think on these things." These are the qualities that are to shine with such attractiveness, as that religion shall not repel men, but win them, draw them—"that men, seeing your good work, shall glorify your Father which is in heaven." 3. Every single quality that belongs to Christian character should be carried up to the condition of beautifulness. That is the aim, not by flash, rare—used only as a medicine is—but beauty that rises like a star, and continues to shine with a steadfast ray. The light that has in it all the primary colours carries them always without any discontinuity. And so the great qualities which grace inspires are to be carried up toward the line of beauty; they are intrinsically so. Now, when a plant seed unknown is sown we watch the unfolding of it, wondering at every step what is to be the outcome. The stem may be coarse, the leaf may be hirsute, and, like the cactus, one may never dream that this great flat, fat, spiny leaf could ever be the mother of beauty until the blossom comes, and then in all the earth is there anything more exquisite and gorgeous than the blossom of the cactus? So in regard to unripe and undeveloped qualities of moral feeling in the soul. Men may, during the process in which they are unfolding, see nothing very lovely; but when they have been carried up to their florescence, or their fruit estate, they are invariably beautiful. Moral qualities, like physical excellences, have a beginning. Some attain more quickly and easily than others the relish of the beautiful; some are the result only of long striving; some grow like autumnal flowers, only when they feel the coming breath of frost itself; but every quality that goes to make the true Christian as Christ longs to see him is an element, that, if carried up to its full extent, touches the line of the beautiful. So of conduct. Whatever is graceful, noble, free, large, manly, lordly in courage, is beautiful; and because it is beautiful it belongs to the religious perfection of man. And all conduct that has in it the element of heroism—how beautiful it is. The fidelity that costs! The self-denial that finds its reward in the fruition of that which is served! The angels of the cradle and the crib—those Protestant saints, maiden women, that, having no family, adopt the children and the household of those with whom they dwell, and spend love, and time, and all service, and pain even, and watchfulness for the sake of others—how beautiful is this quality of conduct! If I read over the qualities that constitute religion, as described in the fifth chapter of Galatians, they will sound to you like the snap of so many harpstrings, and all of them together like the sweep of an old harper's hand. The joy of religion!—not the joy of reading hymns, or of going to meeting, necessarily, or hearing sermons; but the inward joy which one has from communion with God through hope, and inspiration, and faith; the temperament of joy—peace—the absolute concordance of every quality in us, without any oppositions from any direction; the perfect harmonisation of every element in the soul. "Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, self-control"—these are the features. The portraiture every one must make up in his own imagination. This is religion. Whoever, then, so lives as not to produce in some way or other the impression of the beauty of religion falls short of the genius of the New Testament. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The beautiful*:—I. A beautiful THING. "The gate Beautiful." 1. It was fitting that the approach to a beautiful place like the temple should be beautiful. Many beautiful things are marred by the ungainliness of their surroundings. A cathedral in a squalid neighbourhood, a mansion with a tumble-down entry, a picture in a broken frame, an untidy woman, are offensive incongruities. The most beautiful thing in the world is the religion of Christ, but how many are offended by what they see at the front of it—conditions of entrance which Christ never laid down, specimens of Christianity that Christ never produced. Reproduce the beauty of religion in yourselves, and make the path to it attractive, and there will be no difficulty in making converts. 2. The gate led to a beautiful place. This is not always the case. The best things only are placed in some windows. The world

presents an attractive outside, but within is death. Once through the gate of God's house the worshipper should find everything in harmony with the beautiful work he has to perform there; the structure, the service in all its parts should be conducive to the beauty of holiness. An ugly, ill-kept church, a tame, bald service—how detrimental to devotion, how dishonouring to God. II. Beautiful CHARACTERS. 1. Peter. There were ugly seams in Peter's character. He was impulsive, he denied his Lord, he compromised at Antioch. But we must take that character as a whole, and like some vast mountainous region, although there may be a morass here, and stunted vegetation there, and yawning chasms yonder, yet how grand the whole! In his deep penitence, his burning enthusiasm, his teaching by word and pen, there have been few more admirable men than Peter. 2. John. If Peter represents the rugged, John exhibits the more symmetrical type of Christian character. He must have had exquisite qualities whom Jesus so loved, and who was specially selected for so beautiful a task as the care of Jesus' mother. And all these qualities, tenderness, love, loyalty, come out in his letters. 3. Peter and John, a combination which nearly makes perfection of beauty, power and gentleness, zeal and affection. And at the last a good deal of Peter came out in John, and a good deal of John in Peter. III. A beautiful ACT. 1. It was beautifully done. "Fastening his eyes upon him." "He took him by the right hand." How much may be accomplished by a look. The mere gaze of Peter and John inspired life into a hope that had been dead for long years. There is as much in the way a thing is done as in the thing itself. You may bestow alms so as to deprive them of half their value—grudgingly, morosely, even vindictively. You may help a man so as to make every nerve quiver, and so as to provoke a reluctance to be helped at all. You may wipe a tear and leave a wound in the process. The action should be suited to the act. And if you can do nothing you can always look something, which sometimes will answer as well, and if you can give nothing else you can give your hand, which often will be more acceptable. 2. The deed was beautiful. It was physician's work, and what more beautiful—restoration to health—for which in its literal sense we may not be qualified; but there are sick bodies to which we may minister by kindly attention—"Sick and ye visited Me"; sick hearts to which we may administer comfort; sick minds that we may relieve by wise advice; sick souls that we may lead to the Great Physician. IV. A beautiful METHOD. 1. A frank recognition of the impossible. "Silver and gold have I none." There are few things more unpleasant than to attempt what is beyond our power. We excite expectations that are doomed to disappointment, and bring ourselves into contempt. Before you promise to do a thing be sure you have the means. Don't let people think that you are a philosopher if you have no wisdom, a philanthropist if you have no money, a doctor if you have no medical skill, a preacher if you cannot preach. Moral deformities are what a man pretends to have but has not. 2. Self-abnegation in favour of the able. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth." To put oneself between the helpless and the helper, what more ugly. Who more despicable than the quack who interposes between the diseased and the doctor? Only he who stands between the sinner and the Saviour. If you cannot help a man, do not interfere with those who can. This is the least you can do; but the beautiful action is to get the two together and then stand aside. This is what Peter and John did; and this is what all men do in dealing with diseased souls, get them to Christ and then get out of the way. V. A beautiful EXPERIENCE. "Immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength." 1. Strength was given to the weak. Strength added to strength is abnormal, and therefore not beautiful. There is no grace in the opulent receiving money, or in the competent receiving help, but frequently the reverse. But if a starving man is fed, and a helpless man assisted to do a task otherwise impossible, a beautiful effect is produced. "The whole need not a physician," and to give medicine to the healthy only results in a disagreeable experience. Go, then, to the sinful, and lead them through the stages of repentance and faith until the dead in trespasses and sins become alive unto God through Christ, and the most beautiful of experiences is the result. 2. The weak was made strong. What experience is comparable to the consciousness of strength—strength of body, of intellect, above all of soul—to resist temptation, to live to and work for God. VI. A beautiful RESULT. 1. On the part of the man. "Walking and leaping and praising God." (1) Progression. (2) Elevation. (3) Worship—the three great characteristics of a personal Christian life. 2. On the part of the multitude. (1) "They saw and knew." (2) "They were filled with wonder and amazement." (3) Who can doubt that many were convinced and converted? 3. On the part of Peter. It led to two of the most beautiful sermons

in all Christian literature. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Beauty, designations of:*—Socrates called beauty a short-lived tyranny; Plato, a privilege of nature; Theophrastus, a silent cheat; Theocritus, a delightful prejudice; Carneades, a solitary kingdom; Homer, a glorious gift of nature; Ovid, a favour bestowed by the gods. *God's love of the beautiful:*—It is among the mosses of the wall that the richest harvest of beauty and interest may be gathered. Well do I remember the bright July afternoon when their wonderful structure and peculiarities were first unveiled to me by one long since dead, whose cultured eye saw strange loveliness in things which others idly passed, and whose simple warm heart was ever alive to the mute appeals of the humblest wild flower or tiniest moss. There was opened up to me that day a new world of hitherto undreamt-of beauty and intellectual delight; in the structural details of the moss which illustrated the lesson I got a glimpse of some deeper aspect of the Divine character than mere intelligence. Methought I saw Him, not as the mere contriver or designer, but in His own loving nature, having His tender mercies over all His works—displaying care for helplessness and minuteness—care for beauty in the works of nature. Small as the object before me was, I was impressed—in the wonder of its structure, at once a means and an end, beautiful in itself and performing its beautiful uses in nature—not with the limited ingenuity of the finite, but with the wisdom and love of an Infinite Spirit. To that one unforgotten lesson, improved by much study of these little objects alike in the closet and in the field, I owe many moments of pure happiness. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Beauty, true and false:*—Hearing a young lady highly praised for her beauty, Gotthold asked, "What kind of beauty do you mean? Merely that of the body, or that also of the mind? I see well that you have been looking no further than the sign which Nature displays outside the house, but have never asked for the host who dwells within. Beauty is an excellent gift of God, nor has the pen of the Holy Spirit forgotten to speak its praise; but it is virtuous and godly beauty alone which Scripture honours, expressly declaring, on the other hand, that a fair woman which is without discretion is as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout (Prov. xi. 22). Many a pretty girl is like the flower called the imperial crown, which is admired, no doubt, for its showy appearance, but despised for its unpleasant odour. Were her mind as free from pride, selfishness, luxury, and levity, as her countenance from spots and wrinkles, and could she govern her inward inclinations as she does her external carriage, she would have none to match her. But who loves the caterpillar and such insects, however showy their appearance, and bright and variegated the colours that adorn them, seeing they injure and defile the trees and plants on which they settle? What the better is an apple for its rosy skin, if the maggot have penetrated and devoured its heart? What care I for the beautiful brown of the nut, if it be worm-eaten, and fill the mouth with corruption? Even so external beauty of person deserves no praise, unless matched with the inward beauty of virtue and holiness. It is, therefore, far better to acquire beauty than to be born with it. The best kind is that which does not wither at the touch of fever, like a flower, but lasts and endures on a bed of sickness, in old age, and even unto death." *Beauty and virtue:*—A gentleman had two children—one a daughter, who was considered plain in her person; the other a son, who was reckoned handsome. One day, as they were playing together, they saw their faces in a looking-glass. The boy was charmed with his beauty, and spoke of it to his sister, who considered his remarks as so many reflections on her want of it. She told her father of the affair, complaining of her brother's rudeness to her. The father, instead of appearing angry, took them both on his knees, and with much affection gave them the following advice:—"I would have you both look in the glass every day: you, my son, that you may be reminded never to dishonour the beauty of your face by the deformity of your actions; and you, my daughter, that you may take care to hide the defect of beauty in your person by the superior lustre of your virtuous and amiable conduct." *Beauty and virtue:*—Beauty unaccompanied by virtue is a flower without perfume. *Beauty of a living Christian:*—A true man after Christ will be the most noble and beautiful thing upon the earth—the freest, the most joyous, the most fruitful in all goodness. There is no picture that was ever painted, there is no statue that was ever carved, there was no work of art ever conceived of, that was half so beautiful as the living man, thoroughly developed on the pattern of Christ Jesus. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Beauty of conscience:*—There is great beauty in conscience. When it tempers the speech, and makes it true and just; when it tempers the actions, and makes them noble and right; when it produces fairness, and honour, and just judgments—how beautiful are all the direct and indirect influences of a Christian con-

science in a man! But it sometimes leads Christian men to a sphere of uncharitable judgment. It inspires a high conception of what is right, and men take that conception as a rule by which to measure the conduct of their fellow-men, without consideration of their organisations, without making allowance for their weaknesses, without sympathy with them. There are many men that, adhering strictly to God's ideal of rectitude, fail to have sympathy with poor, crippled, and broken-down human nature; and they go aside and away from God just in proportion as they do this. It was this cruelty that brought down from our Saviour His most vehement denunciations; for vice and crime were not regarded by Christ as being as guilty as moral purity without any heart, without any sympathy, without any charitable judgment. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty an educator*:—If I am to use things that are beautiful, I must remember that beauty is a moral instructor; I must educate myself with it, that I may become a man of more power, and that I may take that power and employ it in my Master's cause. If I use beauty as a means of education, I shall be redeemed from the charge of selfishness in it. And if men ask me, "How can you lay out so much for works of art when there is such a demand for money to support missionaries and mission-schools?" I reply, that I am preparing myself by these things to preach the gospel. They help me. The things that fill my house with beauty are not objects for the gratification of my selfishness, but instrumentalities by which I am qualified to do the work of God in this world. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty: its utility*:—People seem to think that God must be a great utilitarian, and that He always makes things for uses. Now, there is many a man that, drawing a sword whose blade is wreathed with all manner of traceries, which must have required days and days of exquisite work, will say, "How foolish it is for a man to spend so much precious time to so little practical purpose! Those things do not make the sword any sharper. Who cares in the day of battle whether there is a picture on the blade of his sword or not?" But when God made rocks, He did not let them alone till He had etched them all over with lines and figures of every description. He smiled upon the earth, and all sorts of grasses and flowers and vines began to grow upon the surface. And wherever you see that God has walked in the world, you see that He has had an eye to beauty. The unconscious effects of Divine benevolence are everywhere springing out of the ground, and from every tree, from every dead stick, and from every stone. There is something on the globe besides what men can eat, drink, and wear. "What is this flower good for?" says a man; "I cannot eat it." What are you good for, that nothing is good to you except what you can eat? Have you no appetite except in your mouth? I have an appetite in my ear, and the things that give that appetite food—sweet sounds—are something to me. I have an appetite in my eye, and the things that give that appetite food—form, symmetry, and beauty—are something to me. These things are a great deal more food to me than bread. I pity a man whose appetites are confined to physical things, and I like a man whose appetites rise up to nobler things. On every side of us are witnesses that God did not make the world for iron, and gold, and stones, and meat, and drink, and clothes, alone; but for the mind and soul as well. (*Ibid.*) *Beauty, danger of*:—Gaze not on beauty too much, lest it blast thee; nor too long, lest it blind thee; nor too near, lest it burn thee. If thou like it, it deceives thee; if thou love it, it disturbs thee; if thou hunt after it, it destroys thee. If virtue accompany it, it is the heart's paradise; if vice associate it, it is the soul's purgatory. It is the wise man's bonfire, and the fool's furnace. (*F. Quarles.*)

Ver. 4. **And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.**—*The reciprocal gaze*:—The gaze was one which read character in the expression of the man's face, and discerned that he had faith to be healed (ver. 16). And he, in his turn, was to look on them that he might read in their pitying looks, not only the wish to heal, but the consciousness of power to carry the wish into effect. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The proper effects of the sight of misery*:—When thou seest misery in thy brother's face, let him see mercy in thine eye; the more the oil of mercy is poured on him by thy pity, the more the oil in thy cruse shall be increased by thy piety. (*F. Quarles.*) *Magnetic influence over our fellow-creatures*:—You may take a lily and draw it through the sand, and it comes out clean. Nothing holds to it. You may take a magnet and draw it through, and out come the iron filings with it. The magnet knows and catches that which is germane to it—that which is susceptible to its attraction. There are some natures that are like magnets, and that touch lust in you. You do not know what it is that affects you. You feel unwashed after they are gone. There has been nothing said, and there has been

nothing exactly done. It is that subtle magnetic power which feeling has on feeling. If on one instrument in the room you sound a given chord, every other instrument in that room has a tendency to sound its octave. If you go among men of strong natures there is a certain vibration in them of a feeling which is strong in you. When you have been with some persons you feel finer, you feel lifted up. And yet they have not exhorted you. There has been no magisterial instruction whatever given to you. You have drunk the wine of being, and by it you are lifted up and strengthened. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 6. **Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee.**—*Wealth in poverty*:—What a remarkable combination of poverty which can give nothing, with power which can do almost anything! "Silver and gold have I none"—then we are ready at once to class him with the men from whom no help is to be expected, with those who hang upon others. The speech, however, does not end there. "Rise up and walk," says the penniless man. Why, Pilate who was the great man at Jerusalem, or Cæsar who was yet greater at Rome, would never have dared to utter anything so bold. Peter, however, ventured in Christ's name, and the result was perfect soundness given immediately by the great Author of life, who has made our frames so curiously and can repair them so easily. St. Peter walked through the streets of Jerusalem on that memorable morning an unobserved and undistinguished man. Many passed him by, probably, who had upon them the trappings of worldly wealth, or were swelling with the pride of office, and if they looked the obscure Galilean in the face, would have taken him for one of the many thousand drudges who filled the streets of Jerusalem. Yet was there a hidden power within which made him really greater than the world's rulers. And the contrast was equally striking between the utterly defenceless condition of Peter and John and the boldness with which they bore their simple emphatic testimony as witnesses for Christ. Precisely of the same character was the apostle's defence of the next day before the council. The history of mankind shows nothing grander than these two appearances of the first preacher of the gospel before two such audiences. But I wish you to notice that in the text we have not only a plain historical account of something said and done by one eminent saint, but—I. A SYMBOLICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCH'S WORK IN MANY AGES. It was specially true of the apostles, considering the place they filled, the work they wrought, the testimony they bore, the blessings they dispensed, that being "poor," they "made many rich"; but numbers, like-minded with them, have trod in their steps, and have earned their praise. The Church which they founded has often been poor as they were. Yet at those very times, more than in her more prosperous days, she has said to many a crippled soul, "Rise up and serve thy God." Just when she had nothing to bribe men with, when her life would have been destroyed if it had not been "hidden with Christ in God," then she has been strengthened with might by Him whose servant and witness she is, and her tones have been louder than before, her port loftier, her message clearer, her triumphs more blessed. She has gone abroad from city to city, or from village to village, proclaiming aloud, "'Silver and gold have I none.' Let the men who covet either go elsewhere and seek them; they are often baits to snare men's souls. But I carry with me better treasures. I teach the man of halting pace and crippled limb to run in the ways of righteousness." Thus often has the Church prophesied in sackcloth, and while many have called her traitress because she would not bow down to images of gold, and some have branded her with heresy, because her message squared not with the creeds that were most in favour at court, others have come thronging from their homes to give her their greeting and blessing. Look, *e.g.*, at the sixteenth century, and the man who did more than any other to distinguish it from the ages of black darkness which went before it. Who was it that said to prostrate Europe, "Rise up and walk"? It was the son of a Saxon miner, singing Christmas carols at fourteen, that he might earn a few pence to supply the cravings of hunger, the companion of the poor till the fame of his deeds brought him to the company of princes. There were mighty princes in that day, one of them governing a larger portion of Europe, and swaying its destinies more absolutely than any single potentate of our own time. On one occasion the monk and the emperor met face to face, and who that reads the scene must not see that the man of power grew little by the side of the fearless, upright champion of truth? It was Peter and the Jewish council over again. II. BUT WE WILL COME TO HUMBLER SCENES AND MORE EVERY-DAY CHARACTERS. 1. Look at one of God's saints. He has lived

a life of faith, and in his humble way has honoured God, served the Church, blessed his generation. And now the day is come that he must depart hence. No inventory need be taken of his goods; no will is wanted. Such an one might say to his weeping children, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." And who shall despise the legacy? It is better than the miser's gold. They are not poor, but rich, who inherit his blessing and his prayers; but how often does the portion of the covetous turn to poverty! It looks like a spreading tree rich in foliage and fruit; but a worm is at the root, and lo! one branch withers, and then another, till at last nothing but a bare trunk is left. 2. Take instances from among the living. Look at the lone woman, whose week's pittance just buys her week's bread, giving kind looks, pleasant words, spare half-hours, to some ailing or afflicted friend. Look at the little child, who never had a sixpence perhaps of its own, dutiful at home, gentle and patient abroad, running on errands for the sick, brightening with its innocent look and cheerful prattle some desolate fireside where infant voices were once heard, but are now heard no more. Look at some aged man of God, who finds it hard to make his weakened limbs hold out from Sunday to Sunday, ministering to the sick, offering a word in season to the reckless, pointing the dying sinner to the Lamb of God, comforting many a tried and tempted brother with cordials from the storehouse of God's promises. Do not all these say in turn, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee"? Is it not a blessed work, that of ministering out of our little to those who have less? Is not your scanty fare the sweeter when you come home from making some dark chambers more bright, and some heavy hearts more hopeful? Very precious are alms like these, worth a hundred times more than the money gifts of the wealthy, ranking higher in God's account, bestowed at greater cost, more blessed proofs of the power of faith. Oh! if the poor, one and all, were a brotherhood of living, loving Christians, they might almost do without help from others, help from each other to each other would be dispensed so wisely and so seasonably, and large-hearted generosity would find such a response in warm-hearted gratitude. 3. God forbid, however, that because they might befriend their equals more, we should befriend any of them less! God forbid that the miserably stinted measure of all our charities should descend to a yet lower standard! (1) Many have leisure. How many hours in a month are given by many to any public object? What is the world the better for their not being compelled to toil at some allotted task? (2) We might pursue the subject and speak of knowledge, worldly influence, talents of any special kind. Whose are they? Who gave them? Whose are you? Who redeemed you and told you that you were not your own? (3) And if we speak of what man may do for his brotherman, our prayers, surely, must not be forgotten. Who can say to a neighbour, "What I have give I thee," if he be not one who remembers them all in turn, when he pleads for his own mercies before the throne of grace? (*J. Hampden Gurney, M.A.*) *What can be done without silver and gold*:—I. SILVER AND GOLD CAN DO MANY THINGS. To speak of them as of no value would be folly. Money—1. Can save our minds from anxiety, supply our wants, educate our children, fill our life with comfort. To speak of such blessings as trivial were both foolish and unthankful. 2. As an instrument of commerce is an essential element in the activity and interest of life. Without it our markets would sink back into the system of barter, and we should be in a ruder condition than those who lived centuries ago. 3. Can be used to relieve distress, to cheer the desolate, to help the struggling. 4. Can be employed in the direct furtherance of religious ends. 5. Gives influence which can be used in the promotion of its highest purposes, and when consecrated by the Christian life of its possessor becomes one of the noblest offerings for the honour of God and the blessing of the world. II. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH SILVER AND GOLD CANNOT DO. 1. You may buy a man's work, but you cannot buy his affection. By paying him his wages you do not on that account secure his respect; while by indiscriminate almsgiving it is not certain that you will earn or deserve any real gratitude. 2. The possession of wealth does not improve, but sometimes spoils a man's character. It seldom makes him more generous. But those who are very poor may be rich in better things—in the respect and gratitude of others, the sweet temper, the generous heart. How rich the poor are sometimes, in the kindness of disposition which gives happiness to themselves and those around them! 3. Money cannot purchase health, whether for ourselves or those whom we love. David's treasury was well filled when Nathan told him his child must die. Hezekiah had proud thoughts of wealth when Isaiah commanded him to "set his house in order." 4. Money cannot purchase grace. Simon Magus thought it could;

but Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee." (*Dean Howson.*) *Poverty and power*:—I. GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS, BUT AS A MATTER OF FACT POOR MEN STAND FOREMOST IN THE GREAT HUMAN LINE. Weigh what Dives has done for the world, and what the penniless. Because Peter and John, though they had not a penny in their purses, had something to give to that poor man, and to all poor men, and gave it, we are here to-day, and the great world lives. He was the poorest of the poor who brought that gift to us. "Foxes have holes," &c.; and by hands as poor the gift has been distributed. Perhaps the most heavenly men and women living are among the poorest. The men who have drawn forth the great inventions, poems, thoughts which have blessed mankind have seldom enriched themselves by their toils. They have loved their work too well for that. The world is not bountiful to genius and to love. And thank God it is not: genius lives on a nobler nourishment, and love has a nobler hire. Socrates, Paul, Epictetus, Dante, Luther, Milton found it so. And yet that we may not idolise poverty the world's most glorious psalms came forth from one of the most splendid and prosperous monarchies of the world. But David knew want before he came to wealth, and perhaps his best work was done in his most struggling days. Still there are eminent instances of the noblest service to humanity from those in the loftiest station to rebuke the supposition that any class has a monopoly of the highest ministries. Sokya-Mouni was a prince, and few out of Christianity have done such work for man as his; and our own great Alfred did, perhaps, the noblest life-work that was ever done by one man for his generation from the height of a throne. The poor may be bigots as well as the rich. St. Giles is as contemptuous as St. James, and God rebukes them both. II. WHAT ARE SILVER AND GOLD COMPARED WITH THE RICH ENDOWMENT OF FACULTY WITH WHICH GOD HAS BLESSED OUR RACE? Which of you now, moaning over your poverty, would exchange for the wealth of Dives, your sight, hearing, or soundness of limb? It would do us good, when we make our plaint against providence, if God compelled us to make the exchange awhile, and try how we liked a splendid paralysis, a gilded blindness or deafness, a park big enough for a province and a shrivelled limb. What cries would rise to heaven for poverty again! Take this healed man, as he clings to Peter and John, half afraid of a relapse, and suggest that he go back to his cripple's lair with a mountain of gold for his store. Faculty is the true wealth of man. There is many a poor workman trudging to his work at sunrise who has a joy in beholding the pomp and glow of the eastern heavens, hearing the lark's glad carol, and bathing his brow in the clear air such as Dives would give any price to enjoy. III. IF IT IS A GOD-LIKE GIFT TO BESTOW HEALTH ON A CRIPPLED BODY, WHAT MUST IT BE TO GIVE HEALTH TO A CRIPPLED SOUL? The healing of bodily disease was but the mere fringe of the work of Christ and His apostles. The real disease that paralyses man underlies all that. Sin makes disease the first form of death in every bodily organ. You know why there are so many bleared eyes, bloated faces, shaking hands, and limping feet; and Christ knows too, and He knows also that the only way, in the long run and on a large scale, to heal sick bodies is to save sick souls. And He who can do this for you gives you a boon of which gold and silver yield no measures. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Apostolic poverty and power contrasted with Papal wealth and weakness*: Once when Thomas Aquinas visited mediæval Rome he was shown through all the sumptuously furnished rooms of the Papal Palace, he became almost as much fatigued and dazed as was the queen of Sheba, when she had been dazzled with the riches of Solomon's kingdom; and then it is related as a fine pleasantry of the Pontiff himself, that he remarked to him, "The Church cannot say in our times, Silver and gold have I none!" And Aquinas replied quickly, "No, indeed! neither can the Church say now, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Poverty of the rich*:—A shrewd old gentleman once said to his daughter, "Be sure, my dear, you never marry a poor man; but remember that the poorest man in the world is one that has money and nothing else." (*Christian Age.*) *Poverty a stimulus*:—A nobleman who painted remarkably well for an amateur, showing one of his pictures to Poussin, the latter exclaimed, "Your lordship only requires a little poverty to make you a complete artist." (*Horace Smith.*) *Something better than money*:—A poor converted woman of India said, "I have no money to give to missions, but I am able to speak of the Saviour to my neighbour." Could a volume tell more of the duty of the people of this country who have found Christ? Said a young man at a meeting, "I worked for Mr. ——, a well-known Christian, for eight years, and he never spoke to me of religion." The woman in India had learned what is better than money—the power

of personal influence. *Money is not omnipotent*:—We sometimes think that money is omnipotent, that it can purchase for us every good thing. This is a great mistake. Money cannot buy love. It often wins its semblance. Summer friends swarm around him who rolls in wealth, but the love of a mother, the fidelity of a father, the affection of a sister, the sympathy of a brother, the trust of a friend, are never bought with gold. Money cannot bring contentment, and "Our content is our best having." Money alone will not secure for us a good education. A rich man, who had neglected his early opportunities, was heard to say sadly, "I would give all my wealth for a thorough education and well-trained mind." But his money and his riches were alike unavailing. Plenty of money will not of itself insure culture and gentility, yet next to Christian graces and robust health nothing is so desirable as refinement and pleasing, self-possessed manners. The wealth of a Crœsus could not give a peaceful conscience. Sin scourges the soul of the rich as surely as of the poor. The poorest boy or girl who has "always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men," is richer than the richest with a "conscience seared with a hot iron." A good character is more precious than gold. Yet money is not to be despised. If we have it let us accept it as God's gift, and use it, not so much for our own pleasure as for the benefit of others. If we have it not let us believe that for our good it has been withheld from us. But whether we have it or not let us remember that it cannot purchase love, contentment, education, culture, refinement, nor a good conscience, and that it will not secure for us either peace, purity, holiness, or heaven. (*Christian Age.*) *What is money?*—"What is money, father?" asked a sickly, motherless child. "Why, gold and silver and copper, my boy." "Yes; I don't mean that; I mean, What's money, after all? What can it do?" "Oh," replied the purse-proud father, "money can do anything!" "Anything! then why did not money save me my mother?" The father felt puzzled, and the boy continued, "It can't make me strong or well either, father." And the question, "What is money, after all?" is left to work its impression for good upon many minds and hearts. *Poverty no hindrance to beneficence*:—A year or two ago a missionary in one of the South Sea Islands wished very much to get a translation of the Gospels printed in one of the languages of the island where he was working. It is not in the South Seas as it is with us. We have one language which can be understood nearly everywhere all over the United Kingdom. In the New Hebrides and other island groups, not only has every island a different language, but often different parts of the same island speak different languages. This missionary had translated the Gospels. He was going over to Sydney with some arrowroot and sago, which his poor people had contributed out of their scanty stores, in order that they might have the Gospels to read in their own tongues and in their own homes. He had saved a little of his own also to add to the offerings. But on board the steamer to Sydney he met a printer, and the printer proved to him that he had not one quarter enough money to pay for the printing. So the missionary was much cast down, and thought that he would have all his trouble and long journey for nothing. When he was landed on the quay at Sydney a little boy, the son of the gentleman with whom he was to stay in the city, met him, and holding out half a sovereign to the missionary, said, "This is to help to print your Bible. My father told me that you had come all this way to get the Bible printed for the poor natives. I had not any money, but father said I might run messages and carry parcels at the warehouse. So I did, and here is my week's pay." Brave boy and happy missionary! The half-sovereign did not of course print the Bible, but it helped, and it encouraged the missionary to trust God, who can raise up help for His servants among little boys and kings of great empires. So much interest was aroused in Sydney by the story of the little boy, which the missionary told at many a meeting, that not only were the Gospels printed, but money was gathered to print the whole Bible as soon as the missionary got time to translate it. So the missionary went away back to his island home, glad and thankful. (*S. R. Crockett.*) *The true sympathy*:—The richness of any material lessens the necessity for adornment. The finest gems are the simplest set, because no environment can add either to their beauty or value. The story of the Beautiful gate is in itself a gem of such inherent worth, that, like Plato's Republic, it needs no rhetorical setting. We can hardly imagine the introduction to any great truth told with greater simplicity than this: "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." And yet these words lead us to the consideration of a truth comprehensive of the whole scope of practical Christianity. Our first lesson is this—1. The disciples of

Christ in the regular performance of their daily duties have ample opportunities for charity, and hence the necessity of mutual helpfulness. Objects of charity naturally divide themselves into two classes: first, those who are strong enough to approach us for help; and, secondly, those who are so weak that we must approach them to give help. Peter dealt with the latter class. While energy lies at the basis of benevolent deeds, yet no extraordinary exertion is required to discover the impotent men of this world. God usually finds them for us somewhere along the line of our daily duty. God may discover one man's object of charity in the heathenism of China; another's on the frontiers of our own civilisation; and yours between your own dwelling and the village church. 2. Wherever there is ability to do good there is always close at hand some object that needs it. The Christian system is so manifold in its organism that a place is afforded for every variety and degree of talents. No Christian is wholly lacking in ability. We are all creatures of want, and mutually dependent on one another. In practice, as in theory, the subjective and the objective are in juxtaposition. We are sometimes misled by the impression that only great deeds count in the kingdom of God. 3. Every Christian can impart vastly more than the impotent man anticipates. Peter's object of charity was a most dismal sight. Placed before a temple whose cost and magnificence filled all the world with its fame. It is the old, old story repeated again and again to the burning shame of the ages, that costly temples can be built while the more valuable temple of humanity must beg beneath their sculptured arches for bread. We may pause to inquire what Peter had to give more valuable than silver and gold. He had the Christ of history, the Christ of his own rich experience, to impart, which was infinitely more valuable than all the world's material treasure. "Christ, Christ," I hear the impotent man repeat, "what need I of Christ? I only want the means of driving away the pangs of starvation." Then says Peter, with all the authority accorded to an inspired apostle, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." You will notice that the man had merely asked for the means of buying bread; he receives the power to earn his own bread, which was far better. Do we not all receive from God more than we ask for, and infinitely more than we deserve? Two inferences from the above. Men are everywhere about us in spiritual impotency, and they recognise it not. We, as Christ's disciples, have power to help them more than they anticipate, or we ourselves imagine, until it has been put forth. If religion is of supreme moment to the human soul, how is spiritual impotency possible? Simply because the sinner's free will positively refuses the spiritual antidote. We have seen that want and the ability to relieve it go hand in hand. Is it true in the vegetable world where by the side of every poison grows its antidote? Is it true in the animal world where the bitten creature knows where to go for remedial efficacy? Who tells the birds of the tropics that a certain leaf placed over the nest protects their little ones from preying reptiles? Is it likely that "man, the paragon of animals," when bitten by sin should be in ignorance as to the antidote? Let the spiritual impotent "fasten his eyes" on the Truth, and he will receive a larger blessing than he anticipates. 4. Through human means a complete work is accomplished by bringing Christ into actual contact with human wants. There is a mighty power in human sympathy. But sympathy in the abstract is meaningless. It has content only as it is applied to an object. There are two ways in which we may express our sympathy with sinners. First by mingling with them for mere companionship, which always lowers us to their level; and, secondly, by mingling with them for the sole purpose of doing them good, which tends to raise them to our level. We need never be ashamed nor afraid to go wherever we can take Christ with us. It is only through personal, sympathetic contact that the impotent men of this world are likely to know of God and the power of His salvation. Suppose Peter had sent a written message from his home to the impotent man, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk," the presumption is that the man would have died as he had lived, impotent. No, the two must come into vital, sympathetic contact. The weakness of the one must arouse the curative energies of the other as they associate. 5. The place where impotent men first find their Lord is always a beautiful gate to them. The place of our natural birth is dear to us. But the place of our spiritual new birth cannot be any the less so. It is a beauty that overrides every material consideration. Thus through life by doing and receiving good are beautiful gates made. By doing good along the quiet lines of our daily duties not only do we confirm our own Christian characters, but strengthen the characters and increase the joys of our fellow-men. (*C. H. Ricketts.*) *Responsi-*

bility for power:—Pentecostal energy now begins to find one of its spheres. The power of preaching Christ, crucified and risen, had already been proved. The power of healing was now put forth. The power of testifying before rulers and princes was soon to be shown. The power of toiling, suffering, and dying for Christ would ere long find its expression. Observe—I. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF POWER. "Such as I have give I thee." It must have been a very high and inspiring moment for Peter when he thus felt the healing energy of Christ ready to work through him. We have often been disposed to envy the skilful physician who, when visiting a diseased sufferer, is so conscious of mastery over the disease that he is able to say, "I can heal you." So many of the sorrows of our life master us that we feel to grow big when we are conscious of the power to make and master any one of them. A simple illustration taken from the life of M'Cheyne sets this point clearly: "His custom in preparing for the pulpit was to impress on his memory the substance of what he had before carefully written, and then to speak as he found liberty. One morning, as he rode rapidly along to Dunipace, his written sermons were dropped on the roadside. This accident prevented him from having the opportunity of preparing in his usual manner, but he was enabled to preach with more than his usual freedom. For the first time in his life he discovered that he possessed the gift of extemporaneous composition, and learned, to his own surprise, that he had more composedness of mind and command of language than he had believed." That is to say, through this providential circumstance he was awakened to the consciousness of power. What we need in these our times is a higher faith in the varied and abundant gifts with which the Church and the individual Christian are endowed, and a keener power of discernment to find these gifts in ourselves and in others. But powers differ in different persons, both in kind and in degree. None are without some kind of faculty and ability which they may lay on the altar of God's service. 1. What is called "wealth" is power. All beyond needful expenditure is a man's wealth. Wealth is what I can save and win by self-denial for the service of others and the glory of God. In that sense we are all of us more or less wealthy, and we might be much wealthier than we are. Such wealth is holy power. A poor widow could glorify God with the wealth of her two mites. But some have wealth in the commoner sense. And your wealth is power—a dreadful power if it has not been first presented to God to be used for Him; a glorious power if it has. 2. Intellect is power. Every man who knows a little more than his neighbour has the trust of a power. It is evident that he can teach and lead others. Surely these times are making larger demands every day on Christian intelligence in these sceptical days. The battle of Christian truth is as that great battle of Inkerman—a soldiers' battle, a people's battle—each one of us in our varied spheres making Christian knowledge and experience tell upon the conservation of the Christian verities. 3. Art is power. Such painters as Holman Hunt and Sir Noel Paton are but the high examples of endowments that come in measure to some of us. In Sunday-school spheres and among the children there is room for the consecration of the draughtsman's skill. And still there is given to men and women the Divine gift of song, and they may "sing for Jesus." No door will be shut against your song. 4. But every Christian has spiritual power. In this he is like Peter. He may, if he will, lay hold of and use the great power of God. But this lies dormant in so many of us. We could give something to men, something healing, vitalising, the very thing which the dying world wants. And what more do we want? Only what Peter had that day—the consciousness of power. This would stir in us holy impulses, would shake us out of selfishness and apathy. Remember that the words "I cannot" have no place upon a Christian's lips, if they are applied to any right and good and holy work. Thou hast power with God and with men, and thou mightest prevail. II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CONSCIOUS POWER. All God's gifts to us are for our giving away to others. Keep any of God's gifts to yourself and they will speedily rot. You can no more store up God's present-day manna than the old Israelites could store up the bread that came down from heaven. If He makes an arm strong, it is for work. If He makes a leg strong, it is for walking in search of somebody to help. If He makes a voice strong, it is that we may plead earnestly with our fellow-men for Him, or that we may win men with the gospel-song. If He makes a heart strong, it is that we may inspire others to a nobler life. Try to dam up God's living streams of blessing, and make a pond in your own grounds, and they will cease to be living streams, they will soon become disease-breeding, stagnant waters, and you will have to be content with the pond, for God will cut off the waters at the

fountain-head. "He that hath not (does not make a worthy use of what he has), from him shall be taken away that which he seemeth to have." (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**—*The power of Jesu's name:*—Consider—I. MAN MORALLY CRIPPLED, HELPLESS, AND WRETCHED. Bodily infirmities are the shadows of the sins and weaknesses of the soul. All sin works by privation. It shuts up senses and organs which God meant to be inlets of joy and channels of life. But there is something very suggestive in this cripple's case—he never knew the joy of movement, "Lame from his mother's womb." Can you remember the time when sin was not a source of suffering and weakness? How long have you been borne by the storm of passion into excesses and follies when you have craved the beggar's dole? You ought to be taking your part with the angels in God's great workshop; but where are you? In the devil's, where you labour and are sheltered and sleep like the brute through long monotonous years. A change sometimes breaks the monotony—quarrels, drinkings, and all the rest, and I have heard men talk of this as life! What stroke has crippled you to put up with such a life as this—without God, joy, hope, like the beasts that perish? Are you in love with such a life, poor cripple? or are you heartily sick of it, as this man was of his? II. THERE IS A NAME WHICH CAN MAKE YOU WHOLE AGAIN, SOUND, GLAD, AND FREE. Your soul wants what that poor cripple's body wanted—power, and that power is in Christ alone. A man whose system is worn out can be patched up awhile by the physicians, but a new gush of life into it is what he needs. They try to do something like it sometimes, they pour some fresh young life-blood into the exhausted veins. But this is what Christ can truly do for your soul. His life will pass into every crippled faculty and unbind it, and open to your powers a field of the most glorious activity. Lie no longer moaning, "O wretched man that I am!" "The gift of God is eternal life." III. THIS IS THE TIME TO BELIEVE ON THAT NAME AND TO RISE UP AND WALK. You have been there fearfully too long. How much of your time has been spent wearily in the devil's service? How much faculty, how much life is left for God? But will God welcome such a wreck as I am? Let that poor cripple and Christ's works of mercy answer. "The blind receive their sight, . . . the lame walk." They were mostly broken fragments of humanity that He gathered. Such as you He needs. You have made many an effort at reformation, but the poor palsied limbs have doubled up again. Now rise once more; there is a hand outstretched to you—lay hold of it. Refuse it, and to-morrow all power to make the effort may be gone. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *The difference between the miracles of Christ and those of the apostles:*—This difference is here observable. They performed them through Christ, by virtue of His name and authority. They were mere instruments; He was the efficient agent. Christ, on the other hand, performed His miracles in His own name, and by His own authority. He wrought independently. His language was that of omnipotence, theirs was that of faith in Him. He said, "I say unto thee, Arise"; they said, "In the name of Jesus rise up and walk." He was the Messiah, the Son; they were the servants of the household. (*P. J. Gloag, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **And he leaping up stood.**—*The healed man's activity and gratitude:*—The evangelist describes minutely the actions of the lame man as soon as he began to believe that he was healed. First he leaped forth, releasing himself from the hold of Peter, or leaped up, as if trying the strength of his muscle; then he stood on his feet for the first time in his life, and walked around, to see whether the same power of walking belonged to him which all that were about had. But the pen of the writer, not content with this, adds graphically, "And he entered with them," unwilling to be separated from the instruments of his cure, "into the temple," practising his newly acquired powers without the ability to restrain himself, now walking, now leaping, and all the while praising God. "Then did the lame man leap as an hart." He was of another kind from the nine lepers, who never looked back to give thanks to the Lord Jesus. (*Pres. Woolsey.*) *Practical gratitude:*—They who have witnessed our frailties should also attest our conversion and gratitude. Our gratitude is false and of no avail unless accompanied with newness of life; and this cannot endure long if our thankful sense of the grace to which we owe our deliverance declines. (*Quesnel.*) *The responsibilities of the saved:*—Sin has reduced the soul to a state of impotence. It has not destroyed the soul's powers, but only disabled them. When a man is saved, therefore, his crippled powers are straightened and strengthened, and his new vocation is to use them. I. WHAT FACULTIES ARE CRIPPLED BY SIN AND RESTORED BY CHRIST? 1. Faith. This exists

in every soul, but is dormant or perverted. Christ straightens it out and empowers it as an eye to see, a hand to grasp Him and heavenly things. 2. Love. No man is destitute of this: but it is wrenched away from its highest Object, who is its true life, and rests upon unworthy objects often, on secondary objects at best whom it cannot love fully, because unrecruited by the love of God. "We *love* (R.V.) because He first loved us." Salvation largely consists in the conversion of the heart, the turning of all the affections to Christ, by whom they are invigorated and sanctified, and made to flow in worthy channels. 3. The will. Paul has given us a graphic picture of what that is in the natural man (Rom. vii.) and what Christ makes it (Rom. viii. and his own life). 4. The active powers. These again are paralysed for all spiritual purposes, but energetic enough in the cause of evil—the tongue, how silent for God, how glib for self or for folly or sin! the hands, how idle for God, how active in other causes! Christ restores these to their true uses, and consecrates them to the service of God. II. THE RESTORED FACULTIES MUST BE EMPLOYED. Otherwise they will fall into their old decrepitude. Had the lame man returned to his haunt, and neglected to use his limbs, those limbs would soon have become helpless once more. To neglect faith, love, resolution and work for God is to forfeit them. The action of the healed man may illustrate the manner in which our restored faculties are to be employed. 1. With alacrity, "leaping up." 2. Progressively, "walked." 3. In union with the Church, "entered with them into the temple." 4. Thankfully, "praising God." (*J. W. Burn.*) *Praise breaking forth:*—Wherever God's grace is discerned, and His love is welcomed, there praise breaks forth, as surely as streams pour from the cave of the glacier when the sun of summer melts it, or earth answers the touch of spring with flowers. (*A. Maclaren.*) *The gate Beautiful:*—I. THE CLOSE PROXIMITY OF PHYSICAL DEFORMITY TO NATURAL BEAUTY. II. THE STRANGE ASSOCIATION OF SPIRITUAL RICHES WITH TEMPORAL POVERTY. III. THE SUDDEN TRANSFORMATION OF POPULAR INDIFFERENCE INTO ABOUNDING AMAZEMENT. The gospel had been applied, put to the test, and had succeeded in a superhuman manner. 1. It had come into positive contact with poverty and suffering. 2. It had exalted the whole nature of the man. 3. It had set the man on a new course of life. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Praise:*—A Christian man ought to be like a horse that has bells on his head, so that he cannot go anywhere without ringing them and making a noise. His whole life should be a psalm, every step should be in harmony, every thought should constitute a note, every word he utters should be a compouent part of the joyful psalm. It is a blessed thing to see a Christian going about his business like the high-priest of old, who wherever he went made music with the golden bells. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Thankfulness exceptional:*—It is said of a lately deceased benefactor of a Western college in the United States that, on a recent commencement day, a lady stepped up to him and said, "Governor Hardin, I wish to thank you for this splendid college, and to say that my daughters, who graduate to-day, owe you a debt of gratitude they can never repay." The white-haired old man broke down, and, while the tears filled his eyes, he faltered out, "Madam, you are the first person to express such a sentiment to me." How many men who secure scholarships and fellowships, or receive other benefactions, ever think of or thank the generous givers? *Thanksgiving expressed:*—"When a boy," said a prominent member of a church, "I was much helped by Bishop Hamline, who visited at a house where I was. Taking me aside, the Bishop said, 'When in trouble, my boy, kneel down and ask God's help; but never climb over the fence into the devil's ground and then kneel down and ask help. Pray from God's side of the fence.' Of that," said he, "I have thought every day of my life since." Continuing, he remarked, "Sanford Cobb, the missionary to Persia, helped me in another way. Said he, 'Do you ever feel thankful when God blesses you?' 'Always.' 'Did you ever tell Him so?' 'Well, I don't know that I have.' 'Well, try it, my young friend, try it, try it. Tell Him so; tell Him aloud; tell Him so that you are sure you will hear it yourself.' That was a new revelation. I found that I had been only glad, not grateful. I have been telling Him with grateful feelings ever since, to my soul's help and comfort."

Vers. 11-26. **All the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.**—*Solomon's porch:*—The porch—or better, portico or cloister—was outside the temple, on the eastern side. It consisted in the Herodian Temple, of a double row of Corinthian columns, about thirty-seven feet high, and received its name as having been in part constructed, when the temple was rebuilt by

Zerubbabel, with the fragments of the older edifice. The people tried to persuade Herod Agrippa I. to pull it down and rebuild it, but he shrank from the risk and cost of such an undertaking (Jos., "Ant." xx. 9, § 7). It was, like the porticoes in all Greek cities, a favourite place of resort, especially as facing the morning sun in winter. (See John x. 23.) The memory of what had then been the result of their Master's teaching must have been fresh in the minds of the two disciples. Then the people had complained of being kept in suspense as to whether Jesus claimed to be the Christ, and, when He spoke of being One with the Father, had taken up stones to stone Him (John x. 31–33). Now they were to hear His name as Holy and Just, as "the Servant of Jehovah," as the very Christ (vers. 13, 14, 18). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Solomon's porch—a hallowed spot for Peter*:—It must have been a spot filled with cherished memories for the apostle. Every Jew naturally venerated this cloister, because it was Solomon's; just as men in the grandest modern cathedral still love to point out the smallest relic of the original structure out of which the modern building grew. At San Clemente, in Rome, the priests delight to show the primitive structure where they say St. Clement ministered about A.D. 100. At York the vergers will indicate far down in the crypt the fragments of the earliest Saxon church, which once stood where that splendid cathedral now rears its lofty arches. So, too, the Jews naturally cherished this limb of continuity between the ancient and the modern temples. But for St. Peter this Solomon's porch must have had special memories over and above the patriotic ideas that were linked with it. He could not forget that the very last feast of the Dedication which the Master had seen on earth, He walked in this porch, and there, in His conversation with the Jews, claimed an equality with the Father which led them to make an attempt on His life. Here, then, it was that within twelve months the apostle Peter makes a similar claim on his Master's behalf. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *Misapprehensions removed*:—Here was a congregation worthy of an apostle; and Peter was ready for the occasion. The people were excited. They "ran together." This made it possible to address them all at once. They were amazed, and were, therefore, in an inquiring mood. Peter—I. CALLED HIS HEARERS TO QUIET THOUGHTFULNESS. He asked them the cause of their amazement. Did he pause after his questions to let the hearer's mind balance itself? The miracle had aroused attention which must now be steadied, in order that judgment might be calmly exercised. II. CORRECTED THE SUPPOSITION THAT THE MIRACLE HAD BEEN DONE BY HUMAN ABILITY. Some supposed the cause was in their magical power or extraordinary godliness. But this was a superficial and God-dishonouring hypothesis, as is that which attributes the results of preaching to the preacher's eloquence, logic, or "magnetism." Peter corrected this, and we say that conviction, penitence, conversion, and the power to live holy is all of God's grace. III. CLEARED A WAY FOR THE TRUTH. If false suppositions had not been removed the true view of the miracle would have been prevented; but by contradicting error Peter brought the minds of the hearers to need a true explanation. So long as astronomers believed the earth to be the centre of the solar system, many false suppositions had to be made, and many phenomena were misinterpreted. Ptolemaic error blocked out Copernican truth. But when the fundamental error had been overthrown the chariot of knowledge could proceed. See the magnificent results in the precision and fulness of modern astronomical science. Conclusion: Let us learn to remove error in order that the way of truth may be open. Let us do this for penitents whom some error may keep in bondage, for inquirers lest some false notion blind them. (*W. Hudson.*) **And when Peter saw it, he answered.**—*A greater miracle*:—1. This speech is a greater miracle than the cure. The great miracles are all wrought within. Compare Peter before the resurrection with the Peter of this speech, and tell me what has happened. Surely a great cure has been wrought upon him. You cannot work miracles, because you yourselves are not miracles. We approach the whole case from the outside, and with many a lame suggestion we attempt to mend the world's sad condition. We must be greater ourselves than any work which it is possible for ourselves to do. 2. In this speech Peter vindicated his apostolic primacy. You might have asked questions concerning Peter's superiority before, but after this all men feel that the first place belongs to him. Any primacy that is not based on merit must go down. For a time you may bolster up a man; but a superiority of position that is not based upon fundamental and vital merit falls before the testing touch of circumstances and time. So let this book of God stand or fall. The priests cannot keep it up. Parliaments and thrones cannot give the Bible its lasting primacy. If the inspira-

tion be not in the book itself you cannot communicate it; and if the inspiration really be in the book itself you can never talk it down. By force you may quiet it for a time, but truth is eternal, it returns. 3. The danger is that we be not just to such men as Peter. We may take this speech as a mere matter of course. We hear an eloquent man drop sentence after sentence of singular beauty, and think that he does so simply as a matter of course. In every such sentence there is a drop of sacrificial blood. True eloquence is forced out of men. This speech was not a prepared oration which he took out and read; it was as extemporaneous as was the event itself. The looking people make the eloquent preacher. All the people fastened their eyes upon Peter and John; and, as the lame man had drawn out of Peter spiritual power by his magnetic look, so the people drew out of Peter still higher power by their marvelling. 4. In reply to that wonder Peter declines any primacy based on purely personal considerations. "This is not our doing. It is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes." And, with inspired wisdom, he magnified the occasion by attaching the miracle to the omnipotence of a God about whose existence the Jew had no doubt. "The God of Abraham," &c. The apostles did not snatch at praise for themselves. They maintained their royal supremacy by operating in the presence of the people merely as the servants and instruments of God. We must return to that allegiance to the Divine name and throne. 5. Not only does Peter decline the implied eulogium, he takes upon himself to cut the people to pieces. No great progress can be made in moral reform until our apostles slay us. Flattery will do nothing for us—at most, will but mislead or bewilder us. Hear his speech, "Whom ye delivered up," &c. That man must succeed in his ministry, or he must be killed! Such a speaker of such an address cannot occupy a middle position. When did the apostles speak with bated breath and whispering humbleness? When did they try to make the best of the case by appeasing the spirit of the people, and by an endeavour to placate sensibilities which had been strongly excited? So we come back to a truth with which this message has made us familiar. We are not to put away the Crucifixion as an historical circumstance, nineteen centuries old. The Crucifixion takes place every day. Realise this circumstance, and there will go up the old cry, and after it will come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. 6. In ver. 17 the tone changes with wondrous skill. The gospel is not an impeachment only—it is an offer, and he introduces this new phase of the subject with a word which united himself with the people—"brethren." This verse repeats the very prayer of Christ Himself upon the Cross. So he opens a great door of hope. The Church ought to be fertile in its invention of opportunities for the worst men to return. Tell the very worst man that the door of hope, if not wide open, is yet ajar, and that the very faintest touch of his fingers will cause it to fall back to the very wall. 7. Then comes the keyword of apostolic preaching, and the secret of apostolic success—"repent" (ver. 19). It is like the sword of which David said, "Give me that; there is none like it." This word "repent" goes to the root and to the reality of the case. Who has repented? I do not ask who has been alarmed by threatened consequences, and who therefore has professed a change of habit and of purpose. My question is a deeper one. Who has felt heart-brokenness on account of sin, as a spiritual offence against God? Have we not forgotten that old word? Has the Church become too dainty to use it? 8. There is another word in ver. 19 of as much importance—"therefore"—which refers to the historical and logical argument upon which Christianity is founded. Peter having gone back to "God of Abraham," &c., and having traced the history of the Crucifixion, and having explained the secret by which the lame man had been healed, &c., gathers himself up in this one supreme effort, and says, "Repent ye, *therefore*"—for no sentimental reasons, but on the historical ground of the ancient dealings of God with His people, and because of the culmination of those dealings in the recovery of the man who is standing there. 9. Then Peter's speech proceeds like a deep, broad river, and ends with "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you." Apostolic preaching was tender, but it kept itself to this one theme. And because it did so it turned the world upside down. Preacher, come back from all intellectual vagaries, romances, and dreamings, and stand to your one work of accusing men of sins, and then revealing the living Son of God, who came with the one purpose only of blessing men. Blessing and iniquity never can co-exist in the same heart. The iniquity must go, and the blessing will come. The wickedness must depart, and then angels will hasten into the soul from which it has gone out. (*J. Parker D.D.*)

The miracle at the Beautiful gate as a text:—It is a law of mind to look through its

dominant sentiments, and to subordinate all outward things to its dominant purposes. The apostles were full of thoughts pertaining to Christ, and they looked at all events through this medium. I. PETER TRACES THE MIRACLE TO ITS TRUE AUTHOR. 1. Negatively. He disclaims the authorship—a remarkable demonstration of his honesty. Had he taken the credit his social power would have been regnant at once, and would have had an immense following. And the people were willing to give it him. 2. Positively. He shows—(1) That their God had wrought the miracle. "The God of Abraham." (2) That their God had wrought it in order to glorify His Son—not merely to restore the invalid—and to attest the Messiahship of Him whom they had put to death. II. HE CONNECTS THE MIRACLE WITH THE NAME OF CHRIST. He had unbounded faith in Jesus, and had therefore power to perform works that should demonstrate His Divine authority; and the effects produced on the bodies of men were only faint types of the results which faith in Christ will produce on souls. Jesus is here presented—1. In the titles that belong to Him: (1) "Holy One and Just." (2) "Prince of Life." 2. In the history of their conduct. (1) They delivered Him up. (2) They denied Him, their Messiah, in the presence of a heathen scoffer. (3) This was done in opposition to the tyrant's wish. (4) They preferred a murderer. (5) They killed Him. 3. In His relation to God. God had—(1) Glorified Him. (2) Raised Him from the dead. (3) Overruled their conduct towards Him. Observe—(*a*) It was the purpose of the Father that Christ should suffer as announced in prophecy (Psa. xxii; Isa. liii. 3–10; Dan. ix. 26). (*b*) That the conduct of the Jews was made to subserve this purpose. So perfect is the control which the Monarch of the universe has over His creatures, that He makes the greatest rebels work out His grandest plans. (*c*) The Jews were ignorant of what they were doing. This was said not to extenuate their guilt, but to convict them of their folly and impotence. III. HE DEVELOPS THE CHRISTIAN PLAN OF RESTITUTION (vers. 19–26). Which—1. Aims at a thorough spiritual reformation as a necessary condition. This includes—(1) A change of heart. "Repent," &c. (2) Forgiveness of sins. "That your sins may be blotted out." (3) Invigoration of being. "When the times of refreshing shall come." 2. Is ever under the direction of God. "From the presence of the Lord" *i.e.*, by His providence. Observe—(1) That the invigorating influence of the scheme is from God. The times of refreshing are from His presence. (2) That the chief Agent of this scheme is from God. "He shall send Jesus." (3) That the revelation of this scheme is from God. "Which God hath spoken," &c. 3. Shall realise its end before the final advent of Christ. "Whom the heavens must receive," &c. Christ is now in heaven, but His work proceeds on earth, and when His work is accomplished He will come again, and not before. Pre-millennialism is a delusion. 4. Is the grand burden of prophetic truth. Observe—(1) The cases of prophetic reference to Christ. (*a*) Moses (ver. 22; *cf.* Deut. xviii. 15–19, LXX.). (*b*) Samuel (ver. 24). Moses and Samuel are the most distinguished names in Jewish history; but they are mentioned as samples. (*c*) All the prophets. We may not be able to trace references to Christ in each, yet in the majority of the prophetic books there are notes of hope struck from the harp of future ages, flashes of light from that bright day which Abraham saw afar. (2) The reason for these references (ver. 25). 5. Was first to be presented to the Jews (ver. 26). Christ was sent—(1) To bless, not to curse. Justly might we have expected malediction. (2) To bless with the greatest blessing. Iniquity is the greatest curse; to men from that is the greatest boon. (3) To bless the greatest sinners first. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Peter's sermon*:—How he denounces (vers. 14, 15); how he comforts and grows gentle (vers. 17, 18); how he pleads (ver. 19); how he promises (ver. 20); how he proves (ver. 21). It makes one think another Joseph has come to the pulpit (Gen. xlv. 4, 5). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Peter's address*:—I. JESUS PRESENTED. II. SINNERS CONDEMNED. III. PARDON PROCLAIMED. (*J. T. McCrory.*) *Peter's address*:—He—I. Begins (vers. 12–16) BY DISCLAIMING THE MIRACLE AS HIS OWN AND ASCRIBING IT TO CHRIST. II. Goes on (vers. 13–16), TO SET BEFORE THE PEOPLE THEIR SIN. III. Continues (vers. 19, 21) BY HOLDING OUT A HOPE OF MERCY. IV. Crowns all (vers. 19, 21) BY A SUMMONS TO REPENTANCE AND A CHANGED LIFE. (*Monday Club.*) *Peter's address*:—I. The exordium is stamped with HUMILITY (ver. 12). II. The body is marked by FIDELITY (vers. 13–18). III. The application is redolent of MERCY (vers. 19–26). (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *Peter's speech*:—This was in thorough consonance with the miracle. The people were excited, the apostles were calm; the people clamoured in darkness, the apostles spoke from the serene elevation of cloudless height; the people were startled by a spectacle, the apostles were controlled by law.

Was it not almost a mockery to ask the people why they marvelled? Are great works to be regarded without surprise? Are men to become familiar with the outstretched arm of God and to be calm? The power that can restore is one that can destroy; what if that dread power be preparing itself to strike? It would strike but once—its stroke would be death. Peter's speech may be regarded as showing—I. THE FALSE METHOD OF LOOKING AT HUMAN AFFAIRS—"As though by our own power," &c. 1. The visible is not the final. 2. Second causes do not explain life. There is a false method of looking at the results of—(1) Preaching. (2) Business. (3) Thinking. The man who does not look beyond second causes lives in distraction—in chaos! II. THE TRUE METHOD OF REGARDING EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS—"God hath glorified His Son Jesus." "Faith in His name hath made this man strong." That is the sublime explanation of all recovery, progress, abiding strength and comfort. Forget God, and society in every phase and movement becomes a riddle without an answer; its happiness is but a lucky chance—its misery an unexpected cloud. Regard life as controlled and blessed by the mediation of Christ, then—1. There is discipline in every event—design, meaning, however untoward and unmanageable the event. 2. A purpose of restoration runs through all human training. See how new, how beautiful, life would be, if after all its happy experiences we could say, "God hath glorified His Son Jesus"! Physical recovery; spiritual forgiveness; special interpositions; even death itself. III. THE ONLY METHOD OF SETTING MAN RIGHT WITH GOD. "Repent ye therefore," &c. The men who worked miracles spoke plain words about men's souls. There is no ambiguity here. Are the old words "Repent," "Be converted," being allowed to slip out of Christian teaching, and are we now trifling with the character and destiny of men? 1. Every man must repent, because every man has sinned. 2. Every man must be converted, because every man is in a false moral condition. IV. THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION—"To bless you," &c. 1. Where iniquity is there is no blessing. 2. Physical restoration is the type of spiritual completeness. Conclusion: 1. Two practical lessons arise out of the subject. (1) It is not enough to wonder at the mighty works of God. (2) God's glory is even identified with the well being of man. "Restitution," "Refreshing," "Blessing." 2. Peter's appeal rested upon a solid Biblical basis; Moses, Samuel, and all the prophets. God's message is the summing up of all the voices of holy history. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The threefold testimony of Peter concerning Christ*:—He is—1. The substance of all miracles (vers. 12, 17). 2. The Redeemer of all souls (vers. 18–21). 3. The accomplisher of all prophecies (vers. 22–26). (*Lisco.*) *True courage*:—If you see a man on the railway track before an approaching train, or if you see a child in the roadway in danger of being run over by a horse, you have no right to be silent and inactive. It is a sin not to speak out. If you see the first outbursting of flames in a neighbour's house it would be criminal not to cry "Fire." Truth cannot be kept to yourself without sin. Silence on popular forms of wrong doing is criminal silence. Silence concerning the duty of repentance and the possibilities of salvation in the presence of the impenitent and unsaved is not to be thought of by the true disciple of Jesus. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Why look ye so earnestly upon us as though by our own power and holiness we had made this man to walk.**—"*Show me the doctor*":—A man, blind from his birth, a man of much intellectual vigour, and with many engaging social qualities, found a woman who, appreciating his worth, was willing to cast in her lot with him and become his wife. Several bright, beautiful children became theirs, who tenderly and equally loved both their parents. An eminent French surgeon, while in this country, called upon them, and, examining the blind man with much interest and care, said to him:—"Your blindness is wholly artificial; your eyes are naturally good, and if I could have operated upon them twenty years ago, I think I could have given you sight. It is barely possible that I can do it now, though it will cause you much pain." "I can bear that," was the reply, "so you but enable me to see." The surgeon operated upon him, and was gradually successful. First there were faint glimmerings of light; then more distinct vision. The blind father was handed a rose; he had smelled one before, but had never seen one. Then he looked upon the face of his wife, who had been so true and faithful to him; and then his children were brought, whom he had so often fondled, and whose charming prattle had so frequently fallen upon his ears. He then exclaimed: "Oh, why have I seen all of these before inquiring for the man by whose skill I have been enabled to behold them! Show me the doctor." And when he was pointed out to him, he embraced him with tears of gratitude and joy. So, when we reach

heaven, and with unclouded eyes look upon its glories, we shall not be content with a view of these. No; we shall say, "Where is Christ—He to whom I am indebted for what heaven is? Show me Him, that with all my soul I may adore and praise Him through endless ages." *Credit due to Christ:*—The engineer of an express train sees, just ahead, a switch wrongly turned, and knows that if he cannot stop the train it will go over the bank and be destroyed. The stoker jumps out, but the brave engineer resolves to share the fate of the engine. Speedily he reverses the action, and with all his strength rolls back the wheels. Just as the fatal point is reached, they cease to move, and the train is saved! What meanness would it be, when unharmed, they reach the town, for the stoker to say, "We were in great danger, but by my presence of mind I saved the train." Yet what greater meanness is it for us to take the credit to ourselves when it belongs to Christ. God's influences come upon you in mighty tides, and you have no right to claim for yourself the glory which belongs to Christ. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Glory to be given to God:*—If I were a pupil of Titian, and he should design my picture and sketch it for me, and look over my work every day, and make suggestions, and then, when I had exhausted my skill, he should take the brush and give the finishing touches, bringing out a part here and there, and making the whole glow with beauty, and then I should hang it upon the wall, and call it mine, what meanness it would be! When life is the picture and Christ is the designer and master, what greater meanness is it to allow all the excellence to be attributed to ourselves. (*Ibid.*) *Glory due to Christ:*—That workman should do ill who having built a house with another man's purse, should go about to set up his own arms upon the front thereof. In Justinian's law it was decreed that no workman should set up his name within the body of that building which he made out of another man's cost. Thus Christ sets us all at work, it is He that bids us to fast, and pray, and hear, and give alms, &c. But who is at the cost of all? whose are all these works? surely God's. Man's poverty is so great that he cannot reach a good thought, much less a good deed; all the materials are from God, the building is His, it is His purse that paid for it; give but therefore the glory and the honour thereof unto God, and take all the profit to thyself. (*J. Spencer.*) *The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of men:*—1. The disposition of the crowd to make heroes of the apostles when they should have recognised in the miracle the power of God is an illustration of a common and not altogether mischievous instinct. When through foreign invasion or internal revolution the institutions of society are broken up, the blind submission which a whole nation sometimes yields to a popular chief, or the heir of an illustrious name, sometimes renders it possible to restore law and order. The intellectual supremacy of great men has also its uses; it preserves something like order in our intellectual life. It is the same with that conspicuous moral excellence which wins more reverential homage. The example of great saints has been a law to successive generations. 2. But there is hero-worship in the Bible. The Jews had their fighting men, poets, orators, statesmen, saints; but you find no disposition in the Old Testament to surround them with glory. The heroism of Wallace is commemorated in the national songs of Scotland, but there is no Psalm to celebrate the heroism of David. Nor does Jewish history exalt Moses as the history of Europe exalts Charlemagne, as the history of England exalts Alfred or Elizabeth. The genius of Isaiah does not receive the same kind of homage that we concede to the genius of Dante or of Shakespeare. There is the same absence of hero-worship in the New Testament. Luke never analyses the apostles' power nor dwells upon their personal qualities. That they were in any way remarkable is never intentionally suggested. The saints of the Old Testament and the saints of the New are transparent; God shines through them. 3. That is the Christian law. Are men steadfast in righteousness, fervent in charity, temperate, fearless? Do not glorify them; glorify God who made them so good. Are they wise? Glorify God who is the Giver of wisdom. Have they wrought great deliverances for mankind? Why look ye on them as though by their own power or holiness they had wrought these deliverances? Joshua fought well; but when the men of later days look back upon his victories, they say—"We have heard with our ears, O God," &c. And we find the greatest of the apostles saying, "I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase." This address of St. Peter's about the miracle is a vivid illustration of the spirit of both Testaments. 4. In recent times we have failed to maintain the traditional spirit of Judaism and of Christianity. We dwell on the goodness, temperament, and intellectual power of Peter, Paul, and John; and treat them as

ordinary historians treat sovereigns like Elizabeth and Cromwell, statesmen like Burghley and Walpole and Chatham. We inquire what there was in the men that accounted for the success of their work. No doubt their character and endowments had a direct relation to their work. But the gifts were from God; their power was His. In the spiritual, as in the natural life, when the blind receive sight, Christ gives it; when the lame walk, it is Christ who makes them strong. "His name through faith in His name, hath made this man strong" is the explanation of all wonders. 5. Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Baxter, Wesley, and Whitefield, what were they all but ministers of God by whom England or Europe came to know and believe a truer gospel? They should be transparent to us as the Jewish prophets and heroes, and as the Christian apostles were. Their noble qualities may be honoured as God's gifts; but still it was not their power or their holiness that first loosened and then broke the fetters by which the spiritual life of nations was bound; it was God who did it all. This holds true of all effective spiritual work in our own time. When men are prevailed upon to submit to Christ's authority, their great decision is not to be attributed to the impassioned eloquence, the vigorous argument, the pathetic entreaty of the preacher, nor to his personal sanctity, nor to his fervent zeal, but to the direct appeal of the Spirit of God to the conscience and to the heart. I. EVERYTHING SHORT OF THE ACTUAL CONVERSION OF MEN TO GOD WE CAN ACCOMPLISH WITHOUT GOD'S HELP; BUT FOR THAT WE ARE ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON HIM. 1. Canvass the town for children and you can fill your Sunday schools. Make the teaching interesting, let the rooms be pleasant, have cheerful singing, let the teacher be kindly and earnest, and you can keep the children when you have them, and enable them to pass excellent examinations in Scripture, and you can soften their manners, refine their tastes and elevate their morals. And if you are satisfied with this there is no need to pray. But if you want the children to love and serve Christ, the Spirit of God must be with you, and must work directly on the inner thought and life of your scholars. 2. Build an attractive church, get a good organ and choir, let there be an educated and earnest and eloquent man in the pulpit, and you can get a crowd of people to hear him, and he may produce a profound impression. But if men are to be moved to real penitence, and are to be inspired with real faith, the light and power of the Holy Spirit must reach individual hearts. 3. Many of us know what this means. For years we were familiar with truths which ought to have exerted irresistible control over us; we believed them; sometimes we felt their power. But we can remember when these very truths came to us as though we had never known them before. Perhaps we were listening to a sermon; but we had listened to sermons before, and to sermons not less impressive, and had listened unmoved; others heard the same sermon and it did not touch them. Perhaps we were reading a book; but we had read the book before, and it had never taught us what we now learnt, and others have read the same book and learnt nothing from it. What made the difference was a silent voice to which then, for the first time, we consented to listen. The Spirit of God came to us, and we suffered Him to lead us into the truth. II. OUR PERVERSE RELUCTANCE TO BELIEVE THAT ALL LIFE AND LIGHT COME FROM GOD IS INEXPLICABLE. We have to learn the same lesson over and over again in many forms; and we look back upon wasted years, and mourn that we had not learnt the open secret earlier which would have made all those years bright and noble and glorious success. 1. The lesson has to be learnt at the beginning of the religious life. We want the pardon of sin and that change which will render it possible for us to do the will of God. And we try for months, perhaps for years, to make our penitence for sin more agonising and our hunger and thirst for righteousness more keen, hoping that at last we shall have assurance and strength. It is all in vain; and then we discover what we knew from the first —that we can trust God to forgive us, and to inspire us with the life and power of the Holy Ghost: we trust Him and we pass into a new world. 2. But the lesson has to be learnt over again. We are now liberated from distress about our past guilt, and we know that we are the sons of God; but we find that we are unequal to many duties, and are overcome by many temptations. We subject ourselves to discipline; we pray; we think upon the transcendent motives to righteousness. It is all in vain. And then, again, we discover what a child might have taught us, what we always knew, that evil passions are to be burnt down to their very roots by the fire of God; that we are to be strong for holy living in the strength of God: we trust in Him once more, and as long as we trust we are kept in perfect peace. 3. But we have not learnt the lesson even now. We engage in Christian work.

We do our best, and hardly anything comes of it. Then once more we discover what we always knew; God and only God can bring right home to man the truth which is on our lips; we trust in Him, and then our work begins to prosper. III. ENTIRE DEPENDENCE IN GOD IS THE SECRET OF MINISTERIAL POWER. 1. For the work of the Christian ministry it is necessary to secure men of intellectual power, and men who have received the most thorough intellectual training. There is an Antinomianism in relation to Christian work not less fatal and far more subtle than the Antinomianism of the Christian life. Men have argued that since they can do nothing for their own salvation without God, they will attempt nothing. They might as well say that they can get no harvest without the rain of heaven and the heat and light of the sun, and that therefore they will not plough nor sow. And men have argued, that since Christian work can never achieve its highest results apart from the direct appeal of the Spirit of God to the souls of men, that learning and eloquence are worthless, and that we should leave everything to God. What insanity there is in this! 2. But among ourselves there are not many who are likely to be infected with this heresy. Our peril lies in the opposite direction. 1. We look back upon the great evangelists of the past, and think that if we could only have them with us again the most glorious days of the Church would return. If St. Bernard with his fiery passion, Luther with his audacity and immense moral force, Whitefield with his affectionate spirit and his charming eloquence, Wesley with his calm and resolute strength and his keen sagacity were here—then we might hope to see a great religious reformation in England. But what can we do? This self-distrust is only the specious cover of a want of faith in God. The illustrious preachers of former days are with us no longer; but the great Preacher of all is with us still—the only Preacher whose voice can raise the dead, whose power achieved all the triumphs which we connect with the famous and sacred names in the history of Christendom. Could these great saints come back again, it would not be to take the work from our hands because we are unequal to it, but to tell us that the same Spirit that was with them can still reach the hearts and consciences of men. 2. Even when we pray we sometimes forget that our trust should be in the Spirit of God. We ask that for the success of our work we may have a larger knowledge of the thought of God, a more fervent passion for the honour of Christ, a profounder solicitude for the rescue of men—wise and necessary prayers, but incomplete, fatally incomplete. For the prayers imply that if we ourselves had greater "power," greater "holiness," we should be successful. This was not what the apostles thought—"Paul planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase." 3. What is true of men is also true of ecclesiastical systems. It is not the perfection of its organisation that enables a Church to redeem men. There have been preachers in the Church of Rome, spite of its monstrous polity, who have done glorious work for mankind and for God. There is no "power," no "holiness" in Presbyterianism, in Methodism, in Congregationalism, in Episcopacy, to work spiritual miracles. The chief merit of an ecclesiastical system lies in the measure in which it is transparent and lets the glory of Christ shine through. 4. The same test is to be applied to all theologies and all methods of spiritual discipline. Do they break down everything that comes between the soul and Him who is the fountain of mercy and of power? (1) Tell me that my good works are necessary before Christ will forgive my sins, and you put months, and perhaps years, of painful moral struggle between me and Christ; tell me that He will forgive me at once, as soon as I come to Him, and Christ is already at my side at the very beginning of my new life. The doctrine of justification by works seems less likely to be true than the doctrine of justification by faith. (2) Tell me that to make sure of the Divine forgiveness I must confess my sins to a priest, and there is danger lest the priest should come between me and Christ. Tell me that I can confess to Christ, and then, again, Christ is near to me while I am in the agony of my repentance. The doctrine which affirms that the priest has power to absolve seems less likely to be true than the doctrine which denies it. (3) Tell me that the priest must consecrate the bread and the wine before the Church can have the real presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper, and then the Church must wait till the priest has pronounced the words of mystery and power. Tell me that wherever two or three are gathered together at the table of Christ, Christ is among them, and then there is no delay, either in His access to us, or our access to Him. Those who maintain the theory of sacramentalism seem less likely to be in the right than those who reject it. (4) But here, too, we must remember that the truest and simplest doctrine may be made a fetich, and may come

between the soul and Christ. If you think that any doctrine is so true and so simple that by its own "power" or "holiness" it will regenerate and save men, you will be separated from Christ as completely by the soundest belief as other men are by the most corrupt. IV. THE TRUTHS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING SHOULD TEACH US TO BE OF GOOD HEART ABOUT THE WORK, WHICH IS CHRIST'S RATHER THAN OURS. We are conscious — all of us — that we have little strength to do any noble service for God and for mankind. The consciousness deepens as we grow older. But neither our weakness nor our unworthiness is a reason for despondency. If we had to measure our own strength and earnestness against the difficulties of our work we might despair; but our confidence is in the strength and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The results of our labour will transcend all that could be anticipated from the labour itself. This kindles our enthusiasm, and is a motive for strenuous exertion. If we are only perfectly loyal to Christ, even we may do very much for the rescue of men. The true minister of Christ does not stand alone; he is in alliance with Christ Himself; this is the secret of the minister's power. But very much depends on the sympathy he receives from his Church. You remember the famous description of an orator. It was not his voice alone that spoke; his eyes, his face, his hands, his feet—they were all eloquent. And a Church is a living body. The minister is its voice; but, if he is to speak to any purpose, the voice must not come from a body struck with death, with fixed features, glassy eyes, and rigid limbs; there would be something ghastly in that. Eyes, hands, face, feet, must all have life and passion in them, and must all speak; they must share the sorrow and alarm with which the minister tells men of the infinite evil of sin, and the rapture with which he triumphs in the infinite love of God. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

Vers. 13–16. **The God of Abraham . . . hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up.**—*St. Peter's testimony*:—I. THE VINDICATION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM A JEWISH STANDPOINT. "The God of Abraham," &c., not God generally considered, but God in relations acknowledged by the Jews—the God of Abraham, as such, had glorified Jesus. If this were the case, then Judaism was logically at an end. The God of Abraham, in a sense, had glorified Moses, and had so terminated the patriarchal dispensation, which every good Jew would acknowledge was thereby legitimately closed, and religion thus advanced a stage. Now the same God had glorified the great Teacher whom Moses had predicted (ver. 22), under whom the legal dispensation must pass into the Christian. When that Teacher came He said, as Moses might have said, "I come not to destroy, but to fulfil," and when He died He exclaimed, "It is finished." By glorifying Jesus, therefore, God put His seal upon the further advance which religion had made out of Judaism into Christianity. A true servant of the God of Abraham was thus logically a Christian. II. THE GLORIFICATION OF THE HUMILIATED CHRIST. 1. No depth of Christ's degradation is here left unexplored. (1) He who claimed to command legions of angels was "delivered up." (2) He who demanded the profoundest homage and the complete allegiance was "destined." (3) This denial came from "His own" for whom He had done so much, and to whose loyalty He had every right. (4) It took place in the presence of a heathen governor, whose jurisdiction was thereby acknowledged, and in spite of even his protestations. (5) And to crown all the release of a murderer was demanded, while the Prince of Life was handed over to the Cross. 2. The glorification reversed all this. Deep as Christ descended it was higher that He rose. (1) Jesus was released from a more terrible than Roman tyranny after Jews and Romans had been allowed to do their worst. (2) The belief and confession of the apostles then, and of adoring Christians since, more than compensates for the denial before Pilate—the inveterate denial which has since characterised the stubborn race. The grand testimony of Paul before Felix, Festus and Nero makes atonement for the shameful denial of Caiaphas and his rabble before the Roman judge—not to mention the innumerable testimonies all through Christian history which, "before princes and governors" have been borne to Christ. (3) That Cross to which Christ was nailed gave Him power to give life to dead humanity, and that power He now wields from the throne of heaven. III. THE INVETERATE DEPRAVITY OF THE HUMAN HEART — the denial of the Holy One and the preference of a murderer. Here sin is seen in its ghastliest development, but the ghastliness lies in the circumstances. We are horrified at the Crucifixion, but the Crucifixion was only a detail, the denial was the essence of the act. And this denial of Christ, and the preference of one who is "a murderer from

the beginning" is normal. The sinner is doing to-day that the only logical outcome of which is crucifixion, and letting loose the devil on his life. This is what is being done on a large scale, and the same is being done on a smaller. What is history but the record of the preference of murderers to deliverers? What was the reward of Socrates, of Savonarola, of Cromwell, of the early Christian martyrs, and later Protestant confessors? IV. THE IMPOTENCE OF SEEMING MIGHT AND THE POWER OF APPARENT WEAKNESS. The power of Rome was at its greatest, and the malignancy and craft of Judaism most intense and concentrated, and both were exerted to crush the Prophet of Nazareth. And both said that He was crushed—killed upon a cross and shut up in a carefully guarded tomb. And then it might seem was that poor, weak Prophet at His weakest and poorest. Who could help Him now? Himself. "The Prince of Life," "could not be holden of death"; and that "stone cut without hands" has crushed in succession the mightiest despotisms that have dominated the race. And that the weakness of God is stronger than the power of man, let the history of all great and beneficent monuments bear witness. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The leader is killed but the cause flourishes. The thinker starves; but his thoughts become the potent forces of the world. The inventor dies of a broken heart with the products of his genius lying in ruins around him; but his invention lives, and helps to make civilisation what it is. V. THE POTENCY OF FAITH—of all things the weakest in the world's estimate. Are there not circles in which faith and folly are convertible terms? And on what does this faith rest? On what the world would call an accomplished failure. "Stark imbecility"—then says the world. But here, again, God chooses the weak things to confound the mighty; for in this early instance of its exercise it accomplished what all the science of the world before and since has failed to do; it gave a man perfect physical soundness. And here, and here alone, is the cure for personal, social, literary, commercial, national unsoundness. Everything else has failed. Let this be tried on a large scale, and faith in Christ will give "perfect soundness" to a crippled world. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Men denying the Just One*:—I. The PERSON against whom the outrage was perpetrated. Men thought Him a mere Jew; and yet He possessed a universality and fervour of love inconsistent with the Jewish character generally. Men regarded Him as only a carpenter; and yet He evinced a strength of mind and soul which enabled Him to grapple with Divine things altogether beyond the grasp of the Jewish doctors. Men thought Him a mere man; and yet there were profound depths and majestic heights about His nature, which entirely separated Him from the common herd. 1. He looked like a man; but His words proved Him more. 2. He looked like a man; but His works proved Him more. 3. He looked like a man; but His life proved Him more. II. The NATURE of the outrage that was enacted. 1. It was the culminating act of human transgression. 2. It was sin against their highest good. III. The OUTCOME of it all. God turned the curse into a blessing. "He made the wrath of man to praise Him." 1. From the death of Christ came deliverance from the curse. 2. From Christ's death came the magic force which conquered man's rebellion. Sinai's terrors and the Levitical law failed to evoke the deep affection and fervent devotion of men. But the Cross of Christ succeeded. (*Homilist.*) *The rejection of Christ*:—How terrible an evil this was Peter showed—I. BY THE TESTIMONY OF A HEATHEN. The sentiment of common humanity was against this treatment. How often has the conduct of professors shocked the prayerless. II. BY THE NATURE OF THE THING ITSELF. This is set forth in an awful gradation. The rejected One was—1. Spotless. 2. Righteous. 3. The Prince of Life, without whose interposition no man could have had life. 4. God's own chosen Servant. Those who in rejecting Him had repudiated purity, justice, needful grace, and indispensable Divine service, might well prefer a murderer. What is reserved for those who now reject Christ with clearer light and further knowledge? III. BY GOD'S MANIFEST OPPOSITION TO IT. 1. Men put Jesus to death, but God raised Him from the dead. 2. Men cast Him out, but God declared Him to be His accepted servant by the Resurrection. Men thought the Crucifixion would put an end to His influence, but God augmented that influence by the energy of the Holy Ghost which empowered the apostles. The argument showed that they had been fighting against God, and that God had completely overcome their evil course. IV. BY THE KEEN REBUKE WHICH THE APOSTLES WERE DIRECTED TO KEEP UP. "Whereof we are witnesses." (*W. Hudson.*) **Ye killed the Prince of Life.**—*The Prince of Life*:—The title suggests—I. THAT JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE. 1. Of natural life. "In Him we live and move," &c. It is only

for Him to say to dead Lazarus "Come forth," and He proves Himself to be the source of life. Let us not, then, deny Him the use of the faculties He has given. 2. Of spiritual life. If we admit that we cannot give ourselves physical life, how absurd to think we can give ourselves spiritual life. And yet multitudes are under this delusion. It is only by Christ's almighty fiat that the "dead in trespasses and sins" can "hear the voice of the Son of God and live." 3. Of eternal life. Jesus is the life of all the joy, the glory, and the love of heaven. II. THAT LIFE CENTRES IN HIM AS REGARDS SENSIBLE ENJOYMENT OF IT. The common comforts of Christ without Christ are monotonous and miserable; but if Christ be enjoyed in them, if He be eaten with our bread, received with our water, breathed with our air, then life has a blessedness and a dignity conferred upon it which the world knows nothing of. III. THAT HE SUSTAINS THE LIFE HE GIVES. "He giveth power to the faint," as well as life to the dead. Does the life of faith, of hope, of love, wane through trial and loss and disappointment? Christ has inexhaustible resources of vitality for their invigoration. Dost thou fear lest thou shouldest lose thy little life in the fierce conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil? Hear His promise, "They shall never perish." IV. THAT HE BRINGS LIFE TO FRUITION. "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. V. THAT HE DOES ALL THIS IN A PRINCELY MANNER. "I am come that they might have life . . . abundantly." (*J. Irons.*)

We are witnesses.—*Sworn testimony*:—In the days of George Stephenson some scientists proved conclusively that a rail-train could never be driven by steam power; but the rushing expresses have made all the world witnesses of the splendid achievement. It was proved conclusively that a steamer could never cross the Atlantic; but the work was done, and the passengers on the Cunard and the Inman Lines are witnesses. There went up a guffaw of laughter from some of the wise men at Professor Morse's proposition to make lightning his errand-boy, and it was proved conclusively that the thing could never be done; but now the news of the wide world, put in your hands every morning and night, has made all nations witnesses. In the time of Christ it was proved conclusively that it was impossible for a man to rise from the dead. The disciples took the witness-stand to prove to be true what the wiseacres of the day had proved to be impossible. Now let me play the sceptic for a moment. There is no God, for I have never seen Him with my physical eyesight. Your Bible is a pack of contradictions. There never was a miracle. Your religion is an imposition on the credulity of the ages. There is a suppressed feeling which would like to cry out in behalf of the truth of our glorious Christianity. "We are witnesses!" If this world is ever brought to God, it will not be through argument, but through testimony. You might cover the whole earth with learned treatises in defence of religion—you would not convert a soul. In order to have faith we must have testimony, and if five hundred men get up and tell me that they have felt the religion of Jesus Christ a joy, an inspiration, I am bound as a fair-minded man to accept their testimony. I want to put before you three propositions, the truth of which I think you will attest with overwhelming unanimity. I. "We are witnesses" THAT THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IS ABLE TO CONVERT A SOUL. You say conversion is only an imaginary thing. We know better. People laughed at the missionaries in Madagascar because they preached ten years without one convert; but there are thirty-three thousand converts in Madagascar to-day. People laughed at Dr. Judson because he kept on preaching five years without a single convert; but there are twenty thousand Baptist Christians in Burmah to-day. People laughed at Dr. Morrison for preaching seven years without a single conversion; but there are fifteen thousand Christians in China to-day. People laughed at the missionaries for preaching at Tahiti and in Bengal years without a single conversion; yet in all those lands there are multitudes of Christians to-day. But why go so far to find evidence? "We are witnesses." We were so proud that no man could have humbled us; we were so hard that no earthly power could have melted us. But one day a power seized us, from which we tried to wrench ourselves, but could not. It flung us on our knees, and when we arose we were as much changed as Gourgis the heathen. He went into prayer-meeting with a dagger and a gun, but the next day was found crying: "Oh, my great sins! Oh, my great Saviour!" For eleven years he preached the gospel of Christ to his fellow-mountaineers, and the last words on his dying lips were, "Free grace! Oh, it was free grace!" There is a man who was for ten years a hard drinker. The dreadful appetite had sent down its roots until they were interlinked with the vitals of body, mind, and soul; but he has not taken any stimulants for two years. What did that? Not temperance societies. Not prohibition laws.

Not moral suasion. Conversion did it. "Why," said one upon whom the great change had come, "sir, I feel just as though I were somebody else!" There is a sea captain who swore all the way from New York to Havana, and from Havana to San Francisco, and when he was in port he was worse than when he was on the sea. What power was it that washed his tongue clean of profanities, and made him sing to the glory of God? Conversion. There are thousands who are no more what they once were than a water-lily is nightshade, or a morning lark a vulture, or day night. II. "We are witnesses" THAT THE GOSPEL HAS THE POWER TO COMFORT. When a man has trouble the world says: "Now get your mind off this; go out and breathe the fresh air! plunge deeper into business." What poor advice. Get your mind off of it! when everything reminds you of what you have lost. They might as well advise you to stop thinking. Take a walk in the fresh air! Why, along that very road your dead wife once accompanied you. Go deeper into business! Why, she was associated with all your ambition, and since she has gone you have no ambition left. And yet you have been comforted. How was it done? Did Christ come to you and say: "Get your mind off this," &c. No. There was a minute when He came to you, and He breathed something into your soul that gave peace, so that you could take out the photograph of the departed one and say: "It is all right; she is better off; I would not call her back." There are Christian parents who are willing to testify to the power of this gospel to comfort. Your son had just graduated and was going into business, and the Lord took him. Or your daughter had just left the school, and you thought she was going to be a useful woman and of long life, but the Lord took her. Or the little child came home with the hot fever that stopped not for the agonised prayer, or for the skilful physician. What has enabled you to stand all the trial? "Oh," you say, "I threw myself at the feet of a sympathising Saviour, and when I was too weak to pray, or to look up, He breathed into me a peace that I think must be the foretaste of that heaven where there is neither tear, nor a farewell, nor a grave." Is there power in this gospel to soothe the heart? There comes up an answer from comforted widowhood, and orphanage, and childlessness, saying—III. "We are witnesses" THAT RELIGION HAS POWER TO GIVE COMPOSURE IN THE LAST MOMENT. We are very apt when we want to bring illustrations of dying triumph to go back to some distinguished personage—to a John Knox, or a Harriett Newell. Such illustrations are of no use to me to-night. I want you for witnesses. I want to know whether you have seen or heard anything that makes you believe that the religion of Christ gives composure in the final hour? "Oh yes," you say; "I saw my father and mother depart." How did they seem to act? Were they very much frightened? Did they take hold of this world with both hands as though they did not want to give it up? "Oh, no," you say; "she had a kind word for us all, and there were a few mementos distributed among the children, and then she told us how kind we must be to our father in his loneliness, and then she kissed us good-bye and went asleep as calmly as a child in a cradle." What made her so composed? Natural courage? "No," you say, "mother was very nervous; it was because she was so good." Here are people who say, "I saw a Christian brother die, and he triumphed." And some one else, "I saw a Christian sister die, and she triumphed." Conclusion: You see I have not put before you to-night anything like guess-work, but affidavits of the best men and women, living and dead. Two witnesses in court will establish a fact. Here are not two witnesses, but millions. If ten men should come to you when you are sick and say they had the same sickness, and took a certain medicine and it cured them, you would probably take it. Now, suppose ten other men should come up and say, "We don't believe there is anything in that medicine." "Well," I say, "have you ever tried it?" "No, I never tried it, but I don't believe there is anything in it." Of course you discredit their testimony. The sceptic may come and say, "There is no power in your religion." "Have you ever tried it?" "No, no." "Then avaunt!" (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong.**—*The power of faith*:—Faith in the name of Jesus is faith in Himself. The result of its exercise here was a manifest continuance of what Jesus "began to do" in the way of healing, and on the same condition. I. FAITH MOVED PETER TO SEEK THE POOR MAN'S GOOD. Faith had united the apostle to the Saviour, and brought him into sympathy with His benevolent designs. The love of "Christ still constrains those who enjoy it by faith" with like results. II. FAITH ENABLED PETER TO PRONOUNCE THE MAN'S CURE. Peter believed the promise, "The works that

I do shall ye do also"; that Jesus, though out of sight, was able and willing to cure the cripple; and, acting under a gracious impulse which that faith secured, he bade the man be whole. It was faith that made this conduct consistent; but without faith it would have been an act of presumption, and even of blasphemy. When God is taken at His word and fully trusted, there is exercised a confidence which enables its possessor to defy all adverse power. This is the faith which overcomes. III. FAITH FURNISHED AN EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY WHICH EVEN ITS ADVERSARIES WERE OBLIGED TO ADMIT. The cripple had been seen and known, and his cure had taken place in the presence of all. The faith exercised, being invisible, might have been talked of long without becoming the means of any one's full persuasion; but here was an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace. What could be said against such an evidence? And what can be said at this day against the evidence presented in conversions and holy lives? But to some even this evidence is as nothing. They love not the Lord; they have no sympathy with His gracious purposes; and they lack that spiritual discernment which can come only in connection with the faith which is the evidence of things not seen. (*W. Hudson.*) *Influence of the name of Christ*:—While infidelity is boastful, it is refreshing to note such facts as these: Eighty years ago, William Carey wrote from Bengal: "The people here hate the very name of Christ, and will not listen when His name is mentioned." To-day the Rev. W. R. James writes from Serampore: "By all means see to it that the name of Christ is plainly printed on the title-page of every book or tract that we print. We have now arrived at that point of time in the history of Christian missions in Bengal, when the name of Christ is more of a recommendation to a book than otherwise. Very often have I heard natives ask for a 'Life of Jesus Christ' in preference to any other book." *The influence of faith*:—Two men are wandering over the mountains in Nevada. They find curious veins running through the rocks One of them studies these veins with the interest of a geologist, and chisels out a few specimens for his cabinet. The other, who is an expert in ores, believes that he has found a silver mine of great richness. When his companion has passed on with his specimens in his pocket, he returns and stakes out a claim. He perfects his title to that claim. He works it, and becomes a millionaire. Now was it the mine that enriched this man or his faith in the mine? Evidently his faith. And so it is the world over. It is not enough to know of a good thing and to be able to grasp it. We must believe in it and take possession of it. There is, of course, no value in faith, if what we believe is worthless. A lunatic, whom we knew years ago, imagined that he was a millionaire. He would take you into his little chamber, and after carefully locking the door, would open drawers full of bits of paper on which he had written figures for various amounts. He would say, "Here are bills and bonds worth millions of dollars." When asked why he did not use them to buy what he needed, he would reply, "No, no, they are too precious." That man's faith was great, but it was baseless. It was like the faith of worldly men in material things. They are heaping up riches that are as worthless for the soul as his bits of paper were for the wants of this life. "*Jesus*":—The old Greek orators, when they saw their audiences inattentive and slumbering, had one word with which they would rouse them up to the greatest enthusiasm. In the midst of their orations they would stop and cry out, "Marathon!" and the people's enthusiasm would be unbounded. My hearers, though you may have been borne down with sin, and though trouble, and trial, and temptation may have come upon you, and you feel hardly like looking up, methinks there is one grand, royal, imperial word that ought to rouse your soul to infinite rejoicing, and that word is Jesus. *Faith in a name*:—When John Howard wanted to visit the prisons of Russia he sought an interview with the Czar. He explained his object, and the Czar gave him permission to visit any prison in his empire. It was a long and weary journey; he knew how jealously the prisoners were guarded, and how averse the gaolers were to permit any one to visit them. But he set out in perfect confidence. When he arrived at a prison he would make his application, and was prepared for the refusal which invariably came. Then he produced the Czar's mandate, and the prison doors were immediately opened to him. He had faith in that name, and it was justified by the results. **But now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it.**—*Apostolic reassurance for the desponding*:—The apostle seems to say, "Ye have rejected Christ, and this is a great evil; ye know not the privilege of faith in Him, and therefore your loss is great; but still do not despair." In order to reassure his hearers he—I. REMINDED THEM OF THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. God had shown what

the prophets had set forth; the prophets as with one mouth had declared the mind of God; and of every part of revealed truth it was to be remembered that "the mouth of the Lord had spoken it." This, in the judgment of a Jew, was a firm foundation, and this foundation remains to this day. But what was now to be built upon it? II. INDICATED THE KEY-NOTE TO WHICH ALL THE PROPHETIC HARMONIES HAD BEEN TUNED. It was "that Christ should suffer." Then it would become evident that salvation through the death of Jesus was not a new doctrine invented by His disciples. One who began to apprehend this would quickly discern new meaning in the leading events of the last few months. III. AFFIRMED THAT GOD HAD ACCOMPLISHED HIS OWN WORD IN REGARD TO JESUS BY UNCONSCIOUS AGENTS. They had ignorantly pursued Him to the Cross. This was some mitigation of their guilt, though not an excuse for their sin. But in all their error and evil conduct God was bringing His own purpose to pass. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, and His death and resurrection made and declared the way of life open to all who should repent and believe. Wicked men had not meant to accomplish this, but God had wrought His sovereign will. Peter's hearers must now feel that God had been infinitely better to them than they had been to themselves. IV. TENDERLY HINTED THAT THOSE WHO, WHILE DOING WICKEDLY, HAD UNCONSCIOUSLY FULFILLED THE WILL OF GOD WERE STILL OBJECTS OF BENEVOLENT CONCERN. Being of the stock of Abraham, they were the children of the covenant. Peter's endearing word "brethren" contained the suggestion of great blessing. There are still those who need encouragement, and this can best be obtained from the Word of God, which sets forth the Saviour of men accessible to all penitent inquirers. (*W. Hudson.*) *The guilt of unbelief*:—1. An act of cruelty excites both compassion for the sufferer and indignation at the actor, and perhaps the latter feeling is the stronger. Your sympathy with the martyr is almost lost in your anger at the persecutor, because, perhaps, you do not make sufficient allowance for him. He may have been acting under a mistaken sense of duty. "Whosoever," says our Lord, "killeth you shall think he doeth God service." Much, too, may have to be attributed to the temper of the times. Many a man who now only argues against heresy would have been for the stake when the rights of conscience were less understood. Men are apt to condemn the Jews—and very justly—for their crimes, but Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and here St. Peter corroborates this. He did not hesitate to charge on them the crime of having "killed the Prince of Life," but, as though he feared driving them to despair, he used words which seem in a measure to extenuate their crime. But we shall find that this plea of ignorance does not apply to modern unbelief. 2. What right had Peter to make this allowance? He must be understood to mean that the Jews were not acquainted with the character and dignity of Christ. They did not crucify Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, but as a blasphemous pretender. But were they innocent in that their ignorance was involuntary and unavoidable, arising from the insufficiency of the evidence, or from feebleness of understanding? St. Peter did not imply this, otherwise he had impeached the whole of Christ's ministry, and represented His miracles as defective credentials. Undoubtedly the ignorance was blameworthy. They might and ought to have known that Jesus was the Christ, and ignorance is only excusable when we do not wilfully neglect the means of obtaining information or cherish prejudices which bar out the truth. Yet it is probable that we use the Jews too harshly in respect of the crucifixion. It was not in that, but in rejecting the final evidence afforded by the descent and miracles of the Holy Spirit, that they committed the unpardonable sin. 3. It may be strange to us that, though He did so many mighty works, Jesus was rejected by His countrymen. But we do not sufficiently consider their powerful prejudice in favour of a Messiah attended with all the pomp of earthly dominion. It is true they were to blame for cherishing this prejudice, since due search into prophecy would have dispersed it; but it is also true that it was contracted not through shutting their eyes altogether against prophecy, but through fixing them so intently on one part that they overlooked all others. They associated with Christ's first coming the characteristics of the second. So, then, the Jew had not sinned against all the evidence that Christ meant to afford—he had sinned against a suffering Redeemer, but not against a triumphant; and so the sin was something that admitted of extenuation—a sin against evidence as yet incomplete. The ignorance was not excusable; it was only not unpardonable. 4. Here comes in the case of modern ignorance and unbelief—the sin of those who, by rejecting Christ, "crucify the Son of God afresh." Can the plea of Peter be urged in favour

of modern infidels and of those who nominally believe in Christ without the consent of the heart? Remember that the Jew had not the whole of the evidence before him; but we have the whole before us. The Jew crucified Christ whilst His appearance was that of an ordinary man; we crucify Him afresh now that He has assumed His Divine glory. Christ had not then given the most touching proof of His love, nor was it understood even by the apostles that His death was a propitiation; but now the whole plan of redemption is set forth, and we who reject Him crucify afresh a loving Saviour, and one who sends down His Spirit to persuade us to be reconciled. What did the Jew in comparison with this? And how absurd to plead an extenuating ignorance! How can anything be known if this is not? Or, if the ignorance be not impossible—besotted as men are by the cares of the world, or the pleasures of sin—men might, if they would, know what they do. Ignorant they may be, but unavoidably and innocently ignorant they cannot be. Therefore "he that believeth not shall be damned." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

In His name:—In the New Testament special potency is attributed to the utterance of a name, especially the name of Jesus. Some of these I will enumerate. Jesus promises that He will be with every two or three who assemble in His name (Matt. xviii. 20). He promises to help those who pray in His name (John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23, 24, 26). It appears, also, that devils were cast out by the use of the name of Christ. This, at first sight, seems like magic. For magic is essentially this, a power obtained over the supernatural world by the use of charms and talismans. In the story of the "Forty Thieves," the door of the cave opened by enchantment to whoever used the right word, and said, "Open Sesame," whether it was said by the robbers or by the good man. If, therefore, we believe that by merely putting the word "Christ" at the beginning or end of our prayer, we shall obtain some blessing from God which He would not otherwise bestow, we degrade Christianity to the level of a magical process and demoralise it. Now, I think it quite clear that the whole spirit of Christianity and teaching of Jesus is utterly opposed to any such magical notions. According to Jesus, men were saved, not by the use of His name as an outward formula, but by obeying His precepts and doing good actions. In the Sermon on the Mount He distinctly rejects any such merely outward use of His name (Matt. vii. 22, 23). Elsewhere He says, "Many deceivers shall come in My name." "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord! shall enter," &c. What, then, does He mean when He says that God will hear us and help us if we pray "in His name"? To answer this question we must understand the peculiar way in which the Jews regarded the name of any person. A name with us is an arbitrary appendage, having no relation to a man's character. But to the Jew a name carried a mysterious power, expressive of what was deepest in the parent's heart, and capable of influencing the child's destiny. If the man or woman appeared to develop new qualities, the name was changed. So Jesus added to Simon's name that of Peter—a rock: and Saul's name, which meant "a destroyer," was changed to Paul, which means "a worker." Thus it happened that to come in the name of any one meant to come in his spirit. So John the Baptist was said by Jesus to be the Elijah that was to come, because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. When the Lord said to Moses, "Thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name," it means that the Lord knew his character, and that it was equal to his work. Whenever trust "in God's name" is spoken of, it means trust in His wisdom, or His love, or His providence. When it is said that "a good name is better than riches," it means a good character. When Jesus says that "he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward," it signifies that he who is in sympathy with the spirit of the prophet, and helps the prophet on that account, shall have the reward of being himself filled with the same prophetic spirit. And so when He tells them to "pray in His name," He means to tell them to pray in His Spirit; to "cast out devils in His name" is to cast them out by the power of a Christian spirit. There are a great many devils in the world—devils of pride, of vanity, of lust, of dishonesty, of falsehood, of cruelty. Now, if we attack these devils in the name of the devil we can do nothing If we meet pride with pride, falsehood with cunning, selfishness with self-will—if we try to put down evil with evil, we shall never succeed. We must cast out devils in the name of Christ—that is, "overcome evil with good." There is a wonderful power which belongs to him who allies himself to truth and right. When we "overcome evil by good," then only do we cast out devils in the name of Christ. And so, to pray "in the name of Christ" does not mean to put the name of Christ at the end of our prayer, and say, "We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord"; but it

means when we pray to be in Christ's Spirit; to forget our vanity, selfishness, egotism; to desire the good of others; the coming of God's kingdom of love. If we pray thus, we may ask what we will and it shall be done unto us, for we shall ask only what God wills. To meet together "in the name of Christ" means to meet for the purpose of doing good and getting good. Where the spirit of Christianity is there is the coming of Christ. Therefore, when Peter said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise and walk," he did not utter these words as a charm. But he thus openly avowed his faith in the Master he had denied a few weeks before, and the man was healed, not by the magic of words, but by the wonderful power which attends a sincere faith in God. Not the word of Jesus, but the faith in Jesus cured him. Not the word, but the thing, makes the power of Christianity. When I see a man walking the road of duty, faithful to every obligation; true and just, when those around him are false; when I see him hold his principles of honesty, though the world grows dishonest, standing by his purity, no matter what comes; then I say that this man is casting out devils "in Christ's name." And when I see a youth, beset by temptations from without and within, making a brave struggle to be true to his mother's counsels and his father's honour, and saying to the Satan who tempts him to go astray, "Get thee behind me," I say that this boy also is fighting devils "in Christ's name." And when I see a young girl, in the midst of a happy home, surrounded by love, called to leave life and all its hopes, and go to meet the great mystery, and going tranquilly, peacefully, trustingly, comforting all around her with the comfort wherewith she herself has been comforted by God, I say that she is going to heaven in the strength "of Christ's name." The name of Christ stands for immortality, for He is the Resurrection and the Life. The name of Jesus Christ means Saviour and King. Jesus means Saviour, Christ means King, and the whole means that He who saves men is the King of men. It means that love is to conquer hatred, that truth is mightier than falsehood, life than death, eternity than time. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*)

Vers. 19–21. **Repent ye therefore and be converted.**—*Apostolic exhortation:*—I. THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED. 1. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one's mind. It has been translated "after-wit," or "after-wisdom"; it is the man's finding out that he is wrong, and rectifying his judgment. But although that be the meaning of the root, the word has come in Scriptural use to mean a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it, the love of what once we hated, and the hate of what once we loved. Conversion means a turning from, and a turning to, from sin to holiness, from carelessness to thought, from the world to heaven, from self to Jesus. The words in Greek are "Repent and convert," or, rather, "Repent and turn." It is an active verb, just as the other was. When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him, that was repentance; but when he was clothed and in his right mind, that was conversion. When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and on a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was repentance. When he set out and left the far country and went to his father's house, that was conversion. 2. Repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit. And yet Peter says, "Repent, and be converted"! "How reconcile you these two things?" We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in them to do so, not because we depend upon any power in our earnestness or in our speech, but because the gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Ghost operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live—while we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious energy makes his ankle-boues to receive strength—while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a Divine power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out and the man is restored. The power lies not in the sinner, not in the preacher, but in the Holy Spirit. II. THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND. "Repent ye therefore." The apostle was logical. It was not mere declamation. What, then, was the argument? 1. The Jews put Christ to death. And this is spiritually true of you. Every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God. Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, so far as you can, put God out of His throne, and disown the authority which belongs to His Godhead. When Christ was nailed to the tree, sin only did then literally and openly what all sin really does in a spiritual sense. Will you not repent if it be so? While you thought your sins to be mere trifles, you would not

repent; but now I have shown you that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world. What, then, if the authority of God should be no more owned in the universe—where should we all be? What a hell above ground would this world become! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it. 2. He whom they had slain was a most blessed person—one so blessed that God the Father had exalted Him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of love to men; and yet men put Him to death! Now God does not deserve that we should rebel against Him. If He were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery, there might be some excuse, but, when He acts like a tender father to us, it is a cruel shame that we should live in daily revolt against Him. You who have not believed in Christ have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in Him, seeing He is so good and kind. 3. While they had rejected the blessed Christ they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, thou hast despised Christ, and what is it thou hast chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Thy lust? What devilish things to set in the place of Christ! What have thy sins done to thee that thou shouldst prefer them to Jesus? What wages have you had? Oh, then, this is a thing to be repented of. 4. Christ whom they had despised was able to do great things for them. "His name through faith in His name," &c. If you will trust Jesus to-day, all your iniquities shall be blotted out. Believing in Him, He can make thee blessed. And is not this cause for repentance? With hands loaded with love He stands outside the door of your heart. Is not this good reason for opening the door and letting Him in? 5. "I wot that through ignorance ye did it." As if He would say, "Now that ye have more light, repent of what you did in the dark." You had not heard the gospel, you did not know that sin was so bad a thing, you did not understand that Jesus was able to save to the uttermost. Now you do understand it. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now "commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Greater light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you. "Now ye have no cloak for your sin." Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the light, I say as Peter did, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." III. WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil, and just flattened down the wax, and the account entirely disappeared. Now, he that repents and is pardoned is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven that there is no record of his sin left. If we blot out an account from our books, the record is gone, but there is the blot; but on the wax tablet there was no blot. But sin cannot be removed except there be repentance and conversion. This must be so, for—1. It is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? 2. It would not be moral; it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them. Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, "You can hope to be saved and yet live as you list." But whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy," but there is no promise for the unrepenting. "He who goeth on in his iniquity and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." IV. REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE FUTURE, for my text says, "When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." 1. He that repents and is converted shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. When the prisoner first gets out of prison, when the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground! when the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ! But you do not know, and cannot. Oh, "repent and be converted," then, and you will. 2. Perhaps these "times of refreshing" may also relate to times of revival in the Christian Church. The only way in which you can share in the refreshment of a revival is by your own repenting and being converted. Of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a corpse. 3. The text means, according to the context, the second advent. Jesus is yet to come a second

time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall His coming be. His Church shall revive and be refreshed. But woe unto you who are not saved when Christ cometh, for the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Repentance, a change of mind*:—The original "a change of mind" or "an after-thought." Now that is exactly what the Holy Spirit produces in the convicted soul. "There is," says the wise man, "a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Now it is the work of the Holy Ghost to dispel this false view of our way, and to bring us to see things as they really are; and when we yield to His convicting influences, the light of truth flashes into our soul, and we come to ourselves. Now we see things from an entirely different point of view, and cry out against ourselves —against our folly and our sin. "What a fool I have been!" cries the awakened and repentant soul. "So many years I have lived in this world, and yet have I never really begun to live at all! My whole past has been a wasted existence. I have been simply exercising my faculties in furthering my own destruction!" The first step in a real repentance is taken when we open our eyes to see things as in the light of the Holy Ghost, when we escape from the long delirium of a life lived under the influence of the great deceiver, and thus undergo a change of mind with respect to God and to sin, and the value of things seen and things eternal. (*W. Hay Aitken.*) *Repentance not mere sorrow for sin*:—It is a common thing to find people confusing between repentance and sorrow for sin, and this leads sometimes to most distressing results. I remember once insisting very strongly upon the importance of making this distinction. The next day an intelligent Christian man said, "Ah, Mr. Aitken, if I had heard that sermon of yours last night when I was seeking salvation, I believe it might have saved me long weary years of misery, during which I was really and earnestly desirous to give myself to God, and yet fancied I had no right to come to Christ, because I could not feel the sorrow for sin that I thought I ought to feel." Now it is quite possible to experience a good deal of sorrow for sin without any real repentance, and it is equally possible to have a sincere repentance, and yet to be ready to cry out against ourselves because we don't feel as much sorrow for sin as we think we should. Indeed this impatience at our own hardness of heart and lack of true spiritual sensibility is often a feature of true repentance. But observe that on no less than ten occasions men are directed to repent, the word being for the most part employed in the imperative mood. Now it is obviously absurd to suppose that we should be thus commanded to produce within ourselves a certain state of feelings; for obviously our feelings constitute just that element in our nature over which we have least control. We cannot command our feelings at will, and therefore it is simply ridiculous to command persons to do so. It would be folly were I to say to you, "Feel very happy," or "Feel very sorrowful." Again, we find repentance expressly distinguished from godly sorrow. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance . . . not to be repented of." Now, if it may be the cause of repentance, it must be distinct from repentance, for an effect must always be distinct from its cause. It does not, however, always stand in this relation. Godly sorrow may sometimes flow from a real repentance, just as in another case it may proceed and lead up to it. Of this we see an instance in David, who poured forth his soul in the sorrowful language of the fifty-first Psalm long after he had both repented and had been forgiven. (*Ibid.*) *Repentance and its results*:—Peter had now proved that the people were in an evil case, and pointed out that the only way of escape was by repentance and conversion. But the apostle urged this duty on three special grounds. I. IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT ATTAIN PROPER RELATIONS TO GOD. "That your sins may be blotted out." There stood against them an account by which they were bound, and that account could not be cancelled except through repentance. Then God would not treat them as sinners. The reason for this condition is obvious since God can do nothing that is morally unfit. To attain this right relation to God is to enter the way of ultimate personal perfection. II. IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT CEASE TO STAND IN THE WAY OF BLESSING DESIGNED FOR THEIR FELLOW-MEN. "That the times of refreshing," &c. The world was full of sin and weariness. God knew all about it, and had promised seasons of refreshment. They were to be granted "from His presence," by His decree. But He would bless men through men. Repentance and conversion were therefore required. So now. Domestic piety will be promoted by those who penitently turn to God. The purification and quickening of particular churches will be aided by such as mourn over sin and forsake it. And the multiplication of purified and quickened churches would soon work mighty changes in Christendom. III. IN ORDER

THAT THEY MIGHT PROMOTE THE COMING OF THE GREAT FINAL MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER. "And He shall send Jesus." (*W. Hudson.*) *What is repentance?*—It is, right about face! I think these soldiers understand that expression. Some one has said that every one is born with his back to God, and that conversion turns him right round. If you want to be converted, and want to repent, I will tell you what you should do. Just get out of Satan's service, and get into the Lord's. Leave your old friends, and unite yourself with God's people. I shall be gone on a journey shortly. If, when I am in the train, a friend should say, "Moody, you are going in the wrong train." "My friend," I should say, "you have made a great mistake; the guard told me this is the right train. You are wrong, I am sure you are wrong. The guard told me this is the right train." Then my friend would say, "Moody, I have lived here forty years, and I know all about the trains. That train is the wrong one." He at last convinces me, and I get out of that train and get into the right one. Repentance is getting out of one train and getting into the other. You are on the wrong train; you are in the broad path that taketh you down to the pit of hell. Get out of it to-night. Right about face! Who will turn his feet towards God? "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" In the Old Testament the word is "turn." In the New Testament the word is "repent." (*D. L. Moody.*) *True repentance is practical:*—I heard one say, "It is an awful thing to be a slave to the winecup; I wish that I had never tasted it. The first opportunity I get I will turn over a new leaf." He did not say what the new leaf would be, but he was going to do any quantity of reforming work. Alas! he never did anything at all, for he was drunk again the next day. A beautiful penitent to look upon; but a wretched hypocrite in due time, for he returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. If you repent of sin, down with sin! In God's name, down with sin! When repentance is hearty it is practical. When a man truly turns to God, he turns away from sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *We must repent now:*—Years ago, on a summer afternoon, I stood on a little harbour-wall and saw two vessels trying to make the entrance. They were lying in a narrow channel, and, since there was not water enough to keep them up, they were lying on their side. But far out the tide began to turn, and one wave after another passed under them, and every wave in the channel made the water deeper; and I saw in a little while that the water was twelve feet deep in the harbour, and the green, foaming waves rushed in like a millrace. I looked again towards the narrow passage, and saw on one vessel that they had taken advantage of the wind at the right moment, and on that first vessel they floated in on the full tide. Upon the other vessel they were not on the alert, though sailors do not often make that mistake, and when they tried to make the harbour the tide had turned, and they could not. The water grew shallower; they gave up the attempt; and gradually the vessel heeled over, and lay just as before on the bank of sand. At nightfall I went down again, and in the dark gloaming I saw the forsaken vessel, and I prayed that I might not miss the tide which God gives to our souls, nor quench His Spirit within my heart. (*J. Watson, M.A.*) *Repentance implies the utter forsaking of sin:*—Every time a man takes a journey from home about business, we do not say he hath forsaken his house; because he meant, when he went out, to come to it again. No; but when we see a man leave his house, carry all his goods away with him, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in another place, never to dwell there more, this man may very well be said to have forsaken his house indeed. Thus it is that every one of us are to forsake sin so as to leave it without any thought of returning to it again. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but sometimes you may find him sober, and yet a drunkard he is, as if he were then drunk. Every one hath not forsaken his trade that we see, now and then, in their holiday suit; then it is that a man is said to forsake his sin, when he throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it, with a purpose never to open any more unto it. Ephraim shall say, "What have we to do any more with idols?" (Hos. xiv. 8). (*J. Spencer.*) *Be converted:*—Let us—I. CONSIDER THE STATE OF THE SOUL BEFORE CONVERSION 1. The Bible speaks of it as a state of death. Death is so offensive in physical nature that we are compelled to bury even our beloved friends; and had we eyes and hearts to see and feel the realities of the spiritual world a soul dead by sin would be more offensive than a decaying body. We bury the physical dead, but it is impossible to put away a dead soul from society. The world would have been better without you, for as a corpse putrifies the air we breathe, so a dead soul is a corruption which gives forth evil and prevents good. A dead soul may—(1) Have great influence. Your influence might have been exerted for the good of society, but you have lived only

to enjoy your own self, and so instead of being a helper of the highest interests of mankind, you are drawing sap from the human tree and are yielding no fruit. (2) Be a moral person. You have not committed any crime, but you are dangerous to society. Your goodness is an argument to a bad man against being "religious," and the children of your family say, "Why, father never goes to church, nor reads the Bible, nor prays—why should I?" People will follow a moral sceptic because they wish to have an excuse for sin. (3) Be an openly wicked man. 2. How can it be known whether I am in this state of death or not? If you be in this state there will be—(1) No growth of goodness in your character. Some persons appear to grow more beautiful every year, but others become more wicked as they grow older. (2) No strength to do holy things. You may do as you like with a dead body; it can make no resistance, and likewise a dead soul is helpless in the hands of Satan. (3) Troubles and obstacles which will cause you to despair. In such a case men, but mostly women, rush to intoxicating liquor, and their last state is worse than the first. A dead soul is one "having no hope, and without God in the world." II. INQUIRE, WHAT IS CONVERSION? 1. It is a new life. You may see advertisements offering for sale an ingredient which improves the breath. Now conversion does not improve the old sinful breath, but it gives a new holy breath within the soul. Just as God by His Providence gives us at birth physical lungs with which to breathe the air about us, so His Holy Spirit creates spiritual lungs in our soul by which we breathe in the atmosphere of the kingdom of God. 2. A second incarnation of God. The first was in Christ, the second in the soul of His disciple. God is not limited to the body of Jesus. He shall also fill every believer with all His fulness. Socrates, speaking of true friendship, describes it as one spirit in two bodies. Now conversion is one Spirit in God and also in you. 3. A moral transformation. It is that change which makes a man who has loved sin to shun it as he would a poisonous serpent. 4. A birth for humanity. It is to realise that you are born to be the brother or the sister of every one, and to prove it by your active goodness. It is that union with God which unites us to our fellow-man. III. I would URGE YOU TO BE CONVERTED: because—1. Unless converted you are at war with God. How shameful to be at war with a loving Father! 2. The gospel assures you of pardon. 3. The Lord loves you. 4. God can convert you. (*W. Birch.*) *Conversion*:—I. WHAT CONVERSION IS, AND WHEREIN IT LIES. The conversion to be treated of is not—1. An external one, or what lies only in an outward reformation of life and manners, such as that of the Ninevites, for this may be where internal conversion is not, as in the Scribes and Pharisees. 2. Nor is it a mere doctrinal one, nor a conversion from false notions before imbibed to a set of doctrines and truths which are according to the Scriptures; so men of old were converted from Judaism and heathenism to Christianity. 3. Nor the restoration of the people of God from backsliding when they are in a very affecting and importunate manner called upon to return to the Lord (Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22; Hos. xiv. 1–4); so Peter when he fell through temptation and denied his Lord, and was recovered from it by a look from Christ, it is called his conversion (Luke xxii. 32). But—4. The conversion under consideration is a true, real, internal work of God upon the souls of men. (1) In the turn of the heart to God, of the thoughts of the heart. (2) Conversion lies in a man's being turned from darkness to light; the apostle was sent to turn them from darkness to light (chap. xxvi. 18), that is, to be the instrument or means of their conversion by preaching the gospel. (3) From the power of Satan unto God as in the above place (chap. xxvi. 18). Satan has great power over men in an unconverted state. (4) Conversion lies in turning men from idols to serve the living God; not merely from idols of silver and gold, of wood and stone, as formerly, but from the idols of a man's own heart. (5) Conversion lies in turning men from their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ. (6) Conversion lies in a man's turning to the Lord actively under the influence of Divine grace; and by this phrase it is often expressed in Scripture as in Isa. x. 21; Acts xi. 21; 2 Cor. iii. 16. II. THE CAUSES OF CONVERSION. 1. Not by the power of man; what is said of the conversion or turning of the Jews from their captivity is true of the conversion of a sinner that it is not by might nor by power, that is, not of man, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts (Zech. iv. 6). 2. Nor is conversion owing to the will of man; the will of man before conversion is in a bad state; it chooses its own ways, and delights in its abominations, it is in high pursuit after the desires of the flesh and of the mind. 3. God only is the author and efficient cause of conversion. 4. The moving or impulsive cause of conversion is the love, grace, mercy, favour, and

good will of God, and not the merits of men. 5. The instrumental cause or means of conversion is usually the ministry of the Word. III. THE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSION. Lost sinners redeemed by Christ are the subjects. (*Theological Sketch-Book.*) *Conversion* :—1. All through the New Testament one great saving change, involving entirely new relations with God on the one hand, and with sin on the other, is represented as indispensably necessary, and one only, and it is to this great change that we give the name of "conversion." The word, particularly in the original, seems to be a suitable one to indicate it, looking at it from man's point of view, because it connotes a turning round and a turning towards, with a view to resting in. The word too, in common use, suggests just such a radical change. We speak of "converters" that change iron into steel; of converting a sailing ship into a steamer, or an old-fashioned gun into a breechloader. 2. This great saving change is represented as the true starting-point of the spiritual life. It is therefore not a life-long work, for if all our days be consumed in making the start, what time is there left to that journey? The locomotive requires to be placed upon the turn-table, and to have its position reversed, before it can proceed on its return journey. But if the whole four-and-twenty hours are consumed in getting the engine turned, what is to become of that journey? And where is the station-master that would be content to go on all day asking, "Is that engine being turned?" or would feel content on hearing that the process was going forward? I. CONVERSION IS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH, BUT DISTINCT FROM, REPENTANCE. Repentance represents the negative, conversion the positive, element. Repentance consists in the honest repudiation of the old, with the accompanying feelings of regret and humiliation; but conversion consists in the acceptance of the new, with all natural, spiritual exultation in God. Repentance is the discovery of the fatal disease and the mournful confession of it. Conversion is the appropriation of the remedy, the believing touching of the hem of His garment, with the firm persuasion, "If I may but touch I shall be whole." Repentance brings us down to the dust; conversion sets us amongst the princes and makes us inherit a crown of glory. II. CONVERSION IMPLIES AN ORIGINAL ATTITUDE OF AVERSION. "An evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God." And it is the presence of this attitude, more or less fully developed, that makes conversion necessary. Now this attitude is inherited from our first parents. Hence our position differs from theirs in this, that they had to fall beneath their created nature in order to turn from God, whereas we have to rise above our inherited nature to turn to God. Then, again, as it was by a definite moral act, an act of the will, that man turned away from God, so it is only by a definite moral act that man can be converted to God. And hence it is evident that no ordinance can render the conversion to God superfluous or unnecessary. This is surely a sufficient answer to those who allege that conversion cannot be necessary in the case of those who have been baptized as infants, unless they have lapsed into open sin. On the other hand, however, it must frankly be admitted that there are many of whose conversion there can be no reasonable doubt, who yet cannot remember in the past any aversion, and hence cannot point to any distinct conversion. They seem to have loved and trusted their Saviour so long as they could remember anything. Again, there are others who, although they can recall a condition of aversion, cannot point to the hour of conversion. This seeming indefiniteness with some, no doubt, arise from temperament, or perhaps to defective teaching. Anxious souls, who wish to come to Christ instead of being directed at once to the Cross, are told that they must wait for certain experiences. But whatever be the true explanation we shall do wisely in thinking less of the accidents and more of the essence of this great change. The question is not when and how did your conversion take place? but, Has it taken place? III. MUST CONVERSIONS ALWAYS BE SUDDEN? You hear not a few affirm with sufficient dogmatism that they don't believe in sudden conversions except those on a death-bed. I must say, for my own part, that these are the only kind of sudden conversions that I am sceptical about. But my answer is not that all conversions are in their outward appearances necessarily sudden, but that there is no reason why they should not be so. If this matter of turning back again from sin and self to God can be settled promptly, none would wish to see it protracted; for it is only after this point has been passed that real religious experience begins. If conversion can be immediate, there is surely no sense in desiring that the process should be protracted. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. If conversion were one and the same thing as reformation, this might well require time; but if it be a mighty spiritual revolution wrought in man by the Holy Ghost, then it is by no means surprising that it should be completed as rapidly as Naaman's cure.

Let us turn to our text. IV. CONVERSION IS AN IMPERATIVE DUTY. The text is a direction couched in the form of a command. "Be converted." It may occur to you to object, Who can convert himself? If I am to be converted, it is God that must convert me. Now there is a certain sense in which this is quite true. The regenerating power can only come from God; but, on the other hand, man as well as God has his part in producing this great change, and it is to man's part in it that the word conversion almost invariably refers. Only once is the word used in the Passive Voice, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," &c. In that passage the actual moral change is referred to. And it is well that the word should thus be used once lest we should lose sight altogether of the necessarily close connection that must exist between the turning on our part and the change wrought by God on His part. But in the present passage the word is active, "turn again." Many awakened souls are kept back from Christ because they cannot make themselves feel the great change that they think they ought to experience. They wait and hope and pray that they may be converted, instead of turning right round so as to face the God from whom they have turned away. Now to all such the voice of God through similar passages would seem to say, "Turn ye even unto Me, saith the Lord." V. CONVERSION IS THE CORRELATIVE OF AVERSION. Now in this aversion three distinct steps may be discerned. The first is taken in the aversion of the inner eye, the looking away from God; the next in the aversion of the will when we say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." We prefer to assert our independence; and then follows the aversion of the desires and affections. Now there are three corresponding steps in conversion. We begin to turn Godwards when we allow ourselves to recognise our inward needs, and turn from the empty cisterns that can hold no water, and confess, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God." That may be called the conversion of the desires. We take our second step in the submission of our wills and our decision to yield ourselves to God, and here usually the struggle is the most severe, and when this point is gained the hardest part of the battle is won. But there is a third step, the conversion of our inner vision. For even when our desires are fixed on God and our wills yielded to God, seeking souls are still not unfrequently kept in darkness just because they will turn their eyes to anything else rather than God. They will look at themselves, at their feelings, at their ill deserts, at their own faith, or rather at their want of it, at other people, and their experiences rather than at God. Now when St. Peter calls upon us to turn right round and face towards God, it is in order that we may so fix our gaze upon God as to discover what there is in God for us, and rest at peace in the joy of that discovery. But it would be of little use to call upon us to turn unless such an object were presented to us as should attract and retain our gaze when once we direct our vision towards it. The thought of God and of His holiness repels and even appals the awakened soul. But here it is that we learn the value of the gospel. It was not enough that Christ should bid us return to our Father; it was necessary that He should constitute Himself the way. VI. Thus we see THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST AND CONVERSION. The result of that work is, that the sinner finds in God the very thing he has despaired to find in himself. Gazing on the Cross, he makes the astonishing discovery, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." Indeed, we may say that in the wondrous vision we find that which converts all our thoughts of God. He who gave His Son for me must needs be worthy of my confidence and love. "Look unto Me," I hear Him say, "and be ye saved," and unto Him I look and find that there is indeed "life for a look at the Crucified One." And this look is conversion; for everything about that Cross seems of a kind to produce a change of thought and feeling that might be called a conversion. I love my sins, but I look at that Cross, and I see in the agony and death of the Sin-bearer what sin really is, and what it must bring me to if I cling to it; and thus my view of sin is changed. I looked upon many of my sins as mere trifles; now I see how exceeding sinful sin must be in the sight of Him who is its Judge, and thus my estimate of the gravity of sin is changed. I once thought of God as though He were hard, austere, and unsympathetic; now I see how tender, as well as infinite, is His love. Thus my judgment of God is changed. I used to love to think of myself as my own master, but now I see what man is without God, and so my views of myself and of my relations to God are changed. Thus in turning myself to God I turn my back upon my old self. The old is passed away, left crucified on yonder Cross, and all things are become new. But more than even this. Not only am I changed in all my views and feelings, but I am converted to God; that is to say, I am restored to

my proper relations with God. Between Him and me there is now nothing but love, and so I am now in a position to enjoy His fellowship and to be strong in His power. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *Conversion is*:—I. A CHANGE. A Scotch lassie, who heard Mr. Whitefield preach, was so impressed that she underwent a change of heart. When she presented herself before the Church to be admitted as a member, the deacon said to her, "My child, is your heart changed?" She replied, "Sir, I do not know whether it is my heart that is changed or the world, but I feel that something is changed; things are different now." When a man is "converted" he undergoes a change. Instead of being a servant of Satan, or living merely to please himself, he becomes a servant of God, and lives henceforth to try to please God. II. A SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE; not merely in name, but in reality. A certain clergyman was preaching to black people. One of the men seemed much impressed, and said he would be a Christian. So the clergyman baptized him, made the mark of the cross on his forehead, and called him by a new name—"Adam." A week or two afterwards the clergyman had reason to believe that this man was not doing as he ought, and amongst other things that he was not fasting on Fridays. Accordingly, one Friday, he went to the man's cabin, and, as he expected, smelt the savoury scent of roasting beef. The clergyman said, "Adam, you are breaking the law of the Church; you ought to be fasting; that is beef, not fish." The man replied, "Well, massa preacher, you cross me and call me a new name, and say I am Christian. So, massa, I take de beef and cross him, and put him in de water, and call him fish." That is about as great a change or conversion as one man can give another. No rite can convert a living soul. Conversion is a personal act between the soul and God. III. A CHANGE WITHIN WHICH TRANSFORMS THE OUTWARD LIFE. IV. AN ENDURING CHANGE. A man can get a new "rig-out" for about half-a-crown in Petticoat Lane. You can get a coat and vest for a shilling, a pair of "unmentionables" for sixpence, a shirt for fourpence halfpenny, a collar and tie—such as they are, for a penny, a hat—what you call a "pot," for threepence, a pair of stockings also for threepence, and you may get a cane and a ring for a penny! And if you are good at bargaining, you may have a gold-like breast pin with a thing like a diamond thrown into the lot for good luck. While you are in the dark shop the whole thing looks moderately "respectable." The articles are not new certainly; nor second-hand; they are about tenth-hand. But when you walk out with your purchases on your back—well, you had better have a good-sized sheet of brown paper to wrap yourself in, for I suspect a decent gust of wind might blow them away altogether, or a shower of rain might dissolve them. The fact is the things are not substantial; they won't stand wear and tear. Man-made conversions are like those cast-off clothes—they are unsubstantial—they will not wear well. (*W. Birch.*) **That your sins may be blotted out.**—*The blotting out of sin*:—This is the only passage in which the verb is directly connected with sins. The image that underlies the words (as in Col. ii. 14) is that of an indictment which catalogues the sins of the penitent, and which the pardoning love of the Father cancels. The word and the thought are found in Psa. li. 10; Isa. xliii. 25. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Sin blotted out*:—A little boy was once much puzzled about sins being blotted out, and said, "I cannot think what becomes of the sins God forgives, mother." "Why, Charlie, can you tell me where are the figures you wrote on your slate yesterday?" "I washed them all out, mother." "And where are they, then?" "Why, they are nowhere; they are gone," said Charlie. "Just so it is with the believer's sins—they are gone; blotted out; 'remembered no more.'" "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." *Obliteration more than pardon*:—I have spilled the ink over a bill and so have blotted it till it can hardly be read, but this is quite another thing from having the debt blotted out, for that cannot be till payment is made. So a man may blot his sins from his memory, and quiet his mind with false hopes, but the peace which this will bring him is widely different from that which arises from God's forgiveness of sin through the satisfaction which Jesus made in His atonement. Our blotting is one thing, God's blotting out is something far higher. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **When the times of refreshing shall come.**—*Times of refreshing*:—Such times—I. ARE NEEDED. Spiritual life is dependent on direct Divine agency. But as there may be life without health or vigour, so in the believer and the Church there may be real life but great languor, and when such is the case times of refreshing are needed. This Divine influence is often compared to rain, &c. (Isa. xxxv. 1; xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 26; Isa. lxi. 11), and the result of its exertion is fertility and growth. 1. Personal piety will be deep and personal activity energetic. These

are here connected because they should never be separated. Piety without activity will degenerate into spiritual selfishness; activity without piety will be formal and mechanical. As spiritual life generally begins in the closet, it is there that it will be invigorated and revived. As the healthy man requires more sustenance and has a larger appetite than the invalid, so there will be a craving for spiritual food. As in health we crave for the fresh air of heaven, so we shall often ascend the mountain-top of communion with God. And this revived piety, taking cognisance of eternal realities, will prompt to corresponding activity in the cause of Christ. As such times are the result of spiritual influence, by that influence the love of Christ will constrain to holy and individual devotedness. 2. Domestic piety will be more manifest. If the flame of closet devotion be dim, that of the family altar cannot be bright; but when times of refreshing come the members of the household will catch the spirit of devotion, and those for whom parents have long prayed will give evidence of spiritual life. Here, perhaps, more than anywhere are such times to be desired. Worldly amusements, literature, principles, conformity, have in too many instances sapped the foundations of family religion. 3. Social piety will be revived. What dulness and formality there often is in our Church organisations and gatherings, and what a falling off in consequence. But get a season of refreshing, and the pastor will speak direct from the mount of communion a message from God, and Church officers and members, instead of availing themselves of any trifling excuse, will eagerly throng to the services and zealously work all the departments. Equally great will be the change in the habitual converse of Christians. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth will testify of spiritual things. 4. Sinners will be converted and added to the Church. This has always been a characteristic of such seasons. Witness Pentecost, *e.g.* II. MAY BE EXPECTED. We are not left in doubt as to the ultimate triumph of the truth. Christ yet will draw all men unto Him. But Christ works by agents, and since the success of the gospel is in proportion to the vigour of the agents, we are led both by the nature of things and the Divine promises to expect a renewal of spiritual invigoration from time to time. And as the fruitful showers of one year will not suffice for the next, but each has its own supply, so we are led to expect for each generation, and for each believer in his successive phases of experience and work, fresh supplies of reviving grace. And the recurrence of such seasons may be expected from the analogy of the past. They have always been sent when the Church's need has been great. It was so after the Exile (Haggai i. 14), in the days of the Baptist, at Pentecost, in Italy under Savonarola, in Germany and Switzerland, at the time of the Reformation, in America under Jonathan Edwards, &c. (Isa. li. 9). III. MUST BE SOUGHT. While we refer their recurrence to the sovereignty of God, yet He has indicated the course which we have to pursue. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them." But if we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us, "Repent ye, therefore, . . . that the times of refreshing may come." This exhortation is needed by dead Christians as well as dead sinners. IV. WILL CHANGE THE WHOLE ASPECT OF THE CHURCH. There will be—1. Clearer knowledge of Divine truth. 2. More manifest spirituality. 3. Greater joy. (*R. C. Pritchett.*) *Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*:—I. WHAT THEY ARE. The phrase might be read—1. "Times of cooling," in allusion to the custom of labourers, especially in Eastern countries, of retiring to the shade during the heat of the day to recruit their exhausted strength. And what are these hallowed hours, whether on the week days or on the Sabbath, but times of refreshing, affording an agreeable pause amid the busy scenes of life, enabling us to retire from the burden and heat of the day to "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?" Here grows the "tree of life," of which the grateful Church exclaims, "I sat down under His shadow with delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste." Here gently rolls "the river of the waters of life," "whose streams make glad the city of God." Here, like Nathanael under the fig-tree, we can review all "the way in which the Lord our God hath led us," and *that* is refreshing. Here we can contemplate the unfolded mysteries of redeeming love, and *that* is refreshing. We can inspect the work of grace in the heart, and *that* is refreshing. We can look into the promises and examine the covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure," and *that* is refreshing. We can think of heaven, and *that* is "refreshing." 2. Times of refection. The renewed soul has an appetite as well as the body, and the blessings of salvation are adapted to our necessities. "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of

fat things," &c. To these rich provisions we have constant access. Here is food for all, and the whole in pleasing variety. Here is "the sincere milk of the Word" for "babes in Christ," &c. 3. Times of humidity, softening, and moisture, when the genial showers or refreshing dews saturate and revive the thirsty bosom of vegetation. Apt emblem of the refreshing influences of the Holy Ghost, which "come down like rain upon the new-mown grass, and as the showers which water the earth." And how welcome these heavenly showers! How they refresh the soul of the minister, who, having sown the good seed of the Word, is anxious to see "the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear!" How they revive the spirit of the people whose graces open and expand like "trees planted by the rivers of water!" What a happy effect they have upon our religious institutions! What a sweet perfume, as a "savour of life unto life," do they produce, as you find in a garden after a refreshing shower! And what a beautiful bow upon "the cloud of our mercies as in the day of rain," do they impress, when they descend in concert with the Sun of Righteousness, like "the bow of promise mid the storm." II. THE SOURCE WHENCE THEY SPRING—"The presence of the Lord." This renders them doubly valuable. The gift is enhanced by the love which we bear to the Giver, especially when we recollect His motive, the way in which our supplies have been procured, the medium through which they descend, the impossibility of procuring others of equal worth, our own unworthiness and "the fulness of joy and the pleasure for evermore" of which they are the pledge and the earnest. They come "from the presence of the Lord," as the pool of Bethesda was rendered medicinal by the presence of the angel; as the bitter waters of Marah became sweet by the influence of the tree which was cast into them; or as the sorrowing disciples were made glad by the presence of the Redeemer. That the blessed God is present with His people whenever and wherever they meet together in His name, requires no proof. He has promised, "in all places where I record My name will I come unto you and bless you." III. THEIR IMPORTANCE. What would the earth be without the genial showers which water it but a desert, whatever our skill or labour? Thus it would be in our Churches without Divine influences. Ministers might "break up the fallow ground, and scatter the precious seed," but it would not germinate. "We should labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought." But when the Spirit is poured out from on high, "The wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose." The Holy Ghost is the fruitful source of vital religion. Without His fructifying graces, instructions, invitations, warnings, judgments, mercies, miracles—are all unproductive. But when He descends, "like showers of heavenly rain," the simplest means produce the noblest effects. And as the Holy Spirit produces vital religion where it has never existed before, so He revives it where it has withered, strengthens it where it is weak, and beautifies, expands, and causes it to unfold where it has been contracted and confined. IV. HOW THEY ARE TO BE OBTAINED. 1. By a conviction of their value. This is requisite to give a proper impulse to our solicitude. 2. By fervent and persevering prayer. We must ask in order that we may receive. For the blessings which we require the Lord will be sought unto. And "if ye, being evil," &c. 3. Prayer must be followed by an avoidance of those inconsistencies and declensions which "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." (*W. B. Leach.*) *Religious revivals times of refreshing* (text, and Psa. lxxxv. 6):—I have selected these words—I. As THE DEEP UTTERANCES OF OUR LONGINGS FOR A REVIVAL IN OUR OWN LAND. 1. Do we not feel the need of it in ourselves individually? Religion begins with a man's self and works outward. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Instead of saying, "What lack I yet?" or "thanking God you are not like other men," rather cry, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust. O quicken Thou me, according to Thy Word." Are some secretly flattering themselves that they have not lived in open ungodliness? "Ah, but where is the blessedness ye once spake of?" What report from thy closet? thy scene of daily labour? the house of God, the Sunday school? the chamber of the sick and dying? "Wilt Thou not revive me again?" 2. Is there no need for a revival in our families? Have you set your house in order? Do you walk within your house with a perfect heart? Is there here no too indulgent Eli? Is there no parent troubled with an Absalom? Like Jacob, are you suffering from concealed idols? Difficulties are felt in these modern times by many a parent; but let the "land mourn, every family apart," and "the voice of rejoicing and salvation shall be in the tabernacles of the righteous." Let the family Bible, the family altar, and the family pew, secure the family blessing. 3. Is there no need for a revival in our Churches? But let us beware of that con-

soriousness which can see nothing but faults, and even feel a pleasure in exposing them. The ears of the world are open to these aspersions, and out of their mouths they condemn us. Mark you the example of Christ in the addresses to the Churches in Asia: where possible, praise is blended with censure, and praise has the precedence. 4. Our eyes naturally turn to our nation at large, and we inquire if no revival be needed. What is our national character, habits, and reputation abroad? Look at your senate, universities, markets, factories, press, theatres, prisons, the sins and miseries of your streets, by night as well as by day, and will you not "sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof"? The deep conviction of national sins precedes a revival. II. THE SOURCE OF A RELIGIOUS REVIVAL. Whence is it? "From heaven, or of men?" What more perplexes the worldly philosopher than to see crowds of men, women, and children rushing to the prayer-meeting. On the Day of Pentecost "they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." But all this leaves the phenomenon of a genuine religious revival unexplained. That a real revival, as tested by the fruits of repentance and a holy life, is the work of the Spirit, we boldly aver. We argue this from the change effected. I appeal to the history of the Church. Say, whether you refer to the conversion of the three thousand, or of individuals, as the malefactor, Zaccheus, Saul of Tarsus, or the jailor, whether in every case it was not as with Lydia—"The Lord opened the heart." If any fact were necessary to confirm this view, it would be not only the notorious sinners that have been converted, but the humble and despised agents and agency employed. But let us appeal to the Scripture itself. What say apostles of their own success? "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves." "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." "Not by might, nor by power; but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." And the same Voice is heard saying, "And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing," &c. III. THE JOYOUSNESS OF ITS CHARACTER. 1. This time is one of "refreshing" from its effects on our own minds. Some of you may be awakened to discover the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and to be alarmed for its consequences. See the penitent at the footstool of mercy beseeching the royal forgiveness; mark the proclamation of the Sovereign's favour, and watch the change on the suppliant's countenance! "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." How different now the heart of the suppliant to the trembling with which he approached to present the prayer—"Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities!" Was it not so with the jailor when he "rejoiced with all his house"? Was it not so with the men "pricked in their heart"? "They gladly received his word." 2. Is it not a time of refreshing when we witness large accessions to the Christian Church? Roused to a feeling of compassion for the perishing world, the Church unites her joy on earth with the "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." But if the rescue of one sinner be such joy, what rejoicing when at these seasons Satan's empire is shaken to its centre, and he himself trembles for his kingdom? 3. Then the Churches themselves are so purified and separated from the world, that they not only believe in, but experience the communion of saints. The charity of every one of them towards each other aboundeth. Instead of being idlers, they are in "labours more abundant"; instead of being troublers they are peace-workers of Zion. 4. But we have not reached the height of the joy until we have associated religious revivals with the manifested glory of God. (*J. S. Pearsall.*)

Revivals:—A revival is the spring of religion, the renovation of life and gladness. It is the season in which young converts burst into existence and beautiful activity. The Church resumes her toil and labour and care with freshness and energy. The air all around is balmy, and diffusing the sweetest odours. The whole landscape teems with living promises of abundant harvest of righteousness and peace. It is the jubilee of holiness. A genial warmth pervades and refreshes the whole Church. Showers of "vernal delight and joy" descend gently and copiously. Delightful influences are wafted by every breeze. Where the dead leaves of winter still linger, the primrose and the daisy spring up in modest loveliness. Trees long barren put forth the buds of beauty and power. The whole valley is crowned with fragrant and varied blossoms. Forms of beauty bloom on every side, and Zion is the joy of the whole earth. If the spirit that renews the face of the earth is a spirit of beauty in the elegance of the germs, the tints of the buds, the verdure of the foliage, the splendour of the blossoms, and the witching glories of the matured

fruits of Nature, "how great is His beauty" when acting out His lovely and holy perfections in revivals of religion. (*T. W. Jenkyn, D.D.*) *Revivals : True test of:*—The divinity of revivals may be tested by their effect on the family. If they turn the heart of the parents towards their children, and the heart of the children towards their parents, they are of God. If they increase the love of the family; if they cause the tendrils of love to draw the members of the family closer and closer to each other; if under their influence blossoms and clusters of love hang in abundance on the family-tree, then you may be sure that it is the true religion that is revived. But if the family has no blessing, and the dew is on the Church, you may be in doubt whether it is a Divine blessing, or any blessing at all. If religious excitements make home dull, and parental and filial duties and relations tame or tasteless, they may be suspected of being spurious, carnal, worldly. And when there begins to be a desire for a revival of God's work, it is not wrong to desire that the congregation should be inflamed, and that there should be a multiplication of meetings, in which Christians, coming together, may exchange their thoughts and mingle their feelings; but it is wrong to suppose that a revival should begin in the Church. The family is a hearth raked up, and the fire must be unraked there. And every one must bring his home-brand and lay it on the altar of the Church. Then the revival in the Church will be genuine. Sometimes revivals begin in Churches and thence go into families. At any rate, either first or last, every true revival of religion must reach the family. A revival that does not reach the family is imperfect, if not spurious. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Revivals : Use of:*—One of the blessings of revivals of religion is that they surround men with sympathies that work towards religious growth. Hours of conviction are benificent in this, that they shut men out from the world, and give them to themselves for the time being, and afford them the opportunity of dwelling in their thoughts upon things Divine and spiritual. Anything is favourable to advancement in Christian manhood which tends to countervail that flow of sympathetic action by which the mind is carried away from intercourse with Christ and God. (*Ibid.*) *Revivals : Effects of:*—In the revival shadowed in the vision of the valley of dry bones, there was first a noise, and then a shaking, throughout all the plain. Revivals always produce vigorous stirrings in a Church, and excitement in a neighbourhood. The smooth and chilling ice of the frigid latitudes of formality is disturbed and broken up; and all the barks and ships that were frozen in them are set at liberty. The snows of winter are melted from the face of the earth, and all men awaken to activity and labour. Revivals disturb the formalist, the indolent, the lukewarm, and the wicked. They produce a turbulence in the conscience, an agitation in the mind, tumult in the emotions, commotion in the sympathies, and vigorous animation in all the faculties. (*T. W. Jenkyn, D.D.*) *Revivals, and seasons of coldness :*—I remember one week New York was like a second Jerusalem at Pentecost. Merchants ran from counting-houses, and bankers from Wall Street and South Street, hungry and thirsty for an hour of noon-day prayer; and the atmosphere seemed laden with the perfumes of the Spirit, as I saw the orchards of England a short time since laden with the sweet apple-blossoms. Of the thousands that then set out toward Zion, with songs of joy and gladness, how many have held out, and who have held out? Only those who gave themselves fully up to Christ, and have followed Christ fully ever since; the truly regenerated with the Spirit, who have learned to know no other but Christ, and follow no other but Him. The Church gets filled in revival seasons, but it gets winnowed in seasons of coldness and indifference. Only sound piety holds out and keeps fresh at times when worldliness abounds, and popular and fashionable sins pour in like a flood. (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *Revival : Waiting for :*—Far in the woods of Maine, in these winter months, there are a hundred camps, and scores of axemen are busy cutting down the huge trees and measuring the logs and sorting them, and throwing them into deep gullies, where they will lie dry and undisturbed until the snow melts and the spring floods come; and then they will be borne out of the ravines into the ever deep-flowing river, and from thence to some Penobscot or Kennebec, and there collected together and bound in mighty rafts, they will float down to the tide-waters. So men are laying dry logs along empty channels, hoping that some revival freshet will come and sweep them down to the deep waters of piety. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Times of restitution and restoration :*—In the text we have (1) the conditions of salvation by Christ: repentance, and conversion; change of mind, and change of life; reviewing the past with true contrition, and turning to God with full purpose of amendment: (2) the immediate result, forgiveness; the cancelling of sin; the

obliteration of the guilty record; the "casting all our sins into the depths of the sea"; the so passing by, the so dismissing, the sins of those who truly repent, that He remembers them no more: and (3) the future result; "that so there may come from God's presence seasons of refreshing"; that so, the number of His elect being at last accomplished, He may send Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who is now in heaven awaiting the arrival of those times of restitution, restoration, reparation of all things which have been the great subject of Divine prediction from the first. The arrival of the times thus described is made to depend upon the repentance and conversion of man. I. THE PERIOD OF REFRESHING. The word thus rendered is properly a revival by fresh air; the consequence of letting in a breeze of cool and invigorating air upon one who has been long fainting under a sultry and oppressive atmosphere. Do not we want such times? Are we not all conscious of the oppressive weight of this world's atmosphere? Do we not all feel ourselves oftentimes fainting with the closeness and sultriness of the air we are forced to breathe? The oppression of persecution is rather "a stormy wind and tempest" which has in it something of a wholesome severity, rousing our whole being into a more resolute and vigorous vitality. But the text speaks of that stifling heat which at once indisposes and incapacitates for exertion; of that sense of breathing an exhausted air, or living in a crowded cabin, which paralyses every energy, and at last forbids repose itself. How seldom does the refreshing breath of God's Holy Spirit revive Christians into the buoyancy of conscious life and health! How seldom does the sweet influence of the Divine presence lift them into that upper air where no earth-born cloud darkens their sky, and no noxious vapour damps or poisons their atmosphere! They can tell the times when this has been their bright experience. But far more often they sigh for light and air, hunger for food, thirst for water. In prosperity the air of earth is laden with a luscious perfume, lulling us into a stupor which is no repose. In adversity we seem to be confined within the walls of a sick-room, from which worldly pleasure is banished, without the admission of a heavenly visitant. II. THE TIME OF RESTITUTION. What a tangled, disordered, inverted thing is the world as we see it! What a deterioration from any condition in which God could ever have pronounced it to be very good. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth," &c. Only see, for example, how the relations of life are disorganised! See what misfortunes, sorrows, spring out of the affections! See the hearts of fathers turned from their children, and the hearts of children from their fathers. See the weaker and the more trusting half of mankind made the sport and the victim of the stronger and the less sensitive. See the distinction of ranks now cruelly aggravated, and now violently obliterated. And under the government of a righteous and holy God can it be conceived that this state of things should be perpetual? Is not the very extent of the ruin a prophecy of the restoration? Can it be that God should thus have made all things in vain, and suffered His own beautiful handiwork to be thus marred and desolated finally? It has been the language of all prophecy that there shall be a time of restitution. "We," the same apostle writes, "according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And shall it not be a comfort to the true Christian to look forward to the arrival of that time when the ways of God shall be finally justified to the universe? How does it become us to see that we ourselves be not adding to the confusion. Although the restoration of all things is not yet, yet let us remember that there is a restitution, a reparation, a reconstruction, which belongs to all time; a repentance and a conversion which, if not realised here, can be realised nowhere; a renewal of soul, and an amendment of life under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the condition of our ever being admitted into the world in which dwelleth only righteousness. If we would ever enter heaven, we must begin it here. If we would ever see the restoration of all things, we must struggle day by day here for our own. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Times of refreshing and restitution.**—*Times of refreshment:*—The thought is that again expressed both by St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 12) and by St. Paul (Rom. xi. 25–27), that the conversion of sinners, especially the conversion of Israel, will have a power to accelerate the fulfilment of God's purposes, and, therefore, the coming of His kingdom in its completeness. The word for "refreshing" is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, but the cognate verb meets us in 2 Tim. i. 16. In the Greek version of Exod. viii. 15, it stands where we have "respite." The "times of refreshing" are distinguished from the "restitution of all things" of verse 21, and would seem to be, as it were, the gracious preludes of that great consummation. The souls of the weary would be quickened as by the fresh breeze of morning; the fire of persecution assuaged as

by "a moist whistling wind" ("Song of the Three Children," verse 24). Israel, as a nation, did not repent, and therefore hatred and strife went on to the bitter end without refreshment. For every church, or nation, or family, those "times of refreshing" come as the sequel of a true conversion, and prepare the way for a more complete restoration. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Ver. 20. **And He shall send Jesus.**—*The Missionary Christ:*—A missionary is "one sent." Jesus was a missionary when He came to save; He will be a missionary when He comes to judge. These missions have been loosely termed the First and Second Advents as though there were no others. But if the Old Testament theophanies were manifestations of Christ, then Christ came on a pre-incarnate mission. Then, again, He had an important mission after the Resurrection; and further, we see from the text in conjunction with ver. 26 and His promise, "Lo, I am with you," that He has been engaged in a mission ever since the Ascension. So there are four advents which characterise the successive phases of the mission of the Son of God. The text refers to that in which He is now engaged. Note—I. THE MISSIONARY. 1. The name "Jesus" is generally used of the Saviour in His human capacity; and it is not without the profoundest interest that the Great Ambassador from on high is that "same Jesus" who assumed our humanity to qualify Himself for a real brotherhood with our race. We have suggested, therefore, in the name sympathy, helpfulness, accessibility, companionship. While we carefully remember His august position on the throne of the universe, let us not forget that that throne is occupied by our Brother, and that therefore we may "come boldly to the throne of grace!" 2. Christ is the official title which represents our Lord as embodying all that was meant by the "anointed" personages of the Old Testament. He is the reality of which they were the type—*the* Messiah. (1) Christ, then, still discharges His teaching functions, and says many things which He could not say to His ancient disciples—not so much revealing new truth as unfolding fresh developments, exhibiting new aspects, and bringing it home in unlooked-for ways. (2) Christ is the Priest of His Church. Atonement was only one function. He ever lives to apply the benefits of His sacrifice, to make intercession, to pour forth His ceaseless blessings. (3) Christ is King to legislate, rule, and lead to victory. II. THE SENDER. God (ver. 19). That Jesus was the Sent of God shows—1. The harmony of the missions of Christ incarnate and Christ glorified. No more frequent thought was in our Lord's mind than that He came from God except the cognate thought that He was glad to come. So our text regards Christ as still being sent, and, since the effects of His mission are so blessed (ver. 26), with the same joy. What dignity and blessedness does this give to those who receive Him! We are amazed at the condescension and love which marked the advent to Bethlehem; but under the same grand auspices does Christ come to our soul, home, church. 2. The relation of Christ. (1) To the Father. (*a*) Subordination. "Send." (*b*) Equality. God only could do what Christ is sent to do (ver. 26). (2) To the Holy Spirit. The "times of refreshing" are regarded as emphatically the Spirit's, but our text shows that they are also Christ's. This harmony of operation is seen throughout the New Testament. And what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. III. THE TIME. "Times of refreshing.' Christ is always here, but He is not always manifest. But He is supremely manifest during periods of spiritual revival. 1. In the revival of personal religion it is the vivid realisation of Christ that brings refreshment. Our dead, dry, barren times are when Christ is partially or altogether hidden. But when the clouds break the showers fall and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth, and all is glad and fruitful. 2. In the revival of Church life it is Christ brought home to the sinner, magnified by the saint, and honoured in all effort that is the prime cause. IV. THE MEANS. "Preached unto you." 1. Christless preaching is never marked by a time of refreshing. There were learned rabbis prophesying in a valley of dry bones; but it was a rude fisherman that was the instrument of bringing them to life. This Peter did by simply preaching Christ. Scholastic philosophers were scattering their ponderous tomes on an age that was not only dark but dead; but it was a rude miner's son that awakened Europe into life. This Luther did by simply preaching Christ. Stately essays were read by cultured thinkers in that barren, arid eighteenth century; but untutored evangelists simply held up Christ and times of refreshing came. 2. As a means of revival, therefore, preaching Christ is the chief. Other things are important—architecture, music, visitation, schools, pleasant evenings, &c. But

a Church may have all, and yet lack the one thing needful. But the Subject to be preached is a whole Christ: not His tender humanness apart from His sovereign dignity; not His precious promises apart from His atoning sacrifice. Let the whole Christ be preached accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, with and through whom He works, and "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" will come. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 21. **Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things.**—*Times of restitution of all things*:—The "times" seem distinguished from the "seasons" as more permanent. This is the only passage in which the word translated "restitution" is found in the New Testament; nor is it found in the LXX. version of the Old. Etymologically, it conveys the thought of restoration to an earlier and better state, rather than that of simple consummation or completion, which the immediate context seems, in some measure, to suggest. It finds an interesting parallel in the "new heavens and new earth"—involving, as they do, a restoration of all things to their true order—of 2 Pet. iii. 13. It does not necessarily imply, as some have thought, the final salvation of all men, but it does express the idea of a state in which "righteousness," and not "sin," shall have dominion over a redeemed and new-created world. The corresponding verb is found in the words, "Elias truly shall come first, and restore all things" (Matt. xvii. 11); and St. Peter's words may well be looked on as an echo of that teaching, and so as an undesigned coincidence testifying to the truth of St. Matthew's record. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The golden age—the restitution of all things*:—1. Restitution means the setting up again of that which has been thrown down. When a fallen pillar is restored to its position; or a plant, blown down, or crushed, regains its upright attitude; when a building, overthrown, is rebuilt—there is a restitution. 2. In the universe there has been a great overturning. The course of history seems to be a succession of failures—God setting up, some other power casting down. And, apart from revelation we could not tell what the end of all things would be. In the Word of God we have the assurance of a restitution—a setting up again of all things—a restoration out of the old, but higher than the old—the same and yet different. "The city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof." I. THE RESTITUTION OF NATURE. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—garnished with wisdom; blessed with love; and, surveying the whole, He pronounced it very good. But through the introduction of evil, a curse soon fell upon creation, and the earth underwent some change, in respect of its beauty and fertility. The world is regarded as full of beauty, notwithstanding its barren deserts, &c.; but had sin never entered, it would have been a scene of order and peace far surpassing our conception. The Cosmos we behold bears traces everywhere of great convulsions; and in this respect nature has been called "a born ruin." There are revolutionary forces which, if let loose, would rend creation asunder. Meantime these forces check each other; only occasionally are we reminded of their power by a quaking of the earth, or a peal of thunder. But the day is coming when these forces will overleap their present bounds, and involve universal nature in a catastrophe. The two agents appointed by God to work great physical and moral revolutions are water and fire. God has already employed water to change the face of the earth, and the current of history. The other agent to be employed in the destruction of the world is fire (2 Pet. iii. 10–14). Part, then, of the restitution of all things consists in the restitution of nature. In the beginning of revelation we see God's first work set up, but soon thrown down, or marred. In the end we read of its being set up again in higher form: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," &c. The first creation was cursed, but in the second creation "there shall be no more curse." The first creation has thorns and thistles, but with regard to the second, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree," &c. The restitution will be not merely a return to primeval beauty, but the introduction of a far higher beauty. For then "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun," &c. Involved in the restitution of nature is the restitution of Paradise, "The Lord God planted a garden," &c. In this there was a perfect combination of the useful and the beautiful. It had trees "pleasant to the sight and good for food." A river, also, went out of Eden to water the garden. And so in the midst of Paradise restored there is "the tree of life, with twelve manner of fruits," &c., and "a pure river of water of life," &c. II. THE RESTITUTION OF MAN. This is intimately connected with the restitution of nature, as Paul shows in Rom. viii. 1. Look at man in his first estate. He was

made in the image of God in nature and will. He possessed the glorious but perilous gift of liberty. And how did he demonstrate his freedom? Not as God had done in the production of good, but as Satan had done in the production of evil. He showed himself to be free by an act that destroyed his freedom. He was a broken creature, smitten with death. Being spiritually dead, temporal and eternal death was the necessary result. Besides, when man lost the image of God, he lost the sovereignty of nature, and having this dominion, he must have had powers vastly greater than those which remained with him after the fall. But man, the broken image of God, is to be restored. Man, the dethroned and prostrate monarch of nature, is to be reinstated in his sovereignty. This restitution begins in time, as a renewal of the spirit. At the resurrection the body is set up again in a far higher form, like the glorified body of the Redeemer. Then, too, the image of God being perfectly restored, man will enter on his true sovereignty again. The believer will be made a king and a priest to God. 2. All this was seen to be accomplished in Christ, as the representative man. He took up the work at the point of ruin to which man had brought it, and from that regained all that man had lost. He magnified the law which man had despised; and fulfilled all righteousness. He encountered the tempter, and defeated him. The first temptation took place in a garden, and the result was that man was driven into the wilderness. Jesus resumes the conflict in the wilderness in order to restore the garden. He Himself is the image of God, and shows that He is in possession of the lost sovereignty over nature. When He was in the wilderness it is recorded that He was with the wild beasts, who lost their ferocity and rebellion in His presence. In this we have a passing glimpse of man's returning dominion over the lower creation; of the time when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb," &c.; just as His miracles, manifesting His power over inanimate nature and the body of man, were a prophetic fulfilment of the great aspiration and effort of the human mind to regain the mastery of nature. III. THE RESTITUTION OF SOCIETY. We find much reformation wanted here. Next to the great question—How shall man be just with God?—is the question, On what terms shall he live with his fellow-men? It is the problem of government. Next to the salvation of the individual is the construction of society. The disturbing element in humanity does not lie primarily in forms of government, but in the individual soul; and, therefore, all attempts to regenerate man from without, by ameliorating his circumstances merely, or placing him under a new political arrangement, have failed; for the root of all rebellion is the unrenewed heart. For a machine to work perfectly—even supposing the machine itself to be perfect—there are required honest and competent men to work it; and, therefore, Christianity begins with the individual, and regenerates society from that point. 1. The first form of society is that of the family. Here we have the nursery of all other forms. If families are godless the Church cannot be prosperous. If they are immoral the city cannot be safe. If they are disorganised the State cannot be strong. But what a dark tragedy broke up the first society of this kind! As we come down the stream of sacred history, we see that God always sets up His work again in the midst of some particular family. In the family of Noah the race makes a new start. In the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a new covenant of grace is established. In the family of David the kingdom of the Jews is confirmed. In the house at Nazareth the foundation of Christendom is laid. But existing families are ever being broken up and dispersed. The institution itself, however, is a Divine idea that cannot perish, and in the restitution of all things the family reappears. God is revealed as the Father of Christ, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." 2. Next to the family is the city. Cain, who destroyed the first family, was the founder of the first city; an acknowledgment that man was no longer at home with nature; a city being a fortified place, surrounded by walls, to keep out intruders. Now, what man founded, God has adopted. After His people had wandered in the wilderness He led them to the promised land, and there built that famous capital of the old theocracy, Jerusalem. It was called the City of God, the Holy City. But it was ultimately visited by a terrible overthrow. "But the city shall be built on her own heap." In the restitution of all things a new Jerusalem rises into view, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Christ has gone to the unseen world to prepare many mansions for His people; and in the revelation given to John there are glimpses of "That great city, the holy Jerusalem." 3. Next to the city is the empire, or union of cities and states. Very early the idea of universal empire took possession of the human mind, and in the immense tower

erected on the plain of Shinar we have the first embodiment of that idea. In the very attempt to make such a huge confederation they were more divided than before. Their impious attempt brought down upon them a judgment that revealed their real but originally-hidden incongruities. Thus the first Babel prophesied the fate and gave its very name to subsequent systems, political and religious, which have attempted the impossible task of founding a universal empire, or Church on a false and godless principle. In itself, however, the idea of a universal empire is not false but true. The true tendency of the world is to reach a confederation of men, or parliament of the world, notwithstanding national differences. The discoveries of science and the reciprocities of commerce are aiming, consciously or unconsciously, at this stupendous result; which, however, they cannot gain by themselves. The highest end of science and commerce is to herald the kingdom of Christ, which carries in its bosom the highest law—the law of God, and the charter of universal freedom. The idea of the Church is that of a universal brotherhood under the fatherhood of God; and the realisation of this is the splendid goal of humanity. Christ is King of kings and the Lord of lords, and everywhere it is foretold that His kingdom will be universal and eternal. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Restoration*:—I. "The restitution of all things" will be A CLEARING AWAY OF SUFFERING. This is the special point of that mysterious passage in Rom. viii. in which Paul speaks of the "earnest expectation of the creature." We see "the creature," rational and irrational, "subjected to vanity"; to a condition of anxiety and toil, unrest, disease, death; "not willingly"—by no act or choice of its own—generation inheriting from generation its heirloom and entail of distress; and this, St. Paul adds, by the fiat of One who laid it under this subjection—we suppose him to mean, as the penalty of sin; yet that sin is not its own, that penalty not removable by present obedience, but having to be endured, to the bitter end, even by the innocent. The thought pressed upon the apostle, as it presses upon us. And he has one and but one escape from "charging God foolishly." He adds, with an emphasis which no power of voice and no skill of enunciation can satisfy, the two brief words, "in hope"; and goes on to explain that even before this distressed and disconsolate "creature" there lies a future of emancipation. Then shall it "remember no more the anguish," in the joy of a delivery and the transport of a new life. We would detain the apostle and interrogate him concerning these dark sayings. We would ask, Is it of earth as the scene of a future, an everlasting inhabitation; is it of a race of nature, to be cleared of sterility and unfruitfulness; is it of irrational creatures, by man requited too often with neglect or cruelty, that the words are written, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the unveiling of the sons of God"? Or does "restitution" mean that nations, ignorant of Christ, destitute of the gospel, shall then, in some wonderful manner, "walk in the light of it"? But there is no voice nor any to answer us in these perhaps presumptuous questionings. Thou hast Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles—hear them. Soon shalt thou, faithful unto death, be reading these mysteries right in the very sunshine of the smile of God. Meanwhile, "what is that to thee?" Christ says, "follow thou Me." Earth shall be restored to its original beauty; its face shall be wiped from tears, its scarred and seamed countenance shall be radiant again with a more than Eden loveliness: for it is one of those "all things" which must receive "restitution" when the heaven which has "received" Him shall send Jesus back. II. MAN, HIS SOUL AND BODY, HIS VERY BEING AND LIFE, is among these "all things" which are awaiting a restoration. Set before the mind's eye the character which you most admire, the person whom you best love—can anything but blind idolatry paint even him to you as perfect? But supposing that the very qualities which you love in their imperfection were but intensified and glorified; that the only change were in the refining away of the dross and alloy of the thing loved, would not the perfecting be a gain unmingled, the "restoration" a joy unspeakable and full of glory? And if it has happened to any one to behold the gradual overclouding of magnificent faculties—the growth of small imperfections, till the result was almost the unloveliness of the lovely; if it has been yours to stand finally by the grave, and bury out of your sight, a face and a form once all but Divine to you, surely you have felt then that the one solace for the loving must be the thought of the restoration, in soul and body, of the loved. But if this be true in cases of exceptional loveliness, how shall it be in the average experiences of human character and attainment? Where is the man not soiled and spoilt by imperfections? What shall *we* say of faults and blemishes, of follies and meannesses, of failures and irresolutions and broken vows, as we are conscious of them

within? Who that has seriously tried the struggle to be holy has not found himself vexed and irritated, if not reduced to despair, by perpetual failure? But if it be so, that I, this faulty man, ever failing, halting, vanquished—seeming to make no way in the race of duty, and purity, and eternal life—shall yet certainly, if I continue to fight, be more than conqueror when I die; shall be clean, sanctified wholly, filled with peace and love, made anew in more than all the thoroughness of the first perfection, when God looked upon all the work of His hands and beheld it "very good"; then I will arise, if need be, from a thousand falls in one day, "cast down but not destroyed," to say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for greater is He that is for me than all that can be against me." III. That "restitution of all things" which thus affects earth and the man has AN ASPECT TOWARDS GOD. If there be one thing clear in the Scripture narrative, it is the nearness of God to the as yet sinless Adam. The hiding from God, the expulsion from Paradise, the subsequent approach through sacrifice, the first "calling upon the name of the Lord," which is mentioned as a feature of the exile—are all so many hints of a change in the facility, the nearness, and the constancy of access to God. The whole history of the race, the whole experience of the life, has been the commentary upon this parable. The sinner has been in hiding from the face of God. Calling upon Him has been an effort. Sin has made it so. Now it is one of the express revelations of "the times of refreshing," that then the conscious presence, the spiritual Shechinah, the Divine companionship, will be restored. "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God," &c. The greatest of the restitutions will be the restoration of God's presence. In the prospect of admission into the very presence of God, let us be willing to endure now the difficulty of the pursuit and the delay of the attainment. Every moment now spent in seeking God is an earnest of the time when we shall have found. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 22–26. **For Moses truly said unto your fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you . . . like unto me.**—*The promised Prophet:*—Note—I. THE APPROPRIATENESS OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF THROUGH A HUMAN BEING. For man is the Divine image, and hence God reveals Himself to man through a man, otherwise we could have no knowledge of God. The office of prophet is the most appropriate way of revealing God's will. When we carry on this line of thought we are landed in the idea that an incarnation of God alone could adequately convey to man the mind and nature of God. II. A SINGLE PROPHET AFTER THE SIMILITUDE OF MOSES IS TO BE THE MEDIATOR FOR THE AGES. Now, only one Person answers this description, and that is Christ. He is incarnate God. God's Spirit He alone could take, and through its gift to men in the different ages make them the channel of Divine revelation (ver. 24). As a matter of fact "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," and the prophets were His instruments in the history of the Church. God has spoken in these last days by His Son; and the prophets between Moses and Christ were really the inspired messengers of the one great Prophet. This is the idea of Peter (1 Pet. i. 11). III. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS, THEREFORE, BECOME THE CLIMAX OF DIVINE REVELATION. The previous revelations were but shadows of this. A human history became the embodiment of Divine thoughts, mercies, and self-sacrifice. The blaze of Divinity that was intolerable at Sinai becomes not only bearable but entrancing in the face of Jesus Christ. "We beheld His glory," but it did not scare men as on the holy mount. IV. DISREGARD OF THE WORDS OF JESUS IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH (ver. 23). "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." If disobedience to Moses was visited in many cases by death, how much more disloyalty to Christ (Heb. x. 28–31). The gospel has penalties of the severest kind for its rejection, as well as bliss beyond compare for its reception. The alternative is thus clearly set before us. (*R. M. Edgar, M.A.*) *The Prophet like unto Moses:*—Christ and Moses were alike—I. AS FOUNDERS OF DISPENSATIONS. It was the greatness of Moses that he was employed by God in inaugurating a new era in the history of His kingdom. In this respect he stood at the head of the Old Testament line of prophets, and in a sense apart from them (John i. 17). He had the ordering and settling of the "house" of God in the form in which it was to last till Christ came, who "as Son over His own house" would revise its arrangements and reconstitute it on a better basis (Heb. iii. 2–7). Prophets subsequent to Moses stood within the lines of economy already established. They could enforce and maintain, but while predicting the advent of a new age in which great changes would be wrought, they had no authority to introduce such changes. It was reserved to Christ to so

remodel Mosaic institutions, or abolish and supersede them, as to place the Church upon a permanent basis, and adapt it for the reception of the Gentiles. II. IN THE FREEDOM AND INTERCOURSE THEY ENJOYED WITH GOD. Moses enjoyed, as was necessary, the freest intercourse with heaven. God spake with him, not in a vision, or dream, or in dark speeches, but "mouth to mouth" (Numb. xii. 6-9), "face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10). This is made a feature of distinction between Moses and the later prophets. In Christ this peculiarity appears in a higher form. Intercourse with the Father reaches the highest degree of closeness and intimacy (John xiv. 10). Christ's insight into the Father's will was perfect (John v. 20, 21), His communion habitual and uninterrupted. III. AS MEDIATING BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND GOD. These points involve others. There was resemblance—1. In the degree of authority with which they were clothed, and in the mighty signs which authenticated their mission. 2. In the fulness and grandeur of their revelations. 3. In the severe penalties attaching to disobedience to their words (Deut. xviii. 19; Heb. ii. 1-5, x. 28, 29). (*J. Orr, B.D.*) *The resemblance between Christ and Moses*:—As Moses was born in a strange land, so was Christ born in a world and country which knew Him not, in a city which rejected Him. To preserve His life Moses was laid in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ's life was preserved by the lowliness of the manger in which He lay. Both were of the house of Israel, and children, the one of a priestly, the other of the royal race. The jealousy of Pharoah put the life of Moses in jeopardy as soon as He was born, as Herod sought the life of Christ because of the same jealous fear, whilst both kings ordered the male children to be slain in order to preserve the stability of their respective thrones. Both were mediators between God and a sinful people, and as Moses pleaded for the children of Israel, so does Christ for mankind. Both Moses and Christ were legislators of God's people, the former for those under the old covenant, the latter for those under the new. As Moses led the people from slavery into the land promised to their fathers, so did Christ deliver His people out of the power of Satan and go before them into heaven. Both Moses and Christ proved the truth of their mission by miracles and signs. As Moses sent forth the twelve to survey the land and encouraged the people to persevere and to enter into Canaan, so did Christ send forth the twelve to teach the people by what means they might take possession of the spiritual Canaan. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Reasons for repentance*:—Peter urged the Jews to repent because—I. THEY BELIEVED THE PROPHETS. Those prophets had told of the Messiah and His claims, and in those prophets they professed to believe. But they had rejected Christ, and hence the necessity according to their own beliefs of repentance. This appeal is a pertinent one to-day. II. THEY ALREADY CLAIMED RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES (ver. 25). Hence their guilt in rejecting Christ. Abraham, the patriarchs and prophets had all been believers, and the blessings of the covenant could be attained only by faith. But faith implied repentance. How many value their privileges under the Christian dispensation, and yet live in sin! But these privileges call them to repentance. III. GOD HAD CROWNED ALL THEIR FORMER PRIVILEGES BY SENDING JESUS. Yet they had rejected Him. So now—IV. WITHOUT REPENTANCE THEY MUST REMAIN IN A STATE OF DEPRAVITY. They would not be "turned from their iniquities." Those who do not repent and receive Christ remain among the enemies of God and in the bond of iniquity. V. WITHOUT REPENTANCE THEY MUST BE EXCLUDED FROM THE PEOPLE OF GOD (ver. 23). (*W. Hudson.*)

Vers. 25, 26. **Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant.**—*The children of the covenant, the Saviour's first care*:—I. ALL WHO HAVE BEEN DEDICATED TO GOD BY BELIEVING PARENTS, ARE CHILDREN OF THE COVENANT which God has made with their parents, and especially with Abraham, the great father of the faithful. 1. The blessings of the covenant with Abraham were all included in three great promises. The first was, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; the second, "To thee and to thy seed will I give this land"; the third, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." Of these promises the first was made to Abraham as an individual, and as the ancestor of the Messiah, and we have nothing to do with it, except to receive the Saviour whose coming it reveals. The second was made to Abraham, considered as the progenitor of the Jewish nation; and this promise also has been fulfilled, and we have no concern with it, only so far as it has a typical reference to the heavenly Canaan. The third promise was made to Abraham, considered as a believer, in covenant with God; as the great father of the faithful, or of all who should believe with a faith similar to His own. Of this covenant circumcision was the seal which answers to our baptism. 2. And now the

question is, Are the baptized children of professed believers, like the Jews, born in covenant, and stand in the same relation to God? Notice—(1) It is frequently predicted that the Gentiles should be brought into covenant with God. Thus in Hosea, God says, "I will call them My people which were not My people." This passage is quoted by St. Paul, to prove our point, and in Isaiah the Jewish Church is assured that the Gentiles shall come to her light, that they shall come bringing her children in their arms, and that these shall supply the place of the children whom she had lost. (2) We learn from many passages in the New Testament, that all these promises were fulfilled. We are there told that Abraham is the father of all who believe, that the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles; that all who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now one of the privileges which Abraham enjoyed, was the liberty of bringing his children into covenant with God, and one of the promises which was made to him was, "I will be a God to thy seed after thee." If, then, Christians are Abraham's heirs, they also have the same privilege; and God's language to every Christian parent is the same. It appears, then, that Christians stand in the same place, which was formerly occupied by the Jews; we take up what they laid down; we receive the privileges and blessings which they forfeited; and therefore if their children were in covenant with God, so, my Christian friends, are ours. This conclusion is confirmed by St. Paul when he says, "If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches," *i.e.*, relatively, holy as being dedicated to God in the ordinance of baptism. II. If these truths have been established, it follows, THAT WE ARE AUTHORISED TO ADDRESS EVERY BAPTIZED CHILD OF BELIEVING PARENTS IN THE LANGUAGE OF OUR TEXT. To all such, then, I say, To you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, hath sent Him to bless you, &c. 1. One of the privileges which the Jews enjoyed in consequence of being children of the covenant was, the enjoyment of the first offer of salvation. Thus, when Christ commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel, he charged them to begin at Jerusalem. This command the apostles strictly observed. They preached the gospel at first, we are told, to none but the Jews only; and St. Paul, addressing the Jews at Antioch, says, It was needful that the gospel of Christ should first be preached to you. So now God sends the offer of salvation first to the children of believing parents. In this respect He acts as a wise earthly prince would do. Were such a prince disposed to confer distinguishing favours, he would doubtless offer them to the children of his obedient subjects, who had sworn allegiance to him before he offered them to the children of rebels or strangers. Now your parents have sworn allegiance to God, and engaged to use all their influence to induce you to do the same. In token of their readiness to do this, they have solemnly and publicly dedicated you to God; and He has so far accepted this dedication, that He now sends you the first offer of pardon and salvation through His Son. At the same time He can confer these blessings upon you only by turning you from your iniquities; for so long as you cleave to them, it is impossible that Christ should bless or prove a blessing to you. At the same time you cannot be turned from your iniquities but by your own consent. Christ's language to you is, "Turn ye at My reproof, and I will pour out My Spirit upon you, I will make known My words unto you. Come ye out from the ungodly world, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2. And now I ask every baptized person what answer will you return to these invitations? While you were infants, God permitted your parents to act for you; but now you must act for yourselves, and stand or fall by your own choice. And what is that choice? Will you take your parents' God to be your God? Will you take upon yourselves that covenant which they have made in your behalf, and perform its duties, that you may enjoy its blessings? Will you receive Christ as all must do who would receive power from Him to become the children of God? and as a proof of your willingness to receive Him, will you turn from your iniquities, and renounce all sinful pleasures and pursuits? 3. Permit me to suggest some considerations which may induce you to return such an answer as your duty and happiness require. (1) You are this day to determine whether God or the world shall be your portion, whether Christ or Satan shall be your king. One of these masters you must serve, but not both. (2) The choice you make will make a complete discovery of your true characters. If you choose to persist in pursuing worldly objects, it will prove that you are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; nay, that you are irreconcilably God's enemies, and that the tears, entreaties, and example of your parents cannot induce you to love Him. (3) Your choice is to be made for

eternity. You are not to choose whether you will serve sin and Satan in this world, and God in the next; but whether you will be the slaves of sin, and, of course, the enemies of God for ever. (4) Your choice will decide, not only your character, but your doom. You must receive the wages of that master whom you choose to serve. 4. Will you, by your conduct, say to all about you, I am a wretch so totally devoid of goodness, that I prefer the world to God, hell to heaven? (1) If so, surely your guilt will be no common guilt; for you can make no excuse. You cannot even plead ignorance; for you have lived in pious families, and had a religious education. You reject a known, and not an unknown God. After seeing the difference between a life of religion and a life of sin, you deliberately choose the latter. Nay, more, you reject not only God, but your parents' God; you violate not only the obligations which all His creatures are under to love and serve Him, but the peculiar obligations which result from your baptismal dedication to God. In addition to this, you will be guilty of the most inexcusable ingratitude. In giving you pious parents, God has conferred on you one of the greatest blessings which He could bestow. And will you requite Him for this favour by practically saying, I regret that my parents were pious, or that they dedicated me to God? (2) If so, remember that as your guilt will be no common guilt, so your punishment will be no common punishment. How awfully aggravated it will be, you may learn from the terrible threatenings denounced against the unbelieving Jews who, like you, were children of the covenant. Christ declares that the very heathen will rise up against them in the day of judgment and condemn them. They who know their Lord's will and do it not shall be beaten with many stripes. And will you then, by refusing to turn from your iniquities, pull down upon yourselves this terrible fate? Shall all the prayers and exertions of your parents only serve to increase your condemnation? Shall the baptismal water, with which you have been sprinkled, be converted into drops of liquid fire? You are like Capernaum, raised, as it were, to heaven by your privileges. Will you, by abusing or neglecting them, be yourselves cast down to hell—to the lowest hell? And now I wait for your reply. III. WHAT ANSWER SHALL I RETURN TO HIM THAT SENT ME, TO HIM WHO SENDS HIS SON TO BLESS YOU in turning away every one of you from your iniquities? I suspect that most of you will return no direct answer, but plead for time to deliberate, for a little longer delay. But this cannot be granted. You have already delayed too long. The Jewish children were required to partake of the passover, and appear before God at the solemn feasts, as soon as they arrived at a proper age; and this, as we learn from our Saviour's example, was the age of twelve years. If they refused or delayed to comply, they were doomed to be cut off from the people; to lose for ever the privileges which they slighted. Now a large proportion of those whom I am addressing, have not only reached, but overpast this period of life. You ought then long since to have embraced the Saviour, and thus have become prepared to appear at the table of Christ, who, the apostle tells us, is our passover that was sacrificed for us. Already you are liable to be cut off for ever from His people, in consequence of delaying to receive Him; and will you then talk of a longer delay? God's language to you is, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," "To-day, if ye will hear My voice," &c. I cannot but fear that some are still delaying a reply, and saying to the preacher as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." But, my friends, I cannot depart without a direct and decided answer. Indeed, if you persist in delaying, I have one; for, in this case, to delay is to refuse. Beware lest there be among you any profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, and found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Conclusion: It was my duty first to offer Christ to others. This duty I have discharged, and am now at liberty to make the same offer to you. Your heavenly Father is more careful for your happiness than even your earthly parents. They refused or neglected to give you to Him in your infancy, but He has provided a Saviour, through whom you may present yourselves to Him and be accepted. The Gentiles accepted Christ, when the children of the covenant rejected Him. Will you then imitate their example? Will you give yourselves to that God whom the children of the covenant neglect? Will you accept the privileges which they despise? If so, the blessing of Abraham will come upon you and your families, as it has on thousands of the Gentiles; and God will make with you an everlasting covenant, as He did with him, to be a God to you. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Samuel:*—The life of Samuel manifests—I. A HOLY CHILDHOOD. Four

things conduced to this. 1. A mother's prayers. 2. Dedication to God. 3. A Divine message. 4. Acceptance of the heavenly call. II. A NOBLE MANHOOD. 1. He was a champion for God. God's service is ennobling. 2. He was an instrument of God. (1) An instrument of defence to the people. (2) An instrument of vengeance, soul, &c. (3) An instrument of instruction. 3. He was a king maker and governor. III. A USEFUL END. The great man often does as much in his death as in his life. Samuel, in the solemn moments of his end—1. Vindicated his life. Not in egotism, but as an example. 2. Reasoned with and admonished the people. He urged them to serve the Lord. IV. A HAPPY DEATH. He had served God in life. God honoured him in death, and he went to his reward. Here we see the steps to happiness. Mothers, much of your child's future rests on you. Childhood, how important is your training! A useful life and a happy death follow this. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 26. **Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you.** *Sent to bless you:*—I. GOD SENT JESUS TO BLESS US. We should have thought that after the Jews had slain the prophets, God would have had no more to do with them; or that if He sent His own Son, it would be to take vengeance upon them. But when the Jews murdered Jesus, what would you expect God to do? A human father could scarcely forgive such murderers; it needs a God to do that. What did He do? This: He raised up Jesus, and not to punish evil-doers, but to bless. Many look upon religion as a sad thing; but it is the most joyous inspiration of life. Jesus is not a taskmaster; He gives rest to the weary and help to the heavy-laden. He charms the dullest life, sweetens the bitterest cup, salves the deepest wound, heals the most stricken heart, gives joy to the sorrowful, peace to the troubled, hope to the despairing, pardon of sin to the penitent, salvation from the power of sin to the believer, and eternal felicity to all who trust Him. II. GOD SENT JESUS TO BLESS US IN TURNING AWAY EVERY ONE OF US FROM OUR INIQUITIES. Without sin life would be very joyous; but when we yield to anything which we know to be wicked, gladness at once departs. A man may gratify his wicked propensity, and by so doing satisfy, for the time being, his physical appetite, but the hunger of his soul for peace is not satisfied. The greedy boy, who hides behind the door, away from his brothers, to eat the whole of his big apple alone, is fully satisfying his appetite, yet he is unhappy, and comes from his feast vexed, sullen, and spiritless. Had he divided the apple amongst his brothers, what a joyous lad he would have been! Greediness, or any other sin, brings sorrow to the soul. 1. The greatest blessing, therefore, that God can give us is to turn us away from our sins. We may turn away from sin in our outward life, and, at the same time, love and indulge it in our hearts; but Jesus would turn us from sin altogether; and in order to do so, He begins first with the heart. Make the fountain pure, and the stream shall be pure. The philosophy of the unbeliever tries to guide the human ship by outside pressure; but Jesus puts a rudder to it, and gives it a magnet of love to show its pathway in the trackless deep. He is not satisfied with half-measures. We must be turned away from our sins. There has been, unfortunately for the world, a church-organisation which has allowed its priests to sell indulgences for sin. But Jesus knows sin to be so hurtful, that He could not, at any price, give a licence to permit it. He came to take sin away. A man says, "If I do not cheat, I shall have to go to the workhouse." Jesus teaches us to reply, "Under such circumstances you would be happier if you walked along an honest path to the workhouse, than on the road of cheating to a palace." As you would hastily pass a house in which you know the small-pox to be, so would Jesus have us turn away from sin. May the Lord, likewise, turn away every one of us from our sins! 2. The text goes on to say, that God sent Jesus to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities. Then the worst man in the world is capable of being saved. Here is a man who has been guilty of many crimes, and is now standing at the bar to receive sentence. The judge may say within himself, "No good can be done with this man; he has been twice in penal servitude, and we must now get rid of him altogether." "Penal servitude for life!" But God dooms no man to life-servitude to sin. Jesus comes to open the prison doors in the soul of every one of us; and the man who is the chief sinner of this age may be saved. Your life may be like a tangled string, which you have tried to unravel, but failing to do so, you have thrown it among the ashes. That tangled string wearied your patience, and you gave it up; but though your life just now is like the tangled string, Jesus is not weary of blessing you, and in this world He will never give you up. As every

tangled string can be undone, so every sinful life can be converted. God sent Jesus to bless such as you; and His skilful fingers, His loving heart, and His patient Spirit will work in you until you are like Himself. III. JESUS TURNS US FROM OUR INIQUITIES BY—1. The powerful inducement of pleasing God. To call upon a man to turn from iniquity because it will be a good thing for himself is to appeal to his lowest motive, and is not the most successful way in winning souls. To bribe a man by promising something good if he will serve the Lord, or to intimidate him by the threat of the torment of hell, is a popular way of winning men, but it is the least successful. The most powerful force in the heart of a child is the love which constrains him to obedience, because if he did wrong he knew it would grieve his mother. Jesus draws us effectually from sin by reminding us of the loving heart of God; our sin grieves Him, and it should pain us to grieve His loving heart. 2. Revealing the goodness of God. His goodness in first loving us should draw us to Himself. After Jesus had risen from the dead, He said, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem." He was not angry because the Jews rejected and crucified Him; and there was nothing in His heart but love to them. (*W. Birch.*) *The servant of the Lord and his blessing*:—Notice—I. THE BOLDNESS AND LOFTINESS OF THE CLAIM WHICH IS HERE MADE FOR JESUS CHRIST. 1. Long ago Peter had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And as long as Jesus Christ had been with them none of them had wavered in that belief; but the Cross shattered all that for a time. "We trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." There had been plenty of pretenders to the Messiahship (chap. v. 36), and death had disposed of all their claims. And so it would have been with Christ, unless He had risen from the dead. But the faith and hope in His Messiahship which had died with Him on the Cross, rose with Him to newness of life—as we see from such words as these. 2. Now the characteristic of these early addresses contained in chap. ii.–iv., is the clear decisiveness with which they put forward Christ as the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. The Cross and the Resurrection poured a flood of light on the Old Testament. Almost every word here has reference to some great utterance of the past, which now for the first time Peter is beginning to understand. (1) "God, having raised up His Son Jesus." The reference is not to the resurrection, but to the prediction in ver. 22. Now that prediction, no doubt, refers to the prophetic order, and the word, "a prophet," is a collective, meaning a class. But the order does not come up to the ideal of the prophecy. For the appendix to the Book of Deuteronomy is plainly referring to the prophecy, when it sadly says, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." The prophetic order, then, was a prophecy by reason of the very incompleteness of the noble men who composed it; not only by their words, but by their office and by their limitations, they pointed onwards to Him who not only, like the great law-giver, beheld God face to face, but from the beginning dwelt in the bosom of the Father and therefore declares Him perfectly to men. The manifold methods and fragmentary portions of the revelations to the prophetic order are surpassed by the one final and complete utterance in the Son, as noonday outshines the twilight dawn. (2) "His Son Jesus" means, literally, a "boy" or a "child," and like our own English equivalent, is sometimes used with the meaning of "a servant." For instance, we talk about "a boy," or "a maid," or "a man," meaning thereby to express the fact of service in a graceful and gentle way; to cover over the harsher features of authority. So the centurion in Matthew's Gospel, when he asks Christ to heal his little page, calls him "his boy," which our Bible properly translates as "servant." The reasons for adopting "servant" here rather than "son" are these: that the New Testament has a distinct expression for the "Son of God," which is not the word employed here: and that the Septuagint has the same expression which is employed here as the translation of Isaiah's, "the Servant of the Lord." (*a*) Now it is interesting to notice that this expression as applied to Jesus Christ only occurs at this period. Altogether it occurs four times in these two chapters, and never again. Does not that look like the frequent repetition of a new thought which had just come to a man and was taking up his whole mind for the time? The Cross and the resurrection had opened his eyes to see that the dim majestic figure that looked out on him from the prophecy had had a historical existence in the dear Master whom he had lived beside; and we can almost perceive the gladness and surprise swelling his heart as he thinks—"Ah! then He is 'My servant whom I upheld.' Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Wonder of wonders, it is of Jesus of Nazareth, and we are His witnesses." If you turn to the second half of Isaiah's prophecies, you will find that

they might almost be called the biography of the Servant of the Lord. And whilst I admit that the collective Israel is often intended by the title "the Servant of the Lord," there remain other parts of the prophecy which have distinctly a person for their subject, and which cannot apply to any but Him that died and lived again. For instance, is there anything which can correspond to the words, "when His soul shall make an offering for sin He shall see His seed"? Who is it whose death is the birth of His children, whom after His death He will see? Who is it whose death is His own voluntary act? Who is it whose death is a sacrifice for others' sin? Who is it whose days are protracted after death, and who carries out more prosperously the pleasure of the Lord after He has died? (*b*) But that name on Peter's lips is not only a reference to prophecy, but it is a very beautiful revelation of the impression of absolute perfection which Christ's character made. Here was a man who knew Christ through and through; and the impression made upon him was this: "All the time that I saw Him there was never a trace of anything but perfect submission to the Divine will." Jesus asserted the same thing for Himself. "I do always the things that please Him": "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Strange claims from one who is meek and lowly of heart! Stranger still, the world, not usually tolerant of pretensions to sanctity, has allowed and endorsed the claim. (*c*) So the claim rises up into yet loftier regions; for clearly enough, a perfect and stainless man is either an impossible monster or something more. And they that fully believe that God's will was absolutely and exclusively done by Jesus Christ, in all consistency must go a step further and say, "He that perfectly did the Father's will was more than one of us, stained and sinful men." II. THE DAWNING VISION OF A KINGDOM OF WORLD-WIDE BLESSINGS. 1. Peter and all his brethren had had their full share of Jewish prejudices. But I suppose that when they found the tongues of fire sitting on their heads they began to apprehend that they had been intrusted with a world-wide gospel. The words before us mark very clearly the growing of that consciousness, while yet the Jewish prerogative of precedence is firmly held. "Unto you first"—that was the law of the apostolic working. But they were beginning to learn that if there were a "first," there must also be a "second"; and that the very words of promise to the father of the nation which he had just quoted pointed to "all the nations of the earth" being blessed in the seed of Abraham. If Israel was first to receive the blessing, it was only that through Israel it might flow over into the whole Gentile world. That is the true spirit of "Judaism," which is so often spoken of as "narrow" and "exclusive." There is nothing clearer in the Old Testament than that the candle is lighted in Israel in order that it might shed light on all the chambers of the world. That was the genius of "Judaism," and that is Peter's faith here. 2. Then, again, what grand confidence is here! What a splendid audacity of faith it is for the apostle with his handful of friends to stand up in the face of his nation to say: "This Man, whom you hung on a tree, is going to be the blessing of the whole world." Why, it is like the old Roman story of putting up to auction in the Forum the very piece of land that the enemy's camp was pitched upon, whilst their tents were visible over the wall. And how did all that come? Was all that heroism and enthusiasm born out of the grave of a dead man? The resurrection was the foundation of it, and explains it, as nothing else can do. III. THE PURELY SPIRITUAL CONCEPTION OF WHAT CHRIST'S BLESSING IS. What has become of all the Jewish notions of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom? That had not been the kind of kingdom of which they had dreamed when they had sought to be first in it. But now the Cross had taught Peter that Him hath God raised up a Prince and a Saviour to give—strange gift for a prince to have in his hand—"to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." 1. The heart, then, of Christ's work for the world is deliverance from sin. That is what man needs most. There are plenty of other remedies offered for the world's ills—culture, art, new social arrangements, progress of science and the like, but the disease goes deeper than these things can cure. You may as well try to put out Vesuvius with a teaspoonful of cold water as to cure the sickness of humanity with anything that does not grapple with the fundamental mischief, and that is a wicked heart. There is only one Man that ever pretended He could deal with that, and it took Him all His power to deal with it; but He did it! And there is only one way by which He could deal with it, and that was by dying for it, and He did it! So He has conquered. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?" When you can lead a crocodile out of the Nile with a bit of silk thread round his neck, you will be able to overcome the plague of the world, and that of your own heart, with anything

short of the great sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. 2. The secret of most of the mistaken and partial views of Christian truth lies here, that people have not got into their hearts and consciences a sense of their own sinfulness. And so you get a tepid, self-sufficient and superficial Christianity; and you get ceremonials, and high and dry morality, masquerading under the guise of religion: and you get Unitarian and semi-Unitarian tendencies in churches. But if once there came a wholesome, living consciousness of sin all such mutilated Christianity would crumble. 3. So I beseech you to put yourself in the right place to understand the gospel by the recognition of that fact. But do not stop there. It is a matter of life and death for you to put yourselves in the right place to receive Christ's richest blessing. You can only do that by feeling your own personal sin, and so coming to Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves, and no one but He can do for you. 4. And notice how strongly the text puts the individuality of this process. "Every one"—or rather "each one." The inadequate notions of Christianity that I have been speaking about are all characterised by this amongst other things: that they regard it as a social system diffusing social blessings and operating on communities by elevating the general tone and quickening the public conscience and so on. Christianity does do that. But it begins with dealing with men one by one. Christ is like a great King, who passing through the streets of His capital scatters His *largesse* over the multitude, but He reserves His richest gifts for the men that enter His presence chamber. Even those of us who have no close personal union with Him receive of His gifts. But for their deepest needs and their highest blessings they must go to Christ by their own personal faith—the flight of the solitary soul to the only Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Christ and His blessing:—I. THE PARTIES CONCERNED. Why was the first offer of Christ made to the Jews? 1. Because they were the only Church of God for that time. And God hath so much respect for the Church, that they shall have the refusal and the morning-market of the gospel. 2. They were the children of the covenant (ver. 25). God follows a covenant people with more offers of grace than others. 3. Christ came of them after the flesh, and was of their seed (Rom. ix. 5), to teach us to seek the salvation of our kindred first. 4. That He might magnify His grace and faithfulness, not only in the matter of the gospel, but even in the first offer of it (Rom. xv. 8; 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15). 5. This was necessary too for the confirmation of the gospel. Christ did not steal into the world privately, but He would have His law set up where, if there were any falsehood in it, it might easily be disproved; and because the main of the Jewish doctrine was adopted into the Christian, and was confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, they were the only competent judges to whose cognisance these things should be first offered. 6. That the ruin of that nation might be a fit document and proof of God's severity against the contemners of the new gospel (chap. xiii. 45–47). 7. That the first ministers might be a pattern of obedience, to preach where God would have them, to preach in the very face and teeth of opposition. II. THE BENEFIT OFFERED: wherein is set forth the great love of God unto the people to whom the gospel comes. 1. In designing such a glorious person as Jesus Christ: "having raised up His Son Jesus." 2. In that He gave notice, and did especially direct and send Him to them: "hath sent His Son." 3. Why He came among them in His Word: it was "to bless them." III. THE BLESSING INTERPRETED. They expected a pompous Messiah, that should make them an opulent and potent nation. But Christ came to convert souls unto God. IV. WHAT IT IS TO BE TURNED FROM SIN. Take these considerations: 1. Man fallen, lay under the power and guilt of sin (Eph. ii. 1–3). So man was both unholy and guilty. 2. Christ came to free us from both these. (1) The guilt (Eph. i. 7); (2) and the power (Titus iii. 5). 3. To be turned from sin implies our whole conversion. Though one part only be mentioned, the term "from which," yet the term "to which" is implied (chap. xxvi. 18). 4. That remission of sins is included in our conversion to God (ver. 19, chap. v. 31). V. IT IS A BLESSED THING TO BE MADE PARTAKERS OF THIS BENEFIT. Blessedness imports two things—1. An immunity from, or a removal of, the great evil, and that is sin. (1) The great cause of offence between God and us is taken out of the way (Isa. lix. 2). (2) We are freed from the great blemish of our natures (Rom. iii. 23). (3) We are freed from the great burden of sin. (4) Being turned from our sins, we are freed from the great bane of our persons and all our happiness (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2; Rom. viii. 1). 2. The enjoyment of positive good. It is a blessed thing to be turned from our sins because—(1) This is the matter of our serenity, comfort, and peace here (Isa. xxxii. 17). (2) It is the pledge of our eternal felicity

hereafter; for heaven is the perfection of holiness, or the full fruition of God in glory (Heb. xii. 14; Eph. i. 13, 14). (*T. Manton.*) *Christ and His blessing*:—I. GOD RAISED UP HIS SON JESUS TO BE A PROPHET (ver. 22, Deut. xviii. 15). 1. To teach the will of God (Isa. lxi. 1). 2. To expound it to us (John xiv. 2, xv. 15). (1) By His prophets (1 Pet. iii. 19; Neh. ix. 30). (2) Himself (Heb. i. 1, 2, ii. 2, 3). (3) His apostles (2 Cor. v. 19, 20). (4) His ministers (Eph. iv. 11, 12). II. GOD SENT HIM. 1. By promise in the Old Testament (1 Pet. i. 10, 11, iii. 19; Gen. iii. 15). 2. In person in the New (Gal. iv. 4, 5). (1) First to the Jews (chap. ii. 39; John iv. 22). (*a*) He was first promised to them. (*b*) Born of them. (*c*) Manifested Himself first among them (Matt. iv. 12, 17). (2) To the Gentiles also (chap. ii. 39, xi. 18, xv. 7–9; Gal. iii. 14; Gen. xxii. 17, 18). III. HE WAS SENT TO BLESS US (Gen. xxii. 17, 18). 1. To purchase a blessing for us (Gal. iii. 13, 14). 2. To apply it to us. IV. HIS GREAT BLESSING IS CONVERSION FROM SIN (Psa. i. 1, xxxii. 1, 2). Is it not a blessed thing to know—1. Our sins pardoned (Matt. ix. 2). 2. God reconciled (Rom. v. 1). 3. That we have an interest in Christ (1 John iii. 24). 4. To have a pacified conscience (2 Cor. i. 12). 5. To delight ourselves in the best things (Psa. i. 2). 6. To be related to God (Gal. iv. 6). 7. To have all things blessed to us (Rom. viii. 28). 8. To have an infallible evidence of our title to heaven (Rom. viii. 1; Matt. xxv. 46). V. CHRIST HAS PURCHASED THIS BLESSING FOR US (Matt. i. 21; 1 Pet. i. 18; Titus ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8). 1. What? (1) Pardon; therefore conversion (Ezek. xviii. 30; chap. ii. 38). (2) Peace with God; therefore conversion. (3) Redemption from misery; therefore conversion (Luke xiii. 3). (4) Heaven; therefore conversion (John iii. 16; Heb. xiii. 14). 2. How? Note—(1) All men are sinners. (2) Christ undertook to cleanse us from our sins. (3) This could not be but by purchasing the same grace we lost by sin. (4) No way to obtain grace but by the Spirit of God (Ezek. xxxvi. 27; Numb. xiv. 24). (5) God would not send His Spirit until man's sins were satisfied for, and so God reconciled. (6) Christ by His death satisfies for sin (1 John ii. 2). (7) And so purchased the donation of the Spirit (John xvi. 7). (8) The Spirit sent into our hearts, turns us from sin (2 Thess. ii. 13). (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *The blessed mission*:—I. God's GRACIOUS ACT, "Raised up Jesus." II. God's MERCIFUL PURPOSE, "To bless you." III. God's BLESSED WAY, "By turning every one of you," &c. IV. God's GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT, "To you first." (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The gospel blessing*:—1. THE WORK IS NOT DESCRIBED ONLY AS CHRIST'S, BUT RATHER AS GOD'S WORK IN CHRIST. We are too ready to make a difference; to think of God as all justice, and of Christ as all love. In past days men had used a loose and unscriptural language about Christ's calming God's wrath. The language of Scripture is always this: "God so loved the world," &c. What things soever the Son doeth, these also doeth the Father likewise. There is but one will, one work. Never run away from God, but ever seek Him and see Him in the Son. II. CHRIST HAS A MISSION TO US. There is no thought more delightful than that of the mission of Christ as He now is in heaven; of His having an errand, and apostleship still towards us (Heb. iii. 1). We are all called to from heaven: that is the meaning of "partakers of a heavenly calling." We are all like Saul of Tarsus when Jesus Christ spoke to him suddenly from heaven. Christ is calling to us. In His Word, by His minister, in conscience, by His Spirit also. And then, as we recognise this truth, we are told also to fix our thoughts upon Him as "the apostle of our profession" (or confession). God has sent, is sending, Him to us, with a message, addressed to each one of us separately, "every one of you," not a vague, general, promiscuous mission, but a direct and single one to each. You are not lost in a crowd. If this be so, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great," because so minute and so personal, "a salvation?" III. A MISSION OF WHAT SORT? Is it that of One who comes from the dead to appal and to terrify? the apparition of a reprover and a prophet of evil? Hear the text: "to bless you"; to speak well of you; to declare good to you; and in the very act of doing so, to communicate the good of which He tells. Is not this the very notion of a Gospel? It is not a threatening, a reproof, it is not even a condition of acceptance, or a rule of duty: it does not say, like the Law, "Do this, and thou shalt live": its essential character is that of an announcement; tidings of something already done; the good news of some change which God has made in our state and in our prospects. And what is that? Surely that God forgives us, whatsoever we are. God sent Him not to curse, but to bless; not to judge the world, but to save. IV. HOW IS THIS MISSION OF BLESSING MADE EFFECTUAL? 1. Is it a flattering of human vanity, a lulling of human indolence, the intelligence that God has forgiven, and that therefore man may lie asleep in his sins, that, where sin abounded, grace did much more

abound, and that therefore we may continue in sin if only to swell the triumphs of Divine grace? None of these things. "Sent Him to bless you, in turning away each one of you from his iniquities." 2. Does this description of Christ's work seem to militate against the former? Does any one say, Then, after all, the gospel is a law: it is only the old story once again, You must be holy, and then God will save? Oh the ignorance and the hardness of these hearts of ours! Is there no difference between working for forgiveness and working from forgiveness, between being holy because we are loved, and being holy that we may be loved, between the being commanded to turn ourselves from our sins, and the being blessed by finding ourselves turned from them by another? Your hearts tell you that there is all the difference! Which of us knows not something of the force of gratitude? Which of us has not felt that it is one thing to please a person as a duty, and another to please a person out of love? Which of us has not known the strange effect of a word or an act of affection, from one whom we are conscious that we have injured? how it sometimes rolls away the whole barrier between us, makes us ashamed of our ill-temper, and heaps coals of fire upon our head? Even thus is it with the man whom God has forgiven. How did David begin to inquire, "What reward can I give unto the Lord for all His benefits that He hath done unto me?" and answer himself, saying, "I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord": yea, I will love much, having been much forgiven! 3. But there may be some here present who cannot understand the connection of the words. They may be saying, I know that my sins are wrong; and I can understand being required to part with them: but how can it be a blessing to give up this pleasant thing which sin is to me? But does your sin make you happy? Have you found the pleasure of sinning as great as its anticipation? Have you found the morning after sinning a bright and pleasant awakening? Have you never known what it was to curse the fetter which bound you, and to long (even without hoping) to be free? Have you not sometimes looked back upon a past and now unattractive sin with bitter remorse, with astonishment at your own infatuation? Then that experience has shown you what it would be to look back upon a life of sin, from a world where it will be too late ever to repent. A thing which has all these marks of misery upon it cannot be happiness. If there is any power or any person, in earth or in heaven, who can set us free from this influence, the coming of that power or that person may indeed be said to be a blessing. Cost us what it may, it will be a blessing if it succeeds. And when that victory is wrought wholly through the power of love; through an assurance of free forgiveness; through the agency of an inward influence as sweet as it is constraining; how much more may it be so regarded! God grant that each one of us may know it for ourselves! (*Dean Vaughan.*)

The blessing of Christ in the heart:—Lady Somerset at Chicago said that in a fisherman's hut in the extreme north-east of Scotland, she saw a picture of our Saviour, and as she stood looking at it the fisherman told her its story: "I was way down with the drink," he said, "when one night I went into a 'public,' and there hung this picture. I was sober then, and I said to the bar-tender, 'Sell me that picture, this is no place for the Saviour.' I gave him all the money I had for it, and took it home. Then, as I looked at it, the words of my mother came back to me, I dropped on my knees, and cried, 'O Lord Jesus, will you pick me up again, and take me out of all my sin?'" No such a prayer is ever unanswered. To-day that fisherman is the grandest man in that little Scotch village. "I asked if he had no struggle to give up liquor; such a look of exultation came over his face as he answered, 'Oh, madam, when such a Saviour comes into the heart He takes the love of drink right out of it.' This Saviour is ready to take every sin out of your heart if only you will let Him."

Christ's errand of mercy:—After the long, sharp winter, a bright, beautiful day comes like a benediction. As I looked up toward the welcome sun, this thought came into my mind: Yonder sun is ninety-six millions of miles away. These rays of light have travelled all that stupendous distance, and yet I have only to drop the curtain of my eyelid and I am left in total darkness. There might as well be no sun as to have his rays shut out at the last instant from this little doorway of my eye. Even so has the Lord Jesus Christ come from His infinite, far-away throne, on His errand of mercy, to a sinner's soul. That sinner has but to close up his heart's door and keep it bolted, and for him there might as well have been no redemption and no Redeemer. Eternal life is refused, eternal death is chosen at that very spot, the door of the human heart. (*T. L. Cuyler.*)

The generous mission of Christ:—When Madame Sontag began her musical career she was hissed off the stage at Vienna by the friends of her rival,

Amelia Steininger, who had already begun to decline through her dissipation. Years passed on, and one day Madame Sontag, in her glory, was riding through the streets of Berlin, when she saw a child leading a blind woman, and she said, "Come here, my little child, come here. Who is that you are leading by the hand?" And the little child replied, "That's my mother; that's Amelia Steininger. She used to be a great singer, but she lost her voice, and she cried so much that she lost her eyesight." "Give my love to her," said Madame Sontag, "and tell her an old acquaintance will call on her this afternoon." The next week in Berlin a vast assemblage gathered at a benefit for that poor blind woman, and it was said that Madame Sontag sang that night as she had never sung before. And she took a skilled oculist, who in vain tried to give eyesight to the poor blind woman. Until the day of Amelia Steininger's death, Madame Sontag took care of her, and her daughter after her. That was what the queen of song did for her enemy. But, oh, hear a more thrilling story still. Blind, immortal, poor and lost, thou who, when the world and Christ were rivals for thy heart, didst hiss thy Lord away—Christ comes now to give thee sight, to give thee a home, to give thee heaven. With more than a Sontag's generosity He comes now to meet your need. With more than a Sontag's music He comes to plead for thy deliverance. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

God's plan for making us happy:—We are told, in a simple allegory, that when man was made in the image of God, one of the bright angels about the throne was appointed to wait upon him, and to be his constant companion. After this beautiful image had been marred by sin, Happiness could no longer recognise the Heavenly Father's likeness upon earth, and pined to go back to her happy home on high. Fallen and wretched man now wandered about searching for a friend to make good his loss. He looked on the fair face of Nature, and saw her gay and cheerful; but Nature assured him that she could offer no alleviation for his misery. Love appeared so bright and joyous, that man, in his disappointment, turned next to her; but she timidly shrank back at his approach, while her tender eyes overflowed with tears of sympathy. He now sought friendship, and she sighed and answered, "Caprice, anxiety, and the fear of change are ever before me." Disappointed at these repeated failures, man followed after Vice, who boasted loudly, and promised great things; but even while she talked with him the borrowed roses dropped from her withered brow, and disclosed the wrinkles of sorrow and the deep furrows ploughed by pain. Retreating in haste from the haunts of the vile enchantress, he now sought for Virtue, hoping that the secret of happiness might be learned from her; but she assured him that Penitence was her proper name, and that she was powerless to bestow the boon he craved. Brought down at last to the verge of despair, man applied to grim Death, who relaxed his forbidding aspect, while he answered with a smile: "Happiness can no longer be found upon the earth. I am really the friend of man, and the guide to the blessedness which his heart yearns after. Hearken to the voice of Him who died on the Cross of Calvary, and I will, at last, lead man through the shades of the dark valley to the delectable mountains, where Happiness makes her perpetual abode." The allegory which I have thus tried to repeat, is a mere expansion of the text. God does not secure happiness to His people—I. BY MAKING ALL OF THEM RICH. Instead of saying, "Blessed are ye rich," He says, "Blessed are the poor." The only really happy rich man is the one who acts as God's steward, paying his lawful tithes to the Church, and dealing kindly with the suffering poor. Dr. Guthrie says: "Money will buy plenty, but not peace; money will furnish your table with luxuries, but not you with an appetite to enjoy them; money will surround your bed with physicians, but not restore health to your sickly frame: it will encompass you with a crowd of flatterers, but never promise you one true friend; it will bribe into silence the tongues of accusing men, but not an accusing conscience; it will pay some debts, but not one, the least, of your debts to the law of God; it will relieve many fears, but not those of guilt, the terrors that crown the hour of death." II. BY BESTOWING ON US THE EMPTY HONOURS OF THE WORLD. It is true, multitudes imagine that happiness is to be found in them; but experience always proves how grievously they were mistaken. The devil seems to have persuaded himself that even the Son of God could be tempted by such a bribe. A mandarin puffed up with a sense of his high position was fond of appearing in the public streets, sparkling with jewels. He was annoyed, one day, by an uncouth personage, who followed him about, bowing often to the ground, and thanking him for his jewels. "What does the man mean?" cried the mandarin; "I never gave you any of my jewels." "No," returned the other; "but you have let me look at them, and that is all the use you

can make of them yourself. The only difference between us is, that you have the trouble of watching them." III. By affording them a large share of worldly pleasure. Most of the things which are called "worldly pleasures" not only fail to make people happy, but leave positive misery behind them. And then, the terrible phantom, which, in moments of solitude and silence, must disturb the minds of the most frivolous—the end; when God shall bring all these things into judgment. When the Chevalier Gerard De Kampis, a rich and proud man, had finished his magnificent castle, he gave a great entertainment to all his wealthy neighbours. At the close of the sumptuous banquet, the guests made speech after speech, lauding their host to the skies, and declaring him to be the happiest of men. As the chevalier loved flattery, this fragrant incense was most acceptable; and nothing disturbed his equanimity, until one of the guests who had, thus far, kept silence, gravely remarked: "Sir Knight, in order that your felicity should be complete, you require but one thing, but this is a very important item." "And what thing is that?" demanded the astonished nobleman. "One of your doors must be walled up," replied his guest. At this strange rejoinder several of the guests laughed aloud, and while Gerard himself began to think the man was mad, he preserved self-control enough to ask: "Which door do you mean?" "I mean that through which you will one day be carried to your grave." The words struck both guests and host, and the proud man saw the vanity of all earthly things, and began from that moment to lay up treasure in heaven. IV. But by sending His Son Jesus, "to turn away every one of them from His iniquities." There can be no salvation for us, unless we are delivered from our sins. God only makes men happy by making them holy (Matt. i. 21). Lycurgus would allow none of his laws to be written, insisting that the principles of government must be interwoven with the lives and manners of the people, as the only sure way of promoting their happiness. He who would abide by the commandments of God must be able to say with David, "Thy word have I hid within my heart." He who will be received into the presence of God and enjoy the blessedness of heaven, is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). We are made heirs of glory only by putting on Christ; but we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints" through a studied and careful conformity to the Divine precept: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Say of no sin, however trivial it may appear, "Is it not a little one?" but following after holiness, let evil under every possible disguise be your abhorrence. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The gospel turns men from sin*:—If a physician were called to see a patient who had a cancer on his breast, the only thing to be done would be to cut it out from the roots. The physician might give palliatives, so that the patient would have less pain—or he might make his patient believe it was no cancer—or forget that he had a cancer near his vitals; but if the physician were to do this instead of removing the evil, he would be a wicked man and the enemy of his patient. The man's case was such that the only favour which could be conferred upon him would be to cut out the cancer. Now all agree that sin is the great evil of the soul of man. Nothing can make man more spiritually happy here, or fit him for happiness hereafter, but the removal of sin from his nature. Sin is the plague-spot on the soul which destroys its peace, and threatens its destruction unless removed. It is therefore certain that if the love of God were manifested towards man, it would be in turning man from sin which produces misery, to holiness which produces happiness. (*J. B. Walker.*) **Turning away every one of you from his iniquities.**—*The blessedness of conversion*:—I. That the indulgence of sin is the grand source of human misery. We increase by our own transgressions the maladies to which we are naturally exposed: our understandings become more confused; our affections more depraved; our passions, appetites and tempers more unrestrained and virulent; our disappointments more bitter and acute; and all this progressive advancement in evil and misery is the consequence of increasing indulgence in sin. II. That Christ especially blesses His people in turning away every one of them from their iniquities. 1. In that as a prophet He enlightens their understanding to perceive the evil, the misery, and the ruinous consequences of sin, both as it regards the present and the future state. 2. This turning from iniquities is progressive; at first the gross and outward acts of sin are cut off, unlawful and expedient pleasures, and indulgences follow, many things of a doubtful and indifferent nature are then relinquished. The tongue, the temper, the thoughts, are gradually brought more and more under regulation and restraint; holy principles are cultivated; the spirit of fervent charity takes possession of the soul; and pity, meekness, forbearance,

compassion, patience, holy resignation, lively hope, and heavenly joy increase and abound. (*T. Webster, B.D.*) *The return of the affections to God*:—The history of man on this side of the grave is like the history of the natural world: the seasons change; if the winter chills, the summer warms; if darkness wraps in its shade, light cheers with its brilliancy. Thus joy and sorrow, hope and fear, satisfaction and perplexity are mingled together. Under these circumstances it is very material to know whether there be any mode of defending ourselves against such an increase of sorrow, and of insuring to ourselves such an increase of comfort. Here in the text is a chart to the wanderer, a light to the benighted, a shelter to the forlorn, a certainty to the dubious! The misery of man lies chiefly in the circumstances of his moral condition; he is wretched under the effects of his iniquities. His remedy must be found in the return of his affections to God; God sent Christ to bless you by turning you away from your iniquities. The sorrows of man mainly issue from the depravity of his affections. He is guilty before God. Certainly his passions, earthly and selfish, spurn every barrier when occasions exasperate their movements. To restrain them under such excitements is as impracticable, as, by the weight of the dews of heaven, to chain down the fiery matter which a volcano is about to cast forth. But to come to individual experience. From whence does the largest portion of man's sufferings arise? Is it not from the disordered state of his affections? Is there not a disease of the heart, which is widely prevalent, and which no skill can heal? To reproduce happiness in a sinful being requires, therefore, a remedy applicable to the inward disease in his mind; a remedy which not only respects a new and favourable relation on the part of God, but also a new and holy state of the affections on the part of man. In other words, the happiness of a sinner will depend first upon the conviction that God has pardoned him, and secondly, upon the consciousness that he loves the Being who has thus tenderly dealt with him. Now the remedy which Christianity brings forward to the view of him who believes it, is exactly of this kind. "Jesus Christ came to bless you by turning away every one of you from his iniquities." He holds out to us pardon and peace, and He gives us the disposition to love the nature and the heart from which that pardon flows! In this complex operation the means of human happiness are unfolded. The pardon of sin is complete and free, unclogged with any condition or qualification. "There is no more condemnation," but perfect reconciliation and peace. Now the belief in this truth, under the agency of the Spirit, conveys healing to the heart. Sin becomes loathsome when its consequences are thus made visible in the personal sufferings of Jesus Christ, and obedience to the will and mind of God then becomes identical with peace and happiness. Thus Christ blesses by turning away from iniquity, by procuring at once the pardon of sin, and by healing the disease of sin; by restoring peace in the relations between God and man, and by making God's character the glowing object of attractive imitation. (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1–22. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them.—*The captain of the temple* was an officer of a sort which Luke mentions in the plural in his Gospel (Luke xxii. 4), and is several times mentioned in the Old Testament, as in Jer. xx. 1. This officer, with his subordinates, had charge of the Levites, especially of those who kept the night watch in the temple. A hint at the forms and ceremonies which accompanied his duties may be obtained, perhaps, from Psa. cxxxiv, in which vers. 1 and 2 are supposed to be the address of these *strategoi*, or captains or archons of the temple, and ver. 3 the response of the Levite watchers. The talmudical name for this captain appears to have been the "man of the mountain of the house [of the Lord]," and he is frequently mentioned in ancient Jewish writings. A little quotation will show a part of his duties: "The man of the mount of the house [or temple] used to make his rounds among the several watches, with burning torches before him. If he found any of the watch not standing on his feet, he said to him, 'Peace be to thee.' But if he observed one asleep, he struck him with his staff, and then was at liberty to set on fire his garments. And when he was asked by others, 'What is the noise in the court?' he answered, 'the cry of a lazy Levite,

whose clothes have been burned, because he slept on guard.' Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said, 'Once they found my mother's brother asleep, and burned his garment.'" It is most probable that this custom is alluded to in Rev. xvi. 15, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked" &c. An official of corresponding power, but, of course, different duties, has charge of the temple enclosure in Jerusalem to-day. He is the "Sheikh of the Sanctuary"; and in addressing him the proper form is "Ya Sheikh," or "O Elder." (*Prof. I. H. Hall.*) *Peter and John before the council*:—1. The name of Jesus was the power that wrought the miracle; or to use the incomparable language of the preacher himself, "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." By the name we are to understand all the powers and prerogatives that centre in the Person. An ambassador borrows all his authority from the name of his sovereign. Paul, in the provincial court at Philippi, saved himself by invoking the name of Cæsar. The inquisitors before whom Peter stood on this occasion supposed that Jesus was dead. It was, indeed, true that bodily He had vanished from the sight of men; but He had left behind Him a name in which resided the tremendous power of His spiritual presence, which was destined thereafter to be the working force in history until the whole world should be subjugated to God. For want of ability to discern this fact, Hume and Gibbon and all other undevout historians have been at their wits' end. They have marked the operations of a mysterious force, working like a magnet, and leading the nations on toward a brighter, better day; but for the most part they have frankly acknowledged their inability to locate or characterise it. The name of Jesus is this unnamed factor in universal history. 2. The name of Jesus, though despised by these inquisitors, has taken precedence of all others in heaven or on earth. Or, again to quote the preacher, "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." Christ dead? Ah, no! Could these ecclesiastics have looked forward through the centuries they would have seen His name written on all scrolls of honour, His Cross glowing on innumerable spires that were to point, like index-fingers, to His throne in heaven, and His kingdom spreading like a vast tabernacle to enfold the world. In vain do kings of the earth set themselves and rulers take counsel together against this Jesus. 3. The name of Jesus alone has power to save; in Peter's words, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Among those who listened to the apostle that day there was probably not one who did not cherish some sort of hope of salvation; but if these words were true they were all leaning on broken reeds. (1) No doubt there were rabbis there who congratulated themselves on their acquaintance with current theology. They knew the technics of the argument between the schools of Shammai and Hillel, and were thoroughly adept in the traditions of the elders. But, without desiring to belittle the importance of dogma, it is right to say that the brain is a good way from the heart, and there is a vast difference between theology and religion. Many a man has, intellectually, a faultless creed who is nevertheless an utter stranger to vital godliness. But souls are not saved that way. A man may know all about the Nicene and the Ante-Nicene fathers, and all about creeds and symbols and theological systems, but if he has not made the acquaintance of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, he shall not enter into life. (2) Then, doubtless, there were others in Peter's audience who hoped to be saved for their devotion to the Church. We cannot dispense with the Church; nor dare we cast reproach upon it, for it is the bride of Jesus Christ; nevertheless, to rely upon externals for salvation is to face an awful disappointment at the great day. This was the trouble with the Pharisees. (3) No doubt there were moralists also in this company, and, if so, Peter's word ruled them out of heaven. For morality, as such, however admirable, has no saving virtue in it. Emerson objects to the use of the term "mere morality," but what else shall we call that sort of legalism which takes no cognisance of the Lawgiver? The trouble with "mere morality" is that it leaves uncancelled the mislived past; it has no power to atone for a single sin, while it ignores the claims of Jehovah. In saying that we say nothing against morality, for the law is good; but the atoning power must be sought for elsewhere. Peter's sermon had a remarkable effect upon the minds of his distinguished hearers. (*a*) They marvelled that "unlearned and ignorant men" should have such forensic power. But they knew nothing of the influence of the Holy Ghost that rested upon them. (*b*) They "took knowledge of these men that they had been with Jesus."

The ground of that conclusion lay in the fact that they had manifestly caught His Spirit. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Peter and John before the council*:—A notable miracle had been wrought at the gate of the temple, and a notable sermon had been preached to the assembled crowd, who were filled with wonder and amazement. It is the sequel of that which had been thus done and said which furnishes our present theme. We notice—I. THE OFFENCE OF THE APOSTLES. It was not that they had been the means of bringing healing and health to a disabled man. Most sympathetic souls doubtless were glad. Others, probably (are there not always such?), after a little, began to question this way of coming to his health. It was not according to the regular practice. It was a reflection upon the professed practitioners of the healing art. But this was not the grievance to those with whom the two disciples of Jesus are brought into speedy conflict. These were the ruling class, the Sadducees, of whom were also the officials, both ecclesiastical and civil, who arrested Peter and John and locked them up for more deliberate examination. These were the rulers of the Church in that day; but they were by no means the religious class. The offence of the apostles was not that they had healed the lame man, or even that they had been disciples of Jesus, but that "they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." It was an offence of doctrine rather than of deed which excited the opposition of these Sadducean rulers. It was the offence of supernaturalism. But there was something more than this in it. Men oppose teachings often because the teachings conflict with the lives which they prefer to live. Supernaturalism always has its foes, for it implies a present God—a God who works, who sees and will judge. Ours is a Sadducean age. Natural science has engrossed the attention of the learned class to a large degree. They will accept mind cure or hypnotism, but not the healing touch of God. They will allow the inspiration of the poet, but not of the prophet. The offence of the Cross is not the only one which stirs up hostility. The offence of supernaturalism is now equally cause of anger and derision as it was in the days of Peter and John. II. THE DEFENCE OF THE APOSTLES. Thus arraigned and thus accused, the two disciples are put in ward until the morrow. This was the very time for which they had been prepared—the very time to exercise their gift to be witnesses here in the very court of Israel. And that is what they were: not defenders of themselves, but sturdy, truthful, uncompromising witnesses to Jesus and the resurrection. So they rehearse the facts. "You ask us who has done this good deed to the helpless man? Jesus has done it; Jesus the Christ, the Messiah for whom Israel has looked and longed. Nay, you know Him well, Jesus of Nazareth, the Man whom you so lately condemned to death, yes, 'whom ye crucified'—He is the Author of this cure. For God undid your murder and raised Him from the dead." So they bore testimony to the thing which had been done. But now they testify to the greater things which He can do. "He is the only One by whom we can be saved. We disciples or your priests and Sadducees can be safe and be saved alone by Him whose name and power has wrought this cure." The defence of those who believe in supernaturalism is not argument. You cannot reason about the particulars in a sphere which men refuse to recognise. What can you do? You can oppose your faith to their unbelief, your confidence to their incredulity. You can give your ringing testimony to what you know. Testimony will win the day for Christ sooner and more surely than reasoning; for it will secure a hearing for the reasons of the faith that is in the disciples. Witnesses are more important than advocates. A hundred reasons why it should be so are not half as strong as one "It is so." III. THE CHANGE OF THE JUDGES. After this form of a trial, the accusation and the defence, the court retires to consult. They cannot deny the facts. Facts are unfortunately stubborn things. What shall they do? "Let us silence them," they say; and so they bring the two unlearned men before them, and charge them, with all the authority they have, and with what dignity they can, "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." How well they were able to enforce their command the further record tells. It is not the last time in the history of the world that men of deep convictions have been met with a similar command. Right or wrong, it is impossible to correct men's thinking, or, for very long, their speaking, by the mere command or compulsion to be silent. The very command is a confession of weakness. To ask your foe not to strike again is to acknowledge your fear of him. You cannot silence witnesses. The fire which is in men's hearts cannot be smothered by the authority of courts, civil or ecclesiastical. The truth of God will overcome all lies at last in the kingdom of the truth. In the hot fires of experience the dross will be run off and the pure silver reflect the image of its

Maker. All through this passage the name of Jesus is set forth as the source of power, of salvation, and of Divine teaching. (*Geo. M. Boynton.*) *Bigotry*:—I was once driven upon an Irish jaunting-car with a little child of four years of age. It began to rain, and a hood was placed over the child's head. I heard her mutter, "That is such a pretty view." I said, "How can that be when your head is covered?" "Oh," she replied, "I see my knees, my shawl, and my pretty little feet." A good illustration of people who cannot see farther than the extremity of their own beautiful selves. (*J. Alexander, D.D.*) *Ecclesiasticism has no exclusive rights*:—The Church ecclesiastical is like a vast water company chartered to supply the Church spiritual from the great river of the water of life. But how absurd it would be for a water company to claim the right to interdict rain from heaven, or to say to the inhabitants of a particular district, "You shall receive no water except it pass through the hydraulic machinery which I have constructed." (*General Gordon.*) *The first persecution of the apostles*:—To the tempter God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." But the hatred reigns in the breasts of the children of the devil, "he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit," while those who are "counted to the Saviour as a seed" are told to love their enemies. The first-fruit of the enmity was the murder of Abel. The first-fruit of this enmity towards the Apostolic Church was the imprisonment of Peter and John. But it belongs to the disciples of a crucified Saviour to do good and receive evil. I. THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE APOSTLES (vers. 1–4). Peter had said to Christ, "I will go with Thee to prison" &c., and our Lord had said to the sons of Zebedee, "Ye shall, indeed, drink of the cup that I drink of." And now we see—1. The first act of violence, which was the arrest of Peter and John. "While they were speaking to the people" gracious words there was a rush in the assembly, and an iron hand was laid on the preachers, not by "rude fellows of the baser sort," but the priests, of whom Hosea said, "As troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of the priests murder in the way by consent." The Sadducees were then in possession of authority, which they employed to indulge in the enjoyment of this life, as they believed in no other, and were cruel to all who disturbed their ease. They were, therefore, "vexed that the apostles preached, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead." For if He who was known to have been put to death was alive again, He was that "Man by whom came the resurrection of the dead." What was there in this to grieve any one? Is the present life so long that we should not wish for another? Or were these rulers so wicked that they suspected a future life must be to them a state of punishment? To wish to die like a dog belongs to those who wish to live like a dog. But, whatever men might think or say of the Resurrection, the question with magistrates should have been, What injury will this do to society? Will men be worse neighbours, or subjects, for believing that, after this life, they will rise, and be judged for the deeds done in the body? And yet, how many have felt the rude hand of violence for no other crime than preaching, through, Jesus the resurrection from the dead! 2. The first night which the apostles passed in prison is full of interest. See them led along to where criminals are lodged, the healed man following, not leaping for joy, but asking in sorrow, "Is it a crime, then, that they have made me walk?" Arrived at the gaol, the authorities demand entrance for two prisoners, who have done—what? good to body and to soul. Shall we pity them? No; save your pity for their persecutors. For, if you say, "But what must it be for pious men to pass a first night in a gaol?" I answer, but they are in a good cause, with a good conscience, and in good company; and with these three attendants a man may lie easy on a cold, hard, stone floor; and in a dreary dungeon pass a pleasant night. For now Peter blesses his Lord, that, instead of denying Him, he can suffer for Him; and John feels that he is indeed the disciple whom Jesus so loved, as to hand from His own lips the cup of suffering, "that His beloved may drink also." Call them not prisoners; their spirits are not imprisoned, but mount together to the mercy-seat, in prayer for grace to suffer well. And they knew that "the Word of God was not bound," that the Church now numbered five thousand. If the apostles were kept from sleep, it was for joy of such triumphs. But "He giveth His beloved sleep," which often refuses to shed its balm on royal eyelids, while it rests sweetly on theirs who, exhausted with labours and devotions, sink down, and, like Jacob, though with a stone for a pillow, see visions of God, heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending, in attendance on the heirs of salvation. Thus Bunyan, passing through the wilderness, lighted on a den, where he slept, and saw what myriads have gladly kept awake to read. II. THEIR

COMING FORTH AND TRIAL (vers 5-22). 1. The court is particularly described, as of importance to the narrative. The great men lived in the suburbs, and now called a general meeting in the city. The rulers were probably the president and vice-president of the Sanhedrim; the elders the body of the council; and the scribes, the persons who acted as counsel, and clerks of the court. Annas was the high priest, as Caiaphas had been. Alexander's name intimates a heathenish Jew; but he was then a man of note. John is thought to have been the Ben Zacchai, celebrated in the Talmud, who, forty years before the destruction of the temple, saw the gates open spontaneously, and said, "I know thine end"; for Zechariah prophesied, "Open thy gates, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars." "All the kindred of the high priest," who were a species of nobles, were now assembled, as if their dignities were at stake. Listen to the examination: "By what power, or by what name, have you done this?—you?" For the last word stands as if it were uttered in scorn: "You, fellows, to have done this!" See how "God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and turneth the counsel of the wicked headlong." For they venture not to deny the fact. The more contemptuously they treat the apostles, as unequal to such a work, the more they glorify Christ. But who ever heard of trying men for the crime of healing in a moment? Who would think of accusing a physician for curing thoroughly and speedily? They ask, what name has done it; as if alluding to the Jews' notion of a magic virtue in the name of Jehovah, which modern Jews have affirmed Jesus learned, and by it wrought His miracles. Had the apostles themselves dictated the examination, they could scarcely have made it more to their mind; for it elicited—2. The defence which they made (vers. 8-12). "It was done in the name of Jesus, the Messiah of Nazareth, whose name we pronounced ere we wrought the cure. You, indeed, condemned Him to die on the Cross; but God raised Him from the dead, of which the proof is before you." The rulers had asked after the wonder-working name, and they now know more than they wished; for what a stab must this have been to their pride! What a thunder-bolt to their consciences! They, aware that Jesus promised to rise again, had set a guard to prevent, and now are told that a miracle has proved it true. But see how Peter turns their attention from healing bodies to salvation for the soul. Who sees not here the fulfilment of Christ's promise to His apostles, "be not anxious what ye shall say, for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say"? 3. The council's embarrassment arose from the sight of the apostles and of the man they had cured. "Seeing the freedom of Peter and John," who spoke like men at their ease, and "conceiving them illiterate and private" men, the rulers could not account for their unembarrassed air. They were not among the literati, nor in any public office, but in private secular life; and they were known to have been with Jesus, who was neither in high station Himself, nor attended by those who were; for it was asked, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on Him?" But the man who was healed was another embarrassing sight, to which the council had nothing to reply. This embarrassment induced them to order all others out of the hall, ashamed to say before them, "What shall we do to these men?" It is, indeed, difficult to know what to do with men who are tried for their good deeds; and still more with men who can work miracles. Often have persecutors seized their victims and then knew not what to do with them. Hence, with a confounding coolness, they plot to smother a miracle, that it may not spread further, as if it were an infectious plague. Thus commenced a long course of threats and orders, not less impious than vain. This was overruled, to bring out to view the great principle of religious liberty. From this time Christ is declared to be the paramount Ruler in religion. "It is impossible for us not to speak what we have seen and heard." Not to speak at all to any man in the name of Jesus! Bid us, neither breathe nor think! A religion of ceremony may be put down by brute force; but to hide the love of Jesus is as impossible as to "hide the ointment of your right hand." Having, therefore, threatened again, they let the apostles go; the people made it dangerous to punish (ver. 21). Thus ended the first act of persecution, and thus commenced the triumph of religious freedom. III. THE LIBERTY OF THE APOSTLES WAS IMPROVED IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE MEN AND OF THEIR CAUSE. Earth and heaven exhibit scenes full of instruction. 1. On earth, the two confessors, "being let go, returned to their own company" (vers. 23-30). A night in gaol, and fierce threats, had wrought no change, except to increase their attachment to a cause that could not be gainsaid; and when restraint was taken off, as the bird whose string is cut soars away to its nest, they returned to their own company. Of the sufferings of a night

in gaol, they say, they think, nothing. The threats, however, call forth a united prayer to God, expressing their submission to His Sovereign pleasure, and their confidence in Him as the Almighty Creator. They had astonished the enemy by their very courage; but they knew themselves too well to trust to this; for he that was a hero in the last battle may turn coward in the next; and therefore they ask for boldness. "He giveth more grace"; and they who ask it are the men who endure to the end. The apostles ask that "God's hand might still be stretched forth to heal"; though one such display of power had cost them one night in gaol. Attention to an apostolic prayer becomes us. Mark its Scriptural character; a large portion is the Word of God; its high rationality; for the Psalm quoted is not misapplied; its deep humility, with its lofty bearing; its superiority to self; with its consecration to the Divine honour; and then say whether these men were either deceivers or deceived? If we pray like apostles, shall we not wisely adapt our prayers to occasions as they arise? 2. Heaven responded to earth; for, they having thus prayed, a second Pentecost followed. As in the first, a mighty sound, like a roaring wind, roused attention; so now, an earthquake, which shook the place where they were assembled, spoke the descending God. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, in new and more abundant measures. Rich recompense for bonds and imprisonments. Conclusion: 1. Let their testimony sink into your hearts, that "there is salvation in no other name, but that of Jesus the Crucified." 2. When you have believed, and found salvation in it, you will show the attraction of affinity as they did, who, "being let go, returned to their own company." 3. Triumph is the testimony of Jesus against all the terrors of persecution; which is a blunt weapon, that has ever failed of its object, from the hour that these apostles were let go, to this moment. (*J. Bennett.*) *The first persecution of the Church*:—The authorities were offended because—I. The apostles TAUGHT. This is emphatically true of the priests, who looked upon themselves as the only lawfully constituted teachers. 1. They considered that the apostles were not personally qualified (ver. 13). "Unlearned" means they had not been trained in Rabbinical lore—they were not brought up to letters—they were *agrammatoi*. Men in every age lay undue stress upon "Grammar." Not to have been trained in the public schools is of itself almost fatal to any man who aspires to the office of a teacher. But were not the priests right? It is necessary we should distinguish between scholarship and learning. Scholarship is proficiency in words and forms and opinions; learning is a large sympathy with life, and a deep insight into the eternal truth of things. In the priest we see scholarship; in the apostles learning; and the learning of the latter is infinitely preferable to the scholarship of the former. But the men of scholarship looked down contemptuously upon the men of learning. Does that surprise you? It has been repeated over and over again in the history of our own country. Did not the clergy sneer at the ministers of Dissent—Bunyan and his contemporaries—whom they now indeed emulate each other to honour? The best thing is to honour the living prophets, the next best thing is to respect and perpetuate the memory of the dead. One fact the history of the Church has indisputably demonstrated—that scholarship alone, however valuable it may be as an accessory, is not a sufficient qualification to teach the people. But though scholarship alone is not a sufficient qualification, yet learning is; and better still to have both scholarship and learning. The ministry of the apostles was characterised by learning, the ministry of the middle ages by scholarship; let us hope that the ministry of the future will be distinguished for its happy combination of the two. 2. They considered that the apostles had no official right to teach. They were *idiotai*—men of no profession, private individuals, in a word, laymen. And the professionals were very indignant that parties outside the sacred pale of the sacerdotal order, and not commissioned, should set themselves up as teachers. Laymen were considered very ignorant men; the *idiotai* suggested idiots. The priests claimed an exclusive right to teach. This, however, had not always been the case in Jewry. The ceremonies of religion had been entrusted to the priests, the teaching of the people to the prophets. But prophecy had long died out, and the priesthood had stepped into its place; and having once possessed themselves of the power they guarded it most jealously. Does this seem strange? The same thing has occurred over and over again. The now famous pedlar of Elstow was charged with insolence, irreverence, and disloyalty for daring to stand up to deliver himself of the truths burning in his soul. The police came suddenly upon him and immured him in Bedford gaol for twelve long years. Why? What evil had he done? This—that he, a layman, one of the *idiotai*, should venture to trespass on the prohibited

preserves of the priests! This mischievous spirit is still smouldering. II. The apostles taught THE PEOPLE. 1. Some felt vexed on personal considerations, for the apostles, labouring to enlighten and convert the people, were indirectly undermining the power of the priests. The heyday of priestcraft is generally the "times of ignorance," and it naturally desires the prolongation of those times. Peter and John held out the lamp of knowledge, and the authorities rushed upon the lamp-bearers and endeavoured to break the lamp. With what result? With the simple result of smashing the glass and letting the flame burn more intensely than before, and kindle five thousand other lamps. 2. Others felt annoyed on ecclesiastical grounds. The priests knew, through the instinct of self-preservation, that the enlightenment of the people meant virtually their deposition. The people had to receive implicitly and unquestioningly the word of priests and rabbis as to what the will of God was; or worse still, their interpretation of it. This monopoly plunged the people into an elaborate system of lifeless traditions and burdensome superstitions. And when the apostles demanded back the key of knowledge and desired to lead the people into the hidden dwelling place of truth, with what reward did they meet? They were cast into prison. Does that surprise you? No; for this history has been enacted over again in Christendom. The key of knowledge was taken away from Europe, and the Scriptures were allowed to lie in an unknown language. Luther on the Continent and Wycliffe in England endeavoured to unlock the treasures, to translate the Scriptures into the popular language, and to scatter broadcast the knowledge of the Divine will; and they were vilified, excommunicated, and hunted about for their pains. Nevertheless the translation of the Bible caused the Papal hierarchy to topple to its ruin in Germany and England. Mark that well. Priests still forbid laymen to peruse and expound the Scriptures—they must believe on authority. The essence of Romanism is to believe on authority. The essence of Protestantism to believe on proof. 3. Others felt annoyed on civil grounds. They would say as all despots have in effect said—"Knowledge is power. If you educate the people you put into their hands a weapon which they have not the wisdom to use. What if they use it for revolution? To avert the evil, we will refuse the good." That has always been the language of despotism; and forthwith it proceeds to fetter, and if need be, to kill the champions of popular education. No doubt knowledge is a tremendous power—especially religious knowledge; and often, alas! it has been converted to mean, vulgar ends. But are we to reject the use of a thing because of its abuse? Do not have fires, and you will have no conflagrations. Light, no doubt, does multiply the shadows; shall we on that account declaim against the sun? III. They taught the people, through, Jesus THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. 1. The teaching reflected deep discredit on the tribunals of the nation. The leading members of those courts had crucified Christ; but yet God had raised Him up from the dead. Now the Resurrection was a complete vindication of Christ's character; but to vindicate His character was to brand the character of His judges. Therefore those judges were irritated beyond measure. In their furious madness the infant Church saw the fulfilment of the prophecy (ver. 25). You have seen a spirited unmanageable horse snorting wildly and plunging desperately—his eyes flashing fire, his nostrils breathing thunders. That is the very figure used in this chapter to describe the raging of the Jewish authorities against the gospel—they were like wild beasts, filled with foolish and unreasonable fury. 2. The teaching was new. The Pharisees were very much in love with the old, and were deemed wiser than their descendants. The Pharisees were the champions of orthodoxy, and in confederacy with the other sections of the Jewish Church put the apostles on their trial for healing the lame man. The Sanhedrim assembled—the court had to decide between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The miracle they could not deny. The question was, "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" The whole trial turned upon that hinge. Were the apostles orthodox, yea or no? You know the conclusion they arrived at—the apostles were branded as heretics, and forbidden to heal or to preach any more in the name of Jesus. We should never forget that the apostles and the Saviour Himself, were charged with heresy and persecuted to death on account of it. This teaches us two lessons. (1) That we should be careful not to reject any doctrine because of its novelty, nor call the advocates of new opinions by bad, unpopular names. Every truth—of science as well as theology—was considered heresy on its first promulgation. The heterodoxy of one age is the orthodoxy of the next. Truth is first crucified, then raised from the dead, then exalted to the throne and adored. (2) Not to refute what we deem heresy by imprisonment. Jesus Christ argued with

the people of Jerusalem, and they took up stones to cast at Him. It is a very easy but a very foolish way to meet an argument with a stone. And yet it has been the universal practice till recently. The Christians hold certain views concerning life and death, and the Jews persecute them. Among Christians again, certain parties hold views different from the majority and they are burnt. Mankind are slow to learn than it is a cowardly thing to kill a man for an opinion. 3. Their teaching, moreover, flatly contradicted an influential section of the hierarchy. The Sadducees probably prided themselves on how little they believed. They would no doubt style themselves broad thinkers; but certainly they were not broad believers. Breadth of thought is in our time, too, preferred to breadth of faith. But there is something fundamentally wrong with the man whose broad thinking leads to narrow believing. Broad thinking should always lead to broad believing, and where the faith is feeble, it is to me a proof positive that the thinking is not broad, but lax. Anyhow, the Sadducees conspired to suppress the teaching of the apostles. In the Gospels the merciless hostility of the Pharisees is in the forefront; but in the Acts the fierce enmity of the Sadducees; for there the fact and the doctrine of the resurrection find a more prominent place. Scepticism knows how to imprison and behead its opponents as well as superstition. Unbelief, not faith, is the real source of persecution. Let men believe in God, and that He is stronger than the devil; in truth, and that it is more potent than error; in right, and that it will and must prove triumphant over might, and they can afford to be patient, they will see the futility of resorting to physical force. The truth of liberty is based in religion. What has unbelief done on behalf of liberty? It has written. What has Christianity done? It has bled. Infidels have pleaded for it, but Christians have died for it. Did their imprisonment check the mighty progress of the gospel? Nay, "many of them that heard the Word believed." Times of persecution are generally times of much spiritual prosperity. Some of the early martyrs had for their mystic symbol a candle surrounded by a crowd of angry men puffing as hard as they could to blow it out; but the harder they puffed the more brightly burnt the candle. The English Reformers were sorely harassed, but did they abandon the cause of Protestantism? No; some of them devised an anvil for their coat of arms with the striking motto—"This anvil hath broken many hammers." "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Typical religious persecution*:—I. THE PERSECUTORS were typical—the "priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees." Here we have—1. Men whose tenets were discredited—the Sadducees. 2. Men whose prerogative was invaded—the priests. 3. The subordinate, notoriously accessible to bribes—"the captain of the temple," the servant of the priests and the Sadducees, who would desire what would please them. Is there not here a type of the agency employed in all religious persecutions? Outraged orthodoxy, slighted privilege, and vile sycophancy have distinguished themselves in many ways and in various combinations in the attacks made on faithful reformers and evangelists from age to age. II. THE GROUND was typical. The persecutors were "annoyed." God was not employing them. They were unable to give any explanation. And their own cherished notions were ceasing to command the respect of the people. Has it not been ever thus, when "unauthorised" teachers have been more welcome and more successful than the official representatives of the Church? But the will of the Lord be done. III. THE TREATMENT was typical. They were—1. Stopped in their preaching. But "the Word" had been effectually spoken. Those who wished and had determined to hinder were restrained until God's own time. 2. Apprehended. Their reasons were not met with counter-reasons. To deal with truth by physical force! What a confession of ignorance and weakness! 3. Imprisoned. That they could do; but they could not imprison or bind the truth, nor prevent it becoming the instrument of spiritual freedom to those who received it. IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS were typical. The preachers—1. Had remained at the post of duty until forced away. They had nothing to reproach themselves with on that account. 2. Had the pleasure of knowing that the good work had progressed. 3. Had a whole night for meditation and prayer. In like manner have the Lord's persecuted servants been comforted and sustained since. (*W. Hudson.*) *Apostolic trials*:—Two men disclaiming all original power excited Jewish society by the performance of a miraculous deed. The excitement became in the long run bewilderment. The Jewish leaders were completely baffled. The facts of Christianity have been awkward stumbling-blocks in the way of unbelief. Opponents can see two sides to a theory, but to a fact it is vain to oppose a suggestion of fancy or a jeer of ill will. I. ON THE SIDE OF THE JEWISH LEADERS there was—1. Illiberality.

"Being grieved that they taught the people." The highest pre-Christian culture! Christ alone has shown Himself the friend of universal man—slave or king. Christianity has a universal appeal. It is not a taper, it is the sun. 2. Shortsightedness. They put the apostles in prison! Fools! They could not put God in prison! Had the apostles been original workers the imprisonment might have met the case. The apostles were put into prison because they did good to the diseased and instructed the ignorant. Christianity is still the physical and moral regenerator of the world. The only charge that can be brought against it is that it continually seeks to do good. 3. Impotence. "What shall we do?" &c. They "threatened" the apostles: that is, they shook their fists at the sun in order to darken the world! They stamped on the sea shore to repel the tide! They sent a message to the wind stating that they would henceforth be independent of air! We see how small men are when they set themselves against truth. II. ON THE SIDE OF THE APOSTLES there was—1. Complete intelligence within the sphere of their ministry. Though they were unlearned and ignorant men, yet within the compass of their work they were wise and efficient. This is the secret of success. Know what you do know. Do not venture beyond the line of your vocation. Every preacher is strong when he stands on fact and experience. Christians must not accept the bait which would draw them upon unknown or forbidden ground. 2. Unconquerable courage in narrating and applying facts. Look at—(1) The dignity of the address. (2) The calm and emphatic assertion of the name of Christ. (3) The direct and special impeachment of the hearers. "Whom ye crucified." "Set at nought of you builders." Dignity is proper in the preachers of truth. Christ is the life of Christianity—beware of lauding the system and forgetting the Man. Accusation is the work of every Christian evangelist. Prove the world's crime. 3. Christian magnanimity in preaching the gospel (ver. 12). (1) Man needs saving. (2) All men, even Christ's murderers, may be saved. (3) There is but one way of saving them. 4. Incorruptible loyalty to God and His truth (ver. 19). "Things that we have seen and heard." What a field! Missions at home and abroad—schools, labours, sacrifices, death-beds. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Teaching and persecution*:— 1. Not only did Peter and John cure the lame man, they proceeded to "teach the people." Herein was their greatest fault. Christianity is a teaching religion. It seeks out all the people, and speaks the popular tongue. It is just here that preachers may learn their most useful lesson. Our danger is that we speak to the classes; the apostles taught the masses. We can never get back to that universal speech unless those of you who are educated and highly refined will support us. You must be content to be partially neglected in so far as intellectual luxuries are concerned, and must assist us in providing good wholesome bread for the common people. That is precisely the difference between Christianity and every other religion. Others say, "Keep the people in the dark"; this, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Others draw a screen, as Pythagoras lectured from behind a curtain to his disciples, and from behind they mutter their unintelligible incantations; this lifts its red banner, throws it out upon the willing wind, and on it is written, "This thing was not done in a corner." Other religions are philosophies only; Christianity is a gospel as well. 2. A very marvellous thing occurs here, in a kind of parenthesis. The rulers put them in prison. "Howbeit"! —God has His finger in this! He comes through very narrow spaces, and seizes very transient opportunities. "Howbeit"—Wait there a while to get the full rush of this glorious announcement—"many of them which heard the Word believed." Why should not that be the case now, so that whatever may happen to the preacher within the next hour he may know, as he goes to his account, that he has left behind him a harvest before the time? 3. The morning came, and justice must be done. This question was hurled at them, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" Beware of turning your religion into a piece of metaphysical inquiry. It is at that point that Christianity is often defeated in her most beneficent purposes. The learned men wanted to analyse what we now call the *modus operandi*. Instead of accepting the man, the concrete, positive, indisputable fact, they wanted to lure the apostles, and those who followed them, into metaphysical quagmires and difficulties. Preachers do not answer the "why" and the "how" of merely inquisitive minds. Have the man himself with you, and let him be your argument. Christianity rests on facts, not upon opinions. If the Church of Christ has not the Man with it, any amount of mere philosophical theorising and speculation will do harm rather than good. Where is the man you have saved? Produce him. Where are the hungry you have fed, the ignorant you have instructed, the enslaved you have

emancipated? Produce them. This is a fact, not a quibble. By whatever means it is done the effect is certain, and the cause of such an effect must itself be good. 4. Peter and John will surely stammer before this glittering assembly! The maid that taunted the rough-spoken Galilæan was too much for Peter; when he sees Annas, &c., there will be no spirit left in him. How does the narrative read? "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost." That is a thousand Peters: Peter multiplied by the very Deity. Peter?—a straw blown away by the mocking wind, by himself. But Peter "filled with the Holy Ghost" was a man of war clothed with heavenly panoply, eloquent with heaven's thunder, gracious with heaven's love. Have we received the Holy Ghost? The question is not, "Are we well trained intellectually?" "Have we read many books?" "Are we able to conduct very subtle arguments?" We shall know whether we have received the Spirit by the fire that is in us. We have received the first baptism, we have been "christened," Christ-named, christianised in the sense of having been brought to the church, and had the initial water sprinkled upon our forehead; but have we received the Holy Ghost? There is no mistaking Him. 5. Peter having been challenged to give an account of the circumstance, made the eloquent reply which you find within verses 9 to 12 inclusive. Whenever Peter spake suddenly, on great subjects, he spake the very heart of God. How much he makes of Christ in the 10th verse! We seem hardly to have heard the whole style and title of Jesus before. We have them here. We have called the Saviour "Jesus," sometimes we have called Him "Jesus Christ." By some short indication of this kind we have made reference to the Redeemer. But how seldom have we given Him His full style and title!—"Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him." There is no mistaking that address. What Christ do you preach? We have heard of the Christ of the painter—a figure tenderly coloured, set in wondrous lights and shades. We have stood before it, and sometimes we have thrilled in its presence, and felt the waters stealing into our eyes. But that Christ never saved the soul, it is only a creation of art. We have heard of the Christ of the poet. Christ has been spoken of in flowing rhyme and stately blank verse; but that Christ never came from the intellect into the depths of the heart in its deadliest remorse on account of sin. We must go back to the apostolic Christ if we have to realise apostolic conceptions and to win apostolic successes in the ministry. Peter might well have ended by the statement contained in the 10th verse, but Peter often found it difficult to conclude when Christ was the theme. How can a river end except in the sea? The little pool, the purling rill, soon sinks in the sand; but the river—deep, broad, fluent—moves on through channelled rocks and shady woods, on, on to the solemn sea. Peter went onward. Said he, "This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner." The place trembled under the vibration of that living voice! He might have ended there; but it was difficult, let us repeat, for Peter ever to end when Christ was the theme. So he continued, "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. The original question was not one of salvation, it was merely a question of healing a lame man. But you never find the apostles confining themselves to the mere incident. Every miracle is only a text. Let an apostle heal a man's ankle-bones, and from those ankle-bones he swings clear off to Christ's world-saving Cross. "If we have healed your ankle-bones, we meant it to be symbolic of the greater healing of your soul." 6. Now, it was the turn of the Sanhedrim to be shut up and put "in hold unto the next day," and every day after that. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John "they marvelled." Any man that can be accounted for will never influence his age. He will make a splash in the pool; but the bubbles will be seen a moment, then will sink for ever. You never can make out the secret of a Whitefield. You never can make out the secret power of any man who makes a whole world hear him. If you could account for him you would be as great as he is. What then did the wise and influential Jews do? "Threaten them." You feel the difference of temperature between vers. 11, 12, and vers. 16–18. The apostles must not speak any more! There must be an end of this nuisance. Society is not to be disturbed by such propagandists. Peter, having heard the threatening, said unto them, "Whether it be right. . . ." That is the word that makes history, that thrills the ages. And the apostles having received this threatening, "went to their own company, and reported," &c. What a talk they had! How they reminded one another of the occasion of the movement! And when the company had heard it all "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, . . ." They too became eloquent. And when they had

prayed, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Pentecost after Pentecost! Poor Church! Thou hast fallen upon empty times. They are but mean challenges that are addressed to us now. If we could be once more threatened with the prison and the stake, the rod of iron and the keen double-edged weapon, some of us might be heroes. At present we may be but common clay. (*Ibid.*) *Peter and John examined*:—I. WHEN GOD IS CARRYING ON ANY DESIGN FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS GLORY GREAT OPPOSITION WILL BE MADE TO IT. Satan will not remain a quiet spectator, and his servants will be stirred up to his assistance. In this combination it ought not to surprise us to find, not only persons of profane principles and wicked lives, but some who, in consequence of their apparent attachment to religion, might have been expected to range themselves on the opposite side. When God was setting His Son on His holy hill of Zion, not only did the "heathen" rage, who were ignorant of prophecy, and had not seen the miracles of Jesus, but the favoured "people," to whom the oracles of God were committed, and among whom the Messiah had appeared, "imagined a vain thing." II. GOD MAY EXPOSE HIS PEOPLE TO MUCH DISCOURAGEMENT WHEN THEY ARE WALKING IN HIS OWN WAY. The apostles preached Christ by express commission from heaven, and on their success depended the conversion of the world. Yet in the outset they were opposed by the supreme authority in the nation. In the course of their ministry they were subjected to danger and suffering, and most of them lost their lives in the cause. Superficial reasoners may conclude that God is at variance with Himself, retarding the execution of His own plans, and may complain that, instead of rewarding, He punishes men for their zeal and fidelity. "But the foolishness of God is wiser than men." By such dispensations He exercises the faith of His servants, and makes known His power in carrying on His designs in spite of the utmost efforts of His adversaries; while in the behaviour of His people, such examples of courage, patience, and love are exhibited, as afford no slight testimony to the truth of religion. Converts are made by the sufferings of the saints as well as by their doctrine. III. CHRIST REQUIRES NO SERVICE FOR WHICH HE DOES NOT FURNISH THEM WITH NECESSARY AID. He is no hard taskmaster. As His commandments are reasonable, so His grace strengthens us to obey them. When Peter and John were called to plead His cause before the Jewish council, they were "filled with the Holy Ghost." Hence did cowardly fishermen become undaunted apostles; hence have simple and uneducated men put learning to silence; hence have feeble and delicate women endured with unshaken firmness, cruel tortures, and death in its most terrible forms. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." IV. GREAT IS THE TRUTH, AND IT WILL PREVAIL. It confounded and silenced the Jewish council; it made foolish the wisdom of the world, vanquishing its vain philosophy and sophistical eloquence by the plain doctrine of the Cross; it will, in like manner, triumph over infidelity, superstition, heresy, and licentiousness. From what it has already done we may calculate the effects which are yet to be expected from it (Psa. cx. 2, 3). V. LET US BE CAREFUL TO MAINTAIN A GOOD CONSCIENCE IN OUR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION. This was the constant study of the apostles, and hence they considered not what was honourable in the eyes of the world, what was advantageous or safe, but solely what was right. It was God only whom they were resolved to obey, and they minded not the contrary commands and threatenings of men. You will never enjoy peace of mind, you will never act uprightly and consistently till you learn to regulate your conduct by the fixed standard of truth and rectitude, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Beware of the vain attempt to serve two masters. The result of such an attempt will be that you will serve neither of them fully, and will lose the reward promised by both. (*J. Dick, A.M.*) *Righteous boldness*:—Courage is of various sorts. Brazen courage is simply an outside affair, born of impudence. Many a timid soul will cower before it, but itself will always cower when rightly met. Physical courage is an affair of the body, born of mere brute force. There is a courage of love, conscience, conviction, action, repose. What is Christian courage? Let us to-day look back to the time when Christ's disciples were first under the fire of persecution and see—I. ITS OCCASION. Peter and John had healed a lame man, and to the wondering crowd preached Jesus and His resurrection. Out of patience with this continued talk about Jesus—the priests, because Jesus had denounced their hypocrisy and formalism; the Sadducees, because in Jesus was set forth the resurrection, which they scouted and denied—had got the apostles arraigned before the Sanhedrim. In the presence of this august body they proved what stuff they were made of. They had no friends at

this court. Wealth, learning, fashion, pride, numbers, and even piety and the national faith, and the very oracles of God, were arrayed against these poor disciples. Peter stood in view of them all, calm and confident, a splendid illustration of the truth that "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. xxviii. 1), and made his reply. II. ITS SECRET. "Filled with the Holy Ghost." This made the difference between Peter before the ascension and Peter after it. It was not natural courage, "to the manner born." Peter's impetuous ardour often got him into trouble, but his courage failed him when put to the test. He could use his sword under sudden impulse, but his temporary boldness is followed by blank cowardice. He could leap from the ship in impulsive obedience, but he scarcely touches the waters before he cries out for fear. This is Peter by nature. But after Pentecost what granite-like firmness he exhibits! what courage of conviction! what unflinching loyalty to truth! what boldness in the rebuke of wrong! This is Peter by grace. The bank of sand is transformed into a rock of firmness. Impulse has given way to principle. Fear of man is exchanged for fear of God. III. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. 1. Courtesy. Peter gives the men of the court their appropriate titles, recognises their office and authority, and addresses them with deference and respect. Bravery does not consist in brusqueness and bravado and bluster. To speak the truth boldly one need not be a boor or a bear. There is a so-called maintaining one's self-respect which is simply a manifesting one's impudence. But the courtesy had no weakness in it. Where grace salts courage, the courage is not noisy or dogged or defiant, but marked by a quiet courtesy in the very repose of conscious power. 2. Prudence. The deed was "good," and Peter reminds them of it. It is well-doing they are to be examined about, not evil-doing. Peter first turns attention from the method to the thing. The work itself could challenge only gratitude and joy. Of itself it could provoke no opposition. One would think the healing of a lifelong cripple to be a matter about which there could be no two opinions. How can a corrupt tree bring forth such good fruit? He made the most of his circumstances. So will the highest courage always. While scorning compromise of principle, it presses into service every alleviating circumstance. It does not court a tilt or invite a conflict. 3. Frankness. The council demanded by what authority or name they had done this. They got for instant answer, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Here Peter might have stopped. This was the truth, and nothing but the truth. But this was not the truth that put Peter in bonds. He knew he was a prisoner because of some other word that he had been bold enough to speak in the presence of the people, and in the frankness of righteous boldness that word must be spoken now in the presence of the court. "Whom ye crucified," for this had stirred the priests against him; and, "whom God raised from the dead"; for this had stirred the Sadducees against him (vers. 1, 2). This is simply another Daniel (see Dan. vi. 10). It was not necessary to pray with "his windows open"; but, having been open when he prayed in security, they must not be shut when the king's decree threatens with a den of lions any man that prays. Christian courage will wear no masks. The temptation to be compromisingly politic at the point of real danger is most plausibly insidious and subtle, and a brave spirit gets here its sorest test. The man of real Christian courage will die rather than be sheltered behind a truth withheld. 4. Fidelity. Peter had fully stated the facts. But here was a rare opportunity to bring out also the meaning of the facts. Peter might never get such a hearing again. So he makes the rejected Christ the glorious and chief corner-stone in Zion (Psa. cxviii. 22; Eph. ii. 20). These trusters in Abraham and good works are thus told that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved. This was the top and crown of Christian courage. It was transforming the prisoner's bar into a pulpit. This is another John the Baptist ready to lose his head rather than fail to testify that his hearers are wrong. A brave soul will preach the gospel as fearlessly to the Sanhedrim as to a mass-meeting. Opportunity is obligation. IV. ITS EFFECTS. "They marvelled." The first effect was profound surprise. Then they came to recognise them as men they had seen before in the company of Jesus. And beholding the cripple, a healed and living witness to the truth, "they had nothing to speak against." They were silenced completely, just as Jesus had said they would be (Luke xxi. 15). So now —1. Men wonder first at the boldness. They see nothing behind it, nothing to support it—no arms, government, material resource—and they are astounded. The world knows not its secret. The natural man has not entered into its hiding-place. 2. Then they have nothing to speak against. Christian courage has a wonderful way of disarming opposition. Opposition may still rage, as it did here,

but it has no case, as it had not here. Conclusion: 1. The Spirit of God can make the weakest saint bold. 2. We can afford to trust Christ. 3. Truth will sometimes smite to silence when it does not smite to heal. (*Herrick Johnson, D.D.*) *Christ the power of God*:—I. IN TIMES OF TROUBLE AND PERSECUTION (vers. 1–4) adding all the more to the Church. II. IN GIVING AID TO HIS DISCIPLES (vers. 5–8). Fulfilling the promise to Peter of courage and right words. III. IN THE SALVATION OF MEN (vers. 9–12). The only name by which men can be saved is His. IV. IN CHANGING CHARACTER (vers. 13, 14). Making His disciples like Himself. (*Christian Age.*) *The miracle at the Beautiful gate as an epoch*:—Peter's discourse delivered on this text woke impulses and started efforts both amongst the adherents and opponents of the true religion that introduced a new order of things. Notice—I. A NEW IMPULSE TO THE WORLD'S ANTAGONISM TO CHRISTIANITY. Observe—1. The representatives of this antagonism—the world against the Church, the defenders of the false in theory and the corrupt in practice. Religion, "the priests"; politics, "the captain of the temple"; scepticism, "the Sadducees" conspired to crush the young Church. The hostile sections of a wicked world are ever ready to merge their differences in an attack on the Divinely pure and good. Pilate and Herod became friends on a similar occasion. 2. The reason of this antagonism. The priests were "grieved" because the apostles arrogated their teaching office; the captain because social tranquility was disturbed; the Sadducees because the resurrection was proclaimed. Wicked men hate truth for different reasons, and according to their passions and interests. 3. Its development. The persecutors (1) Imprisoned the apostles. (2) Arraigned them. (3) Threatened them. So the antagonism was strong in spirit, but futile in efforts. In sooth, all endeavours to crush truth are fruitless and self-confounding. II. A NEW DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S POWER IN CHRISTIANITY. 1. In multiplying its adherents (ver. 4). Though the clouds gather, the sun rises. The tides flow, though the force of the mightiest tempest bears against them; and God's truth moves on to universal empire, though earth and hell combine against it. "Howbeit," aye, and not only despite it, but because of it. Persecution does two things which give an impulse to the course of the Christian martyr. It presents on the one side such a hideous manifestation of evil as produces a social recoil, and on the other such an exhibition of Christian goodness as awakens sympathy and admiration. As the aromatic plant emits its sweetest odours by pressure, so Christian character gains charm by suffering. As the stars only shine at night, so the brightest virtues can only shine in trial. 2. In strengthening its advocates. See how they heroically expound their cause. (1) The miracle was wrought by Him whom they had crucified. (2) He whom they had crucified had become pre-eminent in the universe. What they had rejected God had honoured. Observe—(*a*) That men in their enterprises often reject the Divine. (*b*) That though they reject the Divine, the Divine shall be honoured at last to their confusion. (*c*) That He whom they had crucified was the only One that could save them. 3. In confounding its enemies. (1) They were astonished, and two things would heighten the astonishment. (*a*) The intellectual and social position of the men. Pedants in every age consider those illiterate who do not know exactly that branch of learning in which they pride themselves. The linguist, *e.g.*, despises the man who does not understand languages, although he may know much better the wonders of God's universe. So Peter and John were not up in Rabbinical lore, but were well acquainted with more important matters. (*b*) Their connection with Christ, the carpenter's son, and the crucified malefactor. (2) They were silenced. Facts are stubborn things. The way to silence Christ's enemies is to show them lame men walking. 3. They were perplexed. They felt that something must be done, but what they know not. Seventy of a nation's magnates were confounded by two peasants. It is heaven's law that the opponents of the truth shall involve themselves in inextricable bewilderment. 4. They were thwarted (vers. 19, 20). Note here—(1) That the will of God is the imperial rule of life, whether of monarch or slave. (2) That universal conscience sanctions the supreme law. "Judge ye." (3) That gospel truth, when fully felt, is an irrepressible force. "We cannot but speak." "Necessity is laid upon me." Conclusion. Mark the difference in the effect of Peter's discourse and that on Pentecost. None seem here to have been pricked to the heart, although the same truths were preached. Why? Doubtless because of the different character of the audiences. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The four chief props of apologetics*:—Proof from—1. Miracles—the lame man. 2. Prophecy and Scripture (ver. 11). 3. History (ver. 21). 4. The heart and experience (ver. 13). (*O. Smith, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **They taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection.**—*Apostolic teaching*:—A tolerably full report of two or three of St. Peter's sermons is given us in the Acts, and we may assume that they are fair specimens of his ordinary preaching. A striking likeness runs through them. 1. As to style he deals largely in quotations from the Old Testament, and shows how those quotations were fulfilled in Christ, adducing this correspondence as a proof of Messiahship. In respect of matter, it may be summed up in one sentence—"Whom ye have slain, but whom God hath raised up." It was not necessary for the apostles to bear witness to His death, for nobody disputed the fact. But His resurrection was not an "open" triumph. It therefore resolved itself into a matter of testimony, which testimony formed the chief burden of apostolic teaching. Reading the Epistles we cannot help observing a slight difference in tone. The atonement receives more attention, and the doctrinal significance of the resurrection more than the fact. Addressing unbelievers they dwell on the simple facts. Addressing believers they take the bare facts for granted, and expatiate on their doctrinal significance. I. They TAUGHT. Teaching consists in (1) drawing out the mind and making it work on the object-matter presented to it; (2) presenting the object-matter to the mind, and bringing within its ken the proper materials of knowledge. The first is represented in "education," the second in "instruction." There must be power in the eye to see, and there must be light outside the eye in and on which sight may exercise itself. Eyes without light are purposeless; light without eyes is useless; good eyes and good light are necessary to clear vision. 1. Christianity educates men by teaching them to think. It leads out the mind, and develops its dormant faculties. The masses of men expend more thought upon religion than upon any other subject. The little thinking they do is chiefly in connection with the religion of Jesus Christ. And it stimulates thought not only in the vulgar, but also in the learned. Go to the British Museum; four out of every five books there discuss the problems of Christianity. There is a subtle, indescribable quality in Christianity eminently calculated to provoke thought. Just as the rising of the sun drives away slumber, the rays quietly but effectually tickling the drowsy eye into wakefulness, so Christianity pours such a flood of white radiance on the eyes that it feels constrained to open them. The presentation of Christianity to the mind constrains thought; and in the exercise of thought the world learns to think. The angel Uriel came down to Eden in search of the devil, and noticing a toad crouching at Eve's ear, he touched it with his mystic wand and up sprang an angel. A fallen one, it is true, but an angel still. Christianity possesses similar powers of transformation. If it only touch the rude, unlettered boor, there gradually will be unfolded a holy angel, glowing with enthusiasm for all that is noble and divine. The foremost nations are those which have come most largely under the influences of Christianity. The religions of the heathen are the greatest obstruction to their progress. Philosophy taught the learned to think, but Christianity aims at making every man a thinker, and man, to be a man, must be a thinker. 2. Christianity teaches men to know. That is the meaning of the word "instruct"—to pile up in the mind the proper materials of knowledge. No amount of hard thinking answers its purpose, unless it leads to knowing. Now, Christianity brings within the sweep of our intellectual vision verities which before lay inaccessible. This confers a vast advantage on us as compared with the mighty minds which lay outside the sphere of revelation. The philosophers are renowned merely for their thinking—indeed, they evolved and formulated the laws of thought for all succeeding generations. Nevertheless, their knowledge was small in quantity and poor in quality. They had excellent eyes; still they did not see very far, and what little they did see was shrouded in obscurity. Did the fault lie with the eyes? No; they lacked light. But this much-needed light the gospel abundantly supplies. Our eyes, maybe, are not so strong as theirs; but the medium through which we see is clearer, and the objects have been brought nearer. 3. Thinking answers not its paramount purpose except as it leads to knowing; and Christianity conjoins thinking and knowing, thereby perfectly fulfilling our idea of teaching. There is a school of philosophy which disparages thinking, and runs down the metaphysics of the ancients. This school—sometimes called the Positive, and sometimes the Utilitarian—judges thought by its material results. Christianity avoids this extreme—it encourages thinking more or less for its own sake; the profoundest Christian thinkers feel impelled by a kind of natural instinct to grapple with the questions which baffled

the giants of ancient days. Another school swings to the other extreme, and disparages knowing. "If God," says Lessing, "was to hold Truth in one hand, and Search after Truth in the other, and offer me my choice, I should with all deference choose the Search after Truth in preference to the Truth itself." This is a mistake. To think is well, but to know is better. To hunt for truth is commendable, but to catch truth is more satisfactory. The Greek philosophers hunted well, but it was very little they caught. We do not hunt so well, nevertheless we catch more. Our children know more of God and the soul and eternity than the most accomplished writers of classic times. Christianity lays more stress on thinking than the Positivists; it lays more stress on knowing than the Transcendentalists; and thus it is the reconciliation of the opposite schools of philosophy. II. They taught the PEOPLE. There are two stages in religion. 1. The first is that in which is awakened within us reverence for the High—worship of that which is above us. The first essential in the education of the race as of the individual, is to cultivate this sense, and this the religion of the Old Testament was eminently calculated to do. God is seldom mentioned, but some sublime epithet is appended. The religions of nature served to engender fear; but a religion of revelation was necessary to engender reverence. 2. But Christianity marks a second stage—it teaches us also to reverence that which is under us; not only to worship God, but to compassionate and succour the great masses of men. In Plato's Republic the population is divided into the philosophers who govern, the soldiers who fight, and the people who serve; and the people are immured in slavery the most abject and helpless. Plato never entertained the idea that the vast bulk of mankind are capable of being enlightened, elevated, made pure and wise. But Jesus Christ cherished a larger hope of the human race, the "common people heard Him gladly." John the Baptist sent to ask Him the evidences of His Messiahship. "The blind receive their sight," &c., replied He, and, as the crowning proof, "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." The Saviour adduces this as a more convincing evidence than even His miracles. It was easier to suspend the laws of nature than reverse the usages of society. 3. But Christianity cultivates reverence for the high and reverence for the low. Did it teach the first only, it would establish gigantic despotisms, and authority would crush out freedom. Did it teach the second only, it would establish anarchy, and freedom would destroy all authority. But laying due emphasis on both, it serves as the mainstay of authority, and the sure guarantee of liberty. To the subjects it says—Submit yourselves to those who are above you. To the rulers it says—Respect the liberty of those who are under you. And thus touching the two extremes of government and filling all the space between, it is the very religion which covers all the world's wants. III. They taught the people and PREACHED THROUGH JESUS THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. 1. They preached the fact of the resurrection by the example of Jesus. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses." They preached it. They did not argue and weigh probabilities. The sages had thought and argued much, but left the subject in a state of chaotic uncertainty. What professes to be an historical fact must be judged by historical evidence, and the evidence the apostles brought forward was the undoubted witness of their bodily senses. We require no theories to confirm or confute that. But the Rationalists reply, "The evidence would suffice to establish beyond controversy any event in the history of Greece or Rome; but no amount of evidence can serve to establish the miraculous." That indeed is theorising with a vengeance! But you will notice that such reasoning shifts the ground of the argument from the realm of history to the province of science. Again we must remind sceptics that the resurrection of the Saviour is primarily an historical question. No amount of evidence can establish the miraculous! Then did they see miracles with their own eyes, still they would not believe. But any candid inquirer can see that such reasoning is not reason, but unbelief. "The man who denies that God can perform miracles," says Rousseau, himself not on terms of amity with the Christian religion, "is not fit to be reasoned with—he should be sent to the lock-up." 2. They preached the doctrine of the resurrection. Christianity is first a religion of facts; and out of the facts grow the doctrines. First the Gospels, next the Epistles. First the foundation in history, next the development in doctrine. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. What, then, is the legitimate conclusion? That there is life after death. 3. "Preaching through Jesus the resurrection from the dead," the apostles' doctrine was much in advance of the highest Gentile teaching. Philo-

sophy unceasingly returned to this fascinating problem; but its utterances were vague, wavering, and contradictory. Is the soul of man immortal? Ages passed before the human mind was sufficiently educated to launch the question, and then philosophy could not return a decisive answer—it could only hope. Will the body survive death? Ancient speculation did not concern itself about this. Christianity has raised the masses of men to a loftier altitude of knowledge than the sublimest philosophers of the old world ever achieved, notwithstanding their strenuous life-long efforts. 4. Their teaching is also much in advance of Judaism. Is man immortal? Very little is said on the matter in the books of Moses. No doubt it is implied, for Christ perceived it and beautifully evolved it in His conversation with the Sadducees; and we, reading the Pentateuch under the light of the gospel, can perceive in it certain other passages. As you come on to the Psalms the consciousness of immortality becomes more definite; Sheol becomes an important word in the writings of David and the Prophets. But still, when the Saviour appeared, Jewish opinion was divided as to the precise teaching of Judaism. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **And they laid hands upon them. . . . Howbeit many of them which heard the Word believed.**—*The impotence and benefit of persecution:*—1. Peter had boasted, "I am ready to go with Thee to prison." He was not ready then, and hence the folly of his boast. He was ready now, and so did not boast, but doubtless reflected on his Master's words, "Thou shalt follow Me afterwards." 2. The time-honoured method of the opponents of truth was here practised, "No case; abuse defendant's attorney." You can't refute the preacher; lock him up. The only answer that pagan Rome had for Christians was prison and death; the only answer that papal Rome has is the same. 3. But the policy does not answer. The preachers as cheerfully accept the prison as the pulpit when their Master bids them, and may take as theirs the crest—an ox with the plough on one side and the altar on the other, with the legend, "Ready for either." Ready for work or for sacrifice. Nor does the policy answer in another sense. You may silence the teacher, but you cannot silence the truth. In the case before us "many believed." I. IN SPITE OF the apostles' imprisonment. God's work goes on whether His agents are bound or free, living or dead. It is independent of its best and worthiest supporters. Peter and John are in prison, but the fact that many believed shows that even the chief among the apostles are not indispensable. How foolish, then, the unbelieving anxiety expressed in the question about this or that distinguished minister, "Who can take his place?" Plenty, if God wills; if not the Holy Ghost will take his place. 1. The preacher is imprisoned or dead, but the Word which does the work is not. Fragments of the Bible left behind by the missionaries in Madagascar did more for Christianity than their vocal teaching. 2. The preacher is imprisoned or dead, but his teaching and example are not. They remain in the memory to influence the life. The stone sinks in the water, but the ripples on the lake extend till they reach either shore. II. BECAUSE OF the apostles' imprisonment. Their endurance of persecution for the truth was a guarantee of their sincerity, and an exhibition of the power of the gospel on themselves. It is an easy thing to preach when Christianity is popular, but when unpopular, and when men notwithstanding are prepared to endure bonds or death rather than be silent about it—this shows that they believe in and enjoy the mighty power they preach. So in the milder forms of affliction. How many powerful sermons are silently preached from sick beds! (*J. W. Burn.*) *Persecution a stimulus:*—A certain amount of persecution rouses a man's defiance, stirs his blood for magnificent battle, and makes him fifty times more a man than he would have been without the persecution. So it was with the great reformer when he said, "I will not be put down; I will be heard." And so it was with Millard, the preacher, in the time of Louis XI. When Louis XI. sent word to him that unless he stopped preaching in that style he would throw him into the river, he replied, "Tell the king that I will reach heaven sooner by water than he will reach it by fast horses." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Persecution for well-doing:*—Sad, that so good news should find so bad entertainment! but happy for some, that as it was raised for so good a Word (Matt. xiii. 21), so occasioned by so good a deed done to an impotent man. Such may ever our sufferings be, that if a black shadow must needs follow us, it may be only because we walk in the light; and that if it prove our lot to hear and fare ill, it may be for doing well (1 Pet. iii. 17, iv. 16; John x. 32). (*A. Tuckney, D.D.*) *Peter and John before the council:*—I. THE ARREST was brought about—1. While

the service was being held (ver. 1). The devil has a keen aversion to the proclaiming of the gospel, and will stop it if he can. 2. By ecclesiastical officials. In proportion as Christ is exalted, the Jewish idea of an official priesthood must lose its hold upon the minds of men. 3. By men who felt deeply—"grieved." The preaching of the gospel causes heaven to rejoice, and it brings joy to those who receive it, but these men were grieved because of it. How thoroughly even religious men may be out of touch with sympathies that emanate from God! What a pity there should be so much deep feeling wrongly directed! There has been quite a Niagara of human emotion, which, during the Christian ages, has spent itself in vain in dashing against the impregnable rock of Christian verities. II. THE DETENTION. The apostles had started out to visit the temple at the hour of the evening sacrifice, but as that evening closed they themselves offered a sacrifice with which the Lord would be well pleased. The bars and bolts of the strong door might keep them in, but they could not keep Jesus out. Even on earth suffering saints have often found what Thomas Cooper calls "the paradise of martyrs." III. THE TRIAL. 1. Christ was honoured. 2. There was a word for the rulers. 3. There was a word for everybody. IV. THE RESULT. 1. The rulers were impressed. 2. The apostles were threatened. 3. The apostles were released. 4. God was glorified. To Peter and John this would be an all-sufficient recompense. (*H. Thorne.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers . . . were gathered together.**—*The Sanhedrin in the time of the apostles*:—1. Of all the ancient Jewish institutions there is none which is of greater interest than that of the Sanhedrin. Though the name is not to be found in the Authorised Version, yet it occurs in the original no less than twenty-two times in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, where it is uniformly, but inadequately, represented by the expression "council." 2. There were two kinds of Sanhedrins. I. THE GREAT OR SUPREME SANHEDRIN consisted of seventy members and a president. Hence it is sometimes spoken of as the Sanhedrin of seventy-one members, and sometimes as the Sanhedrin of seventy, exclusive of this patriarch. To understand the constituencies from which these were chosen, it is necessary to remark that from time immemorial the Jewish commonwealth was divided into the three following classes: First, the priests. These, by virtue of their being descendants of Aaron, were the ministers of the sanctuary, and enjoyed certain privileges arising from the services they rendered in the private life of the laity. Second, the Israelites—the people at large who were distinguished by their princes or chiefs of the several tribes, and by the heads of the families called "the elders of the people," or, simply, "the elders," or "rulers," because they managed the affairs of their respective clans. The third class consisted of the literary laity, the custodians and transcribers of the Sacred Text, hence called the "lawyers," or the "scribes." The first class was represented in the Sanhedrin by its four-and-twenty chiefs, "the chief priests." The second class were represented by their four-and-twenty elders, whilst the scribes had two-and-twenty members. 1. To belong to one of these three classes was simply a preliminary necessity, but it was also necessary to be of unblemished moral reputation, and without any physical blemish. Blindness of one eye, or even squinting, or lameness of one foot, or even repulsive appearance, was a disqualification. The applicant had to be the legitimate offspring of Jewish parents, in the prime of life, and wealthy. One who played dice, lent money on usury, or flew pigeons to entice others, was disqualified. He had to be a father of a family, so as to be able to sympathise with domestic affairs. He had to be learned in the Divine law and secular knowledge, and foreign languages, so that the Sanhedrin might not be dependent upon an interpreter. He was, moreover, required to have been a judge in his native town, and to have been promoted thence to the Small Sanhedrin which sat at the entrance to the temple hall. 2. The newly elected member had not to go through any special ceremony, since the ordination which he had received from his teacher on his appointment to a judgeship at his native town was deemed sufficient. About thirty years before Christ, however, the power to ordain, which had up to that time been vested in every teacher, was conferred upon Hillel I., the president of the Sanhedrin. With the permission of this functionary, any member of this assembly of notables, assisted by two non-ordained persons, performed this ceremony by calling him Rabbi, and by saying, "Behold, thou art ordained, and hast the authority to judge even cases involving pecuniary fines." The chain in the succession of ordination, however, was broken during the presidency of Hillel II.,

A.D. 330–365. 3. In the earliest times of the Jewish commonwealth the seventy-one members elected the most distinguished of their number as president, and the next in distinction as vice-president. The former was styled *nasi* (*i.e.*, prince, patriarch), because he represented the civil and religious interests of the Jewish nation before the government abroad, and before the different Jewish congregations at home; whilst the latter was called "the father of the house of judgment," because he led and controlled the discussions on disputed points. The only one ineligible for the presidency was the king, because, according to the Jewish law, subjects were not allowed to contradict or differ from the monarch. Besides these two high officials, there was a referee, who examined the cases before they were brought before the Sanhedrin. There were, moreover, two notaries, and several menial officials corresponding to lictors, who are alternately called in the New Testament "servants," "officers," and "ministers" (Matt. v. 25; xxvi. 58; Mark xiv. 54, 65, &c.). 4. The Sanhedrin held its sessions in the hall of squares which was situated in the centre of the south side of the temple court, between the courts of the priests and of the Israelites, and had doors into both. With the exception of the Sabbath and festivals, these sessions were held every day, from the termination of the daily morning sacrifice till the evening sacrifice. On these occasions the president sat on an elevated seat; on his right sat the vice-president, and on his left the referee, whilst the members were seated on low cushions, with their knees bent and crossed in Oriental fashion in a semicircle, according to their respective ages and attainments. They could thus see each other, and also be seen by the president and vice-president. Twenty-three, or one-third of the entire number of members, formed a quorum. 5. Besides being the depositaries of the legislative enactments which were called forth by the development of the domestic institutions and foreign relations of the Jewish commonwealth, the Sanhedrin had both to interpret and to administer the Divine law in its ecclesiastical and civil bearings upon the daily life of the community. All questions of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, morality and immorality, every pretension to prophecy or miraculous gifts, the legitimacy to perform the duties of priesthood, the necessity to extend the precincts of the temple or the boundaries of the city, the desirability of going to war, and even the conduct of the king, all these came within the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. Though sitting at Jerusalem, its jurisdiction was recognised by Jews everywhere, so that their decisions secured unity of faith and uniformity of practice. 6. In trials of capital offences it required a majority of at least two to condemn, and the verdict of guilty could only be delivered the day following the trial, to enable the Sanhedrin carefully to go over again the whole evidence. The Sanhedrin who found the verdict had to fast all day, and the criminal was executed the day after the sentence. This leniency, however, was not extended to one who gave himself out as the Messiah, or was proved to be a false prophet, or promulgated false doctrines. The trial of such an offender was generally reserved for the forthcoming festival, when all the Israelites came up to Jerusalem. The accused was then tied in the presence of the pilgrims; he was condemned and executed the same day on the festival (Deut. xvii. 13). But even to such a criminal a stupefying beverage was mercifully administered before his execution, to deprive him of consciousness and lessen his pain. In latter days, however, the sentence of death passed by the Sanhedrin had to be confirmed by the Roman procurator. 7. Whatever we may think of Jewish tradition, which affirms that the Sanhedrin is a Mosaic institution based upon Exod. xviii. 24–26; Numb. xi. 16–24, still both the several classes and the number of members which constituted this assembly of notables are alluded to in the Old Testament Scriptures (Jer. xxvi. 8, 16; Ezek. viii. 11, &c.; Ezra vi. 8; 2 Chron. xix. 8, 11). The chain of presidents, however, can only be traced uninterruptedly to *circa* 170 B.C. For about a hundred and forty years the members elected the president from one of their midst. Thirty years before Christ, however, the presidency of the Sanhedrin became hereditary in the family of Hillel I. for fifteen generations; that is, from 30 B.C. to 425 A.D. 8. To enable the student to see with which of the Jewish patriarchs the important events in the lives of Christ, the apostles, and the apostolic fathers synchronise, we subjoin a list of these fifteen presidents of the Sanhedrin with their dates of office:

1. Hillel I.	B.C. 30–	A.D. 10
2. Simon I. b. Hillel I.	A.D. 10–	30
3. Gamaliel I. b. Simon I., the teacher of St. Paul ...	,, 30–	50
4. Simon II. b. Gamaliel I.	,, 50–	70

5. Gamaliel II. b. Simon II.	A.D.	80–116
6. Simon III. b. Gamaliel II.	,,	140–163
7. Jehudah I. the Holy b. Simon III.	,,	163–193
8. Gamaliel III. b. Jehudah I.	,,	193–220
9. Jehudah II. b. Simon III.	,,	220–270
10. Gamaliel IV. b. Jehudah II.	,,	270–300
11. Jehudah III. b. Gamaliel IV.	,,	300–330
12. Hillel II. b. Jehudah III.	,,	330–365
13. Gamaliel V. b. Hillel II.	,,	365–385
14. Jehudah IV. b. Gamaliel V.	,,	385–400
15. Gamaliel VI. b. Jehudah IV.	,,	400–425

From the destruction of Jerusalem, however, to the death of the last president, the Sanhedrin held its sessions in different cities of Palestine. II. There were also SMALL SANHEDRINS, consisting of twenty-three members, who were appointed by the Great Sanhedrin. Every town or village in Palestine, which had no less than one hundred and twenty representative men, had a smaller court, which held its sittings on Mondays and Thursdays in the market-place, or in a room adjoining the synagogue. There were two such courts in Jerusalem itself; one sat at the entrance to the temple mount, and the other at the entrance to the temple hall. With the exception of certain capital offences which belonged exclusively to the jurisdiction of the Great Sanhedrin, the Small Sanhedrin had the power to judge both civil and criminal cases, and there was no appeal against their decision to the Great Sanhedrin. It was only when the judges were divided in their opinion that they themselves consulted the Great Sanhedrin. In such a case the decision given by the supreme court was absolutely binding upon the judges of the Small Sanhedrin. As a rule, the members of the Small Sanhedrin were elected to fill up the periodical vacancies in the Great Sanhedrin. (*G. D. Ginsburg, LL.D.*)

Vers. 7–10. **By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?**—*The power in apostolic miracles*:—The fact of the healing was recognised; and the logical conclusion, that it was a sign of the presence and working of some supernatural power, was not shirked; but the inquiry remained, "What is your power and authority?" The word "power" is that used of our Lord's miracles, and translated "mighty works." The term "name" here stands for "authority." This the Sanhedrin asked because they regarded themselves as the highest religious authority in the land, and they could approve of nothing which had not been submitted for their sanction. They had to learn that God never will allow His grace to be tied with official bonds. Moses gave the high example of the noble spirit. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that He would put His Spirit on them!" We are led to consider the apostolic miracles, and what was thought of them. I. THE PEOPLE'S THOUGHT OF THEM. Miracles excited the interest of the "common people." This is true both of our Lord's miracles and of those wrought by the apostles. The great distinction between the two series is this—our Lord permitted His miracles to witness to Himself; but the apostles turned the people's minds from themselves. The "common people" are more susceptible to the supernatural than the learned; partly because they are more simple, freer from prejudices; and partly because sentiment and imagination are toned and repressed by knowledge. The simplicity of the "common people" has both its good and its bad side. They hardly knew what to make of St. Peter's miracle. It was not in their way to think the matter out. Enough for them that it was a sign of gracious power. They must be good men who were the agents of such good work; and so they were prepared to listen with the expectation that their word would be as good as their work. It is a safe principle that if a man's works are kind and good we may expect kindness and goodness in his words; and we may even assume that there will be truth in them. Our Lord taught us that by their works we may judge our teachers. II. THE PRIESTS' THOUGHT OF THEM. The priests stand for the Sadducee section. They were not simple-minded, and so not prepared fairly to consider the apostolic miracle. They had taken up strong prejudices against our Lord which developed into active enmity, and secured our Lord's death. But their gratification passed into intense anxiety when the guard reported, and the disciples of the Crucified openly declared that He was risen. If that were true they were convicted of the almost inconceivable crime to a Jew, of judicially murdering the long-promised Messiah. In their straits they determined to put a bold face on the matter, and make violence serve

their end. Perhaps they even succeeded in deluding themselves; and when news came of this miracle of healing they declared it must have been wrought by some malign power, some strange jugglery; and it was their duty to deal with these men as wizards and mountebanks. To these prejudiced priests the same rule may be applied as sufficed for the people, and the character and quality of the apostle's works should be allowed to declare their truthfulness, and explain the source of their authority. III. THE APOSTLES' THOUGHT OF THEM (vers. 9–12). They firmly declare that they had wrought the miracle by Divine power entrusted to them; and that they had exerted that power by the authority of that very Nazarene whom they had crucified, but who was risen, and sending forth that grace of which the miracle of healing was an outward sign. The apostles teach us to look upon the miracle—and all the cycle of apostolic miracles—as being signs of—1. The Divine presence: the Lord was present to heal. 2. The Divine witness, giving public attestation to their teachings and preachings; and—3. The Divine work, which is to recover men from all the ill and woes brought in by sin, redeeming them from both sin and sin's effects. Conclusion: Miracles are fitting modes of persuasion only for the unscientific ages and peoples. They are witnesses to eye and feeling for those who are mainly influenced through the senses rather than through the mind. Therefore the age of miracles has ceased; and the ever-working miracle of God's converting and renewing grace in men's hearts and lives suffices to convince all open souls that Jesus the Risen is the One, only, all-sufficient Saviour still. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *The pre-eminence and power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*:—These are manifest—I. IN THE NECESSITY FOR THE GOSPEL, AND IN ITS CORRESPONDING NATURE. Two correlative words summarise the whole Bible—sin and salvation. But our knowledge of these is not derived from the same source. There is a distinction between what is revealed and what is only recorded in Scripture. Salvation is revealed. But sin is only recorded. It was already in the world, and the consciousness of it was interwoven with human experience before salvation was proclaimed (Rom. iii. 20). The Scriptures assume this terrible fact. All their warnings, invitations, and promises are based upon it. All the rites prescribed in the Old Testament and all the forms of worship recognised in the New take it for granted. It lies at the foundation of all prayer. The Scriptures also directly assert it. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The most formal and elaborate argument of the Bible (the Epistle to Rome) sustains these assertions. On the dark background of natural religion, by which all men are tried and found guilty, the glorious gospel shines resplendent. Jesus Christ is not a light, but The Light of the world, without which there is no deliverance from the power of darkness. God has laid at the foundation of all revealed theology, and of all Christian effort, that Stone which foolish builders have rejected, and has graven upon it this indelible inscription, "Neither is there salvation in any other—for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." II. IN THE BIBLICAL HISTORY OF THAT NAME. It is not a mere collection of arbitrary titles, but the embodiment of the Divine nature and purpose. The Elohim created the heavens and the earth; but Jehovah Elohim entered into covenant with man. This new name (Exod. vi. 3) runs through and characterises the Old Testament economy, until its last prophet proclaims the promise, "Jehovah whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple; even the Angel of the Covenant, whom ye delight in" (Mal. iii. 1). The New Testament revelations begin with the fulfilment of the promise that closes the Old. Jesus is the human name of the Covenant Angel. In the synagogue at Nazareth He claims to be the Anointed of God, and from that time His words evoke the recognition of His nature and His mission. Andrew declares, "We have found the Messias," and Philip confirms the testimony. Nathanael falls down before Him, and says, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." The woman of Samaria exclaims, "Is not this the Christ?" Peter falls prostrate at His feet, crying out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" and "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Now He is not only Jesus, He is Jesus the Christ, and "Our Lord Jesus Christ." That name is above every name. It translates the ineffable name of Jehovah into human speech, and interprets it to human hearts. It runs through and unifies all Scripture. It embodies the expressed essence of a thousand titles, by which all that is glorious and amiable in God and man, in heaven or earth, is appropriated to Him. III. IN THE CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the most stupendous fact in the history of the universe. This it is that makes His name Wonderful. This is the foundation God has laid in Zion, and calls upon men and angels to

behold—the elect, tried, and precious stone, rejected of men, but made in the Divine plan and in human experience, the head of the corner. And that which demonstrates this stupendous fact as the power of God unto salvation is the revealed purpose that Jesus Christ should come in the flesh to be "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Among the human builders there are none whose speech is so utterly confounded, and whose wisdom is more manifestly taken in their own craftiness, than those who undertake to re-write the life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to explain His mission, and the confessed power of His name, omitting the recognition of His Deity, and the cleansing power of His atoning blood. Regarded simply as a man and a teacher, He is a bundle of contradictions. For while we are not competent to set limits to the Almighty, we do know what man can do; and we know that no uninspired and deceitful man could have drawn this consistent portraiture of the incarnate God. It is only when we add to the human name and nature of Jesus—the Divine attributes and purposes of which the angels sang when they declared Him to be "a Saviour who is Christ the Lord" (Luke ii. 11)—that we can apprehend the truth and grace which shine out in all His recorded ministry, or the power with which the story of His life comes home to the universal heart. IV. IN THE OFFICES THAT NAME DESCRIBES, AND FOR THE EXECUTION OF WHICH HE IS QUALIFIED BY THE CONSTITUTION OF HIS WONDERFUL PERSON. 1. He is that Prophet whose coming Moses predicted, and for whose teaching he challenged an absolute credence. His instructions prepare the way for the effectual application of His sacrifice. 2. This Prophet is also the great High Priest, and by the one offering of Himself He has both satisfied Divine justice, and for ever perfected them that are sanctified. 3. Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ is King. His royal power underlies and gives efficacy to His prophetic and priestly offices. 4. These offices impart a Divine efficacy to the facts of His death and resurrection. He died as a Prophet and Martyr, to confirm His testimony. He died as a King, to conquer death, and him that hath the power of it. He died as a Priest, that by His precious blood He might redeem and purify unto Himself a peculiar people. V. IN ALL TRUE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. The power of God unto salvation resides in the gospel, *i.e.*, in the open proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus; and demonstrates itself in them that believe. "All power," says the ascending Saviour, "is given unto Me; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." So the apostles understood it, and because they believed, therefore have they spoken. When the Jewish council charged them to speak no more to any man in this name, they answered, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Wherein consisted their inability to keep silence? Doubtless they were constrained by loyalty to Christ. But their loyalty ran much deeper than the external commandment. It was but another name for a Divine sympathy and oneness with Him. (*H. J. Van Dyke, D.D.*)

If we this day be examined of the good deed.—*Giving the reason:*—Let us see that we can give a good reason for our work, both to ourselves and also to others. It is well for us again and again to question ourselves as to the real motives and, as far as we can predict them, the probable results of our actions. Let us see that we can give thoroughly satisfactory answers to questions about whose real meaning there can be no possible doubt. Questions such as these, Why do I teach in the Sunday school? Why ought I to teach? What should be the reason for and the object of my instruction? Don't let us be satisfied with merely general and indefinite answers, such as, "Because it is right," or "Because it is known and admitted to be a good work." The real answer should be of this kind, "It is most important that these children and these young people should have a thorough knowledge of the life and words, the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. They should be taught to seek for and be guided by His Spirit, they should be prepared for the many temptations they will meet in the world. The conscience must be made tender and able to discern between good and evil. The will must be strengthened so that they may be able to persevere in that course of life which they perceive and know to be right. Moreover, since the conflict upon which they will enter will be of lifelong duration, it is most important that they should be trained to live a disciplined life; that they should be taught that the Church, besides being a school, is also an army, the members of which should lead disciplined lives; that they should learn that a means and a method and a safeguard is provided against all forms of temptation by means of this discipline." The district visitor should also be able to answer the same questions. They must answer both themselves and others. From the nature of their work they are more likely to be criticised than the Sunday-school teacher; for they

deal with those of mature years, with those who can form an opinion, and who are not slow to detect and judge their motives. Let people see, then, that our object is helpfulness. Teach them how many are, by sad experience, proved to be impotent to carry on the struggle of life; tell them how we would instruct them in the laws of life, and help and strengthen them to live happier and healthier lives. St. Peter pointed to effects produced; we must do the same; we must show men and women how those who are really obedient to the teaching of Christ and the discipline of the Church are more able to fulfil the duty to which God has called them. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) May I never be disposed to apologise for any "good deed" which I may have wrought in the name of Jesus, no matter who may be offended thereby. May I never be tempted to give to myself any glory for anything that has been wrought through me by the Holy Ghost. May I not be moved by any regard for the opinions of what is called cultivated society or the opinions of materialistic scientists to attempt to explain away, or explain on some natural principle, that which has been wrought by the supernatural grace of God, by the power of faith in Jesus. May I never be ashamed of Jesus because of the opprobrium thrown on Him by His enemies. Jesus of Nazareth: call Him so, bigoted churchmen; call Him so, powerful worldlings; call Him so, cultivated sceptics; but He is Jesus, and whether of Nazareth, or Bethlehem, or Jerusalem, or earth, or heaven, faith in His name has healed millions, and not a single soul has ever been healed by faith in any other name. (*C. F. Deems, LL.D.*) **This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the Head of the corner.**—*The corner stone* is the top stone at an angle of the building, of great weight and importance in their roofs, built of solid flat stones, to admit of being walked upon. Christ as the Corner Stone united Jews and Gentiles, as He united the two natures, the Godhead and the manhood. His own name must have helped to endear this Psalm to the apostle (1 Pet. ii. 4–7). (*Bp. Jacobson.*) *Men as moral architects*:—These words, borrowed from Psa. cxviii. 22, are also quoted by all the evangelists except John, and are applied to the Jewish leaders who professed to be the builders of the temple of religion. All men are builders in some form or another. Man is a constructive creature. Some are building scientific systems, some mercantile schemes, some social institutions. All are building their own character. The text suggests—I. MAN'S GREAT NEED AS A MORAL BUILDER—a foundation stone. A good foundation is essential to a good building. 1. Is it a system that man is building? He must have a foundation principle which will give strength and unity to all the parts. 2. Is it an institution—social, political, or ecclesiastical? It must be based on some good reason. 3. Is it character? Whatever a man's governing disposition, whether sensuality, avarice, ambition, selfishness, or benevolence and religion, that is the foundation of his character. II. MAN'S GREAT ERROR AS A MORAL BUILDER. Men reject the Divine—1. In their system of thought. The world teems with intellectual buildings, some of a grand and imposing character; but they have no Divine truth for their foundation. These, like houses on the sand, are constantly tumbling down. The ever-swelling river of history bears on its bosom the wrecks of many such. 2. In their institutional arrangements. A truculent expediency, a false philanthropy, a perverted religious sentiment, form the basis of many political, social, and religious institutions. These cannot stand; many have tumbled down; some are tumbling now; all must go. 3. In their practical enterprises. Schemes of business are launched, great companies are built up, whose foundations are chicanery and fraud, and sooner or later they fail. 4. In their moral character. Man's character is made up of habits, habits are made up of acts, and acts start from principles which lie at the foundation. But the principles are not Divine. They are selfish, not benevolent; carnal, not spiritual; atheistic, not godly. All these are "wood, hay, stubble," and cannot last. III. MAN'S ULTIMATE DISCOVERY AS A MORAL BUILDER. One day he will find the Divine, which he rejected, supreme. 1. This is often fulfilled in the individual characters of men—in the history of all who have been genuinely converted. The stone which they once set at nought, through the renovating grace of God, becomes the head of the corner. Christ, whom they once despised, becomes their all in all. 2. This is being gradually fulfilled in the life of society. As the old systems, institutions, and enterprises in society which have been founded on wrong principles totter and fall, society begins to look out for a firmer foundation—for the Divine—and the rejected stone in many cases is becoming the head of the corner. The varied edifices in social life are becoming Diviner things. 3. This will be fully realised in the final history of the world. Christ,

whom the world had rejected, will be the subject of every thought, the spirit of every system, the spring of every activity, the sweetness of every pleasure, the glory of every distinction. He shall be all in all. What a terrible discovery for Christ's rejecters! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ the Head of the Corner*:—Christ acts in a two-fold capacity in the building up of human life. He is the foundation (1 Cor. iii. 2; 1 Pet. ii. 4–7); and the stone which crowns the edifice and gives it completeness, unity, and strength. He is thus the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. The text sets forth Christ in the latter of these two capacities. Man without Christ is incomplete, disorganised, and weak; in Him he has perfection, oneness, and power. We see this—I. IN THE HISTORY OF THE RACES. Before Christ came humanity lacked its full development. Never before the Advent was there an exhibition even in the ideal of what man could be. Just as man was the crown and perfection of God's handiwork in creation, so is Christ the crown and perfection of man. And wherever Christ is not accepted and placed in His true position, the fatal flaw of incompleteness is apparent. Note, too, the disintegration of humanity before Christ came, and where Christ's supremacy is not recognised. "One is your Master," &c., is the secret of the unity of mankind. Weakness, too, is stamped upon all ancient nationalities, in spite of high civilisation and bloated armaments, "part of iron and part of clay." Hence their non-survival. Internal weakness, prophetic of sure decay, is the fate of every nation that rejects the Head of the Corner. II. IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL. These principles hold good of man's—1. Intellectual life. Ancient and modern antichristian philosophy were and are defective, lacked coherence, had and have no power to quicken. The truth as it is in Jesus alone can survive, because it has in it all that man needs to know, appeals to all his faculties, reason, imagination, &c., and thoroughly satisfies the mind. Then it is a complete and well-rounded unity, and by accepting it man's intellectual nature becomes at one with itself and with the other faculties. And finally the words of Jesus "are spirit and are life." 2. Moral life. "One thing thou lackest" is the allegation against all systems and men out of Christ, and how true Rom. viii. is of all the unregenerate! "Dead in trespasses and sins" completes the fatal category. 3. Business life. The fatal lack here is that of the ennobling motive, "Do all to the glory of God." Men are "distracted" because of the want of a cohering commercial principle such as "Ye serve the Lord Christ" would supply. And all enterprises are impotent to do more than supply man's physical needs which are not animated by the Spirit of Christ. III. IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FAMILY. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 12. **Neither is there salvation in any other.**—*Salvation* in none other. This is—1. The substance of every apostolic announcement. 2. The experience of every pardoned sinner. 3. The strength of every courageous confession. 4. The foundation of all missionary preaching of the Church. (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *Salvation in Christ alone*:—I. SALVATION is a subject of world-wide interest, for all need it. 1. The infant at birth needs salvation, and unless kindly hands "save" it, and minister to its necessities, it must perish. Through childhood the saving interposition of others is needed. Even in manhood there is constant exposure to dangers, salvation from which is required. In age, sickness, and sorrow, how great is the need of temporal succour and salvation! 2. The unhappy fall of our first parents has involved all their descendants in ruin. By it the human race has been brought into imminent peril (Rom. iii. 10, 23; Ezek. xviii. 4). Nor is the danger of sinners the less real because they are ignorant of it, or affect to make light of it. See to it that you neglect not so great salvation. To give prior consideration to any earthly consideration, however pressing, is a terrible mistake. II. SALVATION IN CHRIST. 1. With the general outlines of the plan of salvation in Christ we are all happily familiar. We know how the Divine pity was extended to man in his fallen estate (Job xxxiii. 24). Christ undertook our cause, and purchased our salvation by His death (Isa. liii. 5; Rom. v. 6, 8; 1 Pet. ii. 24, iii. 18). Now, since Christ was really God, His sufferings had an infinite value, and His life might well be regarded as more than an equivalent for the life of guilty man; and since He was perfectly man, it was both possible and proper for Him to take man's place, endure his punishment, and procure his salvation, so that God can be, and is, "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). 2. The conditions on which this salvation is bestowed are also familiar, viz., repentance and faith (chap. xx. 21). Compliance with these conditions is necessary. Nor can you justly complain of this. The seaman, provided with chart and compass, and

instructions as to their use, who refuses to follow his instructions, and perishes, has only himself to blame. The man who has taken poison, and refuses the antidote, will have but scant pity. 3. And how much does the expression "salvation in Christ" include? (1) By it the mind is brought in contact with the entire range of human history. We are led to think of the fall of our first parents, the promise of a Deliverer in the seed of the woman, the types and shadows of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, the incarnation of the Messiah, His atoning death, His triumphant resurrection and ascension, the mission of the Holy Spirit as His representative and administrator until He shall come again, His high-priestly intercession and mediatorial reign, the coming judgment of quick and dead. (2) Nor are thoughts connected with the salvation of the individual less full of interest. Salvation in Christ comprehends the first dawn of conviction of sin, the apprehension of the plan of salvation, the exercise of repentance and faith, the joy of forgiveness, adoption, and renewal, a life of holiness and usefulness, with its vicissitudes, its conflicts, and its triumphs, conquest of death, entrance into heaven, everlasting life in God's presence, where there is fulness of joy, the light of perfect knowledge, the glow of perfect love, the rapture of perfect felicity, and all this for ever. 4. This salvation, as it is needed by all, is adapted to all. Of all so-called faiths the gospel alone is equally suited to all latitudes and lives. Some religions can only flourish in certain countries, just as some kinds of food are peculiar to certain climates; but this seed of the kingdom is like corn—wherever man lives it will grow. 5. And this greatest of all blessings, while adapted to all, is intended for all. It is cause for thankfulness that the chief blessings even of this world are not the exclusive property of the great and wealthy. And salvation may be the portion of the poor as well as of the rich. Moreover, it may be embraced by the illiterate as well as by the learned. 6. This salvation is in the name of Christ. Amongst the Jews a mystic virtue was supposed to be attached to certain names (chap. xix. 14–16). And we rejoice to know that the name of Jesus is still the most potent of charms, and is invested with glorious mystic and saving properties. III. SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE. 1. With regard to the salvation of the race, of no other being except Christ has it ever been affirmed, "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). Christ, however, having redeemed all, claims the homage and the hearts of all (1 Tim. iv. 10). 2. As to the salvation of the individual, this, too, is to be had in Christ alone. (1) We cannot save ourselves. The poor sinner under conviction resolves, it may be, to "turn over a new leaf," but the first thing he does is to make a blot at the top of the next page. But even supposing he could succeed, what would it profit him while his former sins still cried for vengeance? For a sinner to undertake to lead a moral life henceforward is merely like a bankrupt promising his creditors that for the future he will always pay cash. Nor can we save ourselves by the merit of our penitence and faith. Impenitence is a perpetuation and aggravation of sin; but penitence has in it no atoning efficacy. And unbelief—the refusal to accept Christ—is a sin; but faith is not a meritorious act which earns salvation. (2) And as we cannot save ourselves, so also no other human being can save us. We would not undervalue the loving efforts of others for our salvation. Who can tell how much those of us who are now saved owe to the examples, counsels, prayers, and faith of pious parents and devoted friends? The conditions of salvation cannot be fulfilled by proxy. (3) Nor can any human system save us. (*a*) Look at the various systems of heathenism. How degrading and demoralising their teaching and tendency! (*b*) Sometimes an impious priesthood has professed to dispense salvation by external religious rites and sacramental efficacy; but such a claim is mere blasphemy. (*c*) Philosophy has often made proud pretensions as to the elevation and salvation of mankind; but her actual performances have not been such as to warrant boasting. Education and civilisation may do much for man; but with regard to his sorest need they are helpless. The greatest benefits which it is in their power to bestow may be enjoyed, and enjoyed to the full, by sinners whose end is everlasting destruction. In the great work of human redemption Christ is absolutely alone (Isa. lxiii. 1–3, xlv. 22; Matt. i. 21; Heb. vii. 25). (*A. O. Smith, B.A.*) *Salvation by Christ alone:*—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED. That there is salvation for us in Christ, we appeal—1. To the typical representations of Christ. There were a great variety of sacrifices under the law which typified the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. To the positive declarations concerning Him. Nothing can be conceived more clear and strong than the Scripture declarations of Christ's sufficiency to save. How forcibly has the prophet marked the extent (Isa. xlv. 22), the fulness (Isa. i. 18), and the freeness (Isa. lv. 1, 2) of

His salvation! 3. To matter of fact. We can draw aside the veil of heaven, and point to some before the throne of God who are such monuments of grace as leave no doubt respecting the sufficiency of Christ to save any others whatsoever. Let us now turn our attention to—II. WHAT IS EXPRESSED. It is of infinite importance to every one of us to know that, as there is salvation for us in Christ, so "there is no salvation in any other." 1. There is not. (1) In whom else can we find the requisites of a Saviour? In whom can we find a sufficiency, either of merit to justify, or of power to renew, a sinner? If we should apply to the highest angel in heaven to give us of his merit, he would tell us that "he himself is only an unprofitable servant; for that he does no more than is his duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10). If we should intreat him to change our hearts, he would confess his utter inability to effect so great a work. Shall we then look to ourselves? We are full of sin. (2) If there were any other Saviour, the most eminent of God's servants would have had some intimation of it. Abraham (Rom. iv. 3–5); David would probably have been acquainted with such an important fact in order to his own salvation; but he sought refuge in none but Christ (Psa. li. 7). We might hope at least that some information of this kind would have been given to the Apostle Paul (Phil. iii. 9; 1 Cor. ii. 2). 2. There cannot be. We are warranted by the Scriptures to say that, consistently with His honour, as the Moral Governor of the universe, man could not have been saved without a Mediator: nor could any Mediator besides Jesus have been found to execute all that was necessary for our salvation. But there is yet another ground on which we may deny that any other could save us, namely, that if we were indebted to any other, either for righteousness or strength, we could not join in the songs of the redeemed in heaven, but must separate from the heavenly choir (Rev. vii. 9, 10), and ascribe to ourselves, or to some other, the honour of our salvation. And how would this comport with the dignity of Jehovah, who has determined "that no flesh should glory in His presence"? Address—1. The careless. Wherefore are men so indifferent about their spiritual concerns? Is it that they are in no danger of perishing? Surely the very circumstance of Christ being sent down from heaven to die for us is enough to alarm all our fears, and to convince us that, if the salvation offered us could be procured by none but Him, the danger of those who are not interested in Him must be inexpressibly great. 2. The self-righteous. It is difficult to convince those who are looking to Christ in part that they are really renouncing Christ altogether. 3. The desponding. By nature and practice. Let none complain as though they were beyond the reach of mercy: for there is nothing impossible with Jesus: "with Him there is mercy; with Him is plenteous redemption; and He shall redeem Israel from all his sins" (chap. iii. 16, iv. 10). (*Theological Sketch-Book.*) *Salvation only from above*:—In Germany there was a prison of exquisite beauty; its floors and walls were highly polished; it was roofless, and the prisoner could look out upon the beautiful sky. A prisoner was placed therein, and for a moment congratulated himself upon the polish and splendour of his apartments; he could freely breathe the fresh air and see the stars that decked the brow of night, or the sun that rose in glory; but after a time he observed that the walls were gradually approaching him, softly as the fall of the dew from the hand of night; noiselessly, as by the force of gravitation, those walls drew nearer, inch by inch, and as they came closer and closer the cold sweat stood upon his brow, for he saw that those walls were soon to embrace him in the arms of death. There was but one way of escape, and that was from above; a friendly hand might possibly be put down, but there was no such friendly hand for him. That represents the condition of humanity; the walls are approaching, there is but one way of escape, and the relief comes from above. The Son of the Highest from His Father's throne is reaching down His hand of power into our dungeon; our hope is to grasp it, or the walls of our dungeon will crush us to death. "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved." (*J. P. Newman, LL.D.*) *Salvation in Christ alone*:—"You have been a good child to your parents," said the venerable George III. to his daughter, the Princess Amelia; "we have nothing for which to reproach you; but I need not tell you that it is not of yourself alone that you can be saved, and that your acceptance with God must depend on your faith and trust in the merits of the Redeemer." "I know it," replied the dying princess, with gentle resignation, "and I could not wish for a better trust." *Christ the only Saviour*:—"Believe a dying man," said Dr. Johnson in his last days to his physician. "There is no salvation but in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God." *Christ the only Saviour found out too late*:—It is not long since that a prominent business man, when

closely pressed by his pastor, who had lately come to the church, replied with a calm force which was meant to put an end to further pertinacity: "I am interested in all religious matters; I am always glad to see the ministers when they call; but I have in the years past thought the subject over long and carefully, and I have come to the decision deliberately that I have no personal need of Jesus Christ as a Saviour in the sense you preach." Only two weeks from this interview, the same man was suddenly prostrated with disease; the illness was of such a character as to forbid his conversing with any one, and the interdict from speaking was continued until he was within an hour of death. A solemn moment was that in which a question was put to him, intimating he might talk now if he could—nothing would harm him. The last thing, and the only thing, he said was in a melancholy and frightened whisper, "Who will carry me over the river?" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ the only Saviour*:—A young French nobleman, a particular friend of Napoleon III., becoming unaccountably gloomy in mind, and threatened with insanity, was urged by the Emperor to apply for advice and treatment to the celebrated Dr. Forbes Winslow. He came to London, and the great doctor, after careful questioning, discovered the character of his disease. He was tormented with a thought—and the thought was "Eternity! where shall I spend it?" This haunted him day and night. Dr. Winslow told him he could not help him. He had sought in the wrong quarter for his cure. "Is there no hope, then!" exclaimed the nobleman in despair. "Yes; listen to me, and I will tell you how I was helped and healed," said Dr. Winslow. "When I was younger I had your complaint; and I tried every resource but the right one. At last I carried my case to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and He gave me health and peace. Go thou, and do likewise." The nobleman was astonished, but he stayed while the doctor read to him the portions of Scripture that had been blessed to himself, and after prayer, light and comfort came to him. The new medicine had cured him. *The way of salvation*:—Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It first heals our wounds, removes our diseases, takes away our curse, puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads to be crowned with the King of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the effects of salvation. We are redeemed from hell, and enter heaven because we have been saved. Observe here—I. A NEGATIVE FACT. "Neither is there salvation in any other." 1. Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen respected the gods of their neighbours: but Jehovah put this as one of His first commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods besides Me." The Christian religion is just as intolerant. The Brahmin may admit that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own; but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus. 2. What is the reason of this intolerance? (1) Because there is the truth with the Jew and the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire-brand. Truth cannot afford to be yoked with error: it gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation. (2) Because we have here the sanction of God. It would be improper in any man who had invented a creed of his own to state that all others must be damned who do not believe it; but since this religion is revealed from heaven, God, who is the author of all truth, hath a right to append to this truth the dreadful condition. We are not really intolerant, for we are but echoing the words of Him that speaketh from heaven, that there is no salvation out of Him. 3. Now persons say, "Do you imagine, then, that none are saved apart from Christ?" I reply, I don't imagine it, but I have it here in my text. "Well, but how is it concerning the death of infants? Are they saved? and if so, how?" I answer, Saved they are beyond a doubt; but not apart from the death of Christ. Another says, "But how about the heathen?" Holy Scripture saith but very little concerning them; but there are texts which lead us to believe that there are some who, led by God's Spirit, are seeking after Him; and it may be that the God of infinite mercy is pleased to make to them revelations, so that they may be made partakers of the blood of Jesus Christ, without having such an open vision as we have received. But this much is certain: no heathen, however moral—whether in the days of their old philosophy, or in the present time of their barbarism—ever did or ever could enter

the kingdom of heaven apart from the name of Jesus Christ. 4. But it is a great deal better not to talk upon speculative matters, but to come home personally to ourselves. And let me now ask you this question, have you ever proved by experience the truth of this great negative fact? Once I thought there was salvation in good works, and I laboured hard to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness; but when the Spirit of God came into my heart, "sin revived and I died"; wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy. After that I thought, surely salvation might be obtained, partly by reformation, and partly by trusting in Christ; so I laboured hard again. But after fagging on for many a weary day, like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Perhaps I have in my presence some who are trying to gain salvation by ceremonies. You have been baptized; you take the Lord's Supper; you attend church; and if you knew any other ceremonies you would attend to them. As well might you labour to build your house with water, as to build salvation with such poor things as these. These are good enough for you when you are saved, but if you seek salvation in them, they shall be to your soul as wells without water, clouds without rain, and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. II. A POSITIVE FACT, viz., that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. Thou hast long been trying to find the road to heaven, and thou hast missed it. Guilt, like a heavy burden, is on thy back, and thou darest not yet cry for pardon. Satan whispers, "It is all over with thee; there is no mercy for such as thou art: Christ is able to save many, but not thee." Poor soul! Come to the Cross of Christ, and thou shalt there see something which shall remove thine unbelief. 1. Come now with thy defilement, and look at Christ's purity; and as thou lookest at that purity, like the lily, and thou seest the crimson of His blood overflowing it, let this whisper be heard in thine ear—He is able to save thee, sinner, inasmuch as though He was "tempted in all points like as we are," yet He was "without sin"; therefore the merit of His blood must be great. Oh, may God help thee to believe on Him! 2. But this is not the grand thing which should recommend Him to thee. Remember, He who died upon the Cross was no less than the everlasting Son of God. If He were a mere man, a Socinian's or an Arian's Christ, I would not bid thee trust Him; but since He is none other than God Himself incarnate in human flesh, I beseech thee cast thyself upon Him: "He is able, He is willing, doubt no more." "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." 3. Recollect again, as a further consolation for your faith, that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of Christ. It is the Father's anger that you have the most cause to dread. Now, Jesus was punished in the stead of every sinner who hath repented, and God the Father hath accepted Christ in the stead of sinners. Ought not this to lead you to accept Him? If the Judge has accepted the sacrifice, sure you may accept it too; and if He be satisfied, sure you may be content also. If the creditor has written a full and free discharge, you, the poor debtor, may rejoice and believe that that discharge is satisfactory to you, because it is satisfactory to God. But do you ask me how I know that God has accepted Christ's atonement? I remind you that Christ rose again from the dead. 4. Another argument is this—many have been saved who were as vile as thou art, and therefore there is salvation. The chief of sinners was saved years ago; that was the Apostle Paul: but even if thou should exceed him, still that word "uttermost" goes a little beyond you. I could turn to you myself, and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. Often have I said, I will never doubt the salvation of any one, so long as I can but know that Christ has accepted me. 5. To quicken thy diligence, however, I will conclude by noting that if you do not find salvation in Christ, remember you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *One only way of salvation*:—I. OTHER WAY OF SALVATION THERE CANNOT BE, FOR THAT ONE WAY IS GOD'S WAY; its divinity necessitates its exclusiveness. It is clear, that when man fell, he lay at the mercy of his Sovereign. To Him alone it pertained to determine these two points—whether the offender should have means of salvation at all; and then, what those means should be. If, in the exercise of the mercy in which He delights, Jehovah determined on man's salvation, and appointed and revealed the way, how can the conclusion be resisted that that way is the only way? The name by which we are to be saved must be "given"; *i.e.*, it must have Divine appointment. If "Jesus"

be the name "given," then must it be the only name that can furnish any valid and satisfactory plea at the throne of the eternal God? If men could have been saved in ways of their own, God would not have devised one of His; and the very fact of His having done so is sufficient to show that men cannot be saved in ways of their own. It is related of Alphonsus, of Castile, that on having the Ptolemaic system of astronomy explained to him, he jeeringly said, that had he lived at the time, to give the Almighty counsel, he could have instructed Him to make a universe better. We now know that the scoff of presumptuous profanity was founded in sheer ignorance. And so it is in every one who fancies that he can dictate to God the way to save him. Men calling themselves philosophers have speculated whether God could have saved men in any other way than that which Christianity reveals, so as to forget the necessity of an interest in the way which He has accomplished. The question with us should be, what God actually has done, and if you admit that God has done what was best, you admit that He has done what alone He could do without ceasing to be God. II. WE ARGUE THE SAME THING FROM THE DIVINITY OF THE EXECUTOR of the plan; that is, from the person of the Redeemer. He is "God manifest in the flesh." Now if this is true, then that there can be no other Saviour must of necessity be as true. Either such a Mediator and such means of salvation were necessary, or they were not. If they were not, God could never have had recourse to them, for He is infinitely wise, doing nothing in vain, never using great means for little ends; and if they were, then all others must have been not only inadequate, but infinitely inadequate. The Mediator between God and man must either have been created or Divine. Then if a creature were sufficient, no matter how exalted, a Divine Mediator was infinitely above the exigency of the case; and if, on the contrary, a Divine Mediator was requisite, then was a created infinitely beneath the exigency of the case. We might base our argument, with equal conclusiveness, on the wisdom or the goodness or the justice of God. Take, in connection with the Divinity of the Saviour's Person, the sufferings which He endured. Then, if all this was not necessary, the adoption of such a plan was at variance with the Divine justice and goodness. III. We argue exclusiveness, on the ground that THE PLAN REVEALED IS THE ONLY ONE THAT BEARS TO BE TESTED BY THE PRINCIPLE OF ADAPTATION TO WHAT THE EXISTING CASE REQUIRES. This principle of adaptation is largely appealed to, as exhibiting the evidence of Divine perfection in the works of creation. This principle is as applicable in the moral world. 1. The gospel plan of salvation is in the essential and elementary principle of it, as well as in its provisions, adapted to the circumstances of man as the party to be saved. As guilty and condemned, he needed pardon and justification; and these are provided for by the mediatorial propitiatory obedience unto death of the divinely constituted and Divine Saviour. As depraved and sinful, he needed renewal in the spirit of his mind, sanctification; and this is provided for him by the work of the Holy Spirit in association with the work of Christ. 2. It is the only scheme adapted to the character of Him who saves. There is no salvation in any other, because He is the only Saviour by whom, and His the only name by which, in saving the lost, the glory of God is in every point secured. IV. The last ground on which we rest the exclusiveness of the gospel method of salvation is THE COMPLETENESS OF THE SALVATION ITSELF. It is a salvation worthy in all respects of God, and fully meeting the wants of man. It is a salvation from guilt, sin, suffering, death, hell, to a state of pardon and acceptance and favour, to the exercise of holy principles and holy affections, to life, to happiness, to usefulness, to heaven, and all for eternity. All God's works are perfect, and this not less than others. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Jesus the only Saviour:*—This passage is remarkable as forming part of a sermon by Peter—who thrice denied this very Jesus—and as having been first delivered in the hearing of the judges and murderers of Jesus. When Jesus stood before their tribunal, He told them that "hereafter they would see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of power," and when the sacred writer speaks of His second coming, he says, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him." Now, it must have been a foretaste of this fearful truth when His apostles stood in their presence. In illustrating this subject, let us—I. REMOVE AN OBJECTION. A difficulty arises in the minds of some, as if the doctrine savoured of intolerance. They rest satisfied with the general idea that Christianity is true and important, but do not feel that it is the only Divine religion. Now these views are precisely those of the ancient heathens, who would have allowed an image for Jesus as one amongst many idols. What they found fault with was the universal demand that every idol should be destroyed, and that Jesus alone should be regarded as the object of worship and the author of salvation.

But this is evidently the very spirit of Christianity. No blood can cleanse sin but that which was shed on Calvary; no power can open the gate of heaven but that of Him who "hath the key of David, opening so that no man can shut, and shutting so that no man can open"; no power can overcome the "strong man armed," but the power of Him who binds Satan in chains and bruiseth him under the feet of His people. If men would only meditate on the solemn truth, that "God spared not His only-begotten Son," who "died the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," he would see that it is blasphemy to imagine that the salvation of man can be secured in any other way. For if so, God would have spared His only-begotten Son. Nor is there any ground for imagining that the doctrine of the text is at all inconsistent with just views of the benevolence of God. Suppose a body of men cast ashore on a desert island, smitten with disease, and famishing, and that in such circumstances one solitary ship was descried making towards the island, loaded with bread, but carrying an infallible physician, who offered to supply and heal the diseases of the people and to carry them to a land where they should hunger no more, and where there should be no more death—what would you think of the perishing men if they objected to all this because there was only one ship by which to escape, only one physician, only one supply of bread—because vessels had not been sent to all sides of the island, and bread of various kinds, and physicians of various qualities? Would you not think them insane and deeply ungrateful? Now this is the very case before us, only not nearly so strong. And what are we to think of such as object solely on the ground that God has not sent many deliverers instead of one; and instead of hailing the glorious offer, stand by callous and indifferent, and imagine that somehow or other they will escape, although death and famine are raging around. II. EXPLAIN THE TRUTH. 1. We are said here to be saved by the "name" of Christ. This is a mode of expression sometimes used in Scripture; as, *e.g.*, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower"; where by the name of the Lord is meant God Himself. We speak of the "greatest names" of antiquity, and of men filling the world with the "terror of their names," when in both cases we mean not the names but the persons. And so we are saved by Christ Himself, although in Scripture we are said to trust in His name. "In His name shall the Gentiles trust." 2. The form of expression, also, in the first part of the verse, is peculiar. The apostle does not represent Christ as giving salvation as a thing disconnected from Himself, but as a thing existing in Him, as a great treasure-house of spiritual blessings in Christ, from whom all the members united to Him by faith derive strength, nourishment, and salvation. The general doctrine here is, that Christ is the only Redeemer as He was the only Creator; and that He only is able to create us again, as He was to make us at first. The special doctrine is, that this fulness of mediatorial power is laid up in Christ as the Head of His Church, and that it descends from Him upon all His members, like the holy anointing oil from the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garments. The general truth is, that Christ alone hath removed the curse of the law and silenced the accuser of the brethren. He hath died, the just for the unjust, that He may bring us to God, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The special truth is that it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and that we become partakers of all the blessings which He hath purchased only when by faith we become branches of the true vine, living stones in the spiritual building of which Christ is the chief corner-stone. And these blessings are in no other. The merits of saints only exist in the imaginations of blinded idolaters; for every saint is by nature a child of wrath, even as others. If we desire blessings we must go to the Master of the house direct, for none of the servants can supply our wants. III. SHOW THE CONCURRENCE OF SCRIPTURE IN THIS TRUTH. The whole stream of revelation from the beginning points to Jesus and His finished work. The law which was given by Moses pointed to that grace and truth which were to come by Jesus Christ. The prophets prophesied beforehand His coming and sufferings. The angels of heaven filled the air with melody at His birth, and announced that the great Deliverer had at length arrived. The Spirit of God descended like a dove, and rested on His head, and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." John, who baptized Him, said, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. Old Simeon said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," &c. Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found," &c. And what was the uniform doctrine of the apostles? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And the song of heaven is full of Christ's atonement. (*J. Begg*,

D.D.) *Salvation exclusive but comprehensive*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS SALVATION. St. Peter might well have meant—1. Salvation from physical discomfort and pain. The circumstance was the healing of the cripple which the judges thought was effected by magic, but which the apostles ascribed to the name of Jesus, who had simply employed them. Pain and discomfort, although they may be transfigured by resignation, may yet crush out heart and hope, and our business in imitating God is to cure it if we can. Our Lord did by His apostles what He still does by generous hearts. The inspiring force of our hospital system is the grace and charity of Christ. 2. National salvation. This was the point of the reference to Psa. cxviii. Christ's way of delivering the nation was by becoming the corner-stone of its hope. For Israel was the real cripple. As a political body the Roman power had broken it. Still more was it crippled morally. The devotion of prophets and psalmist had died away, and in its place were Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. The old heart had been eaten out. What Israel wanted was new life, and its only Saviour was He who had healed the cripple. 3. Spiritual salvation. This was implied by the national, and the spiritual salvation of the nation implied that of the majority of its members. A nation is but an aggregate of individuals seen as such by God. To save men they must be taken one by one. Did not the Redeemer, who gave Himself a ransom for all, love me and give Himself for me? Does not the Spirit, by whom the whole Church is governed and sanctified, dwell in each separate soul? Does not a mother deal with her children personally? So Christ dealt with Peter, Thomas, Mary Magdalene, as if there were no other souls in existence. II. SALVATION IN THIS SENSE IS NO MONOPOLY OF ISRAEL. What was Israel that she should claim the sole monopoly of the saving name? The final absolute religion could not but be universal. The question of the Gentiles had not been raised, but there was behind the apostles the broad commission. The old infection of nature still remains in the world. Who will save it? Now, as eighteen centuries ago, Jesus washes out the stains of a guilty past, and gives new desires, aims, hopes, enthusiasms, and renews by His eternal Spirit what His enemies have destroyed. III. SALVATION WAS EXCLUSIVELY CONFINED TO THE POWER OF THE LORD JESUS. Christ was not one among many possible saviours; He was the only Saviour. And the ground of Peter's confidence was that he had not a human speculation or theory, but, as he firmly believed, the final, absolute, one truth. Error may pay its insincere and splendid compliments to that which contradicts it. Truth can only firmly, tenderly, unvaryingly say, "It is I who save; neither is there salvation in any other." "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." The apostles speak as men who had found the secret of life, hope, happiness, salvation, and their highest ambition was that others might share their privilege. 1. When we affirm that there is salvation in none other than Jesus, we do not deny that other religions than Christianity have in them certain elements of truth. They would not exist if they had not. The element of truth in them enables them to resist dissolution. But they cannot save. 2. When we affirm that Christ alone can save men, we do not deny that other agencies can improve mankind. Education, &c. 3. But such influences as these are bounded by the horizon of time; they have no effects in the great hereafter. They are not opponents nor rivals; they move in a different sphere. 4. There can be no doubt that this conviction was in the first ages of Christianity, and has been since a great motive power in urging devoted men to spread the religion of their Master. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ our only hope*:—On a huge cross by the side of an Italian highway hung a hideous caricature of the Beloved of our souls, who poured out His life for our redemption. Out of reverence to the living Christ we turned aside, disgusted, from the revolting image, but not until we had espied the words SPES UNICA, in capitals over its head. Here was truth emblazoned on an idol. Yes, indeed, Jesus, our now exalted, but once crucified Lord, is the sole and only hope of man. Assuredly, O Lord Jesus, Thou art *spes unica* to our soul.

"Other refuge have we none,
Hangs our helpless soul on Thee."

We found this diamond in the mire of superstition: does it sparkle any the less? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *None other name*:—A few persons were collected round a blind man, who had taken his station on a bridge in the City Road, and was reading from an embossed Bible. Receiving from the passers-by of their carnal things, he was ministering to them spiritual things. A gentleman on his way home from the City was led by curiosity to the outskirts of the crowd. Just then the poor man,

who was reading from Acts iv., lost his place, and, while trying to find it with his fingers, kept repeating the last clause he had read, "None other name,—None other name,—None . . ." Some of the people smiled at the blind man's embarrassment, but the gentleman went on his way musing. He had lately become convinced that he was a sinner, and had been trying in many ways to obtain peace of mind. But religious exercises, good resolutions, altered habits, all were ineffectual to relieve his conscience of its load, and enable him to rejoice in God. The words he had heard from the blind man, however, rang their solemn music to his soul—"None other name." When he reached his home and retired to rest, the words, like evening chimes from village towers nestling among the trees, were still heard—"None other name—None other name." And when he awoke, in more joyful measure, like matin bell saluting the morn, the strain continued, "None other name—None other name." The music entered his soul, and he awoke to new life. "I see it all; I see it all! I have been trying to be saved by my own works—my repentance, my prayers, my reformation. I see my mistake. It is Jesus who alone can save me. To Him I will look. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name—none other name—none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." *The power of the name of Jesus*:—A brave cavalry officer was dying of his wounds. He thought himself on the field, at the head of his gallant men, and fancied that a heavy gun was just in front of them ready to be fired. His distress was great. At length he thought the gun had been fired, and his men, badly cut up, were retreating. Here I interposed, saying, "There is no gun there; you are safe among friends." "Let me alone," he sternly replied; "I must recover my command and renew the attack." "No," said I, "let us not think of battle scenes. You are soon to die. Let us talk of Jesus." The mention of that name seemed to exert the powerful influence I had often heard ascribed to it. His agitation ceased at once; his delirium passed away; a smile lit up his pallid features. After a moment's silence, he said in a low tone, "Jesus, Jesus! It is He who said, 'Come unto Me,' &c. I want rest, I am weary." Soon after he entered the glorious rest of heaven. (*W. Baxendale.*) *The one saving name*:—The text declares that Christ's is the only saving name on earth. Other terms are used elsewhere to indicate the paramount value of His religion over all other instrumentalities for man's well-being in this world and in that to come. But, either from an inadequate idea of moral evil, or from a failure to see the perfect fitness of God's remedy for it, this truth is yet widely unfelt or denied. Men resort elsewhere, and apply to this or that pretender, instead of the only infallible Physician. With some insufficient and temporary expedient, they patch up evils which the miraculous touch of the Son of God is requisite to cure. Lanterns and lamps are of no little use, but he would not be accounted wise who should propose to substitute them for the sun. Let us consider some of the substitutes which have been proposed by some men for the great instrument of man's highest good. I. LIBERTY—the goddess, as Mammon is the god, of the present civilisation. Summoned upon the theatre of Europe by the fearless voice of Luther, breaking forth in the tremendous throes of successive French revolutions, and winning her more complete triumph in the New World, liberty is one of the strongest passions of modern history. And no wonder. When you have entered the house of human bondage, and remembered its dreadful secrets, no wonder your blood boils. The Bastiles of tyranny have fallen before this potent indignation. Let them fall. All honour is due to those who have lifted the yoke from the neck of humanity, and said to myriads, "Ye are men, go free." But then we need only glance at the condition of the freest nations to see that Liberty can be no substitute for the gospel. Under her dominion men may know their rights, but they need another master to teach them their duties. Liberty must take law into her partnership, or she is but another name for license. And when the general relations of society are equitably adjusted, and justice done between man and man, what a wide empire of character is beyond her reach! National liberty, glorious boon as it is, is external. But the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free is carried into the inmost recesses of the mind. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—liberty from anger and malice and lust and drunkenness, and the whole legion of evil spirits wherewith society is possessed. II. MODERN CIVILISATION. The crying demand for a spiritual regeneration is postponed for external ease and luxury. When the sacred writer wished to describe the growing degeneracy of the chosen people, he said, "Jeshurun [a term of endearment for Israel] waxed fat, and kicked." That phrase describes the two great eras in a nation's growth: first, of prosperity;

and secondly, of insolent power, forgetting right. Thus modern civilisation has woven so thick a veil, that many seem to be incapable or indisposed to see underneath the living texture of Divine laws, and our accountableness to the will of the Supreme. Strange and deplorable result, if home become so attractive that it should prove a rival to heaven! Sad mistake, if the charms of earthly friendship and comfortable life should dull our sensibilities to our holy relationship to God and Christ! We need to know that what is best and safest in this modern civilisation has flowed from Christianity; but that, so far as it is disconnected from Christ, as its controlling principle and sanctifying motive, it is base and soulless and dangerous; that there is hazard of entombing our souls in this magnificent earthly good. The splendid gift of life was not bestowed that we might dress in purple or fine linen, or fare sumptuously every day, or even that we might ride a mile a minute, cross the ocean in ten days, or send a despatch round the globe in the twinkling of an eye. He who rides a mile a minute ought to be using that grand conveyance on no fool's errand. He who can cross the Atlantic in ten days should feel himself commissioned to do some great and good work for man, when the Almighty has thus put in his hands the sceptre of the winds and waves, and they obey him. He who can send swifter than the sun's flight messages from clime to clime ought to charter the telegraph with some good tidings of good. Modern civilisation is all good and safe, when kept down at the proper secondary mark; but if it arise, and assume prouder titles, and the privilege of monopolising immortal capacities for mortal uses, the watchmen must cry aloud, and spare not. For none can look abroad, and not see that the world, so called, has got a fearful hold of men's minds. Everything, even virtue, is to be turned to profit. What does not bring money is not, in general, thought to be worth anything. Then is there no fear that we have another God than the Lord of heaven and earth, even Mammon, as the actual deity of our worship! Tried by every rule, and weighed in every balance, modern civilisation, as such, is found wanting. Ill can it suffice for its own temporal needs, and keep itself out of fire and water; how much less meet the great need of immortal man! Ill can it stand in the place of Christ for the healing of the nations. Its god is gold, its aim is self; too many of its governments are tyrannies; too many of its cities Sodoms; its highest honours are military butcheries; and its only tolerable deserts are discoloured reflections from His glory who died on the Cross. III. REFORMATION, PHILANTHROPY, A NEW ORGANISATION OF SOCIETY. The plea is ingenious, because it has some truth to give it countenance, that, notwithstanding Christianity has existed so many centuries, the dreadful evils of society have gone unreformed. True, but it is because it has been corrupted, both under Greek, Catholic, and Protestant forms. But there it is, in the life of Christ, in the books of the New Testament, and it will never suffer man to give sleep to his eyes until it has made all things new. It is said, also, by the reformer, that though men make institutions, institutions, in turn make men. For example, that you may preach heavenly-mindedness, but how can you expect any considerable amount of spirituality in the brutal camp, or in the damp, cold cellars of city pauperism? We confess we cannot. It becomes, accordingly, a matter of the last consequence that the permanent institutions of society, and the customs of the time, should all square with the Christian standard. Christ must sit as sole and final umpire upon all the great questions that now agitate society. And in this just judgment, whatever Christ, by His Word, rejects, we, who are His followers, must reject; and whatever He commands we must do, let whoever will say nay. So much we yield to reformation. But what we protest against is, simply, that moral reformation, or any new organisation of society, can take the place of the religion of Christ. For, in the outset, how could these great moral movements start, unless there were the heaven-derived and omnipotent influences of Christian ideas acting behind? This is the ever-flowing river that sets in motion all the wheels and complicated machinery of practical philanthropy. This is the exhaustless reservoir and lake that fills all the pipes, aqueducts, and fountains, and quenches a city's thirst, and cleanses a city's impurity. Christ is the reformer's wisdom and guidance and strength, and without Him he could do nothing. Then, again, grant that you could by a possibility get the world all reformed, the timepiece wound up and running well, property more equalised, education and happiness universal. How long would the millennium last without Christ? Self is still there, and passion is busy, and the old man will again come to life though he has once been crucified with the lusts thereof; and then the world is as bad as it was before, and you have

all your work to do over again. No; Christ is the only Sovereign and legitimate Reformer, as He is the Saviour of the individual soul, and those only who go forth in His name and spirit are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. IV. EDUCATION. We grant, indeed, that if the world is ever to be better and happier, it must be in no slight measure by a better family and common school nurture. But education, like all other great movements of benevolence, is powerless of good when disjoined from Christ. The culture of the mind exclusively becomes a doubtful good, if moral training keep not an even pace with it. Jesus, as the perfect representative of our spiritual nature, encourages the earliest moral training. He called children to Him, and pronounced His blessing upon them. At one time He set a little child in the midst, and bade His disciples be converted and become like little children, or they could not enter His kingdom. And He left it in charge to His apostles, "Feed My lambs." Education, then, in its higher forms, has the explicit encouragement of Him who knew what was in man. (*A. B. Livermore.*) *One saving name* :—We can destroy ourselves and each other, but we cannot save ourselves or each other. There are some dangers and evils from which we can save both ourselves and our fellows, but from the worst we can neither save ourselves nor others. All that in this case we can do for ourselves is to look to a Saviour, and for others to direct them to a Redeemer. We are seldom satisfied with what we have. Eve desired the forbidden fruit; and the Jews desired a Saviour entirely different from Him to whom the prophets had given witness, and whom God had sent. To this fact Peter calls attention, and then adds, "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. Note here—I. SALVATION. 1. Ignorance with respect to the highest subjects is compared to darkness; to be called out of darkness into marvellous light, is in part salvation. 2. Foolishness is ever attendant upon sinfulness. To receive wisdom from above, and to be made, concerning the highest ends and the best means, truly wise, is in part salvation. 3. The imagination is a faculty ever busy for good or evil. Unless connected with knowledge and wisdom, its fabrications are vain and wicked. To have all such imaginations cast down, is in part salvation. 4. The heart of man is a tree bearing corrupt fruit, and a fountain pouring forth bitter water. To have created within us a clean heart and a right spirit, is in part salvation. 5. The will of man was created to correspond to the will of God, as a wheel within a wheel, but it has fallen from its place and revolves out of its sphere. Like the rudder of a ship, the will was intended to keep men true to the glory of God while compassing the broad way of God's commandments. But the helm is in the hands of pirates, and the vessel's prow is to the rock, or the quicksand, or the iceberg. To be delivered from a rebellious and wayward will, and to be made ready to do the will of God as an obedient child, is in part salvation. 6. Conscience is a faculty which many suppose can never become corrupt. But a man may do evil when he acts conscientiously, for there are evil consciences. To have the conscience cleansed and healed by the precious blood of Christ, and rectified by the Holy Ghost, is in part salvation. 7. God created man in His own image (Gen. i. 27). As the painting or the statue to its subject, as the mirror to the spectator, so was the first man, in the beginning, to his God. But the mirror is broken, and the statue is defaced, and the painting is rent, and the child has fallen and is disfigured and maimed. To have the mirror replaced, the picture renovated, the child healed, and the Divine likeness restored, is in part salvation. 8. With a sinful nature we are born. To have our sinfulness crucified and its dominion destroyed, is in part salvation. 9. The position of man was, in his first estate, righteous and filial. But we have fallen from our position by sin, and are accounted guilty and ungodly. To be justified, is in part salvation. 10. There is an evil spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. To be delivered from his presence and power, is in part salvation. 11. There is evil in all human institutions and arrangements. God's world is good, but man's has much evil. To be made to overcome the world, is in part salvation. 12. Death has crept over our human nature, spiritual death. To be morally and religiously quickened, is in part salvation. 13. Punishment hangs over our guilty heads like a thunder-cloud pregnant with storm, and the impending tempest murmurs in our present sorrows. The wages of sin is death, and all the evils to which flesh and soul are heir are as instalments of the wages of sin. To have the firmament of life cleared of these clouds by the forgiveness of sins, is in part salvation. 14. Such are the derangements of evil, that the forgiven and regenerated are exposed to affliction, and it is appointed that they too should die. To be sustained in the hour of tribulation, to go down into our grave and to rise again, shouting, "O

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" is in part salvation. 15. Paradise was lost by Adam, but paradise is regained by Jesus Christ. To enter that garden as our own, and enjoy its innumerable delights, and to realise therein everlasting life, this is the consummation of salvation. This salvation God promised at the beginning, this God has provided, and this we offer you in the preaching of the gospel. II. SALVATION IN A PERSON. 1. Deliverances are sometimes wrought by things. The shipwrecked one is saved by clinging to a floating spar, the tenant of a house on fire by the trap-door in the roof. And deliverances are effected by things employed by persons, as by a crew in a lifeboat, a fireman and the fire-escape, a physician and his medicines. There are, moreover, persons whose profession is some work of salvation, as the medical practitioner, the fireman, and the lifeboat crew. 2. The salvation of which we have been speaking is not in the Divine purpose, or in the Divine fiat, or in anything, but in a living Saviour. 3. To be saved by a Saviour. (1) This shows our weakness, and in our weakness we see our wretchedness. We are like one drowning, bound hand and foot. We are like one exposed to the flames, and paralysed in every limb. We are like one poisoned, upon whom the sleep of death is already creeping. (2) This arrangement removes all cause of boasting from the saved. (3) It places the redeemed under special obligations. They are indebted to their Saviour as to none otber. Father, mother, husband, wife, have done nothing for us compared with Him who saves us. (4) It renders the actual work of salvation a service of sympathy and love. Salvation comes not from a mere power or force, but it is connected with intelligence, affection, and volition, and is therefore not liable to failure. (5) It creates a new relation and connection. By our existence we become the offspring of God. By our entrance into life we have parents of the flesh. And these and other connections are natural. We have Creator, mother, father, perhaps brothers, sisters, in the ordinary course of providence. But a Saviour is distinct from all other relations. Blessed is the man who, looking toward one mighty to save, can say "My Saviour." A man may be an orphan and friendless, but with a Saviour anything but desolate, while he who, in the midst of the largest and most loving circle, has no Redeemer is not only a forlorn, but a lost man. III. SALVATION IN A PERSON WHOSE NAME IS MADE KNOWN. 1. Six thousand years ago the Saviour of men was simply called the seed of the woman. Then He was denominated the Shiloh, the Prophet, Wonderful, Root of Jesse, Righteous Branch, Jehovah our Righteousness. And the angel who announced the conception said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," &c. 2. Jesus is the name given among men as the name of the Saviour. To this Jesus give all the prophets witness as the Christ of God. This Jesus was proclaimed Saviour by the angel Gabriel, by another angel, and by a multitude of the heavenly host. This Jesus was introduced by one of the greatest prophets the earth has ever known. The works He wrought bare witness of Him. The heavens were thrice rent, and from the excellent glory a voice came, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Eclipse and earthquake saluted Him as the Saviour when He died; resurrection revived His renown, and ascension established it for ever, "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." It is an interesting fact that the name Jesus occurs nearly seven hundred times in the four Gospels, Christ alone some sixty times in the Gospels and in the Acts, Jesus Christ but five times in the Gospels, and Christ Jesus not once in those books. We may regard Jesus as therefore the name given among men. 3. Joshua, to which name Jesus corresponds, is composed of a portion of the name Jehovah, and of a word which signifies salvation. So that the etymon would signify the Lord's salvation, or Lord of salvation. This name was given to the Son of Man, to a Bethshemite in the time of Samuel, to a governor among the cities of Judah in the days of Josiah, and to a high priest in the days of Haggai. The name, though in use, was not common, and it was given the Son of Mary with a special signification. 4. But who is this Jesus? He is God manifest in flesh. He has all the attributes and properties of God, but while on earth He "made Himself of no reputation," &c. He has all the attributes and properties of humanity, but without sin. In Him is all that is requisite for complete redemption. God has given this name—in writing to be read, by preaching to be heard; given it Himself that it may never be forgotten, and that it may be above every name; given it among men, that men may read and hear it, learn and repeat it, incorporate it with their prayers and their songs, and that it may become as familiar in their mouths as any household word. IV. SALVATION LIMITED TO THIS PERSON. 1. There have been other names under heaven given among

men. The Pharisees gave the name of Abraham, and said, "We have Abraham for our father," and the name of Moses, saying, "We are Moses' disciples." The false prophet of the sixth century gave his own name. The Church of Rome gives the name of the Holy Catholic Church, the names of angels, saints and martyrs, and above all, the name of Mary. But Abraham was the ancestor of the Saviour, not the Saviour; Moses was a prophet of the Saviour, not the Saviour; Mahomet was self-deceived and a deceiver; the Church is composed of the saved, not of saviours; the angels minister to the heirs of salvation, they cannot save them; and Mary is indebted for her own salvation to her own son Jesus. 2. But not only have other names been put forward, but things have been presented as saviours. Thus, sacraments are given among men as means of salvation, and men-made creeds, and membership with particular churches, and good works. But these are given among men by men, and not by God. 3. It would be interesting to inquire into the causes of other names and things being put forward. Perhaps the chief cause is pride. We shrink from the practical acknowledgment of entire and absolute dependence upon the grace of God for our redemption; we despise the simplicity of faith, or we are not prepared to follow after holiness. But, however, this may be, "neither is there salvation in any other." 4. There is much mystery surrounding this name, the mystery of the holy incarnation, of the union of the Divine and human natures, of oneness with the Father, co-existing with subjection to the Father, of the temptation and agony, and of the "Eloi, Eloi," of the grave and resurrection and ascension; but we cannot afford to neglect the name Jesus because of the mystery which surrounds it, because "neither is there salvation in any other." 5. There are differences of opinion concerning Him who bears this name Jesus. Some deny His Deity, others His true humanity. Some refuse to recognise Him as victim and priest, and do Him homage only as a teacher; others leave Him in the sepulchre among all the mighty dead. The unbelieving Jew still accounts Him an impostor, the believing Gentile crowns Him Lord of all. But amidst this diversity of opinion we may not say, "I suspend my judgment." We must on this subject make up our minds. Nor can we hold error without fearful peril, for "neither is there salvation in any other." 6. Many who say they are saved by Christ show no signs of redemption. As we look at them we say, "Saved from what?" If they be saved, what must they have been before? There are men who boast that they are saved, who are such children of the devil, that many have said, "If this be salvation, may Heaven keep it far from me!" But what then? Although many who say they are saved exhibit no signs of salvation—yea, more, although but few be saved—yea, more, if as yet not one soul has been saved, my text abides true, "Neither is there salvation in any other." 7. Many men think their own cases too singular to be saved by Christ Jesus. One man is sceptical, and his doubtings are, in his judgment, of the most extraordinary character. There have been sceptics many, but none like himself. A second was once an atheist or a deist, and in the denial of religious truth proceeded farther than he can conceive it possible for an infidel to go. A third has been a blasphemer. A fourth has been a licentious profligate. A fifth has been more cruel than a beast of prey. A sixth once wore the form of godliness while destitute of the power. A seventh once heard the Word with joy, but endured only for a while; tribulation arose and he was offended. The eighth has been a bitter persecutor. Now, each of these say, Jesus may save others, but He cannot save me. But whatever eminence a man may have in that which is sinful, if he be saved at all, he must be saved by the Redeemer of the least of sinners. There is one sun to rule our day, one moon to rule our night, one atmosphere round our globe in which to breathe and move, and not another. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Conclusion: 1. And are there any persons here who believe not on Jesus? If there be, who can they be? Surely not the children of believing parents? Not those who are now, or who have been, in our Christian schools? Not the possessors of a New Testament? Not those who regularly or even occasionally hear the gospel? Not such as know this name Jesus? Or is it so, that the unbelievers here consist of these very classes? Not believe! Why do you not believe? This name, by faith in this name, saves. The ignorant by faith come to this Jesus as a teacher; the unwise by faith come to this Jesus as wisdom's fountain; the foolish builders by faith come to earth's Creator; the impure by faith come to this Jesus, as to a fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness; the conscience-wounded creature comes by faith to this physician of souls, that He may make him whole; the fallen come by faith to this Jesus, mighty to save, that He may lift them up;

and if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. 2. My brothers, believe. Do I hear you say, "Go thy way for this time"? For this time! Why for this time? Ah, I know why—that you may drink more freely of this world's pleasures. 3. Believers in this name, do your utmost to make it known. When you see it, does it not sparkle beneath your eye as the gem of gems? When you hear it, does it not sound as heaven's sweetest music in your ear? and in your heart of hearts, do you not feel it to be the power of God to your salvation? Then do your best to sustain the men by whom, and to uphold the places in which, this name of names is preached. (*S. Martin.*) *Only one way in*:—Standing opposite Fort William, a missionary heard the Mussulmans and Chinamen saying, "There are very many gates into Fort William—there is an hospital gate, a water gate, and others. Now, Sahib, it is just the same in regard to heaven. Chinamen get in at one gate, Mussulmans in at another, and Hindoos in at another!" "Yes," the missionary said, "that is true; but there is a sentinel at every gate, and every sentinel has the same watchword, and you cannot get into it without that watchword. 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved' but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." *Christianity the only reformatory force*:—1. Four great facts confront us at every turn. (1) There is that in the world which men have consented to call vice. (2) There is that in the world which men have consented to call virtue. (3) This vice and virtue has its residence not in the human physique or intellect, but in that which you and I have consented to call character. (4) The power to suppress vice and to develop virtue is not in man nor of man, but from God. 2. These are four facts, confirmed by the whole race, that stand to-night unchallenged. And we stand here to advocate the great thought in the text that the only power whereby vice can be suppressed and virtue developed is the power of Christianity, manifested through a personal Christ, resident in the human heart. I. THE LIBERALISM OF TO-DAY is opposed to such a thought, and POINTS US TO OTHER SOURCES OF REFORMATORY POWER. 1. Our attention is directed to China, where a name is held as sacred as the name of Christ by us. Once a year the Emperor, surrounded by his court, enters a temple, and exclaims: "Confucius, Confucius, how great is Confucius; before Confucius there was no Confucius, and since Confucius there has been no Confucius; Confucius, Confucius, how great is Confucius!" Now what was the radical conception of humanity by Confucius? It was that humanity is radically good, that it is capable of the highest form of virtue, independent of any external force; hence he gives to his countrymen the five relations. The great reformatory force of Confucius was subordination; the obedience of the wife to the husband; of the child to the parent; of the youngest brother to the eldest brother; of the youngest friend to the oldest friend; and of the subject to the Emperor. Let us honour Confucius for the moral principles he gave his countrymen; but those principles have been tested under the most favourable circumstances, and what are the results? Go all through the Chinese Empire, and what do you find? Lying and theft, and all forms of dissipation; the degradation of women; and an expenditure of £33,400,000 annually in one branch of idolatry. 2. Then in the East there is another rival name, the name of a man who sways his sceptre over more than 100,000,000 of people in China, Japan, the Isles of the Sea. Sakya-Muni went forth with the two great ideas that vice is the result of the change that is apparent all around us, and that to secure virtue the mind must rise to that law under which no things change. Hence the name Buddha is given to one who ascertains that changeless law. I have no interest in misrepresenting this great man. I would estimate him a providential man, as Socrates and Plato. But when he is brought as a rival against my Master I am bound to sit in judgment upon his proposals to make humanity better. He gave noble precepts to his people, and that six hundred years before Christ came into the world. He issued His commandments, "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," all of which, however, can be traced to Moses. But now go all through where Sakya-Muni has swayed his religious sceptre. Here not only are his precepts violated, but all the precepts in our Ten Commandments. 3. In India we find another rival to our Master in the form of Brahma. The great theory in Brahminism for the elevation of humanity is that as sin abides in the flesh, and virtue in the intellect, we must reduce the physical to the minimum, and exalt the intellect to the maximum, and then we suppress vice and develop virtue. Well, let us judge of Brahminism by its results. Let us go to that fair land, where all nature is lovely and only man is vile. Look at the idolatry —360,000,000 of gods! Woman is degraded; childhood, especially female child-

hood, is sacrificed; Thuggism prevails, and there vices are dominant. And all this is the result of the insufficient reformatory force in Brahminism. 4. I do not mention Mohammedanism, for Mohammedanism is not original; it is plagiarism. II. NOW TURN TO CHRISTIANITY. What is Christ's radical idea of the condition of humanity? It is that human nature is bad, and that this badness is in the condition of the will, conscience, and affections, and that out of this moral condition flows vice, and that out of vice comes the misery of the world. Now, what does He propose to do? To transform by a supernatural power. 1. We must not look upon Him as a mere philanthropist; Christ's philanthropy is subordinate to His supernatural power. Christ did not come to improve the physical condition of man. Do you tell me that He performed miracles? True; but not as a philanthropist. He did not raise all the dead, or heal all the sick; but only where He could write a credential for His great mission to renew the human heart. The significance of the miracles of Jesus Christ is this, that all through the East there prevailed the idea that sin was in matter, and that there was no power in the universe by which matter itself could be controlled. Hence He performed His miracles simply to prove that He was higher than nature, and that matter was subject to Him. He was not a philanthropist in the ordinary sense. The orphans cried in the streets of Jerusalem, but He erected no orphan asylum; He never founded a college. He might have given to the world a perfect system of science and a *Materia Medica* that would have alleviated the sufferings of humanity. But He did nothing of the kind. He might have anticipated great inventors; whatever to-day seems to be the glory of our civilisation must have floated through His Divine imagination. But this was not the purpose of His coming. Nor did He come as a statesman. Twice He was invited to be a judge, but He declined; once He was asked to be a king, but He refused. He expressed no preference for this form of government or that. He knew that government was oppressive, and slavery fearful, but He issued no proclamation of emancipation. The social evil prevailed, but He organised no meetings for reclamation. Intemperance prevailed, yet He never offered the pledge of total abstinence to any. War prevailed, yet He did not organise peace societies. Even idolatry cursed every hill and valley, yet He organised no crusade against idolatry. What He did not do is as remarkable as what He did do. The infidels of to-day arraign Him because He did not do these things. 2. But listen! His eye looked down the ages, and, passing over China, saw what subordination or subjugation had failed to do; over the region swayed by Buddha, and saw what his teaching had failed to do; over India, and saw that intellectual culture had proved a failure; over Rome, and saw that law had failed to suppress vice or develop virtue; over Greece, where art was in its glory; and there He saw that the æsthetics of civilisation had failed, and that art was not a reformatory force. Then He said, "I will now enter the citadel of man; I will come to each individual, and ask him to permit Me to incarnate Myself in him; to enchain his conscience to My severe morality, to harmonise his will with Mine, to enthrone Myself in his affections; I will make each man a living, walking, speaking Christ." 3. He resolved not to do what men could do. He knew that man, unaided by Him, could educate the mind, could bless the orphan and comfort the widow; but He resolved to touch the fountain of life that all the streams might be pure, and just in proportion as He is received as the regenerator of the human heart, in that proportion do public charities become facts, and benevolence is a sublime truth in the world. A learned Chinese in Philadelphia wrote a series of articles to this effect—that in his country there were houses of charity for the reception of the widow and the aged, but he should have had the honesty to tell two facts—first, that in his country there is no house of charity which antedates the introduction of Christianity; and, secondly, that on the banks of the Yang-tse-kiang there is a house of charity for animals which antedates Christianity. Those Chinese are in advance of Darwin, for they say these animals are to be men in the next world. In the same city I attended the semi-centennial of the Bible Society. First came upon the stand a mute, who, in his graceful language, recited to us the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Then came a beautiful girl born deaf, but Christian science had taught the mute lips to speak, and she whispered, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Then came a Chinese lady who was born blind, brought to this country and converted, and Christian science had taught her fingers to read deftly in the language of the blind, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Christian science is doing to-day what Christ did in His person. The genius of Christianity working through renewed hearts is writing its credentials

in favour of our Divine Lord. Is it true He did not found a college or a university? He did something better; He placed in the hands of each man a book that should tell men of the character and the claims of Almighty God; that should inform man of his own origin, that he is immortal, and responsible to the ages as he is to God; a book that should present to him the noblest specimen of virtue and the grandest laws of morality, and wherever this Book has spread its banner of wisdom and love knowledge has been diffused, universities founded, and science advanced. Christ did not come as a statesman? He declared the brotherhood of mankind; He announced the eternal principles of truth and justice, and He knew that wherever these principles were accepted, from a heart that had been renewed by Him, there government would be modified, oppression would cease, and liberty would be enjoyed. Is it true He did not organise missions to reclaim the poor courtesan? He knew it was necessary to create a new affection in the heart of men and of women, for Him to be received into the human heart, to restrain passion; and He knew that, having been thus received, there would come a reformation of this fearful class in society. Only in a Christian land, and as Christianity becomes a living force in society is the social evil branded and banished. Is it true He did not offer the pledge of total abstinence to any? He knew that antecedent influences would be at work at first, and that great moral forces must operate. Is it true He did not organise peace societies? He whispered that Beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and He very well knew that only as humanity is transformed by His power would war-passions cease and men live in sweet harmony together. Christian men have organised the only peace societies in the world. (*J. P. Newman, LL.D.*)

Ver. 13. **Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John.**—*St. Peter; or, true courage:*—The grace of God, which St. Peter's character and story specially forces on our notice, is the true courage which comes by faith. There is a courage which does not come by faith, but from hardness of heart, obstinacy, anger, or stupidity, which does not see danger or feel pain. That is the courage of the brute. One does not blame it. It is good in its place, as all things are which God has made. It is good enough for the brute; but it is not good enough for man. You cannot trust it in man. And the more a man is what a man should be, the less he can trust it. The more mind a man has, so as to be able to foresee danger and measure it, the more chance there is of his brute courage giving way. The more feeling a man has the more chance there is of his brute courage breaking down, just when he wants it more to keep him up, and leaving him to play the coward and come to shame. Yes; to go through with a difficult or dangerous undertaking a man wants more than brute courage. He needs to have faith in what he is doing to be certain that he is in the right. Look at the class of men who in times of peace undergo the most fearful dangers. Not a week passes without one or more of them, in trying to save life and property, doing things which are altogether heroic. What keeps them up to their work? High pay? The amusement and excitement of the fires? The vanity of being praised for their courage? Those are motives which would not keep a man's heart calm and his head clear under such responsibility and danger as theirs. No; it is the sense of duty. The knowledge that they are doing a good and noble work, that they are in God's hands, and that no evil can happen to him who is doing right. Yes; it is the courage which comes by faith which makes men like St. Peter and St. John. "I will not fear," said David, "though the earth be moved, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." The just man who holds firm to his duty will not, says a wise old writer, "be shaken from his solid mind by the rage of the mob bidding him do base things, or the frown of the tyrant who persecutes him. Though the world were to crumble to pieces round him, its ruins would strike him without making him tremble." Such courage has made men, shut up in prison for long weary years for doing what was right, endure manfully for the sake of some great cause, and say—

"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage."

There is but one thing you have to fear in heaven or earth—being untrue to your better selves, and therefore untrue to God. If you will not do the thing you know to be right, and say the thing you know to be true, then indeed you are weak. You are a coward, and sin against God. And you will suffer the penalty of your cowardice. You desert God, and therefore you cannot expect Him to stand by you.

But who will harm you if you be followers of that which is right? (Psa. xv. 1–5.) There is a tabernacle of God in which, even in this life, He will hide us from strife. There is a hill of God in which, even in the midst of danger, and labour, and anxiety, we may rest both day and night—even Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages—He who is the righteousness itself, the truth itself. And whosoever does righteousness and speaks truth, dwells in Christ in this life, as well as in the life to come. And Christ will give him courage to strengthen him by His Holy Spirit, to stand in the evil day, the day of danger, and having done all to stand. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Christian heroism* :—The Church was born and nursed amid storms. The advocates of Christianity have frequently met with unexpected opposition and cruel persecution. Men whose office it was to promote the progress of truth have striven to impede its course. Persecution intimidates the weak, but ennobles and purifies the true. The text teaches us three things about the genuine disciple. I. THAT CHRISTIAN MEN ARE INSPIRED WITH DIVINE COURAGE IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION. "They saw the boldness of Peter and John." There is a wide difference between a Christian and a worldly man in times of trouble. The worldly man is timid, irritable, and restless; the Christian man is calm, courageous, and hopeful. Nothing can calm and strengthen a man more than a full assurance of God's protection. Three things show that the disciples were endowed with Divine fortitude. 1. Look at their noble defence. Peter speaks courageously and eloquently for Christ. 2. Look at their bold attack. Peter charged his accusers with ignorance, they had rejected Christ; he charged them with sin, they had crucified Christ. 3. Look at their undaunted spirit. They were commanded to cease from preaching; but they remained steadfast to the truth. God can inspire His children with courage to meet the fiercest conflicts of life—to endure pain, to suffer poverty, to bear bereavement, to meet persecution. II. THAT CHRISTIAN MEN ARE INSPIRED WITH DIVINE WISDOM IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION. "And perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men." Christ had promised to impart wisdom to His disciples in times of danger. "When they deliver you up, take no thought how and what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." "I will give you a mouth and wisdom that all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay and resist." Three things show that the disciples were Divinely instructed. 1. They were enabled to make a special declaration of the power of Christ. The examination was particular—"by what name" they had performed the miracle. The answer was particular—"by the name of Jesus." It was a merciful work, a successful work, a Divine work. 2. They were enabled to make a suitable declaration of salvation in Christ: "neither is there salvation in any other." 3. They were enabled to make a public declaration of their faith in Christ: "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." They believed in the supremacy of Christ. They knew He was both the Son and the Sent of God. His word was true. His work was complete. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Christian men ought to speak boldly in defence of the truth. Speak for Christ anywhere and everywhere, in the shop and in the market, at fasts and at feasts. Speak of His life, His atonement, His resurrection, His intercession. III. THAT CHRISTIAN MEN ARE INSPIRED WITH A DIVINE INFLUENCE IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION. "And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The man who has frequent intercourse with Jesus will reflect his Master's spirit. Communion with Christ makes a man gentle, patient, courageous, devout, and zealous. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai his face shone with such a Divine lustre that the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh him." The influence the disciples possessed is noticeable for three things. 1. It was a visible influence. "They saw, perceived, took knowledge of them." There is something in the conduct, disposition, and countenance of a good man that reports itself; his influence is felt in the world, the Church, the family circle. A Divine life cannot be concealed; the light must shine. 2. It was a mighty influence. They silenced their accusers, they convinced their hearers, they converted five thousand men. 3. It was a spiritual influence. The miracle only excited attention, the word produced conversion. (*Joseph Woodhouse.*) *Christian heroism* :—We sometimes hear it stated that courage is a quality that is decreasing; that men are wise, enterprising, and refined, but not courageous. That opinion is not true even of physical bravery. It also ignores the altered conditions of life. If we look into life and see what is necessary to realise any great purpose in it, we shall conclude that opportunities are not wanting for the display of high heroism. The old bravery is not extinct, it is transformed and directed to

better ends. It is the fortitude that comes from faith, love, and duty that is needed in these times. Christianity is the religion of heroism, as opposed to the creeds of expediency and prudence. It begets in us that temper of mind from which high achievements naturally flow. It reveals a universal conflict between truth and error in which true chivalry must be shown. The boldness of the mariner or the adventurer we may not all be called to rival, but the boldness of Peter and John we must all possess, if we are to fight our battle faithfully and attain the crown of life. Peter and John are examples of the new courage—the heroism of hearts inspired by love, and living for the benefit of others. Christianity had to fight. How did it bear itself in the conflict? Did it take counsel of safety, compromise, policy? No! what one is struck by in the action of the apostles is an audacity that is caution, a calmness that is power, and a love that impressed friends and foes. Peter declares that it is by the power of the risen Christ the healed man stood before them. That is the true explanation of all progress. The confidence, the contempt of suffering, the holy elevation of soul with which Peter uttered that statement filled all with surprise; they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. That was the result of Peter's boldness. It turned judges into criminals, and apostles into judges. It brought about their acquittal, and the still greater progress of their cause. If Peter had wavered, all had been lost. Similar devotion do we need to-day, not only for the conflict of Christian truth with error, but for the destruction of evil in laws, institutions, and habits, and for the every-day battle of life. I. CHRISTIAN HEROISM RESULTS FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. The sense of the heroic is in all men; the disposition to admire the great and exceptional in the lives and acts of men. Life would be very monotonous if all men occupied one level of power. The sameness of nature is broken up by mountains, torrents, cataracts, and by crises. So the torpor of social life is broken up, and a new sense of power reached, by the presence of heroes, and of the heroic. The hero is one whose faculties are raised to a higher plane of power than ordinary men reach. Before Christ came there had been such characters. In various countries and at different times they had appeared: military heroes like Alexander; political heroes like Pericles; intellectual heroes like Plato and Socrates; artistic heroes like Phidias; reforming heroes like Elijah, Buddha, Confucius; patriotic heroes like Moses and David. But, wonderful as were the doings of these men, they do not fully satisfy the sense of the heroic. Their mastery over nature was not complete; their knowledge was limited; their sympathies were not universal; their greatness was measurable. The world needed the expression of a higher enthusiasm. Jesus Christ realised and transcended all these conditions. The special qualities of all other heroes meet in Him. Consider His personality, His knowledge, His labours, His conflicts, His sufferings and triumphs. And now that He is exalted to the throne of the universe, and praised and adored as the glorified Son of God, what is His purpose towards His disciples? To impart unto them His own enthusiasm, courage, power, and glory. How does Jesus Christ infuse His spirit into His disciples? 1. He reveals to them the high possibilities of their nature. The unheroic mind sees the actual as the measure of the possible. The heroic mind says, "All things are possible." Jesus Christ is the measure of human possibility. He sees and awakens the capabilities of men. He saw the possibilities of Peter, of Paul, of Augustine, of Luther, of John Howard, of Carey, and educated their faculties to realise them. 2. Jesus Christ gives absolute certainty about the truth He teaches. If Peter had doubted, boldness would have fled. 3. Jesus gives courage by demanding the surrender of self. All cowardice results from self-consciousness. Let self be devoted to a worthy end, fear dies. 4. Jesus Christ teaches us that heroism is the universal law of heaven. The heroisms of earth are the commonplaces of heaven. 5. Jesus Christ concentrates our powers on one great aim. Distraction destroys heroism. The balloon must be steered. 6. Jesus Christ sustains His followers by His presence. Peter denied Jesus when he was charged. The Master does not disown the servant, but stands by him. II. CHRISTIAN HEROISM SHOULD BE MANIFESTED IN VARIOUS SPHERES. 1. In witnessing to Christ in common life. 2. In faithfulness in temptation. 3. In new methods of Christian service. 4. In loyalty to personal conviction. 5. In responses to special calls to duty. 6. By the boldness of our prayers. III. CHRISTIAN HEROISM PRODUCES GREAT RESULTS. IV. CHRISTIAN HEROISM IS POSSIBLE TO ALL. Peter the denier transformed into Peter the heroic witness. Be not discouraged, cleave to Jesus, and in Him be strong. (*J. Matthews.*) *The boldness of apostolic preaching*:—I. THE POSITION AND CHARACTER OF THESE MEN WHO WERE GRIEVED AT THE APOSTLES'

TEACHING OF THE RESURRECTION. Most of them were Sadducees, rich, courtly, influential, holding the Pharisees in contempt as did the Pharisees the common people. A crisis was now impending. The impress of the Great Teacher was too great to be denied. Tone, look, manner, put the apostles' training above suspicion. All had admitted the originality of Jesus as a teacher, and had opposed Him on this account. Lo! this originality has reappeared. The old controversy had suddenly returned. Jerusalem was in a moral upheaval. In this God's hand strikingly appears. To confront the Sadducees was the initial work of Christianity. The question of "Jesus and the resurrection" must be settled at once. Other questions might be postponed till Sadduceeism received its deathblow. So the risen Christ confronted them everywhere and "sore troubled" them. II. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SADDUCEES AS TO THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY. "We cannot deny it." If the miracle is undeniable, then the source, in the risen Christ, is undeniable. Only one resource remains—silence the preachers! But can they be silenced? The leader of the hour was lately a weak man, who quailed before a servant-maid. Now he stands with John unflinchingly before the most formidable tribunal of the country. How is it? The secret escapes their own lips. "The boldness" astonishes them, and they put it down to the fact that they had been with Jesus. Was this conscience? No. There was no sense of guilt here. It was fear. In the boldness of Peter and John they saw the answer to "His blood be upon us and our children." III. NO ONE CAN HAVE BEEN WITH JESUS AS A DISCIPLE AND NOT SHOW IT THEREAFTER IN HIS SPIRIT AND ACTION. The human heart was made for Him, and when renewed receives His fulness. This is the secret of Christian influence. (*A. A. Lipscomb, LL.D.*) *Courage comes from faith*:—Courage comes from faith! Faith always leads us out of self and teaches us to believe in the possibilities of others. No nature can be strong that is not enthusiastic, and no nature can be enthusiastic that has not faith. The man who has faith in other men and other things, and other manifestations of life and character than his own, will always have courage. And this faith of which we hear so much in the matter of religion is not only a Bible quality; it is a quality which is found in the busiest market-places of life and among the most successful of earthly heroes. Columbus bound in his prison was, after all, a stronger nature than the crowned Ferdinand upon his throne, for his faith realised an undiscovered continent. It was said of William Pitt, the younger, the Prime Minister of England at twenty-three years of age, that no one ever entered his closet, if it was for only five minutes, who did not come out of it a stronger and braver man than he was when he went in. Count Cavour, when he made Italy the free kingdom that it is, was once asked how he came to be so trusted by every one, and said, in reply, that it was simply because he believed in men, and trusted them. There can be no courage without faith; for it is faith which bears our trembling natures away from their earthly moorings to some unknown, unseen reality, which exists because the soul believes in its existence. *Serving God with boldness*:—Mr. Moody told of a young man who attended his meetings at the Hippodrome in New York. He was long before he would confess to this belief in Christ, and when at length he did so, Mr. Moody asked him what had kept him back. He replied that he knew he had to make a clean breast of his profession to his room-mate, and he was deterred by the fear of being laughed at. Eventually he summoned up courage. He sat in his room reading the Bible, and presently he heard his mate coming up the stair. His first impulse was to shut the Bible and put it away in his trunk. His second thought restrained him, however, and he continued his reading. His bed-fellow came in and saw him with the Bible before him, and going up to him, said, "Are you interested in such things?" "Yes, I am." "How long have you been so?" "Since Mr. Moody preached on such and such a text at the Hippodrome." "Well now, that is strange, I was impressed with the same address, and all these nights I have been trying to screw up my courage to read my Bible before you." "And I have only succeeded to-night in getting my courage up to read mine before you." Mr. Moody remarked, "We want men who have got boldness and courage. If it is right to serve God, then let them serve Him with boldness, without regard to what man will think." **And perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled.**—*True religion the wonder of men*:—This astonishment was the natural effect of the appearance of a true Christianity differing so greatly from all its surroundings, of an effect disproportionate to the apparent cause. Strange coincidence that in the moment of their amazement the rulers should give the true explanation, "They have been with Jesus." This should remind us, in the face of those powers now leagued

against us, that we too possess a supernatural power, ever-victorious, be the combat what it may. This amazement—I. WAS THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD WHICH BELIEVES ONLY IN THE VISIBLE, whether as to power, riches, or science. 1. None of these characteristics were found in these men, therefore when the power of the invisible and Divine appears in them, it is beyond the comprehension of the world which ignores that the visible is the Son of the invisible, and lives by its inspiration. 2. It is remarkable that this amazement was felt by the representatives of a holy religion. One could understand the Romans, men of war, or the Greeks, lovers of art, or the worshippers of gods which were only personifications of natural or human feeling, feeling such amazement. But here we are in the land of the prophets, yes—but religion was in a state of decay, impregnated with the spirit of the world. Therefore its pride was punished and its wisdom confounded. II. AROSE FROM THE ILLITERACY OF THE DISCIPLES. 1. Opposition does not exist between religion and science in itself, but between false knowledge and religion. Two conditions of religious knowledge proceed from the nature of its object, which is God. (1) The moral intuition of the heart and conscience. (2) The communication of the Spirit of God. Learning destitute of these conditions is ignorance, but having them the apostles could afford to be illiterate. See that learned man with his phylacteries. He reads the Scriptures, but understands nothing; compare him with the man who was born blind. Yes, these apostles, opening their minds to the teaching of the Master, have learned more than all the sages of Jerusalem. 2. Application to the present time. (1) Man objects to illiterate Christianity compared to antichristianity. But the objection must be overruled, for Christianity has knowledge rich and fruitful. Fear nothing, therefore. (2) God wills, perhaps, to lead us back to the intuitions of the heart and conscience. (3) Above all, we should learn the lessons of the upper room, that we may cause our contemporaries to acknowledge that we "have been with Jesus." (*E. De Pressensé, D.D.*) *Influence of unlearned but true piety*:—Next came a negro servant. He was my next evangelist. I used to watch him in the field, and in the house, and even now, with my mature reflection, I cannot remember ever to have seen him do a wrong act. As I worked beside him in the field, he used to tell me his experience, and where he learned this and that hymn; and then he would sing as only the African can sing, and I used to wish that I could have such religion as that negro enjoyed. When we went to bed—he and I slept in the same garret, he in one corner and I in the other; some people would think it a dreadful thing to have to share a garret with a negro—when we went to bed he used to pile his pillows up behind him so that he could lie sitting up, take his hymn-book, and fasten his candle up somewhere so that he could see. He would sing hymn after hymn with such relish and enjoyment, the big tears frequently rolling down his dark face, that I used to be cut to the heart with remorse, that I, a minister's son, brought up with every advantage, should be so much worse than a poor negro. I would lie there and pretend to be asleep, while all the time —— was singing right at my conscience, and I was crying heartily to hear him. Oh, how glad I should have been could I have changed places with that poor negro serving-man, if it hadn't been for cheating him! I think that lived, acted out religion does more good to children than all the talking that can be done, though talking certainly should not be omitted. That African did me more good than all the ministers that ever came to my father's house. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Unbelievers astonished*:—There are two sets of problems which excite the attention of the unbelief of every age—intellectual and practical. The first provokes antagonism, the second, mostly wonder. It is with the second that we have here to do. Note—I. THE COURAGE OF THE WEAK IN THE PRESENCE OF IRRESISTIBLE MIGHT. What that might and that weakness were had been felt eight short weeks ago. Nor had the one grown weaker or the other stronger by lapse of time. Yet in the face of the power which could commit them to prison, to scourging and to the cross, these two helpless men deliberately brought themselves into collision with the authorities. The like has been witnessed in every age, when the tender child, the gentle maiden, the aged have dared the fires of martyrdom for the cause of Christ. The like is still witnessed in the conflict with the powers of darkness, the resistance to worldly solicitation, the endurance of contempt, poverty, and affliction even with gladness. Whence this courage? asks the infidel. Ah! we know. "We have been with Jesus." II. THE VICTORY OF THE IGNORANT WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD. What chance had these uneducated fishermen in the presence of a whole college of learned Rabbis? Yet the Rabbis were made to look very foolish,

and the fishermen won a triumph such as a philosopher might have envied. So has it ever been. It was so with Jesus as a child, it was so with Him as a man. "Whence has this man letters?" It has been so with His followers ever since. How often has Christianity been slain in the opinion of its opponents! Scholarship has left no weapon unused. But the victory of Christianity is all along the line. And this not because of the labours of its learned "apologists." The disciples of Celsus were not vanquished by the treatises of Origen, but by the witness of obscure slaves and artisans. The tide of infidelity in the last century was not stemmed by Butler's "Analogy," but by the testimony of Kingswood colliers and Lincolnshire labourers. The good fight of faith to-day is not won by academic men in secluded cloisters, but by "unlearned and ignorant" successors of the men who could not but speak the things they had seen and heard. And sceptics marvel. They need not, for it is an open secret, "We have been with Jesus." III. THE PERSISTENCY WITH WHICH CHRISTIANS ADHERE TO A DISCREDITED CAUSE. Here were men calmly avowing themselves disciples of a crucified malefactor, and prepared to be crucified themselves rather than abandon not simply His cause, but His very cross. It was this which astonished the cultured Greek and the practical Roman; it is this which has astounded both persecutors and onlookers ever since. The offence of the cross has not ceased, yet millions still glory in it. Wonderful, says the worldling, that these fanatics should renounce our pleasures and profits, and deliberately prefer a life of self-sacrifice and service of others. Wonderful, says the modern thinker, that men in the nineteenth century should hold to a creed formulated in the first. Not at all wonderful, says the Christian, "I have been with Jesus." IV. THE REASON OF IT ALL, which is the greatest wonder. How can there be fellowship with Jesus? And if that were possible, how can that fellowship make men bold in persecution, invincible in argument, enthusiastic in attachment, and so hold the field all through the centuries? Ah, perhaps we ourselves cannot tell. All we can say is, "We have been with Jesus, and He has baptized us with the power from on high, which has made us bold. We have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him, and with His wisdom have been made wise. We have been with Jesus, and His love has created a union which death, life, angels, principalities, powers, &c., cannot break." We can say nothing further to a wondering world except "Come and see"; then you will know what we know, but cannot speak. (*J. W. Burn.*) **They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.**—*Christians who have been with Jesus*:—The apostles are called unlearned and ignorant, or private men, *i.e.*, men of private education. They were not men who then appeared unlearned and ignorant. The freedom with which they spake, their knowledge of the Scriptures, and the force of their reasoning, convinced the rulers that they were at that time men of superior abilities and acquirements. But it was matter of wonder how these men who had only had a private education, and never had been instructed in the Jewish schools, should so speak; but the fact that "they had been with Jesus" was sufficient to account for it all. It is here observable, that though Christ chose men of private education, yet He sent them not forth to preach until they had been for some time under His own immediate instruction. Paul, whose early education had been superior, was previously instructed in the doctrines of the gospel by Ananias. Even in that day, when uncommon gifts were bestowed by the Spirit, a preparatory education was ordinarily required for the gospel ministry. Novices were not to be introduced into so great and important an office. How absurd is it, then, in this day, when supernatural gifts have ceased, for the unlearned and ignorant to assume, without a previous education, the work of public instruction! I. THE EXPRESSION "BEING WITH JESUS" may be applied to—1. All who enjoy the gospel. Peter and John, and their fellow disciples, were admitted to familiar converse with their Lord. You have His gospel, which communicates the instructions they heard, the works they beheld, the example they followed, and the devotions in which they joined. In regard therefore to all the purposes of faith, knowledge and virtue, you may be with Him as truly as they were. If a living voice will touch the heart more sensibly, yet the written word is better adapted to enrich your memory and improve your knowledge. 2. The true believer. He has received the renewing influence of the Spirit of Christ, and experienced the sanctifying power of his gospel. This the first disciples had. Barely to behold Christ's works and receive His instructions, was but a small thing compared with this. But there are times when true believers have special intercourse with Christ. (1) In their private devotions. (2) In social worship. "Where

two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (3) In the Holy Communion. II. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WITH JESUS. Should—1. Be watchful against all sin. You have seen Him who suffered death to redeem you from iniquity; how can you continue any longer therein? 2. As having been trained up under His instructions, excel in religious knowledge. 3. Show themselves to be like Him. Learn of Him to be meek and lowly, patient and contented, pious and heavenly. 4. Set their affections on things in heaven, for Jesus is there. 5. Like the apostles, discover zeal and fortitude in the cause of Christ. 6. Be loving. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *Fellowship with Jesus*:—I. LIFE'S TRUEST FELLOWSHIP. It is with Jesus. 1. It is real. "Enoch walked with God." 2. It is spiritual (Rom. viii.). 3. It is heartfelt (Luke xxiv. 32). 4. It is sustaining (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). 5. It is efficacious (Rom. viii. 37; Phil. iv. 13). 6. It is constant (Matt. xxviii. 20). II. THE MARKS OF LIFE'S TRUEST FELLOWSHIP. 1. Simple faith (chap. iv. 7–12). 2. Manly courage (chap. iv. 20). 3. Sanctified wisdom (chap. iv. 19). 4. Decisive choice of associations (chap. iv. 23). 5. Faithful consistency of character in all things (Luke i. 6). III. THE INFLUENCE OF LIFE'S TRUEST FELLOWSHIP. 1. It awakens surprise. "They marvelled." 2. It produces conviction. "They took knowledge of them that had been with Jesus." 3. It disarms the enemy (chap. iv. 21.) (*Homiletic Review.*) *Been with Jesus*:—I. WE MUST BE MUCH WITH HIM BY MEDITATING ON HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US DISPLAYED IN HIS SUFFERINGS ON OUR BEHALF. II. WE MUST BE MUCH WITH JESUS IN STUDYING THE EXAMPLE HE HAS SET US. III. WE MUST BE MUCH WITH JESUS IN HOLDING COMMUNION WITH HIM. (*Homilist.*) *Keeping company with Jesus*:—I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO KEEP COMPANY WITH JESUS. 1. In His Word. 2. In the sanctuary. 3. In the closet. 4. At His table. 5. In every path of service. II. KEEPING COMPANY WITH JESUS WILL RESULT IN SOME ASSIMILATION OF CHARACTER. 1. In proportion to the degree of intimacy. 2. The constancy of the intercourse. 3. The regard we have for our Companion. III. THE RESEMBLANCE TO CHRIST, in habit and character, WILL BE MANIFEST TO THE WORLD. The disciple may be unconscious of it, but—1. God will see and reward it. 2. Angels will note it and rejoice. 3. Brethren will discern it and be encouraged or rebuked. 4. The ungodly will be forced to confess it, to the honour of religion. (*Homiletic Review.*) *Fellowship with Jesus*:—I. AS A SPIRITUAL POSSIBILITY. By many lightly esteemed, by some ignored, and by others denied, fellowship with Him in His work, word, worship, is real (1 John i. 3). As real now as with the disciples of Emmaus, as with the youths in the fire, as with Paul, John, or Peter. II. AS AN ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCE. However ignored or denied, it is a necessity of spiritual life. Christ cannot be known but by fellowship. 1. It is the initial act of living faith. Consciously or unconsciously, each soul that seeks has fellowship. The woman touched hem of garment, and fellowship resulted, though she knew not its meaning. So in prayer of contrite as well as in sublimest communion. 2. It is the constant solace of earnest spirits. Mid life's perplexing problems and heavy sorrows, this is support. It is indispensable. The body would as soon forget to breathe as the heart to talk with and lean upon Christ. "Lo I am with you alway," is Christ's promise: "I am continually with Thee," is the heart's reply. III. AS A MORAL INSPIRATION The apostles possessed the secret of true courage. They, of all men, could be bold—1. Because they believed and did the right. They knew their mission and their message to be Divine; this made them invincible. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who is he that shall harm you if you be followers of that which is good?" 2. Because they believed and did the right from a right motive. They were no time-servers. Many can do the right when such doing is popular. Inquiring too often what will please, what will suit, not what is right, what will profit. 3. Because they believed and did the right from a right motive under the immediate inspiration of Christ. Here was the true secret of courage. "Fear not, for I am with thee"; "Go in this thy might." IV. AS THE SECRET OF REAL INFLUENCE. "They took knowledge of them," &c. Priests and scribes and rulers felt the force with which these men spoke. They exerted an influence which —1. Transcended social distinctions; they were but fishermen. 2. Surpassed educational attainments. "They were unlearned and ignorant men." 3. Lies within our reach. It was when Jacob had been alone with God that he was enabled to meet and to overcome his brother. Be much with Christ, and you shall be a prince amongst men. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Fellowship with Christ essential to courageous testimony for Him*:—I. IN THE

PRESENCE OF THE WORLD. To have heard or read of Him is not enough: we must be with Him; walk with Him in a consenting will, love Him as having first loved us, be joined to Him in one Spirit. They who have been with Jesus fear not the pomp, nor the scoffs, nor the threats of men. A man's religion before the world is one of those things by which his genuineness as a Christian are most readily tested. By testimony for Christ I do not mean an obtrusive introduction of His name and doctrines at all times; but a prudent uncompromising assertion of His rights and defence of His precepts and servants when occasion requires. II. BEFORE THE FOE WITHIN, a more formidable feat. Many a man could bear testimony for Christ before a world in arms, who yet is ignominiously silent in the council chamber of his own heart. There—where he hopes, or fears, or loves—his Redeemer's name is not heard, his Saviour's precepts are not alleged, his Master's example is not heeded. Would you find a remedy for this and uplift the spirit so that it may assert Christian motives, press Christian rules of action, put forward Christ as his pattern? Christ must dwell in your heart by faith. III. IN THE TIME OF SORROW. Ere we have gone on long in life, hopes betrayed, fears realised, joys dashed with bitterness, are every man's companions. And sorrow is a stern suggester of doubts and misbelief. Would you bear a consistent testimony in the presence of sorrow? Here, above all, you require the Saviour's presence. Hearing and reading of Him may do while the weather is fair, and the sails are set, and the sea is smooth; but when the sky is overcast, and the winds are awake, and the sail is torn, and the billows rage, we want Him in the boat to steer. IV. IN THE PERIOD OF PROSPERITY. If sorrows are open foes, successes are to us enemies in disguise. Many a man has borne noble witness to his Saviour in adversity, but how few have glorified Him in the broad sunshine of prosperity! It was the custom of persecutors to try not merely tortures to shake the constancy of the martyrs—these only a few craven dispositions heeded—but also to tempt them by the offer of advancement, of lands and houses, of rank and honours. And the father of persecutors follows the same plan. "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." How shall the man of wealth, the magistrate, the statesman, render a fearless testimony to the Master of his talents and time? Only in one way—only on one condition. That way is the way of reality—that condition, communion with his Lord for himself. "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." How different is the decent toleration of religion, the respectable patronising of God, His service and His people, the worldly-prudent care to grasp the world in one hand and just touch the refuge with the other; from the genuine Christian character, whose fountains gush evermore within, which is found always fearless on the side of God and good, submitting to obloquy if need be, enduring hardness as a good soldier of Christ. And there is nothing short of being with Jesus that will create such a character. You cannot put it on—it must result from the gradual accretion of many experiences, trials, failures, prayers, years spent under the eye and within the sound of the voice of the Saviour. You cannot build it up on the shifting sands of fashion, or on the soft and tempting soil of self-indulgence: its foundations must be on the holy hills, or it will never stand. V. IN THE HOUR OF DEATH. There will come a day when each one will be called to wrestle with the last foe: to bear, in the presence of his past life, and in the presence of those who are to outlive him, his witness to Christ. Would we meet death fearless, and in humble assurance that we have a part in One who has robbed him of his terrors? There is but one way, and that way is, to have been with Jesus during our lives. There is nothing but the reality of the Christian life, which can ensure the peace of the Christian's death. VI. IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Then who are they that shall escape the wrath of the Judge, whom the crash of falling worlds shall strike unmoved and fearless? There will be found a multitude whom no man can number, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Angels and men shall take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus. (*Dean Alford.*)

The Christian's exemplification of religion:—I. BY WHAT MARKS MEN SHOULD TAKE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHRISTIAN THAT HE HAS BEEN WITH JESUS. 1. By the exclusive dependence with which he regards Him as his Saviour. 2. By the simplicity with which he acknowledges Him as a Teacher. 3. By the fidelity with which he follows Him as his Example. II. To WHAT END this manifestation is demanded of him. 1. It were a motive of irresistible urgency (if no other existed), to one who knows his obligations to redeeming goodness, that He who bought him from the condemnation of endless death, is hereby honoured in the estimation of men. 2. To this powerful impulse I would add the animating consideration, that the

conduct resulting from a spiritual and saving communion with Jesus Christ by faith, may be advantageous to others; and induce them to glorify God in the day of their visitation. Lessons: 1. Remember, ye who profess to seek Jesus, that as the Jews took knowledge of the apostles that they had been with Him, so the world is taking knowledge of you. 2. If any here, like the chief priests and Sadducees, are taking knowledge of those who have been with Jesus, to blame the good part they have chosen—to cavil at the principles they profess, the joys they feel, the self-denial they practice, or the faith in which they delight—let such ungenerous observers bear in mind Who hath said, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Communion with Christ discovered:*—I. WHEN MAY WE BE SAID TO HAVE BEEN WITH JESUS? 1. When we have been engaged in private devotion. 2. When we have been attending public worship. 3. When we have been partaking of the Holy Communion. There "we dwell in Christ, and He in us." II. BY WHAT PROOFS SHOULD MEN TAKE KNOWLEDGE OF US THAT WE HAVE BEEN WITH JESUS? 1. By our humility. 2. By our zeal. 3. By our heavenly-mindedness. 4. By our holiness—hatred of sin, and determination to avoid it. (*R. Davies, M.A.*) *The assimilation of character:*—It is a law of our nature that we become like those whom we habitually admire and love. This is the principle according to which religions, whether true or false, react on men's minds and hearts for good or evil. By worshipping, men are assimilated to the moral character of the objects which they adore. In China, Buddhist priests have been heard to say, "Think of Buddha, and you will be transformed into Buddha. If you pray to Buddha and do not become Buddha, it is because the mouth prays, and not the mind." The same is true in the highest degree of Christianity: communion with God in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, must have an assimilating effect, very gradual, indeed, but sure. "There are," it has been well said, "some men and women in whose company we are always at our best. While with them, we cannot think mean thoughts or speak ungenerous words. Their mere presence is elevation, purification, sanctity. All the best stops in our nature are drawn out by their intercourse, and we find a music in our souls that was never there before. Suppose even that influence prolonged through a month, a year, a lifetime, and what would not life become? To have lived with Christ must have made us like Christ: that is to say, a Christian." (*W. Burnet, M.A.*) *The odour of grace:*—Men carry unconscious signs of their life about them. Those that come from the forge, and those from the lime and mortar, and those from the humid soil, and those from dusty travel, bear signs of being workmen, and of their work. One need not ask a merry face or a sad one whether it hath come forth from joy or from grief. Tears and laughter tell their own story. Should one come home with fruit, we say, "Thou art come from the orchard"; if with hands full of wild flowers, "Thou art from the fields"; if one's garments smell of mingled odours, we say, "Thou hast walked in a garden." But how much more, if one hath seen God, hath held converse of hope and love, and hath walked in heaven, should he carry in his eye, his words, and his perfumed raiment, the sacred tokens of Divine intercourse! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Fellowship with Christ: its visible effects:*—Often when I am on the beach, or even from my window, I look across the bay; and I can just see a speck gleaming against the grey sands, or the surf-beaten, sullen-looking cliffs of Howth beyond; and I know at once what the speck is by its whiteness. At other times when the storm has come, and the waves are sweeping over the rocks, I see a light speck upon the dark cloud curtain; and I know it is a brave little sea-gull in its white coat. So when we have given ourselves to Jesus, it should be easy for those round about us to see that we have. When, like the bird on the sands, we are doing our lowly work, the white robe should be visible; and in sorrow and trouble the whiteness should gleam as it did in the lives of those men of whom we are told in the New Testament that others "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." (*J. Bowker.*) *Communication with Christ the secret of power to bless men:*—On Thursday evening, March 29, 1883, for above an hour all who had occasion to use the telephone in Chicago found it vibrating to musical tones. Private and public telephones, and even the police and fire-alarm instruments, were alike affected. The source of the music was a mystery until the following day, when it was learned that a telegraph wire, which passes near most of the telephone wires, was connected with the harmonic system; that tunes were being played over it, and that the telephone wires took up the sounds by induction. If one wire carrying sweet sounds from place to place could so affect another wire by simply being near to it, how ought

Christians in communication with Christ in heaven to affect all with whom they come in contact in the world. The Divine music of love and gentleness in their lives should be a blessing to society. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Communication with Christ the source of pulpit power:*—It is related that one of his hearers once asked, "How is it that Mr. Bramwell always has something that is new to tell us when he preaches?" "Why," said the person interrogated, "you see Brother Bramwell lives so near the gates of heaven that he hears a great many things that we don't get near enough to hear anything about." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's people—imitators of Him:*—I. WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE—a striking likeness of Christ. You have read lives of Christ beautifully and eloquently written, but the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. A Christian should imitate Christ in—1. His boldness. This is a virtue nowadays called impudence, but the grace is equally valuable by whatever name it may be called. Christ dealt out honest truth; He never knew the fear of man; He stood out God's chosen, careless of man's esteem. Be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which only flourishes in a hot-bed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No; if ye are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ; never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you—take care you never disgrace that. 2. His loveliness. The one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who, by carrying their courage to excess, have been caricatures of Christ and not portraits. Let courage be the brass; let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together, so shall we produce a rich Corinthian metal, fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the temple. The man who is bold may accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror—still, if while he had the *fortiter in re* he had been also *suaviter in modo*, he might have done even more good than he did. So, while we too are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. 3. His humility. In England a sovereign will not speak to a shilling, and a shilling will not notice a sixpence, and a sixpence will sneer at a penny. But it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree, and rank, when we come into Christ's church. Recollect, Christian, who your Master was—a man of the poor. 4. His holiness. II. WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THIS? For there is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on a Sunday, but that it does not matter what they are on a Monday. Is there a time when the warrior may unbuckle his armour, and become like other men? No; at all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking with a person who said, "I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion; I think we ought to have religion when we go to the house of God, but not in the drawing-room." I suggested that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers in that case. "How is that?" was the question. "Why," I replied, "we should need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need religion to die with, and consequently every one would want to die there." Aye, we all need the consolations of God at last; but how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? Imitate Christ—1. In public. Most of us live in some sort of publicity. The eagle-eyed, argus-eyed world observes everything we do; and sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us exhibit our Master, and not ourselves—so that we can say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." 2. In the Church. How many there are like Diotrephes, seeking pre-eminence, instead of remembering that there all men are equal—alike brethren. Let your fellow-members say of you, "He has been with Jesus." 3. In your houses. Rowland Hill once said he would not believe a man to be a true Christian, if his wife, his children, the servants, and even the dog and cat were not the better for it. 4. In secret. When no eye seeth you except the eye of God, then be ye like Jesus Christ. Remember His secret devotion—how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, He stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from His God. Take care of your secret life. III. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THIS? 1. For their own sakes. For their honesty's sake, their credit's sake, their happiness' sake; let them imitate Christ. 2. For religion's sake. The professor who has not lived up to his profession; the man who enters the fold, being nought but a wolf in sheep's clothing—such men injure the gospel more than the laughing infidel or the sneering critic. 3. For Christ's sake. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Be like Christ, since gratitude

demands obedience; so shall the world know that ye have been with Jesus. IV. How HE CAN BE SO. 1. You must know Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow Him as your Exemplar. 2. You must study Christ's character. There is a wondrous power about that, for the more you regard it the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the glass, I go away, and forget what I was. I behold Christ, and I become like Christ. 3. "But," say you, "we have done that, and we have proceeded but little farther." Then correct your poor copy every day. At night recount all the actions of the twenty-four hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over fifty times, and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them. 4. Seek more of the Spirit of God. Take the cold iron, and attempt to weld it if you can into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all your might; let blow after blow fall upon it, and you shall have done nothing. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable, then lay it on the anvil, and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, put it into the furnace; there let it be molten, and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal, and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ. Conclusion: To be like Christ is to enter heaven; but to be unlike Christ is to descend to hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat. (*Ibid.*) *The true joyfulness of a witness for God*:—I. ON WHAT IT IS FOUNDED. 1. The experience of grace in the heart. 2. The pure Word of God on the lip. 3. The exemplary walk in the life. II. How IT SHOWS ITSELF. 1. In the pulpit by the joyful opening of the mouth. 2. In the world by the fearless testimony of the truth. 3. Under the cross by peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. III. How IT WORKS. 1. To the confusion of the adversaries. 2. To the building up of the Church. 3. To the glory of God. (*C. Gerok.*) *The means of silencing blasphemers*:—I. JOYFUL PERSEVERANCE IN TESTIMONY. II. EXHIBITION OF FRUITS OF WORK. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 14. **And beholding the man which was healed . . . they could say nothing against it.**—*Practical testimony to Christianity*:—"Have you ever heard the gospel before?" asked an Englishman at Ningpo of a respectable Chinaman, whom he had not seen in his mission-room before. "No," he replied, "but I have seen it. I know a man who used to be the terror of his neighbourhood. If you gave him a hard word he would shout at you, and curse you for two days and nights without ceasing. He was as dangerous as a wild beast, and a bad opium smoker; but when the religion of Jesus took hold of him he became wholly changed. He is gentle, moral, not soon angry, and has left off opium. Truly, the teaching is good!" (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Mouths closed and opened*:—I. THE MOUTHS OF THE RULERS WERE CLOSED. They could say nothing against the miracle—1. As a fact. There was the man; that he was lame, that he now walked they all knew. There are equally incontrovertible facts to-day. Men are sober who were once drunkards, honest who were once thieves, and the enemy cannot deny it. 2. As a blessed fact. Not a man amongst them but would have confessed that lameness was a misfortune, and the cure of it a blessing. Similarly when sceptics see lives, homes, circumstances transformed by the power of the gospel, they can say nothing against the blessedness of the transformation. II. THE MOUTHS OF THE RULERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN OPENED. If they could say nothing against the fact they ought to have said something for it. 1. They should have accounted for it. If they rejected the apostles' hypothesis of the cure they should have framed one more satisfactory. And so now. The blessed facts of moral healing have to be accounted for, and sceptics are bound logically to account for them. The process requires painstaking and honest research, and candour when the conclusion is reached. But no one has ever reached but one conclusion which will satisfy all the conditions of the case—the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 2. They should have been grateful for it and encouraged its repetition. However much it may have gone athwart their convictions, at least the sum of human misery was by so much reduced and the sum of human happiness augmented—why, then, not more? The Marquis of Queensberry candidly confessed his disbelief in Christianity, but he could not ignore the blessedness of its results, and so in logical consistency with the knowledge which should have upset his illogical unbelief contributed to General Booth's scheme. III. THE MOUTH OF THE RULERS WAS OPENED. 1. In secret con-

fession of the truth of the fact (ver. 16). And there is much of this nowadays. Not all of it is like that before us hypocritical. Many sceptics are privately convinced of the unsoundness of their position, and many heathen are secretly convinced of the truth of Christianity. Let us hope that both may come into the public light. But these rulers, like others to-day, "love darkness rather than light," &c. 2. In open prohibition of its repetition (ver. 18). What a result! Here were men objecting to other men being made healthy and happy. Why? Because it was done in an objectionable way. Let us not be surprised, for there are doctors who forbid the use of any remedies that are not in their pharmacopœia, although the use of those remedies has been proved to be beneficial, and there are also Christians who forbid a certain style of preaching and preachers although they convert souls. 3. Ineffectually. The mouth of the rulers was opened to close those of the apostles, instead of which mouths which were open all along opened wider. (1) In emphatic and persistent testimony (vers. 19, 20). (2) In powerful and prevailing prayer (ver. 24, &c.). (*J. W. Burn.*) *The golden muzzle*:—1. It is no new thing for the gospel to be opposed. 2. Nor a strange thing for the great, the official, the powerful, and the influential to be foremost in such opposition. The opposition of ungodly men is—(1) Natural, seeing that the heart of man is depraved. (2) Endurable, since our Lord and His apostles suffered it. (3) Harmless, if we commit the case to God. (4) Overruled for good by Divine grace and wise providence. 3. The best and perhaps the only way to silence opposition is by exhibiting the blessed results which follow from the gospel. 4. Those who would say anything if they could, can say nothing of what they would, when they see before their eyes the cures wrought by the word of the Lord Jesus. "The man that was healed" is our best apologist. Better than Paley's "Evidences," or Butler's "Analogy," is the proof given by results. I. THE GOSPEL IS VINDICATED BY ITS RESULTS. 1. On a broad scale in nations. England, the islands of the Pacific, Jamaica, Madagascar, &c. 2. In individual conversions from open sin. Some of the worst of men have become clear instances of the purifying power of the gospel. 3. In restoring to hope the comfortless and despairing. Very marvellous is its efficacy in the direction of healing mental maladies. 4. In elevating saints above selfish aims and designs, and inducing heroic consecrations. The biographies of gracious men and women are demonstrations of the Divine power of the Word. 5. In sustaining character under fierce temptation. Wonderful is the preserving salt of grace amid surrounding putrefaction. 6. In holy and happy death-beds. These are plentiful throughout history, among all ranks; and they never fail to convince the candid. Many another catalogue of results might be made. Many a man is unable to be an infidel because of what he has seen in his mother, wife, or child. II. GOSPEL-WORKS AND WORKERS MUST LOOK FOR LIKE VINDICATION. Nowadays men ask for results: the tree must bear fruit, or the cry is, "Cut it down." We do not shrink from this test. 1. The minister must find in his converts a proof of his call, and a defence of his doctrines, methods, peculiarities, &c. 2. A society, college, or institution must stand or fall by its fruits. 3. The individual professor must abide the same test. 4. The Church in any place, and the Church on the largest scale, must be tried by similar methods. 5. Even our Lord Himself loses or gains honour among men according as His followers behave themselves. III. THE GOSPEL AND ITS WORKERS DESERVE VINDICATION AT OUR HANDS. Those who are healed should boldly stand with Peter and John as witnesses and fellow-workers. This suggests a series of practical questions:—1. Has it produced blessed results in us? 2. Have we come forward to stand with the preachers of it in evidence that it has wrought our cure? Are we continually witnessing to the truth and value of the gospel of Christ? 3. Does the influence of the gospel upon us so continue and increase unto holiness of life as to be a credit to its influence? 4. Are there not points in our character which harm the repute of the gospel? Should not these be amended at once? 5. Could we not henceforth so live as more effectually to silence the opponents of the Word? Let the Church plainly see that her converts are her best defence: they are, in fact, her reason for existence. Let converts see the reason why they should come forward and declare their faith, and unite with the people of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Opponents silenced by Christian consistency*:—The behaviour of some professors has often given the wicked an opportunity to reproach religion. Lactantius reports, that the heathen were wont to say, "The Master could not be good, when His disciples were so bad." The malice of sinners is such that they will reproach the rectitude of the law, for the obliquity of their lives who swerve from it. Oh that your

pure life did but hang a padlock upon their impure lips! (*William Secker.*) *Conversions the test of a good ministry*:—Certain gentlemen waited upon Rev. Matthew Wilks to complain of the eccentricities of his discourses. Wilks heard them through, and then produced a long list of names. "There," said the quaint divine, "all those precious souls profess to have found salvation through what you are pleased to call my whims and oddities. Can you produce a similar list from all the sober brethren you have been so much extolling?" This was conclusive: they withdrew in silence.

Ver. 16. **What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done . . . we cannot deny.**—*Healed men* (1)—*The miracle*:—Few things are more striking than the continuance and growth of Christianity; first, under the circumstances of difficulty and persecution; and next, under the conditions of maintenance to which it is restricted, viz., moral persuasion and impression. The Church is its own sufficient witness. It is of God, because it has so triumphed. The conditions under which its most signal triumphs have been won have been far removed from any that human sagacity could have devised. How often the things that threatened its destruction have proved the signal means of its salvation! The Jews prevail upon Pilate to crucify Jesus; that very death accomplishes His redeeming purposes. The Sanhedrin persecute the little Church, and break it up; but it simply scattered coals of living fire, which ignited everything they touched. So it has been a thousand times since. Tempests of persecuting passion have only carried in every direction the pollen of the Christian flower, which has fructified and brought forth a hundred-fold. Precisely this result was produced by this persecution: unwittingly it furnished occasion for one of the most signal triumphs of early Christianity. The whole issue turned upon the character of the alleged miracle, and upon the power whereby it was wrought. If it could be established that such a miracle had been wrought in the name and by the power of Jesus, the Christian doctrine was indubitably attested. The question therefore really was the relation of miracles to Christianity, the question that scepticism is discussing still. Only the Sanhedrin never thought of taking the ground of modern scepticism, which, not so closely confronted by contemporary fact, affirms that miracle is impossible. Their insinuation was the old Pharisaic blasphemy, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." It is not always deficiency of evidence that causes men to reject Christianity. I. THE HEALING OF THIS CRIPPLE IS A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF THE PECULIAR BENEVOLENCE AND GRACE OF CHRISTIANITY. Amid thousands who needed healing this beggar was the selected object. Lordly priests and wealthy nobles crowded the temple, some probably victims of painful disease, but to none of them were the apostles sent. It was surely in purposed and beautiful harmony with the character of the gospel that neither our Lord nor His apostles sought for illustrious patients. They did not, of course, exclude the rich. Our Lord gladly went to the house of Jairus, and to that of the centurion. To the poor, characteristically, the gospel was preached. They especially awakened the Master's compassion, because of their greater misery. There is a sense in which special solicitudes of the Christian worker will gather round the rich, whose peculiar spiritual peril the Master indicated when He said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!" It is not easy to make Dives conscious of his spiritual poverty. Men who receive their "good things" in this life are in danger of neglecting the life hereafter. But it is the distinctive grace of Christ's gospel that to the very poorest its blessings may come. It saves the respectable Pharisee, but it has its greatest triumph and joy in saving the outcast publican. It comes to "seek and to save the lost"; to "call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Its characteristic agencies are reformatories and ragged schools, theatre preachings and midnight meetings, city missions and missions to the heathen. When do its workers seek the palaces of nobles, or a place among the rich? Its glory is to fill its churches with "healed men." II. THE PROMPTINGS OF THE HEALED MAN'S GRATITUDE. 1. Its piety. (1) His first movement was into the temple. The first use of his recovered limbs was in God's praise. The healing of his body had touched deep springs of religious feeling. Perhaps his disability had long taught him to pray. Such is often the severe yet gracious lesson of affliction. The rarer thing is that his healing prompted him to praise. Of the ten lepers cleansed, only one returned to give God thanks. (2) All great experiences of life appeal to religious emotions: in great sorrows we are passionate in prayer, in great joys rapturous in praise; only the religious feeling

excited is often as transient as it is fervent. Whether or not this was so with this recovered cripple we are not told. But his fervour, and the courage with which he took his stand by the criminated apostles, are strong presumption of a radical and permanent piety. (3) Whatever the instrument of our blessing, it is God who makes it efficient. He therefore claims our supreme acknowledgment. If, therefore, I have received temporal healing, let me first pay to Him the "vows which I made when I was in trouble." If my soul has been healed, let me "enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise." What emotion can be so strong, what joy so exquisite, as those of the man who for the first time after his healing enters God's house? 2. Its human fidelity. (1) He "held Peter and John" in a grateful embrace. Next to him who saves us our gratitude is due to him who leads us to the Saviour. (2) Thankful to his benefactors, the healed man stood by them when they were apprehended by the Sanhedrin; glad to share their reproach and peril. And poor and unworthy will be our thankfulness if, when Christ is rejected or His servants are scorned, we slink away in shame or fear. III. IN THIS PERILOUS CRISIS OF THE INFANT CHURCH IT WAS SAVED BY THE PRESENCE AND TESTIMONY OF THIS HEALED CRIPPLE. What could these few peasants and fishermen have done against the might and hostility of the Sanhedrin? If, as is sometimes affirmed, Christianity be only human, the miracle of its establishment and propagation by such apostles, and under such circumstances, is surely as great as the miracle of the Incarnation. Five thousand converts within a few days, as the result of simple religious teaching, are surely as difficult to credit as the healing of the lame man. It was not the first time that Peter had stood before Annas and Caiaphas, who would exult in having in their hands again the leaders of the sect. What could be easier than to crush this accursed thing? The difficulty lay in certain incorrigible facts. The vitality of this pestilent heresy was derived from these facts. First, there were the notorious miracles which Christ Himself had wrought, crowned by His own indubitable resurrection. And now His followers seem to be working similar marvels. A fact such as this was worth a thousand arguments. It utterly baffled the Sanhedrin. It compelled them to admit the miracle, and, with it, its undeniable inferences. The healed man, not the eloquence of its apostles, saved the infant Church. Such has often been the vindication of the Church; not the learning of its doctors, or the arguments of its apologists, but the spiritual life of some humble, simple-hearted disciple, who has justified its work by himself demonstrating its healing power. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Healed men* (2)—*The argument*:—In religious systems the ultimate test of validity must ever be practical efficiency. Let us then apply this test to Christianity. Putting the argument in the broadest way, it stands thus: The fact of human sinfulness is proved from the universality of the consciousness of moral imperfection, and the assertion of the Christian Scriptures. Now philosophers, theologians, and moralists have set themselves to correct this evil, and to exert such influences as may quicken within men holy affections, and array their will resolutely and effectively on the side of purity and piety. The world has had a long history. All kinds of experiments have been made in it. We know what was the faith, and what the kind of life that it produced in Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, China, and other non-Christian nations. We know how various forms of Christianity have worked in Europe. We know the effects of infidelity. And the comparative claims of these various systems are submitted to our verdict. Which of all the theologies, philosophies, or moralities propagated amongst men has been the most effective in making men good? We might rest the argument first upon a broad historical view of nations and peoples; we might compare Christian nations with idolatrous or Mohammedan nations; and point out how little non-Christian faiths have done to correct moral evil in men. We gladly admit that they have done something, and cannot question the true and noble elements of Buddhism, &c., and the very worst superstition is better than unchecked godlessness and vice. There may be religious traditions of a primitive knowledge of God which even a Bechuana has not lost. Yet who would hesitate to recognise the moral superiority of Christianity, and the greater practical power of its truths? A similar line of argument, secondly, might be maintained respecting different forms of Christianity. Just in proportion as it has been spiritual, biblical, have the nations who have received it been virtuous, noble, industrious, and powerful. The connection between Popery and the state of nations such as Spain, Austria, Italy, and Ireland, not to speak of France; and between Protestantism and the state of nations such as Germany, England, and the United States, is too obvious to need exposition. And one has only to think of the prin-

ciples, religious, social, and political, of the two systems, to see that the result is inevitable. Sacerdotalism, in all its forms, is antagonistic to the noblest life of nations or men. But these lines of argument demand volumes for their adequate illustration. Let me take one or two of the fundamental elements of Christianity, and look at their adaptation to make men holy. I. THE BIBLE. It is our authoritative religious book, claiming to be a supernatural revelation of the thought and heart of God. Is, then, the Bible, as tested by its history and practical moral power, the efficient instrument for recovering men? On many sides its claims are disallowed. It is denied that it is inspired—only as Plato, and Bacon, and Shakespeare, and Milton are inspired. It is not, we are told, even true as a history. Its chronology, statistics, science are false, its miracles impossible violations of natural law, its prophecies but remarkable coincidences or sagacious prognostications. There is in the Book nothing that may not be accounted for on natural principles. How, then, are its Divine claims to be vindicated? Christianity has scholars abundantly competent to reply to the scholars of infidelity. Nay, the chief learning and science, criticism and philosophy of the world, are Christian. Hitherto, moreover, every assault of hostile criticism has only called forth new champions, who by fresh researches and lines of argument have shown how impregnable and manifold its defences are. But the vindication of the Bible need not be left to learned argumentation. We may appeal to the religious character and achievements of the Bible. Alone among the religious books of the world it is a book of history; and further, itself has a history. The Bible is not like the Zendavesta, a book of liturgies; nor like the Vedic Hymns, a book of impossible legends; nor like the writings of Confucius and Plato, a book of moral philosophy; nor like the Koran, a book of mere doctrine and precept. Fundamentally and characteristically it is history. What, then, is the moral character of the Bible? and what have been its moral effects? Take as a test of the Old Testament the Book of Genesis. Is it history or is it legend, from God or of men? Do we need a Niebuhr to give us a reply? Nay, verily. Make what abatement we may for historic or scientific difficulties, indisputable religious characteristics remain. 1. How are we to account for its characters, Abel, Enoch, Abraham? How is it that Abraham, the "friend of God," is not, like Hercules, a demigod or a hero? Always in closest intimacy with Jehovah, he is yet always as human in all his thoughts and actions as the men of to-day. How is it, again, that the Jehovah whom he worships is not like Zeus, an incongruous conception of supernatural attributes, human imperfections, and even vile passions. While the worshipper has no single trait of divinity, the Jehovah whom he worships has no single trait of humanity. How is it that these conceptions of the human and Divine, and of their relations, so incomparably transcend all the mythologies of the world, that in fundamental ideas we have neither surpassed nor altered them since? 2. How is it, again, that the morality taught in the Book of Genesis so singularly transcends even that of Plato; nay, that it is so wonderfully accordant with the moral conceptions and feelings of our own day? Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, are fully delineated, and their faults exposed. Wrong is never confounded with right. How came it to pass that when the philosophy of a Plato and the morality of an Aristotle were so signally defective, this old book of three thousand years ago anticipated the fundamental theology and morality of our nineteenth Christian century? Is not the only possible answer—These were men whom God had healed, and this is God's record concerning them? Difficulties of science or of history have no weight against these moral evidences, based as the former are upon ignorance or erroneous interpretation, which greater information might remove. But there can be no mistake about these positive features, and before the claims of the record can be rejected these must be accounted for. II. Turning to the New Testament, still grander moral delineations are presented to us. Peerless and Divine stands THE MORAL PORTRAITURE OF JESUS CHRIST. Whence is it? of man or of God? Whatever we may think about Christianity, Christ Himself is the greatest moral miracle of human history. Had Jesus never lived, could His character have been imagined? Has any conception of romance approached it since? Think of—1. His calm, majestic strength, His perfect self-possession and dignity, and yet His nature intense even to passion in its emotions. He denounces the Pharisees, but without a vestige of unholy passion; He drives out the money-changers, but without a spark of religious fanaticism. 2. The wisdom of His holiness. His is not the innocence that is ignorant of human life, it is the strength that is above it. 3. His self-consciousness and self-assertion. When He speaks concerning Himself it is to avow His human faultlessness,

to assert His Divine perfection and prerogative. His character, He claims, has been subjected to unparalleled tests, and without the discovery of a single flaw. 4. The singular proportion and adjustment of His character. What a wonderful harmony of greatness and gentleness, holiness and pity, strength and sympathy; the grandeur of the loftiest manhood, the tenderness of the gentlest womanhood. We reverence as much as we love Him, we love Him as much as we worship Him. 5. His moral excellences in combination with His intellectual greatness. 6. His conception of His own kingdom. He, a peasant of the mountain village of Nazareth, conceives a kingdom of pure spiritual life, alike adapted to the ancient Asiatic and to the modern European, to the shivering Esquimaux and to the torrid Hindoo; a kingdom of universal brotherhood, in which all men are to be knit together in holiness and love. May we not, then, fairly appeal to the moral portraiture of the New Testament in proof that it is of God? Not merely to its healed men, but also to their Healer. Scepticism has had its men of genius—why has it never produced another gospel? Upon the moral integrity of its Christ Christianity is staked. He alleged that He wrought miracles. But if He never did them, the loftiest truth, the purest morality of the world is the offspring of a lie—a moral solecism so great that our entire consciousness rejects it. III. Nor are THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL or the religious history of the Bible less conclusive. We know what Christianity did in apostolic times, when it came into contact with the unutterable depravities of Greece and Rome—what it found its converts, and what it made them. We know what it has done in every land to which it has come since; what just now Europe is in contrast with Asia, America in contrast with Africa. We know what fifty years ago the South Sea Islands were, and what—the officers of our navy and the intercourse of our merchant ships being witness—they are now. And its latest triumphs have been the most signal. A few chapters of the Bible, sometimes a single page, has sustained and propagated the Christianity of Madagascar; inspiring its converts with the virtue of saints and with the heroism of martyrs. No other book does this. Stand in a pulpit and read to men Plato or Milton or Bacon: where are their converts? whose hearts do they change? whose lives do they sanctify? Read to them the Bible, and healed men spring up everywhere, "walking, and leaping, and praising God." IV. We might take THE DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY, and reason from them in the same way. 1. No doctrine, *e.g.*, has been more demurred to than the doctrine of atonement. It has been represented as unrighteous and immoral. It is sufficient to reply—(1) That this, for eighteen hundred years, has been the fundamental doctrine of Christendom. The moral conscience of Christian men, so far from stumbling at its supposed moral incongruities, has gloried in nothing so greatly. (2) That if it be a false doctrine, men are misled the most grievously where they think themselves guided the most explicitly; and instead of being the most lucid, the New Testament is the most ambiguous of books. (3) That in its practical influence upon men's hearts and lives, this alleged error has been more potent and fruitful than all admitted truth. Whenever this idea is lost, whatever else is retained, religious life is chilled down, and grateful love is abated, Can we then imagine that all this is a delusion? that this gratitude has been falsely generated? this holiness illegitimately wrought? It cannot be; man's error can never be more potent than God's truth. 2. So with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is objected to as loosening the bonds of responsibility, as encouraging a perilous laxity in morals; inasmuch as men who are taught that all their goodness is from God, and that a Divine power external to themselves must "create in them a clean heart," and "renew them day by day," are not likely to strive to be good. Again we appeal to the inexorable logic of fact, to healed men. Who in religious life are the most sensitive to sin, the most scrupulous in holiness, the most consecrated in service, the most beneficent in help? Beyond all dispute, they who theoretically believe, and who practically illustrate the new birth of the Spirit. In a word, we boldly submit all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity to this test of results. Conclusion: Every Christian minister, every town missionary, almost every member of a Christian Church, could adduce instances, some of them scores and hundreds, which would stand the test of any judicial investigation. No one rejects Christianity because its influences are pernicious, or Christ, because His teaching is immoral. When Christian men are charged with inconsistency, the very charge implies a standard far higher than any other in our social life. Reason with a sceptical objector, you may be ignominiously defeated. But the argument from moral result is unanswerable. The most

ignorant can say, "Whether this be of God or not I cannot tell; this I know, that whereas once I was blind now I see." If the objector tells you what his philosophy is, you show him what your Christianity has done. He challenges the philosophy of your creed, you challenge the moral effects of his infidelity. Where are its religious penitents, its rescued reprobates, its Magdalens and prodigals? And if he has found no such moral power to make men holy, he will, if a true man, tell you with a sorrowful heart, how reluctantly he rejects your Christianity. He who feels no such anguish, or who chuckles over any discredit of a benign and holy Christianity, is simply a fiend and not a man. In this way, then, even gainsayers may be made to confess, "That a notable miracle hath been done by these Christian teachers, is manifest to all them that dwell in the land, and we cannot deny it." (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 18–31. **And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor to teach in the name of Jesus.**—*Christian courage*:—I. ITS TEST. The apostles did not wish to separate themselves from the Jewish Church, for it was while entering the temple that Peter and John restored the lame man. See these men, then, confronted by a positive command from the nation's highest tribunal to be silent, a tribunal, too, that had condemned their Master. National love, respect for law, pride of race, reverence for institutions hoary with age, strength of social ties, personal friendships, a shrinking from becoming disturbers of the peace, fear for personal safety—all these conspired to intensify the command "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." What now enables them to oppose the Sanhedrin's command? Their personal love for Jesus. To be silent is impossible. Bound to their nation by enduring ties, a stronger cord binds them to Jesus. "We cannot but speak." And speak they did, with added boldness. There are currents in the sea which, despite opposing winds and tides, move on their way unhindered, impelled by a mighty force hidden far in the depths. Such a force in the hearts of these disciples was love for Christ. II. ITS MANIFESTATIONS. Men are sometimes called courageous when they are only reckless. The man of real courage will be bold enough, and calm enough, to act wisely. In the conduct of the apostles every mark of true courage is manifest. 1. They show that their course is not prompted by impulse or passion. They are moved by deep convictions. They plant themselves on the highest conceivable ground, the sense of right. They have no ambitious ends to seek, no revenge to gratify, no popular applause to gain. "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." When the Empress Eudoxia sent threatening messages to Chrysostom in Constantinople to desist from his pungent reproofs, the golden-tongued preacher replied: "Tell the Empress that Chrysostom fears nothing but sin." Note, as an evidence of wisdom, how sagaciously the apostles appeal to this self-same principle of right in the minds of their accusers. "Judge ye." This sense that it is right to hearken more unto God than unto men, whether adopted in practical life or not, must and does commend itself to every man's conscience. Those who adhere to it gain the confidence of all. "What," was asked by a merchant of a poor boy applying for a situation, "should you say if I were to tell you to work on Sunday?" "I shouldn't come; for God has said, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' and I shall do as God has told me." "Then," said the employer, "you are the boy I am looking for." 2. The apostles' courage is seen in the company they keep. "Being let go, they went to their own company," &c. How changed the aspect! In the Sanhedrin the air was dense with suspicion and malice—here is love, purity, and the peace of heaven. Courage is of the right kind when it seeks to sustain itself by breathing an atmosphere like this. III. ITS SOURCE (ver. 31). The breath of God's Spirit upon their spirits. Christ did not send the apostles into trial without providing them with a power adequate to every want. Christians should learn to look to the Holy Spirit to work in them and for them whatever their needs require. If courage is the virtue needed here, then courage will be the product of the Spirit. Before the Sanhedrin the Spirit makes Peter bold; but afterwards the same Spirit made him deeply humble. John, originally a "son of thunder," was by the Spirit's agency so transformed as to become a renowned example of Christian gentleness. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

The apostles' confidence in God:—In the breast of every earnest man this conflict resolves itself into a question of duty *v.* expediency. The easy thing is to suit one's convenience; the hard thing is to do right. In the case of Peter and John there was a disagreement between the higher and the lower law. The powers that be are ordained of God; wherefore it is right to be subject to principalities and

powers, to obey magistrates, and be ready unto every good work (Titus iii. 1). But if there comes a moment when the soul is hemmed in between the mandate of an earthly ruler and the word of Jehovah, the way is plain: God must ever hold the first place in the soul of a true man. We are resolved to do our duty though the heavens fall! In reaching this determination they were moved by two arguments —1. It was right. All considerations of mere prudence must stand aside for principle. Conscience has always the right of way. The meanest man on earth knows that God's service is above time-service. It was perfectly safe for the two disciples to submit that proposition to their inquisitors, as they did when they said, "Judge ye." 2. It was in line with the ruling motive of their lives. They had some time ago made up their minds deliberately to follow Christ. In that resolve there was no reservation; they had surrendered all. Now the matter is to be brought to a test; will they be loyal to their Master or not? There is no ground for hesitation. So Peter and John stood by their principles. It must have seemed to them as if they were facing death, but no matter. Now mark the immediate result. These disciples expected imprisonment, the lash, perhaps death, for their temerity; but God had His own plans. 1. Their judges "marvelled" at their courage and "let them go"! The angel of the Lord came and shut those lions' mouths so that they could not hurt them. 2. The people "glorified God for that which was done." That term, "the people," represents an inconstant and untrustworthy factor; but in this instance the good work done upon the impotent man was so manifest, and the subsequent demeanour of Peter and John in court so heroic, that they were perforce convinced and moved to glorify God. 3. The two disciples were themselves emboldened for further service. They had tried God and found Him faithful, and they were ready to try Him again. The lad David was encouraged to go out against Goliath by the fact that God had once before delivered him from a lion and bear that had taken a lamb out of his flock. A man's courage is like his biceps muscle; it grows by use. 4. The whole Church was strengthened and enheartened by this event. Courage is catching. Heroes make heroes. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Obedience to God*:—The Rev. Mr. Martini, from Spain, says: "I have had the privilege of suffering a little—a very little—for the dear Lord, but in a sense it was my own fault, for I broke the law of my country. In Spain it was against the law for a Protestant to preach to a congregation of more than twenty persons, and that law I broke by addressing an audience of more than two hundred and fifty persons in the open air. I was holding a meeting of twelve persons in a small room, when certain persons entered and told me that there was a large number of people who wished me to preach to them in the open air. I thought, 'This is a call from God! Shall I obey God or man?' I obeyed God, and broke the law of man; the consequence was that I was sent to prison for forty-six days. I was well treated by every one. The mayor and all the notables came to see me, and I gave them tracts and Gospels, besides preaching inside the prison to more than fifty persons at a time, although the law forbade me to preach to more than twenty persons at a time outside the prison." *God before man*:—A heathen king had a Christian bishop brought before him, and ordered him to abjure his faith and sacrifice to the heathen idols. "My lord and king," said the bishop, "that I will not do." At this the king was furious, and said, "Do you know that your life is in my hands, and that if I liked I could kill you? I have only to sign to my servants, and you are a dead man." "I know that," answered the bishop; "but before you kill me let me tell you a story. You can decide my fate when I have finished. Suppose one of your most faithful servants falls into the hands of your enemies, and they seek to excite him to rebel against you—to make him a traitor. He, however, remains faithful, and your enemies strip him, and drive him back to his country. Say, O king, when he came to you thus, insulted and outraged for your honour, would you not provide him with your best garments, and cover his shame with honour?" "So far, so good," said the king, "but what has all this to do with the case in hand? A pretty story enough, and well told, but I do not see the connection it has with you." Then the pious bishop answered, "Listen, sire. You may strip me of my earthly garments, but I have a Master who will clothe me with splendour, and fit me for His presence in glory. Shall I barter away my faith to save my garments?" Then the heathen king answered, "You have conquered; go in peace." *Christian courage*:—I. MANIFESTED (vers. 18–22). II. SUSTAINED (vers. 23–28). III. INCREASED (vers. 29–31). (*Christian Age.*) *Not to cease because despised*:—What would the nightingale care if the toad despised her singing? She would still sing on and leave the toad to

his dark shadows. And what care I for the threats of men who grovel upon the earth? I will still sing on in the bosom and ear of my God. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christian courage*:—Courage is one of the Bible virtues. It was one of the last words of Moses to Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage." It was almost the first word of the Lord on welcoming him to his new office: "Be strong and of good courage." It was the counsel given the twelve Hebrew explorers. David recalled the energising word in his charge to Solomon, and in the Psalms he rings out the same voice to all the saints: "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." The correspondent word "boldness" is as often used in the New Testament. It applied to Christ Himself in His preaching; it was what Paul would have the Church pray for as a gift to him; and, as we see in this book of Acts, it was one of the distinguishing traits of the other apostles and the primitive Church. Mark, then, this instance of Christian courage—I. As BELONGING TO PRIVATE AND NON-PROFESSIONAL MEN This was the problem that first exercised the Sanhedrin—confidence where they looked for diffidence. They had not been trained in the schools as rhetoricians who might be expected to command their speech and self-possession before the tribunal or a popular assembly. It would have been a severe ordeal to some men of education and experience. Whence, then, the calmness of these obscure disciples? It was derived from Christ Himself. And so the Sanhedrin soon perceived. Christ, though no professed rhetorician, spoke with calmness, with knowledge and with authority, and these two disciples had taken their style from their Master. I have seen plain men, who had been brought up far from schools, but brought so near to Christ that they could not but speak of Him, and with such knowledge and calmness that they always gained a hearing. II. As MAINTAINED IN THE FACE OF WORLDLY ARRAY AND AUTHORITY. "What will the world say of us?" is a question many persons ask with great solicitude. Some very strong men (like Napoleon) have been very weak here. What the world will do to us is still more startling, if it has a rod in its hands and a will to use it. It seemed as if the whole world was against these two Galileans, and likely to make quick work with them. The Shepherd had been smitten; how could the flock fail to be scattered? The people rather than the rulers were the audience on Pentecost. "Your rulers" are spoken of as if absent. But now the great men began to be astir. How amazed was the Sanhedrin when these two plain men, instead of humbly begging pardon, calmly stood on their defence! They went over the gospel story as unembarrassed as if they were telling it to an audience of friends. III. As SUSTAINED BY THE SENSE OF A DIVINE PRESENCE. "Whether it be right in the sight of God." There being two here to judge us, which shall have the precedency? The rulers had not been with Jesus, and had not learned this lesson. If Jesus were at their side, what though the whole array of the Sanhedrin confronted them? Precisely this was what the Saviour had promised: "Lo, I am with you alway." IV. As HAVING THE SUPPORT OF PERTINENT AND PALPABLE FACTS. When the lame man heard of the apostles' arrest, he went before the tribunal, ready to give his testimony and share their fate. Standing upright there on his feet, what could the Sanhedrin say? How else could the apostles feel at that sight but joyful and thankful that such a miracle of mercy had been wrought by their hands? This has always been a strong support in the work for God—the good results that have atttended it. Paul felt this: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," &c. V. As ENCOURAGED BY THE COMPANIONSHIP OF CHRISTIAN MEN. "They went to their own company." In holy joy they lifted up their voices together in the triumphant words of the Old Testament Psalm: "Why do the Gentiles rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Their prayer went up for greater boldness in their Master's cause, and new wonders of grace as the fruit of it. (*W. E. Knox, D.D.*) *The apostles' confidence in God*:—The suggestions and the truths which may be gathered from this lesson are many and varied, for example—The vanity of combinations and conspiracies against God as affirmed in Scripture and illustrated in history. The beneficent character of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The necessity and value of mutual sympathy. The power of united and believing prayer as taught in the New Testament. The care of God over His own. The disciples had in a measure been prepared for trouble by the pre-announcement of Christ: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." But now it was in sight, and under threat of pains and penalties they were charged to keep silence. But, like the three Hebrew children of Daniel's day, they needed no time for considering the question. We find no hint or shadow of one that indicates on their part any wavering of

purpose. We look for the grounds of this confidence and courage, and find them incorporated in the lesson text. This confidence was based on the omnipotence of God, which was—1. A fundamental element of the irreligious faith. The Mosaic economy had taught them this. The history of their own people, which they still cherished, and the memories of which were dear to them, was full of illustrious evidences of the power and glory of Jehovah. They had not changed in becoming followers of Christ this fundamental faith in the God of their childhood and of their earlier manhood. This element of their religious faith was further buttressed by—2. The convincing events of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The facts were then, as they should be now, the unanswerable factors in the propagation of the gospel. When they beheld "the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." 3. In addition, the Holy Ghost within them enabled them to make forceful and persuasive the truth they advocated. It is true they were neither skilled in arms nor trained in schools; they had neither wealth nor social position, but God was with them, and they were invincible. Pentecost had made them all-powerful. Let us emulate their dauntless courage, touch the sources, as they did, of supernal power, make regnant in our lives the principles they enunciated, and then the world will be at our feet as it was at theirs, and we shall go forth, as did the apocalyptic rider, on the white horse, "conquering and to conquer." (*John D. Pickles.*) *Boldness:*—I. COMMANDED—1. Against God's enemies (Deut. xxxi. 6; Josh. i. 6, 9, 18). 2. To keep God's law (Josh. i. 7, xxiii. 6; 1 Chron. xxii. 13). 3. In testifying for Christ (Matt. x. 28; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Eph. vi. 10). 4. In reproving sin (Isa. lviii. 1; Mic. iii. 8). II. THE SOURCE OF—1. Wisdom (Eccles. vii. 19). 2. Grace in Christ (2 Tim. ii. 1). 3. Distrust of self (2 Cor. xii. 10). 4. Righteousness (Prov. xxviii. 1). 5. Faith in Christ (Eph. iii. 12; Heb. x. 19). 6. Trust in God (Isa. l. 7). 7. Fear of God (chap. v. 29). 8. Faithfulness to God (1 Tim. iii. 13). 9. Prayer (ver. 29; Eph. iii. 12; Heb. iv. 16). III. REASONS FOR. 1. God only to be feared (Isa. viii. 12–14, li. 12, 13; Matt. x. 28; Heb. x. 31, xii. 28, 29). 2. Those who trust in God are safe (Prov. xxix. 25). 3. God is with His servants (Isa. xli. 10). 4. God can deliver (Dan. iii. 17; Jer. i. 8). 5. The Lord delivereth (Psa. xxxiv. 7). 6. Right requires (ver. 19). 7. God will reward (Rev. ii. 10). (*S. S. Times.*) *Testimony not to be stifled:*—Suppose that some savages have seen a cannon charged and discharged. Suppose that when they saw it charged a second time, dreading the consequences, they should gather stones and clay, and therewith ram the cannon full to the muzzle, by way of shutting in the shot, and securing the safety of the neighbourhood. They know not the power of gunpowder when it is touched by a spark. This is the sort of blunder into which the Sanhedrin fell. They thought they could stifle the testimony of the apostles by ramming a threat of punishment down their throats. They knew not the power of faith when kindled by a spark from heaven. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.**—*Apostolic heroism:*—A great and prolonged conflict was approaching. How were the Christians to meet it? We have the answer here. The apostles' heroism—I. WAS BASED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS. "Whether it be right in the sight of God" was a rebuke to those who were only consulting the interests of Judaism or their own. But that which is based on righteousness does not find favour with unregenerate human nature, and much so-called heroism has rested on wrong. II. WAS SUSTAINED BY REFERENCE TO GOD. All is right which is right in His sight. The apostles then referred to the only true authority, doubtless devoutly and in faith. No wonder they were heroic, for the history of their nation showed that such reference to God had stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, &c. How could they fail with Omnipotence on their side? What could the Sanhedrin be to such men? Like faith produces like heroes everywhere. III. WAS MANIFESTED IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD. The apostles "hearkened unto God" who had spoken by Jesus, and was now speaking by the Spirit—hence the healing of the cripple, and this defence. The man who was urged to do his duty on the battlefield because he seemed to hear the voice of his country was a hero; but how much more the apostles. They heard God Himself, and as long as He was obeyed what mattered it if men were displeased. IV. BORE THE TEST OF COMMON HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. "Judge ye." The principle was referred to as an axiom which might be evaded and practically disobeyed, but which could not be intellectually contested; and any position founded upon it is impregnable. When our ways please God we may safely submit them to the arbitrament of human judg

ment. V. WAS THE CONSTANT EXPRESSION OF THE CONSTRAINT OF CONSCIENCE. "For we cannot but speak," &c. To have acted otherwise would have been to violate their consciences by wilful unfaithfulness and neglect of duty. We have seen the works of Christ in the salvation of sinners: then how dare we be silent? (*W. Hudson.*) *Moral heroism*:—When John Knox heard of the projected marriage of Queen Mary with the Roman Catholic prince of Spain, he rose in the pulpit at St. Giles, Edinburgh, and told the congregation that whenever they, professing the Lord Jesus, consented that a Papist should be head of their sovereign, they did, as far as in them lay, banish Christ from the realm. Mary recognised her enemy. Him alone she had failed to work upon. She sent for him, and her voice shaking between tears and passion, she said that never prince had been handled as she: she had borne his bitterness, she had admitted him to her presence, she had endured to be reprimanded, and yet she could not be quit of him; she "vowed to God she would be avenged." The queen sobbed violently. Knox stood silent until she collected herself. He then said, "Madam, in God's presence I speak: I never delighted in the weeping of God's creatures; but seeing I have but spoken the truth as my vocation craves of me, I must sustain your Majesty's tears rather than hurt my conscience." (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Duty to God first*:—The great classic dramas (the *Antigoné* of Sophocles, *e.g.*) frequently deal with the complications involved in the conflict between duty to God and duty to earthly authorities. I. MAN'S CLAIMS ARE ADMITTED. Family life and social order demand that some should rule and some should serve. Scripture requires due submission to government authorities on the ground that they are ordained of God, and that resistance to them is resistance of the ordinance of God. All right and reasonable demand of human magistracy are therefore to be loyally met as indirectly the claims of God. But no human authority may interfere with a man's spiritual religion. Man's claims are limited to conduct. God alone may rule in motive, thought, opinion and feeling. Even apostles had no dominion over the disciples' faith. II. GOD'S CLAIMS ARE ADMITTED. 1. He may as He pleases communicate His will either directly or indirectly by—(1) His providential arrangements. (2) His written Word. (3) His Son. (4) His Spirit. 2. These claims must be absolutely supreme. They, indeed, afford the test of all other claims, which must be in harmony with these, if they are to be in any sense binding upon men. The relation in which man stands to God is that of the child who recognises no authority above that of his father. III. SHOULD THE CLAIMS OF MAN AND THE CLAIMS OF GOD COME IN CONFLICT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION AS TO WHICH MUST YIELD. Here was such a conflict, and there were many such in the times of the prophets. The conflict is in regard to things—1. Absolutely wrong, as when the early Christians were required to swear by the genius of the Emperor. To cease to witness for Christ, or to yield where custom, fashion and caste require what is inconsistent comes under this category. 2. Doubtful. The conflict in this case is the gravest perplexity of life, and sends us back on first principles. No one, however, need find much difficulty who accepts such counsel as this, "Be not conformed to this world," &c. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *Duty to God the supreme law*:—The Word of God is not my word; I, therefore, cannot abandon it; but in all things short of that, I am ready to be docile and obedient. You shall have my blood, my life, rather than a single word of retraction; for it is better to obey God than man. It is no fault of mine that this matter creates confusion among you. I cannot prevent the Word of Christ becoming a stumbling-block to men. I know well that we must pay obedience to the civil magistrate, even though he be not a man after God's own heart; I am quite ready to pay that obedience in any matter that does not shut out the Word of God. (*M. Luther.*) *The one question in conduct*:—We have here—I. A CRITERION OF FREEDOM. The two men are prisoners; but who will say that they are not free? Great things may be expected of any man when he has gained the moral liberty to put this question first. The liberty of a Roman citizen at that time was costly, but, like all mere political independence, stopped far short of this. It secured mortal rights; but it could never confer the conscience which inquires, or the power to perform, what is right. That distinction between rights claimed and right done runs very deep, dividing the world into two orders of souls. It may be pure selfishness that insists on its rights. It must be unselfish duty that chooses what is right and does it in singleness of heart. A new commonwealth had just risen from the grave of Christ, and here was its watchword. II. A TEST OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETY. 1. We have one outward witness to the religion of Jesus—the Christian

propriety of domestic habits; the Christian talk of the railway and parlour; the Christian tone of literature; the Christian fashion of Sunday and ceremony. But as the eyes of God run over the Christian world, does He not seek some other proof? 2. This brings us to the vital point. Original Christianity is a religion of righteousness. Behold the Divine Man! Observe the proportions of His doctrine —how much about duty, character, the glory of right, the wretchedness of wrong; how little about anything else! Notice what kind of people hated Him—corrupt office-holders, hypocritical devourers of widows' houses, traders in virtue and blood, &c. Notice what kind of people loved Him—men that wanted to be honest and true, women that wanted to be strong in charity and pure in heart. Infer from these passions that He crossed, and from the noble aspirations that He invigorated, what it was, after three years of loving work, that drove the nails through His hands and feet. Settle it with yourself in this way, what was the vital core of His ministry? Was it not righteousness in man? Was it not to set up a kingdom of "right"? Did not Christ come and die to beget by a new faith a race of men right-thinking, right-feeling, right-reverencing, right-working? He had now but just ascended out of sight. The power of His Spirit had illuminated His messengers. Two apostles there, knowing Him thoroughly, sure of His meaning, are told to shut their lips about Him. The blood scarcely yet dry at Calvary shows that these magistrates' threats are not empty. But nothing comes into their minds but one open answer, not whether it be prudent, politic, safe, profitable, or even "necessary," but "Whether it be right." I take that to be the fundamental ground in practical Christianity. Many other things have been crowded into its place; things of high pretension and considerable value. But we had better go back to the beginning. For what is Catholic, Evangelical, Churchly, reasonable, true as Christ is true, we had best go nowhere else but there. This is what we mean by the appeal to primitive antiquity and apostolical authority. They make the substance of personal Christianity to be a character that you can trust. Dogma, formularies, symbols, sermons, exist for character. It is the decisive test, as to every particular action, as to its being done or let alone— "whether it be"—not lucrative, fashionable, popular, comfortable, but "right." Call Christianity a temple—this is its foundation; a kingdom—this is its law; a tree—this is the root; a stream—this is the spring; a creed—this is the conclusion of all its articles. 3. Does the world want this less now than ever before? Take two of the great departments of human conduct for a criterion. (1) Business life. It would seem that the highest law here, the ideal mercantile condition, would be that producers, sellers, and buyers should trust one another, and not be disappointed in that trust; that the money, the interest, the good name of each one should be safe in his neighbour's hands. But do not business men watch one another with distrustful anxiety? Are not the processes of trade and commerce methods of protecting one man from another's rapacity? What are all the complicated functions of the attorney, the court, the police, but a standing presumption that men will cheat if they can? Every little while comes a crash. Some hitherto unquestioned reputation collapses in disgrace. A merchant, a banker, a contractor, a trustee of orphans' inheritances, fails; so fails that integrity, truth to his creditors, gratitude to his friends, fail in him and with him. The tumbling down of all the towers and steeples of the town ought to send less shock and gloom through the air. Then, on the other hand, there appears amongst you, now and then, a man of solid virtue—so true, so unbribable, that everybody does trust him, and is never betrayed. The very rarity and refreshment of the sight tell to the same conclusion. There is a widespread lack of simple reverence for the right. There is some defect in our training. Right is not first; it comes after profit, office, position. In the summing-up of Old Testament morality there were three requirements of God: "Do justly" was the first of the three. In the new gospel test there are two conditions of acceptance for every nation; and working "righteousness" is one of the two. (2) From business turn to social entertainment. Christianity is in the world of common social life not to prohibit it or to ask leave to look on, but to regulate it by its rule, helping to sweeten it by its charity, and to elevate it by its chaste nobility. Yet as one sees what passes, and listens to what is said, he wonders how often the participators ask of this or that feature of the spectacle "Whether it be right." Are the going or staying, the indulgence or rejection, the expenditure, style, talk, dress, drink, brought to this Christian criterion of right and wrong? I speak of no artificial standard or rule; but does the question of duty, by any rule, of sin by any

standard, get a fair and clear hearing of all? 4. In the gospel there are proportions. In one sense the bark of a fruit-tree is as necessary as the root or the sap, the limbs of the body as the heart. But after all we build badly, and we grow badly, unless we set things in their order, always with a view to the one end, and keep the essentials supreme. In the religion of Christ the one end is character. In the kingdom of God the honours are for those who are good and true; uprightness is the nobility; and the business of the citizens is not only to take the name of their King, and to bow in His presence, but to be like Him. An apostolic faith is not handed down, but it fails on the way unless it carries with it an apostolic conscience. Before Mammon, before the spirit of society, before gain and fashion, before all the world's rulers and elders and scribes, make your answer for God, each one alone, and then stand. In a way that will need no subtle imagination to explain, the grand issue of that old trial in Jerusalem will be yours also: "All men glorified God for that which was done." (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Not man's, but God's voice to be heard*:—The spirit of this reply is that calm but immoveable resolution in pursuing the course of duty which an enlightened conscience shall mark out. The reply of the apostles points out—I. THE RULE OF PERSONAL CONDUCT; AND THIS AS CONSISTING IN AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE LAW OF CHRIST, AS REGULATING ALL THE PRINCIPLES AND ACTIONS OF LIFE. And here a very wide field opens itself, if we were to follow out this head at length. It takes in the whole length and breadth of the Christian character: it contemplates the servant of the Lord under all the conceivable circumstances of duty in which he may be placed in the world. Suffice it, therefore, to state generally that, in such a man, Christ sits as a King upon the throne of the heart. The line of duty being plainly marked out in the law of Christ, He follows it in the face of all the consequences that may ensue. He will not judge of the extent of his duty by what is acceptable, or otherwise, to those around him, but from the plain command of Christ. What will the world think of me? is a suggestion which frightens away "the fearful and unbelieving" man from following that path which the voice of God within him pronounces to be right. The fear of being reckoned what is called "righteous overmuch," or of being deemed too rigid in his principles, reconciles him to practices which his conscience condemns. Like those base flatterers who crowd the courts of kings, and know no other standard of good and evil than their prince's humour, so, in whatever heart the fear of man reigns, that heart will avow neither doctrine, nor sentiment, nor practice, but such as are in good odour among men, however strongly it may be enforced in God's Word as truth, and however it may be inwardly felt to be such. But while discretion regulates the conduct of the courageous Christian, and points out to him the fit time and manner of acting, yet he will not fail to discover his true character. Remembering evermore the "contradiction of sinners against Himself," which his Lord underwent, and with a sense of eternal things fastened on his mind; recollecting, too, the sting he has felt in his conscience when he may have seemed, by his silence at least, to applaud sentiments and practices opposed to the spirit of the law of Christ, he is enabled, by the united influence of all these considerations, to be prepared to risk the loss of all things, rather than desert the cause of God. Such a man, such a Christian, will feel that the more ungodly are those with whom he converses, the more imperative the call made upon him to honour God in an irreproachable life: the greater the darkness which is around him, the stronger the obligation that rests upon him to shine forth in the beauty of holiness. By this were those eminent servants of God actuated, who, in the face of a burning fiery furnace, heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated, could say to the king in whose power they were, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." This was the spirit of David, who said, "I will speak of Thy testimony even before kings, and will not be ashamed." II. THE REPLY OF THE APOSTLES EXPRESSES, WITH EQUAL DECISIVENESS, THE LEADING PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL BELIEF. If there be any part of His truth which it is plain that "God hath highly exalted"; if there be any one announcement upon which a mighty emphasis is laid by the constant repetition of it, and because it meets the view at all points, this ought to find a rank proportionably high in our own minds. This truth a Christian must learn to prize dearly, and for this earnestly contend. Such a truth, pre-eminently, is that which teaches that "we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith." But it is possible to hold such a system of doctrine, as shall pass for a Scriptural acceptance of this truth, while it is either a corruption of that truth, or even in its tendency subversive of it. He must be

little conversant with his own heart who is not aware how reluctant man naturally is to be beholden to another for his redemption, even though it were to God Himself; and how unpalatable to the taste which Divine grace has not refined is that religion whose first claim is that all idea of personal merit be renounced. The courageous Christian finds here an exercise for his firmness. III. The occasion on which the two apostles announced this great principle suggests to us yet another application of it: IT WAS WHEN THEY HAD BEEN PREACHING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST THAT THE PROHIBITION WHICH THEY RESISTED CAME FORTH FROM THE COUNCIL. Their answer, therefore, naturally reminds us of the foundation on which is to be constructed the rule of faith. Here, too, as in the former case, the course of a resolute follower of Christ is to be founded on a principle. It may not be self-willed, but it must be conscientious: not caprice, which is irresponsible, but reason, which is consistent, must be his guide. And the principle, on which the rule of his "faith" is constructed, is obvious and distinct. In a matter so peculiar, and so closely affecting himself, as religion, he declines to listen to any voice except that which speaks to him immediately from heaven. Whilst he acknowledges, in common with one who wrote on the evidences of Christianity, and against the infidel, that, considering the circumstances in which man is placed, it is even highly probable that a revelation should be made to man; yet, for that very reason, because it is a revelation—something hitherto unheard of that God should speak to man—he requires that the voice which speaks shall be one that shall instantly be recognised to be the voice of God. If a Roman poet, familiar to us all, could say, "'Tis when he thunders from the sky that we believe Jove is really king there," the Christian may, with much more reason, require that the voice to which he is called upon to attend in the things that everlastingly concern him shall be attended by credentials alike Divine. Those of us who admit this reason will, as a necessary consequence, take the Scriptures as our sole rule of faith. Had the Holy Ghost spoken unto us only a few enigmatical words, it had been necessary to spell and scan them with the most inquisitive earnestness, and to eke out from some other source a supplement to a communication so scanty. But, when we have a volume of such bulk, beginning with the foundation of the world, and ending with the last dispensation, it is not easy to understand upon what principle we are to look for any other communication (as from God) from any other quarter whatsoever. Nor, in thus upholding the undivided claim of the Scriptures to be the rule of faith, need any simple-minded advocate of truth be perplexed by questions that have startled some. If any should inquire how the Church is to extract from a body of truth lying scattered over so wide a surface her own confession of faith, the reply is that she can only do it by the study of that Scripture itself. To aid in ascertaining its meaning she will not disdain the writings of the pious and learned of all by-gone days; she will take them, however, as guides to her judgment, not as superseding it. The Word of God will thus be made the supreme authority; and if any should propose to modify the plain assertion of Scripture upon any point, the servant of Christ, tenacious of the principle he has adopted, will reply, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." And yet it is remarkable that, in thus asserting the paramount duty of listening to no other voice than God's, he need not shut his ear to that of the Church; and this in two respects: first, because the Church has taught agreeably to God's teachings; and, far more, because such is the course acted upon by our Church itself. For what was the procedure of those men who drew up our doctrinal standards? They made the Scriptures the single court of appeal. With them tradition is not an assessor with Scripture upon the throne of judgment, but sits in a lower place. It may be no small satisfaction to an inquirer after the right way, thus to have it made clear to him, that he may be at once jealous for the honour of God, and not conceitedly negligent of the opinions of men. But, that the balance of truth in this matter may be duly preserved, it is well to urge that the rule of faith is not the blended voice of God and man, but that of God only. It was not until "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child Samuel," that he bade him give to the voice this reply, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." IV. There is yet another case which comes within the range of that broad principle which the apostles Peter and John laid down. THAT PRINCIPLE WILL FURNISH A RULE FOR MAINTAINING THE PURITY OF GOD'S TRUTH. Taking the Church from its commencement, it will be seen that error has been found in it of a more or less mischievous nature. Every period has witnessed its peculiar corruptions. And thus the men of each age have had a corresponding duty imposed

upon them, to be very jealous for the Lord of Hosts. The Israelites, when the whole generation that rebelled in the wilderness were cut off, entered into Canaan, and soon fell into the idolatry of their new neighbours. Other Christians, again, were for engrafting on it the pagan philosophy, for rejecting the Old Testament and the moral law—a specious and insinuating heresy. The vigilant sentinel would cry out to those who were in danger from this subtle enemy, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, and not after Christ." But, when it shall have been successfully maintained that it is "right to hearken unto God rather than unto man" in all of these respects, the whole practical use of the demonstration may yet be lost. For some may say, "You need a key which is to unlock to each individual the sense of the Scripture, a curb to the vagrancy of each man's private construing of that very voice to which you bid him hearken. Unless you will open a door to the entrance of as many varieties of opinions as there are men to frame fancies, another voice must be listened to." Whoever will not yield up the very citadel of Christian liberty, must manfully defend the truth in this matter. It is in religion as in our daily conduct. There are certain laws of morals which are defined; and the conscience of each man is to make his own application of them to his own case. This is discipline under which we are all held, and from which none of us can escape. The keeping of ourselves from hour to hour is not by any specific rule provided for every case that can arise, but by the going back to some grand principle which we have the task of applying. If there be any truth in the foregoing remarks, then every one must gird himself with the armour of resoluteness; for a yet more subtle foe may be in the rear. When the unanswerable nature of our arguments shall have silenced the adversary, he may employ another expedient to wrest out of our hands the weapons which they grasp. The voice of God may have been so clearly heard by unwilling ears that it cannot be gainsaid; but there may be a demand set up for not speaking of these things, and for forbearing to characterise the opposed errors by such titles as probably belong to them. Under the specious plea of charity, and an abstinence from evil speaking, many, on whom the mantle of Peter and John may have fallen, will be "straightly charged to speak no more" that of which they are inwardly convinced. "We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen." Truth, if it be such, must find its utterance; just as love will express itself, or any other emotion: "Wisdom is justified of her children," not by their suppressing, but by their declaring her claims: "I tell you, if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." Why shall not this strong language of the Lord have a fitness always as heretofore? The remarks that have been offered, if they are to be practically applied, imply such a state of things in the Church as it is never joyous to contemplate. Courage implies danger—unshaken firmness is an attitude which tells of encroachment. It suggests itself as another reflection from this subject, how painful the sensation and the effects of a period of religious dissension! The occasion which calls for firmness is not one of serenity. (*R. Eden, M.A.*) *God to be obeyed at all costs*:—Unless I be confuted and convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by open and clear grounds and reasons, and also those sayings, adduced and brought forward by me, be confuted, and my conscience be captivated by the Word of God, I can and will recall nothing, because it is neither safe nor advisable to do anything against conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. (*M. Luther.*) *Obeying God rather than men*:—John Nelson, the Methodist stonemason, being once desired by his master's foreman to work on the Lord's day, on the ground that the King's business required despatch, and that it was common to work on the Sabbath for His Majesty when anything was wanted in a particular haste, Nelson boldly declared, "That he would not work upon the Sabbath for any man in the kingdom, except it were to quench fire, or something that required immediate help." "Religion," says the foreman, "has made you a rebel against the King." "No, sir," he replied, "it has made me a better subject than ever I was. The greatest enemies the King has are Sabbath-breakers, swearers, drunkards, and whoremongers, for these bring down God's judgments upon the King and country." He was told he should lose his employment if he would not obey his orders; his answer was, "He would rather want bread than wilfully offend God." The foreman swore he would be as mad as Whitefield if he went on. "What hast thou done," said he, "that thou needest make so much ado about salvation? I always took thee to be as honest a man as I have in the works, and would have trusted thee with £500." "So you might," answered Nelson, "and not have lost a penny

by me." "I have a worse opinion of thee now," said the foreman. "Master," rejoined he, "I have the odds of you, for I have a worse opinion of myself than you can have." The issue, however, was that the work was not pursued on the Sabbath, and Nelson rose in the good opinion of his employer for having shown a sense of his duty as a Christian. (*Southey's Life of Wesley.*) *Protestantism* was a refusal to live any longer in a lie. It was a falling back upon the undefined untheoretic rules of truth and piety which lay upon the surface of the Bible, and a determination rather to die than to mock with unreality any longer the Almighty Maker of the world. (*J. A. Froude.*) **We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.** — *Honest Christian speech:* — I. THAT WHICH THE CHRISTIAN HAS HEARD IS WORTH REPEATING. He knew not God—words from heaven have revealed to him God. He was far from God—words from heaven have been the means of leading him nigh to God. His heart was at enmity towards God —words from heaven have been the means of reconciling him to God. He knew not how he could be pardoned—words from heaven have directed him to the Lamb of God. So timid was the Christian before he heard these words that he was like a soldier who trembles at the flutter of his own banner, and starts at the clangour of his own trumpet—words from heaven have so aroused his latent courage, that now, armour-clad, and sword in hand, he glories in the battle of a true life, and instead of shrinking cowardly from the conflict, he now, in the thickest, sharpest warfare stands. Verily, worthy of the world's acceptation are words which are God's power unto salvation. And, think you, will the winds waft these words of God? Will the waters spread these Divine voices? Not your winds, O ye husbandmen, not your waters, O ye merchants; but the currents which carried Peter onwards when he said, "I cannot but speak," and the breath which moved John when He testified, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." II. THE SPIRIT OF FAITH INCLINES THE CHRISTIAN TO REPEAT WHAT HE HAS HEARD. 1. Observe the order in which religious belief and speech are here placed. We have heard; and we cannot but speak. This is like Paul's language, and it is in harmony with that of David, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak." This order has been reversed, and much mischief has been the result. Are not children often made to say, "We are members of Christ, we believe in God the Father Almighty, and in His Son," while all evidence is wanting of such union, and of such faith? And converts, before they enter Christian communion, are often required to confess their belief in all the doctrines which that community holds. In some cases men publicly teach and preach before they believe, and the mischief of this false speech is most terrible. Immediately a lad has acquired a few religious ideas, he is often ushered into a Sabbath-school to speak. So soon as an adult is religiously impressed he must confess himself a Christian publicly, and speak. And when he has made a profession, he must be hurried into some sphere of Christian instruction to speak. Now where is the Nazareth in which Christ's disciples are brought up? Where the wilderness that precedes the showing unto Israel? Where the men who, like Paul, sojourn in Arabia before acknowledging Christ in Jerusalem? Premature effort makes weak Christians, and if you would have in Christ's Church strong Christians, men who can work, you will certainly keep all young converts for a time at Nazareth; and even after that you will sometimes send them into the wilderness. We have no confidence in number; our confidence is in the right men to do certain things. Faith comes by hearing—faith grows by listening—doubts are dispersed by waiting and by inquiry. Moreover, listening, while it permits the honest, unwilful doubter to suspend his confession, is the best means of guiding such into that integrity of faith in which, like Thomas, they can address as living the Saviour whom they thought dead, and cry, "My Lord and my God." We cannot be always silent, that would be concealment; and we dare not be always reserved, that would mislead; we speak. There is something in the very principle of faith which moves to utterance. 2. But while it is of the nature of faith to incline to speech, that testimony which is the object of Christian faith, exerts the same influence. For what is it that the Christian has heard? Faithful sayings, worthy of all acceptation. And if his heart be right, sensitive, alive, it cannot be to him a matter of indifference whether or not men hear and believe that which he has heard and believed. The word that he has heard is a Divine word; and he would have others hear, that God may be glorified. It is the message of reconciliation; and he would have others hear, that they, too, may be reconciled. The origin, the worth, and the truth

of the gospel, move the believer to speak. Its utility, its wonderfulness, the good-will to man that it induces, the believer's own conscience, obligation to the gospel, all move him to speak. If the Christian history appeared to him a fable, seriousness might bid him hold his peace; if the Christian doctrine were doubtful, integrity will command silence; but the tendency of the believer's faith in the gospel is to move him to speak. 3. And beside the inward impulse, there is an external demand for honest, Christian speech. The disciple of Christ believes that which multitudes around him have not heard; and as he detects, by many symptoms, their ignorance, the spirit of faith saith, "Inform them—speak." He binds to his heart that which many reject; and the spirit of faith saith, "Repeat that which you have heard, persuade, warn, speak." He sees many perishing for lack of that remedy, of that provision by which he is saved; and the spirit of faith saith, "Tell of the antidote to sinfulness—speaking." The Christian in the midst of an ignorant community is like a fountain in the desert; a beacon on a dangerous coast; like his Master when surrounded by a multitude of the sick and needy in Palestine. Lepers are before him — he knows what will cleanse the leper. The palsied and the paralysed are around him—he knows what will re-animate the withered nerves. Divers diseases are exhibited to him — he knows what will remove them all. For sin in all its forms, for evil in all its workings and results, the Christian knows a remedy, and has a remedy. Then keep not silence about it, but of it —intelligently, lovingly, earnestly, incessantly, but seasonably, speak." III. CONSIDERATIONS HELPFUL TO HONEST CHRISTIAN SPEECH. 1. Multitudes, by voice and pen, are sneering at religious faith and speech. Be not driven from either by the sneers of men; but let us learn from them. There is some excuse for them. The world has heard the Church say she believes what the Church cannot prove that she has ever heard; and the world has had reason to suspect that some Christians speak that which they do not believe. Paul told Titus, "There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped." So you see it is not simply talking about religion that the world wants and that the Church requires, but it is seasonable talking, talking about the right thing. 2. We increase our faith by listening. The mere prayer for increase of faith is not enough. How many precious moments in the day are lost, during which you might be directing your ear to Christ! Do not say that there is any incongruity between your listening to the voice of Christ, and your standing before a bench or behind the counter. Wherever it is right for you to be it is right for you to speak to your Saviour. And if you think that you honour Him by fancying that you must be in the place of worship to think of Him, or that you must have the Bible always open before you, you make a very serious mistake; for you want Christ with you everywhere. Thomas Carlyle recommends as a remedy for the false speech of the age, that the tongues of one generation should be cut out. But the cure for the truthless utterances of the Church will be found in placing listening to Christ before believing—in meditation upon the object of faith, and in placing speech after this meditation. Such bridling of the tongue will make perfect men; while clipping of the tongue, as Carlyle forgets, would only make maimed men; and God's way of redeeming a man is not to maim him, but to make him whole. 3. As it is not mere faith that saves us, but faith in Christ, so it is not religious speech that the world needs, but speech of true religion. As our interpretations of the Bible are not necessarily the Bible, so no Christian system is Christ, and some systems called by His name have no connection at all with Him. Do not let men hear so much about my views (for of what consequence are they?), our principles, our Church, our denomination, our fathers, our tradition, our theology; for amid these sounds men lose the only Name by which a sinner can be saved. (*S. Martin.*) *The connection between believing the gospel and making it known*:—I. WHAT WE CONCEIVE TO BE BELIEVING THE GOSPEL. 1. Entertaining it in the mind, so as for the judgment to approve, from a conviction of its importance. 2. Yielding to it, as God's method of acceptance. 3. So feeling its influence as that the character shall be changed. This faith, generally speaking, comes by listening to Divine truth. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." II. WHAT WE INCLUDE IN MAKING THE GOSPEL KNOWN. 1. Imparting spiritual knowledge to those with whom we are acquainted—husbands, wives, sisters, brothers, &c. 2. Giving Christian education. We commend the cultivation of the mind, but let us not neglect the sanctification of the heart. 3. Distribution of religious tracts, of books, such as "Baxter's Call," Romaine's "Walk

of Faith," &c., but especially of the sacred Scriptures, which are able to make wise to salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. 4. The preaching of the gospel. 5. Deportment becoming the gospel. III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO. Where there is a real spiritual reception of the gospel there will be a publication of it arising from the following considerations. 1. Sympathy with the distressed. 2. Love to the Redeemer. 3. Anxiety for the cause will induce this. 4. The happiness to be possessed here and hereafter. 5. The glory that will be secured to God. (*W. Lucy.*) *The gospel cannot be concealed:*—I have heard say that in the old Bread Riots, when men were actually starving for bread, no word had such a terribly threatening and alarming power about it as the word "Bread!" when shouted by a starving crowd. I have read a description by one who once heard this cry: he said he had been startled at night by a cry of "Fire!" but when he heard the cry of "Bread! bread!" from those that were hungry, it seemed to cut him like a sword. Whatever bread had been in his possession he must at once have handed it out. So it is with the gospel; when men are once aware of their need of it, there is no monopolising it. None can make "a ring" or "a corner" over the precious commodity of heavenly truth. Neither can any one put this candle under a bushel so as quite to conceal its light. It cannot be hid, because there are so many that want it. They are pining, these myriads of London, these myriads all over the world; and though they hardly know it, yet there is a cry coming up for ever from them for something which they can never find, except in Christ. You may depend upon it you cannot stop the gospel being preached while there is this awful hunger after it in the souls of men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Speaking God's Word:*—If you really study God's Word, I believe you'll get so full of it that you can't help but speak it out. The reason so many don't care to work for God is, that they are so empty they cannot find anything to say. You can't bring water out of a dry well. There are two ways of getting water; the one is by pumping. Now many Christians are like these pumps, you have to pump a long time before you get anything. The other kind of well is what they call artesian; they just dig down until they come to the very fountain itself, hundreds of feet below, then up springs the water into the air, they don't need any pumping then. I wish Christians would be like artesian wells ever springing up to eternal life. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Making Christ known to others:*—Gideon Ousely was impressed with the thought that he ought to preach Jesus Christ to the people; he hesitated for a time till a voice came to him, as if asking, "Gideon, do you know the nature of the evil?" He said, "Yes, I do. I know the nature of sin." "Do you know the remedy?" "Yes, I do." "Then go and tell it." We know the nature of the disease, and we know the only remedy is God's remedy in Jesus Christ, and we must go and make the remedy known to those who are in the dark valleys of the shadow of sin. There comes to my mind the story of one of our own missionaries in Wales, who, when he was converted, was so full of joy that he ran out of the meeting shouting. A boy went up to him and said, "What's to do? What's to do?" Then the man—Griffith Griffiths, well known to many of us—took sixpence out of his pocket, and said to the lad, "Here, go and tell the people that God has saved Griffith Griffiths." He gave the boy sixpence to do it. He felt that as soon as he knew Jesus Christ it was his business to make Jesus Christ known to others. (*J. S. Balmer.*) *Christian testimony:*—A gentleman, sitting in an arbour in the middle of a wood, saw an ant running along the surface of a rustic table which was in front of him. Knowing that ants are fond of sugar, and having a small lump of loaf sugar in his pocket, he placed it on the table, and set himself to watch the movements of the ant. As he expected, the ant soon discovered it, and began sipping. But it had scarcely partaken of it, when, to his great surprise, it scampered off and disappeared. A short time after, however, it returned, followed by some two or three hundred of its friends; from which it appeared that the ant had no sooner tasted the sweet morsel, than it went to invite its friends to become partakers of its joy. And so it is with all who have tasted the joy of salvation. No sooner does Christ become precious to their souls than, like Peter and John, they "cannot but speak" of Him to others. *Constrained to speak about Jesus:*—An evangelist in an inquiry meeting asked a woman, "Are you resting in Jesus?" Very indignantly she replied, "It is nothing to you whether I am or not; besides, I would not speak about such a subject to any one but God!" In about a fortnight the evangelist was in another inquiry meeting, and saw this same person speaking very earnestly to another woman. Drawing near to them, he heard her telling the stranger about her own conversion to Christ, and pressing the woman to follow

Jesus at once. Much gratified, the evangelist, thinking to test her, said, "Madam, madam, keep your mouth shut on that subject!" "Keep my mouth shut!" she replied, with enthusiasm, "I cannot do it, sir; I *must* speak about Jesus." **So when they had further threatened them, they let them go.**—*A reluctant release*:—I. IT WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH GREAT WRONG. "They further threatened them." The dreadful language which had hitherto stood in the place of argument was now made more dreadful. We see here proofs of iniquity, of a settled prejudice against Jesus and His work, and of absolute unwillingness to yield to the evidence of facts. But these threats were sure to be answered as the previous ones. II. IT WAS A CONFESSION THAT THE COURT WAS BAFFLED. "Finding nothing how they might punish them." They had a mind to punish, they had done their best to do so, but severally and unitedly they had failed; and now prudence moved them to do what was no part of their pleasure. They barked and snarled, but were afraid to bite. Often have persecutors been in such a case. III. IT WAS IN DEFERENCE TO A PREVALENT POPULAR SENTIMENT. "Because of the people." The people were wiser than their rulers, and more religious. (*W. Hudson.*)

Vers. 23–37. **And being let go, they went to their own company.**—*Being let go*:—We do not know what we or other people are until the restraint is taken off. We call ourselves free, but there is not an absolutely free man in the universe. We have the liberty of law. We have the freedom of a theocracy. "The Lord reigneth," and He would reign to no purpose if He did not restrain every creature, and restrain with singular meaning and graciousness the creature who bears His own image. I. GOOD RESTRAINTS. 1. Socially, in the lowest level. He is an ungallant and wholly undesirable man who is not restrained by the presence of ladies. But for that you could not tell what language he would have used. He could not be in his true self, not because there are ten great fiery commandments staring him in the face, but because of an all-pervading feeling of refinement. But if such men be let go, and join their bad set, you see their quality. 2. Or take the limits of hospitality. A man says, "I cannot avenge this insult now, because I am bound to show hospitality; but being let go, I shall feel entitled to say or do things which at present I cannot." 3. Or, still keeping within the scope of the question, the occasion makes the man. Say it is a solemn occasion, a funeral, people weeping because of the dead and gone. The modest man, at all events, halts, he is silent if not complaisant. He dare not say what he would at other times; but being let go away from the grave and the cypress shadow, you will see what he is really. 4. Look at the subject religiously. Here we have the subtlest restraints. The tender memories, the old, old long ago, somehow, to kill that ancient time would be like strangling an angel. The old home feeling, the childish sounds, the old family usages, seem to keep us back with "Beware! you had better not do it! Stand still!" Who can estimate the value of a religious education? First prayers, first little verses learned and sung by bird-like lips—who can tell how these things will go with the child when he becomes a man, full of care and tempted to sin? The little things which now are matters of amusement, may stand one day up and say to the man, "You used to be a pure-lipped child, a loved and loving creature; a thousand prayers were offered for your salvation." When you murder yourself, you murder a whole generation of mentors and suppliants. II. BAD RESTRAINT. 1. A man is shut up in bad society, in a corrupt atmosphere. He never hears a word that touches his best nature; he longs for the higher and purer spaces; for moral liberty; he is a better man than he can be under his circumstances. God will make a difference, because He will have compassion upon some. He knows exactly what restraints are upon us, and what we would be if we could break the chain and fly upward into the blue heaven. 2. Others are crippled for want of means. We regard them as destitute of good deeds and high feeling, and we speak about them with our erring judgment. God will discriminate. He knows what the poor soul will be. There is a way out at the other end! Great moral freedom, liberty for giving the soul spaces to fly in, and temples to sing in not made with hands. God knows what munificence you would show if you had the liberty. 3. Many a man is misunderstood for want of liberty. He is waiting. I have known often splendid talents wait a long time for a chance. I have known men misjudged, contemned, spring up into their true selves when let go. Their time has come; then you hear the music of their voice, and you know the length of their arm, and they were waiting—great men all the while. Conclusion: 1. We each belong to a company, and until we have found our company, we are restless. We speak of being "a fish out of water," as fully expressing the con-

dition of men who are not in their own company. Some of us are only half in our right society. We were born for the gutter and were destined for low companionship, and by a singular force of gravitation we turn to that which is unworthy. Others, again, are the contrary. They are forced to do the things they hate. They say, "It is not our nature; it is not the place I was born into. These are not the surroundings God meant me to enjoy." So by this discontent of soul God calls us to our own company. 2. But we may be converted! The lowest nature may be converted! The lowest nature may be made into the highest. The man who began with low desires may come to enjoy the desire for prayer. Conversion is the state which we are called upon personally to realise and represent. Mere restraint is not conversion. We are restrained from starting up in the midst of the service and going out. We seem to rise to the great spirit of the occasion, while we are in reality buying and selling, transacting our business. So we cannot tell what we are until the restraints are taken off, when we shall be left to our own company, and being let go, will only go downward. There are grades in devildom, and there is still a lower and lower, until we reach the pit that never ends. 3. Are we under the right influence? We cannot test it by mere laws, by mechanical arrangements and impositions. Only love can keep us, and love will keep us. And though we shall always have the liberty of doing wrong, we shall have within us the love which makes the use of that liberty an impossibility. Now I am about to let you go. Will you go to your own company? But, remember, young man, wisely trained at home, you have no business with that bad set. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Our own company*:—I. WE ALL SUFFER A KIND OF IMPRISONMENT BY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. There is—1. The chain of work. We and our children must live. And in order to maintain this life, we voluntarily give away every day a part of our personal freedom. This necessity is on the whole a beneficent one, and it is perfectly consistent with personal freedom in the truest sense. But still there is imprisonment of some of the highest faculties. Faith, hope, love, joy, can all indeed have exercise in work, but not their most perfect exercise. What a prison a great city is, and how many are in it with "hard labour!" A fine morning dawns. You would like to wander away, to hear the gurgle of the country stream, to see the bloom on the trees, the bird on the wing, the clouds floating so restfully across the sky. But you are a prisoner. You can look through your bars towards the large and wealthy place but it is only a look. You must soon turn to your work. 2. The chain of habit. Not so much of a man's own habits as those of the society in which he lives—the conventionalities of life, in which every man is more or less bound. These are not at all insincerities, hypocrisies. They are generally a fair product of the state of society at the time. If our conventionalities were all away, some would be better, and some worse. So that all are in prison by them. There is a great resentment sometimes felt against those who break through; and such attempts generally end in submission. Take, for instance, our social gatherings. With all their freedom and geniality, there is considerable restriction imposed by the mere forms of society. One makes an endeavour to be natural and almost succeeds; but cannot quite. Another seeks to know his neighbour a little better, but the real man escapes him, and goes home to be known far more perfectly by his little children. Another endeavours to speak out his real sentiments; but the astonishment, pain, or disapprobation, make him almost regret that he has spoken—and certainly a little less likely to speak again. 3. The great strong chain of law. That is no doubt a grand safeguard of society. But while it protects it restrains. It protects partly by restraining. It makes some men more virtuous than they would be, and others a little less. A man could do some great good, and would, but the law forbids. He would only involve himself and others in difficulties and loss by making the attempt. Or he could do some evil. He has impure thoughts which might become actions; unjust longings which might become fraud, if the law were not there frowning defiance and suspending penalty. II. IN THESE ENVIRONING CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE ARE, NOW AND AGAIN, CLEAR PROVIDENTIAL OPENINGS—by which the real man himself comes out, seen by others, or seen only by himself and God! A changing time is always a critical time. 1. When the young man leaves home to come up to the great city, how intense is the parental and the friendly solicitude! "He was safe here; but will he be safe yonder? Will he not slide or perhaps fall? Or will the change strengthen his will for goodness, and draw him more clearly into the ranks of Christ's faithful ones?" These are the searching solemn questions, but why do they arise? Because it is felt that even at home that youth was not fully known, because there are sleeping possibilities which other circumstances

might draw out into actualities, and they are not quite sure how the scale might turn. 2. A change of residence in later life sometimes operates in the same way. There is then a complete break up in one class of associations. Living in the new neighbourhood seems to bring out a new man. It may be a better man, or it may be a worse. The gates of that social prison where before he was held in restriction, perhaps kept from ruin, have been opened, and he will show himself more as he is. 3. The continental journey is another opening of the wall. Persons then go to places the like of which they would never think of visiting at home, and altogether feel a freedom which they would in vain seek for with the ordinary circumstances of life around them. The freedom may be rightly used in putting aside the chains of opinion, prejudice, and custom; or it may be much abused. But it is freedom, and therefore develops some more of the reality of the persons than is usually seen in the walks of their home life. 4. Then again life as it goes on brings many opportunities for freer action and fuller display of the real inward man than ordinary circumstances permit. They are opportunities for good and for evil. To some they are "the gates of righteousness," into which they "enter and praise the Lord." To others they are but the door leading to an "inner prison," where their "feet are made fast in the stocks." III. WHEN SO RELEASED WE GO TO OUR OWN COMPANY. Every night what multitudes hasten through the door of opportunity to their own company! The day keeps them in prison, the night brings release. Let us follow some, and see what company they keep! 1. Take that young man for whom so much anxiety was felt when he left home. Enter with him—there is no company there. There is the little table for refreshment which is soon over; then he takes down the books to the study of which he will devote these evening hours—and that is the company he keeps. He is smitten with the love of knowledge, and what is far better, with the love of Christ. He is sure that he will have to serve Him in some sphere, and is resolved by study and prayer to make himself ready. 2. Or let us observe this young woman who has been busy all day with her needle. Blessings on her industry! honour to her virtue! peace to her home! To-night she is going to her own company before she reaches that home. There is to be a meeting for prayer, a great blessing is expected, and she must be there to ask among the rest. 3. Take another, a man. He has had what is called a heavy day; but, oh, what a lightsome welcome now that he is home! Little hands are soon in his, and little tongues are telling the wonderful things that have happened during the day; and smiles fall from another face, and there is a comfortable mingling of thought, and love, and sympathy, and heart with heart. The day opened to him the theatre of duty, the night thus brings him to "his own company." 4. Another; where is he going? Westward, but not out of the city. On he passes along the busy streets under the gas-lights, until he comes to the flaring entrance of the place where his company will be. With perhaps just one twinge of conscience he passes in, and there among the gaudy and giddy throng he sits for hours listening to the music, or watching the display. And these he says are the happiest hours of his life. That man has reduced his soul to a pitiable condition when, having all this world to choose from, that soul "being let go," finds its own selectest company in a frivolous throng like that. 5. And others go to places still worse, which we cannot describe; where the fires of Tophet are already kindled, where the guests are in the depths of hell, and there find "their own company." 6. But enough! Where do we find ours? We shall say no more of places now, but speak only about persons. Who are the persons in whose presence and society our souls find their best company? What is their character? What is their aim in life? What will be their end? Suppose we had been imprisoned with the apostles, and with them set free, should we have gone with them to their own company? When we are set free, now and again in the course of our own life, do we long for and seek fellowship with faithful souls and pure hearts? There are but two companies in the universe. Even now there are but two, although in this world they are to us inseparably mingled. The division and separation is taking place by degrees. The gospel makes it. We ourselves make in those selective moments of our life to which we have referred. But it will be made infallibly and visibly at last by the Lord Himself, when the sheep shall be on His right hand, and the goats on His left. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Their own company*:—The crystallising power in nature. What we call the force of gravitation is a force most mysterious and constant. But the force of gravitation is simple compared with this many-sided ramifying force of crystallisation. The reason—ultimate particles of matter are seeking their own company; these ultimate particles of matter are

possessed of attractive and repellent poles; and as these atomic poles attract or repel each other the shape of the crystal is determined. There is as well a certain crystallising power sovereign in society. Men and women have attractive and repellent poles. By means of this social crystallising power many and various social shapes are being formed—not always beautiful and noble, sometimes evil, ugly, disastrous. Concerning this crystallising fact and force in society, in the light of this narrative, consider—1. Hindrance. See whole narrative as to how Peter and John were hindered from going to their own company. So, often, we are somehow hindered from seeking the company really most congenial to us. Work, social requirements, regard for reputation, lack of money, hinder. Apply to young men, &c. 2. Permission. "And being let go"—work ceases, social requirements allow, special danger to reputation passes, wages are paid. Men are free. 3. Like goes to like. Character asserts itself. These apostles went to the company of the pure because they were pure. 4. Lessons. (1) It is a man's own company which nurtures what is predominant in him. (2) A man's own company discloses him to others. (3) A man's own company discloses him to himself. (4) A man's own company is the test of the regenerate life. We know that we have passed from death unto life if we love the brethren. (5) A man's own company settles his destiny. (*Homiletic Review.*) *Being let go*:—"Being let go, they went to their own company." That means for one thing that we do not know until straits come, what a man's heart and real disposition are. You have your children with you at home, and think that your children have a love for this, and a liking for that, and a strong desire for the other, but "let them go," and then you will see; as long as they are under parental restraints, you really do not know what they are. They must be tested by being let go. They go to their own resort, and to their own set. Oh, what painful things happen in family life when the children are old enough, and you must let them go, when home restraints are removed! Then you thought they loved whatsoever things were honourable and of good report, and they, perhaps, themselves thought it too. It is not so much hypocrisy as an illustration of the solemn truth that the heart is deceitful and full of evil things. Being let go, the real heart in them takes command, the real pilot takes the wheel and guides the vessel according to his liking. "Being let go they went to their own company." See, for example, the restraints of religion. I think I am a religious man, you think that you are religious people, but if in some way I could be let go from the ministry, and if you could be let go from the eyes that are upon you in this place, from the associations and routine that brings you here, where would you go? What is in the heart determines the life. To-night you are set free from business, and in a sense you are let go from the office, but are you, is your heart really let go? Are you going into the holy work before us to-night, or is it not the case that even while you are sitting here, that being let go, your heart is back to the stocks and shares, the buying and the selling, that even here your heart is seeking its true home, its true happiness? It is not in this thing, is it? There are reasons why we come, why in a sense we like it, but let us be honest with ourselves. It is what we like that is the true man or the true woman. How does the heart go when we are let go? But if I have thus spoken of the dark side, bless God there is a brighter side, and I trust that we can even, when we meet here to-night, experience the happiness and brightness of the better side. When we come to the House of God, to the prayer-meeting, from all outward life, because we like to do it, we like to come, like a bairnie with her mother, a wee bird to her nest, we fly home to God, to the Bible, to God and the Book of God, and the House of God, when we are let go. We delight when the cords are snapped, and when we can come into the House of God. Only during the day there is a kind of chafing restlessness within us. Oh that the evening would come that I might get to my own company! "Being let go they went to their own company." Just as at school, I suppose we looked as if we liked our school, we looked as if we were diligent, we had to be so outwardly, but when four o'clock came and the doors were open, did you ever see the schoolboys that departed reluctantly, as if they could hardly cross the threshold and go away from the blessed place? We nearly tumbled over each other rushing away. Being let go, out we went home. And yet we were not hypocrites. It is that our heart was in it, and we were restrained; we were tied up, held back, but being let go, the full momentum and swing of our disposition got out. Thank God, then, for the bright side, and I would say you are encouraged to make much of the bright side. If you know God, then thank God, for that is a fruitful plant that never grew up in the dry dreary sand of our worldly heart. And if I speak to any to whom this word is sad,

you say, "Well, brother, I wish I was like it, I wish I could rush to the fellowship of God's people, as those apostles rushed to their own company, and as children rush home from school, and the tired business men flying home by 'bus and train to the sweetness and seclusion of their own homes in the suburbs. I wish I had that desire for the House of God." There is more gladness of heart here than if I were in the theatre or music-hall, or giddy dance or banquet, with its so-called "feast of reason and flow of soul." Here the best and deepest, the truest thoughts in you get out, and lay hold of the deep, true, living, satisfying God. "Being let go, they went to their own company." It is that, let me just urge, that we should cultivate still more, this company and fellowship. Do not let a little keep us back. How disappointed the apostles would have been if they went to their own company, and found a small meeting when such great interests were involved. My father said, when he was a lad going to school, they had to take their own fire with them, the coals were not then provided as they are now, and every lad carried his peat under his arm. That was his contribution of heat. Bring your peat under your arm, and like one that is let go, like an arrow from the string, come gladly and brightly, and I will try and come with mine, and "every little makes a mickle," and it is wonderful what a roaring, open fire we may have, even in this dull neighbourhood of Regent's Square, what light and warmth before God, and to His praise. Let us come as the apostles did, when being let go they went to their own company. I like to think of the text in its final application. There is a day coming when we shall be let go. The dark side and the bright side of my text will receive its final and truest illustration then, for every man goes to his own place. And when the stroke of death cuts all our cords, and we drop this muddy vesture of clay, and are, at last, let go, we will hardly need the judgment day and verdict of God. Some will rise as glorious ones, treading the way unto the throne of God, and some will go into outer darkness, for they always loved darkness rather than light, and they will get it. Being let go, God at last will say, "I will restrain you no more, I will argue with you no more, you would be free, be free. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, he that is holy, let him be holy still. Be let go and find your own company." This is the Lord's election. This is the natural law that runs through the spiritual world, even He that worketh in all our fellowships and friendships, our likes and dislikes, our drawings and repentings. It is being let go that a man finds his level, and seeks and gets his own company. At the great day when some of us go past the judgment seat on our way home, and hear the word, "Come ye blessed," it will just be a re-echo of this, for you have been always coming ever since you were converted. It was the end and trend, a focus of all your way and work. Only when some of us hear the thundering curse, "Depart!" we shall understand then that we were always cursed. "I never knew you," what a solemn word! How bright! How black! Thank God that grace can make it for you and me all bright. The Ethiopian can change his skin, the leopard can change his spots, the vilest can be changed, and changed by the abundant grace of Christ, received through simple faith in Christ. Another few minutes and you are let go, and you go to your own house, and a rebound will take place. The heart will slip round to its true base. Watch it, for God's sake, and your own. Being let go when the preacher's voice is still, the holy words are no longer spoken, the holy place with its associations no longer present here, God grant that it may be all bright. (*J. McNeill.*) *Company*:—I. EVERY MAN HAS HIS COMPANY. II. SOMETIMES MEN ARE RESTRAINED FROM KEEPING THE COMPANY OF THEIR FRIENDS. III. WHEN THESE RESTRICTIONS ARE WITHDRAWN, MEN RETURN TO THE COMPANY OF THEIR CHOICE. Life itself is a restraint, separating us from the companions we have chosen, but when it ceases, its restraining power will cease too, and we shall go to "our own company" in heaven or in hell. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Every man to his own place*:—I. THE DISCIPLES WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANY. They naturally desired the society of those who had sympathy with them. II. EVERY PERSON BELONGS TO SOME COMPANY. There are two classes: saints and sinners. Affinities, proclivities, &c., are only subdivisions of these. III. RESTRAINTS OF LIFE MAY PREVENT OUR OPENLY JOINING OUR COMPANY. 1. Our work. 2. Public opinion. 3. Policy. 4. Interest. 5. Lack of courage. IV. WHEN THESE ARE REMOVED EACH PERSON WILL GO TO HIS OWN PLACE. What a change would follow if this world had no social, civil, or moral law laid upon it—every one a law to himself! The devil in man would make havoc in human history. This has been proved wherever restraints have been slackened. V. THE TEST OF CHARACTER FOUND HERE. 1. What is our company? 2. Are we restrained by work, circumstance, or policy from joining it? 3. Is it a company God can

approve of? 4. What is our influence on it, and its influence on us? 5. We shall go to our own place at last. (*G. F. Humphreys.*) *Happy only in "our own company":*—The following incident was told in my hearing in one of the villages of Canada to illustrate the truth, which so many ignore at the present day, that there must be a change of heart if we are ever permitted to enjoy "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." "Some years ago there was to be a prize-fight at a certain place in England, and a party of men chartered a steamboat to take them to the place at the time appointed. Another steamer was engaged to take a party of Christians to a different kind of fight—a fight against wrong-doing, that every soldier of Christ is called to engage in under the 'Captain of his salvation.' The place of the last-named conflict was a Methodist camp-ground. Just as the last bell rang on each steamer (both were chartered to leave at the same hour—half-past two p.m.) two men were seen running towards the steamers as they were moving out from the wharf, and both sprang into what each one thought to be his own company. But, oh! what a mistake! the Methodist saw that he was among prize-fighters, and the prize-fighter found that he was among Christians. Do you suppose those men were contented and happy in their different company? Is a fish happy out of water? 'No, not happy, but miserable,' you say. So each of those men were miserable because they were out of their element. The Methodist came to the captain, and said, 'Captain, I have got into the wrong steamer, and I am not going to stay here; it is like hell to be among these men who are cursing and swearing; take the steamer back and let me get out. I intended to go to a camp-meeting; yonder is the steamer I ought to be in.' But his trying to get himself righted after he saw he was wrong was fruitless. Well, what about the other man? 'Oh,' you say, 'he was all right and happy among those good Methodist people.' But you are mistaken, for he was in a worse dilemma than the Christian man. He went to the captain and asked him to take the steamer back, as he said he must go to the prize-fight. But the captain said, 'No: our orders are to keep on our course as long as there is nothing wrong with the steamer, and we must obey.' Then the man offered the captain money if he would turn back, but the captain was as determined to go on his voyage. By this time the Methodists thought they would 'show their faith by their works,' by talking to the prize-fighter about his soul; but the prize-fighter could not endure it, so he went to the captain again and begged of him to bring the steamer a little nearer to the shore and he would jump into the water and swim to land." (*John Currie.*) *Every creature after its kind:*—A mysterious, reciprocal attraction drew Peter and John together, although they were by no means alike. Perhaps their differences rendered them more suitable to each other; as a man's strength and a woman's gentleness bind two into one in married life. This noble pair were of the three chosen disciples, were companions at the sepulchre, and were together through all the stages of this incident. Now being free they go to their own. Like draws to like. When evil was to be done the rulers laid their heads together. "Birds of a feather flock together"; and if one bird has been for a time imprisoned, when the cage is opened it will fly straight and quick to the place where it left its mates. On this principle proceeds the pigeon telegraph. The instincts of animals are perfect in their kind. When a captive lamb is set at liberty it never halts until it has rejoined the flock. With equal exactness does the washed sow return to wallow with her fellows in the mire. Thus suddenly and surely did a worldling, who had for a time been arrested by the discourses of Jesus, leap back into his element of filthy lucre. As soon as there was a pause in the sermon he went to his own: "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." An example of the opposite tendency in a renewed heart is seen in the possessed man whom our Lord delivered at Gadara. Being let go of Satan he went to his own—to his own Saviour and fellow disciples. How often when professing Christians go abroad, they leave their religion behind them. It was never more than an external thing, a bondage, and therefore when removed the irreligious soul goes to its irreligion. A young man has been accustomed to the order of a Christian household. As the lines of restraint were laid on him while an infant, he is not very conscious of them. But he leaves for the great metropolis. If his religion has been only a cord round his neck, like the bit and bridle which holds the horse, he is now free; he will go to his own and seek the company of the careless or the profane. Cords of this kind were fastened on Judas, but when at last he was let go what a leap he made into his own place! Demas was brought for a time under the mighty influence of Paul, which, however, gave way one day, and to the present world, his

chosen portion, gravitated Demas, as a stone sinks when you let it go. But the new creature acts after its kind as well as the old; when the chains of bondage are broken the captive returns to his Father's house. A youth who has got a new heart becomes an apprentice in an engineering establishment where his lot is cast among the profane. In the first hour they discover that a saint is among them, and do everything that devilish ingenuity can suggest to make him one of themselves. If his religion had been a conventional gilding it would have been rubbed off in the first week; but as it was all gold the more it was rubbed the brighter it grew. The first evening came, and each went to his own company—the apprentice, articled by an eternal covenant to the Saviour, went to the fields, the flowers, the birds, with which he had been wont to keep company at home; then to his food, which he enjoyed with the fresh relish of a labourer, and the fresher relish of a child of God constantly getting daily bread from a Father's hand; then to his Bible, his own Book; then to his own Saviour, in faith's confiding prayer. A whole legion of wicked men will not overcome this youth—maybe he will subdue some of them and lead them captive to Christ. Yet another lesson. The grave has a greedy appetite, and all go to it. A strange place for Christ's members to be in! But some day they must be let go, and then they will go to their own company. An atom of air may have been imprisoned in some strong vessel at the bottom of the sea for ages. At last the vessel gives way, and the atom of air, though long an exile, has not forgotten its home, and will not miss its way. It rises in a sheer straight line through the thick heavy waters, nor halts till with a joyful burst it reaches its own. Be of good cheer, disciples of Jesus. Ye are of more value than many atoms of air. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Men will go at last where they are fit to go*:—It is related of the distinguished Rev. Dr. Bellamy that he had seasons of deep despondency, when he was confident he was going to hell. His brethren often laboured with him in vain. One day, after all reasoning had failed, one of the ministers said, "Well, brother, you know more about yourself than we do. To us you appear very well: but, after all, you may be a whited sepulchre—beautiful outside, but inwardly full of corruption. If so, you will go to hell. I should like, however, to know what you will do when you get there?" "Do?" cried the doctor, with great animation and emphasis: "what will I do? I will vindicate the law of God, and set up prayer-meetings." "All right!" said the brother; "but in that case the devil will not keep you there; he will soon turn you out as unfitted for his place and company." The doctor was happy. Men will go at last where they are fit to go; and those who spend their lives in the service of God would be poor company for the devil and his angels, while those who hate God and despise Christians here must have strange notions if they expect to be for ever happy with them hereafter. The disciples, "being let go, went to their own company." So all will go at last. (*J. L. Nye.*) *Features of the apostolic Church*:—By so simple a term is the infant Church designated—"a company." As soon as Jesus had ascended, we find that there was an assembly of His followers, who continued with one accord in prayer, resorting to an upper room (chap i. 13, 14). This small assembly was speedily increased by fresh adherents. Our Saviour never formally organised His Church: He left it to the operation of the human mind assisted by Divine influence. Men find it necessary to associate together for all important interests, and would be sure to do so for religious purposes. I. The NATURE of the Church. 1. It is a voluntary company: one to which men are not born, but to which they attach themselves by choice and from conviction. Such assemblies were at first formed in various places, and were each called a church. The term was not then used, as it has since been, to mark the whole body of Christians in any district; but always either for the whole Church or for some particular society. In the former sense, we read that "Christ is head over all things to the Church." In the latter we hear of the Churches of Achaia and Macedonia; of the Church which is at Corinth, or at Ephesus, or even in the dwelling of a single family. 2. It is a separated company; a holy society; its members are called to come out from among the people of the world. 3. It is a spiritual society, as opposed to a merely civil association. Nothing secular properly belongs to the Church. Just as we cannot, by artificial embellishments, add anything to the real beauty of nature; so all that man has aimed to add, in the way of pomp and circumstance to the Church of Christ instead of adorning, rather disfigures it. 4. Though human instruments are employed in this society, yet it is wholly of Divine institution. All its varied offices and administrations are of Divine origin: "He gave some apostles . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ." 5. It is an immortal company. The individual members die; but fresh

generations of saints are continually rising up in succession. The sacred lamp may be removed from one place, but it is only that it may burn brighter in another. II. The DESIGN with which the Church is formed. 1. For the benefit of every individual belonging to it. The Good Shepherd, while He feeds the whole of His flock, has a particular respect to the state and wants of every member. As in the first age all had all things in common, so real Christians will now be ready to share their joys and sorrows; to help the needy in temporal wants; and most of all to cherish a spiritual union and sympathy. Christian intercourse unites the hearts of the saints, "they that feared the Lord spake often together." 2. For the salvation of others. III. The manner of its GOVERNMENT. As every society, to be well-ordered, requires rules; so there are rules of Church government. These indeed are very few and very simple: real Christians need very little law; the law is for the lawless and disobedient: but theirs is the law of love; love is fulfilment of the law. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The apostles at liberty*:—I. THE WHOLE CHURCH IS INTERESTED IN THE PROCEEDINGS OF ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. Peter and John gave their report to the whole company. It was a report of—1. Gracious success. A man had been healed, and therein the name of Jesus had been glorified. 2. Opposition, suffering, threatening. This is the kind of report which the Church will render until the end of its beneficent course. The two sides should be looked at together—the one will stimulate, the other will give new aspects of sin, and call for increasing devotion. II. THE RIGHT METHOD OF TREATING OPPOSITION TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. 1. See what the apostles might have done. (1) They might have fled before difficulty. "If we are exposed to all this we shall give up our work: we are not equal to it; it will be a losing battle, our enemies are so many and so strong." (2) They might have formed themselves into a secret society for their own edification and comfort. Contemplation would have taken the place of service. 2. What they did do. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord," and committed themselves to Him as unto a faithful Creator. A prayer offered under circumstances as peculiar will show the strength and purpose of the Church. It did show—(1) The profound religiousness of the Church. Instantly the disciples flee to the Holy One. There is no paltering with second causes; no drivelling talk about difficulty. Opposition brought the Church face to face with God. (2) The clear doctrinal intelligence of the Church. They fell back upon the great histories and prophecies upon which Christ's kingdom rests. Again and again it is seen how thoroughly the early Church knew the sacred writings. This is the strength of the spiritual life. "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly." (3) A supreme desire for the glory of Christ. The apostles were referred to as "servants." It was for "the Holy Child Jesus" that the suppliants were concerned. (4) Preparedness for further service (ver. 29). III. THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL RESULTS WHICH FOLLOW THE RIGHT ACCEPTANCE OF SERVICE AND SUFFERING. 1. A vast accession of spiritual grace. The disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost." 2. A vast accession of spiritual power. They "spake the Word of God with boldness." 3. The consummation of spiritual union. They were "of one heart and one soul." 4. The ideal of social beneficence. They claimed nothing as their own, but had all things common. In such a case opposition became the occasion of infinite good. There was no wordy controversy, but a renewed dedication to Christ. All opposition should be met in the same way. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christian socialism*:—The narrative gives us such a view of this as throws the secular thing into contempt, and reveals the lamentable imperfection of modern spiritual fellowship. From it we learn that early Christian socialism was—I. ATTRACTIVE. No sooner were the apostles free than they returned as if drawn by magnetic force to their chosen society. There were two things that rendered it attractive. 1. Responsive listening. There is a law of mind which urges a man to communicate what he deems of great importance. It is also a law to seek the most responsive listeners. To those who will give a cordial hearing we go, rather than to the hostile or indifferent. True Christian socialism involves this. There the speaking brother will find an audience all candour and love. This is not the case in the cavilling, captious, secular socialism, and alas! not always in the Church where there is too often the prejudice that deafens the ear and closes the heart. 2. Sympathetic co-operation. For this we instinctively crave, and without it the strongest are weak. Without the breeze of social sympathy the sails of our spirits would collapse in the voyage of duty. Peter and John knew that they had this, and so were strong in prison and before the council, and when "let go" they instinctively found their way to their sympathetic brethren. Thus was Christian socialism attractive. Kindred souls flowed to it as rivers to the sea. What circle is so attractive as that

which has—(1) A common object of supreme affection. (2) A common class of dominant thoughts. (3) A common cause engrossing the chief activities of being. This is the ideal of Christian fellowship. Would that it were everywhere realised. II. RELIGIOUS. This comes out in—1. Ascription. Here we have a recognition of God's—(1) Authority. "Lord, Thou art God." The word is that from which "despot" is taken. Deeply did the company feel the absoluteness of the Divine control. (2) Creatorship. "Which hast made," &c. (3) Revelation. "By the mouth of Thy servant David." (4) Predestination. They regarded all the enemies of Christ as unconsciously working out the eternal plans of heaven. 2. Supplication. Note—(1) The substance of their prayer. They invoked (*a*) Personal protection. "Behold their threatenings," *i.e.*, those of vers. 17 and 21. The meaning is, "Guard us and frustrate the evil designs of our enemies." (*b*) The power of spiritual usefulness. "That with all boldness," &c. Protection is desired for service, not because they dreaded martyrdom. (*c*) Miraculous interposition. "That signs and wonders," &c.: *i.e.*, "Enable us to work miracles that we may be more successful in spreading the knowledge of Christ." This power Christ had promised; they had an authority, therefore, to seek it. (2) The success of their prayer (ver. 31). In answer there was—(*a*) A miraculous sign, familiar to Old Testament saints (Exod. xix. 18; Psa. lxviii. 8). (*b*) An impartation of Divine power—to preach the gospel. III. AMALGAMATING (ver. 32). Note in regard to this amalgamating force that—1. It was most hearty and practical (ver. 34). The thorough unity of soul expressed itself in the surrender of worldly goods. Aristotle defines friendship as "one soul residing in two bodies." It was so here. The rising tide of brotherly affection bore away from their hearts all love of gain. 2. It consisted with a diversity of position and service (vers. 35, 36). The apostles were both the spiritual and economical heads of the community. Material bodies may get so thoroughly fused as to lose all their individual peculiarities; but minds, however closely welded together by social love, will retain for ever their individuality of being, position, and mission. Social unity is not the uniformity of a regiment moving with one step and in the same garb, but rather like the variety of the landscape, each object clad in its own costume and bending to the breeze according to its own structure and style. It is not the sound of one monotonous note, but all the varying notes of being brought into sweetest harmony. 3. It was produced by the gracious favour of heaven. "Great grace was upon them all." (1) The love of God was the parent of their liberality. (2) This liberality brought the esteem of men. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **They lifted up their voice to God with one accord.**—*Resource in trouble*:—I. GOD ALMIGHTY (ver. 24). It is good sometimes to think of the affluence of the Divine power. Take, *e.g.*, the central object in the heavens which God has made: the sun—diameter, 112 times that of our own earth; surface, 12,611 times that of our earth; volume, 1,400,000 times that of our earth. Sun's light—800,000 times greater than that of the full moon, 22,000 million times more than that of the most brilliant star. The sun—the source of light, heat, life. And yet, all the manifold action on this earth of ours is carried on by the two thousandth three hundred millionth part of the force radiation by the sun. For that is all the earth can grasp of the sun's rays given out in all directions. It is by this pitiable fraction of the sun's mighty power that all the earth's work is done. Now, God is a Sun—how limitless His power, &c. II. AN ALL-WISE GOD. David, a thousand years before, sang, yet prophesied: "Why do the heathen rage," &c. (vers. 25–27). That is to say, that which was predicted is now taking place. Thou are not, O God, taken by surprise and disappointed. Disastrous as it seems to us, it is shining clear to Thee. III. AN ALL-CONTROLLING GOD. "For to do whatsoever," &c. (ver. 28). Mystery here, but comfort. Here is the great helpful truth that God controls. IV. This almighty, all-wise, all-controlling God, LAID HOLD OF BY PRAYER (ver. 24). No thought unto them that such a God could not answer. V. This almighty, all-wise, all-controlling God, laid hold of by prayer, THAT IN THEM THE DIVINE WILL MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED. They do not ask to be released from persecution, but that in their present circumstances they may be enabled to accomplish their Christian duty (ver. 29). They ask for magnificent self-surrender. Thus they take sides with God. They are as one with the nature of things. Defeat is impossible. Theirs must be the deliverance of victory. Application. Do not let your trouble get between you and God. Let your trouble shut you up to God. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*) *Prayer and the promises are doubly dear in extremities*:—When I first went to sea, as the winds arose and the waves became rough I found difficulty to keep my legs on the deck, for I tumbled and tossed about

like a porpoise on the water. At last I caught hold of a rope that was rolling about, and then I could stand upright. So when troubles invade we lay hold of God's faithfulness to His promises, and, holding fast, we can securely stand. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Primitive worship*:—No doubt there was something in it of a special character. It was held at a moment of danger. There was that, therefore, in the circumstances from which God's mercy has spared *us*. Should we be here at all, were it otherwise? Those of us who even in quiet times, when it is respectable to be a Christian, cannot conquer indolence, forego inclination, brave a smile or a sneer, in behalf of Christ; what would they do if the voice of the world turned altogether against Christ? Certainly, then, our thanksgivings should arise to God for having permitted us to live in quiet times. And then we ought to set ourselves to make our worship as much like theirs as by God's grace we can. I. THE MANNER OF THIS WORSHIP. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord." Not their heart only, but their voice. 1. Some have called this the first example of a creed, one of those joint utterances of a common faith which our Church has prescribed to us, *e.g.*, in "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." "Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth," &c. 2. Others have seen in this the proof of the existence of a Liturgy. They have said that, in order to lift up their voice to God in these words, they must first have known them. We will not enter into these arguments: they at least want certainty. 3. It will be enough for us to observe, that, while one spoke, all followed; the well-known voice of St. John or St. Peter led, and they who heard found no difficulty in adding a humble voice, as well as a pure heart, to the words of supplication, accompanying the speaker to the throne of the heavenly grace, and saying the prayer after him. In this elementary point let us be earnest to resemble them. If the heart is engaged, the voice will not be withheld. II. ITS NATURE. It was—1. Reverent. How profound is the adoration of God as the alone Great and Good and Holy! How solemn is the sense of that rightful sovereignty over all things! The least that can be looked for in this House of Prayer is reverence; the feeling of the sinful approaching the Sinless, the creature the Creator. 2. Scriptural. "Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said." It is not essential to prayer that it be in Scripture words, but it is essential that it be founded on Scripture doctrine; that our petitions be addressed to God as He is, and not to God as we fancy Him. And we can only know God as He is by becoming acquainted with Him in His Word. 3. Believing. Unbelieving men would have seen only Herod, &c., banded together against God and against His Christ, and said, What are we against the world? But their eye was not thus bounded. Above all human agency for evil, they saw the hand of God working wholly for good. The murder of Jesus, what was it? In itself, a Satanic, a diabolical act; in its consequences, the working out of God's counsel; the redemption of a world. 4. Practical. We are too ready to let our prayers stop with themselves; to be satisfied if a ray of comfort, if a passing thought of peace is left behind them. We have our reward, even as we prescribed it. But these worshippers looked to conduct, to duty, to future trials of their faith and constancy, and asked for grace sufficient. To quicken this zeal, to strengthen this devotion, they pray that God's hand may still be outstretched to heal; that He will never leave them without witness, but will give them daily proof that His holy Servant Jesus is indeed strong to help, mighty to save. We ought in prayer to bethink ourselves of coming trial; and while we trust God implicitly with the unforeseen, to ask His help expressly for that which we can see before us. One word of definite request is worth volumes of vague general aspirations. (1) In itself; because it is real and means something; because it is the address of a living man to a living God on a topic which concerns life. (2) In its effects; because one thing actually granted is a proof of being heard; is God's own witness to His own grace; is a token for good, shown and proved, encouraging confidence in Him who is not only the Giver of single blessings, but the Fountain of all goodness, and the very source of life. III. ITS EFFECTS. An immediate sign followed it. The place was shaken. These things are of the past. Men then looked for outward signs, and wanted them, while faith was young. In this age there is no outward sign which scepticism could not account for: signs would not convince the infidel, and the believing ask not for them. But has God, then, no sign for His people? Has worship no sign of its acceptance? Is there nothing now corresponding to the altar-flame which attested God's regard to man's offering? Yes, there is an inward peace following upon Divine communion: a glow of faith, and a comfort of love, and a joy of hope, by which "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that

we are sons of God." He who seeks God with all his heart, on any occasion of worship, shall find Him, and know that he finds: he shall feel it good for him to be here, and he shall be sent on his way rejoicing. Filled with the Holy Ghost, by a conscious communication between his soul and God, he shall go forth, to bear a more manful and a more consistent testimony to the gospel. Conclusion: 1. Expect great things from worship. Worship will be, in great measure, what you make it in your use and expectation. If you look for much, you will also receive much: if you expect little, you will also reap little. 2. Carry your worshipping thoughts forth with you. Let them not be dissipated by idle words, by foolish levity, just outside or even within these walls. The great enemy will watch you after this service, that he may catch away the seed sown. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The prayer of the Church at Jerusalem under persecution*:—I. THE PRAYER. 1. It contains a distinct acknowledgment of God's almighty power. "Lord, Thou art God," &c. Our highest conceptions of the power of God are derived from the act of creation. Finite power can shape and fashion, but it can never create. (1) God created the heaven of heavens: the place where He has erected His throne, and where He is pleased especially to manifest Himself to the heavenly powers. There the humanity of Christ is seen. That world our Saviour has described as His "Father's house." If the Queen of Sheba fainted at the sight of the splendour of Solomon's court, what shall be thought of the temple of the great King? He created all the inhabitants of that world. Of these there are various orders. "Thrones, dominions," &c. Their numbers are great. All derive their existence from God, their immortality, their mighty intellect, their profound and comprehensive knowledge, their burning love, their rich and elevated enjoyments. (2) He made the visible heavens. The sun, moon, stars, and planets. Their magnitudes; the regularity and rapidity of their motions; the vast sweep of their orbits; all declare the greatness of His power. (3) He made the earth. Its plains and valleys, its deserts, its hills, its mineral substances, its refreshing springs, its daily and annual motion, with its changing seasons, the clouds which supply it with the fruitful rain, the winds which sweep over its surface, the atmosphere in which it moves, all attest the greatness of His power. He made all that the earth contains. The varieties of the vegetable kingdom; the fowls of the air, with the endless train of sentient creatures. Man, his outward frame, so "fearfully and wonderfully made," his mind, by whose sagacity the secrets of nature are penetrated, and the unruly elements and animals made subservient; and by which the knowledge of God is acquired, and a spiritual worship is presented. The lesson is that the mighty hand which fabricated all this is pledged to defend the Christian from evil. Hence this prayer. The storm of persecution was raging around. The danger is appalling; but God is near; and His people take refuge in His almightiness. What is the power of the rulers before the great Lord of earth and sky? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe!" Here, then, is an example worthy of imitation. In every perplexity and danger, let us call upon God in prayer, and cover ourselves with His omnipotence. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear." 2. A distinct acknowledgment of God's governing wisdom (vers. 25–28; cf. Psa. ii.). (1) Because the men who put our Lord to death did that which God had "determined before to be done," some have concluded that they were compelled. But as to the perpetration of it, this opinion is dishonourable to God, and injurious to piety. We shall prove that it is not the doctrine of Holy Scripture. (*a*) It was God's purpose that His Son should die. This was the appointed method of human salvation. Man had sinned, and could not be justified without an atonement. That atonement was therefore determined in the counsels of the Divine Mind before time began; for He "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." The death of Christ, therefore, was in effect declared in the first promise: was prefigured by the sacrifices of the old dispensations, and was attested by the prophets. But now note that so far as the Jews were concerned, the crucifixion involved a criminal inattention to the predictions of their own Scriptures. They wilfully shut their eyes against the light of the clearest evidence, as to His real character, arising from His miracles and teaching. To suppose that God should solemnly forbid all this wickedness, and reveal His wrath against it, and yet impel any of His creatures to commit it, is a foul aspersion upon His truth and holiness, as well as upon His justice and love. (*b*) It has been rashly concluded, that if the authorities had believed in Jesus, and forborne to lay violent hands upon Him, the Divine plan of redemption must have failed; but such apprehensions arise from

very imperfect views of the depth of God's counsels. His wisdom could have devised a thousand means of securing the death of His Son independently of all sinful agency. If He "does not need man's work," in order to the accomplishment of His plans, He certainly does not need man's wickedness for any such purpose. But on such a subject it is useless to speculate. The death of Christ has been accomplished, and with it the world's redemption. (*c*) Some persons have thought that the prophecies imposed upon the Jewish people a necessity to put Jesus to death; but of this there is no proof. Prophecy, in this case, was simply an expression of God's foreknowledge. Had the conduct of the Jewish and Roman authorities towards our Lord been friendly, the Divine Mind would have seen it to be such; and prophecy would have corresponded with it. Simple foreknowledge no more influences a fact than after-knowledge; and the actions of a moral agent are no more determined by a mere prediction than they are by history. (2) In all the circumstances attending the crucifixion we have a striking display of the wisdom of God. The Jews unquestionably intended—(*a*) To cover His name with indelible odium, but God has made it an occasion of the highest glory. (*b*) To subvert His spiritual kingdom. Vain men! The means which they adopted led Him to the possession of a dominion wide as the universe, and lasting as eternity. (*c*) By the frightful and tormenting death to which our Lord was subjected, to terrify and scatter His disciples. Here again we see the short-sightedness of man; the Cross was the means of binding the disciples of Christ to Him for ever. (3) Here, then, is another ground of confidence towards God. He who thus brought good out of evil is always the same. Men are often taken by surprise; but He sees the end from the beginning, and is therefore prepared for all events. 3. A direct application to God for His immediate interposition. They request that supernatural boldness may be given to the apostles in the exercise of their ministry. This is a very remarkable petition, and places in a striking light the singleness of heart of the first Christians. Ease, honour, liberty, friends, life itself, are all to be sacrificed, rather than the word of God should be bound. As one means of inspiring the apostles with the requisite "boldness," the Church pray that miracles may be continued and increased. It is here assumed that miracles are the peculiar work of God: for had miraculous power been inherent the prayer would have been absurd. Miracles were indeed wrought by the instrumentality of the apostles, because they were intended to authenticate the system of truth which they were appointed to teach; but the miracles themselves were effects produced by the immediate exertion of God's power; and in every instance they depended upon His will. 4. The prayer is marked by the absence of all wrathful feeling. In preaching Christ the apostles violated no law; injured no man; they conferred the greatest possible good upon multitudes. While thus discharging their consciences, and benefiting mankind, they were censured, imprisoned, brow-beaten, and severely threatened. Yet the only allusion made to this cruel and unreasonable conduct is, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings." How like their Lord who, when He "was reviled, He reviled not again"; and "when He suffered unjustly," He forbore "to threaten." In the same spirit Stephen suffered. There was a time when the disciples proposed to punish inhospitable people with fire from heaven. But now they were actuated by holier feelings. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love. 5. The prayer presents a beautiful example of Christian unanimity. The assembled multitude "lifted up their voices with one accord." How different from the congregations of ungodly men, brought together for some worldly object, and actuated by selfishness, anger, or curiosity (chap. xix. 32). Here is a complete unity of purpose and desire. Not a wandering eye, no listlessness, inattention, or formality; no silent lips; for here is no cold and unfeeling heart. The Holy Ghost has produced in them all an intense desire for the preservation and extension of the cause of Christ. Oh, when will our assemblies resemble this! When shall we cease to complain of late attendance upon our religious ordinances? of undevout worshippers? II. THE ANSWER WHICH GOD GRACIOUSLY VOUCHSAFED. 1. They received a sensible token of the Divine presence. "The place was shaken." The entire fabric was moved by the power of God; but not a stone seems to have been displaced. The effect must have been somewhat similar to that produced on Jacob and Elijah (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17; 1 Kings xix. 12, 13). Only in this case there was no guilt to terrify; for their sin was purged; and the weakest among them was greater in Divine knowledge and heavenly enjoyment than the most distinguished prophet. To them, therefore, the presence of God was the cause of holy joy. Miracles are no longer necessary, and are therefore discontinued; but God is as really present in the assemblies of His people

at this day as He was when they met in Jerusalem; and our whole spirit and behaviour in His house should correspond with this conviction. 2. They were favoured with a rich effusion of Divine influence. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This being the case—(1) They were, of course, emptied of all that was opposed to His mind and nature; and whatever was defective in the piety of any of them was now supplied. Those that were weak in faith were now inspired with strong confidence. Each of them was entirely sanctified to God, and made perfect in every Christian grace. They were not only saved from all sin, but were filled with the fulness of God. They dwelt in God, by constant acts of faith and love; and He dwelt in them in all the fulness of His Spirit's power. It may be justly questioned whether the power of Christianity was ever more strikingly manifested than upon this occasion. Who were these people? The greater part of them were Jews upon whom the spotless purity of our Saviour's example, and even the resurrection of Lazarus, had failed to make any salutary impression. They had actually been "His betrayers and murderers." Yet they no sooner believe in Jesus, and are brought under the full power of the Holy Spirit, than they become examples to the Church in all ages till the end of time. Who, then, can despair of the conversion of any one? Why should we not in the present day witness displays of the power and grace of Christ equally striking? Even our missionaries never meet with people more deeply depraved. (2) They "spake the word of God" with renewed "boldness." They had a full assurance of the triumph of the Christian cause, whatever opposition they might encounter. Hence they preached Christ at every opportunity with dauntless ardour; for they felt that God was with them, conferring upon the world the richest blessings. (3) "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul." The "little flock" had now become a "multitude"; yet were they perfectly one in spirit. No angry controversies agitated them; for they had not learned to attempt the settlement of questions which no human sagacity can solve. The authority of the Son of God was sufficient to fix the assent of their understandings, as it was to sway their will, and command their obedience. There was in them such an identity of feeling, and tenderness of sympathy and affection, as the world had never previously seen. The more wealthy shared the blessings of Divine Providence with the poor; and the hearts of all were so set upon the heavenly treasure, that none of them called the earthly things which belonged to him his own. They lived not under a low degree of Divine influence; nor was that influence limited to a few individuals. "Great grace was upon them"; and it was upon them "all." Thus was the dying request of the Saviour answered (John xvii. 20-23). 3. The cause of Christianity was greatly extended. The Church prayed that God would "stretch forth His hand"; and now the historian goes on to state, that "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." Conclusion: The subject reminds us—1. Of our obligations to the merciful providence of God, for our exemption from those harassing persecutions by which the Church was formerly oppressed. 2. In times of trouble to seek relief in prayer. Though we are exempted from legal persecution, we are liable to various other calamities, from which we have no means of escape. 3. Of the true secret of the Church's power. Weak as the Church is in itself, it is armed with God's truth. This is the weapon which no form of evil can effectually resist, when it is rightly applied. The Church is also favoured with the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is zeal. Let us return, then, to the first principles of our holy religion. Let us study Christianity as it is embodied in the books of the New Testament, and as it was exemplified by the Church under the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit. (*Thomas Jackson.*) *The prayer of the primitive Church*:—Prayer is not the origin of a movement, but the result of one. You stand on the margin of a lake, and hear a mysterious sound coming from the dead wall of a grey ruined castle that stands on an island near the shore. The sound, however, was not generated in that ruin. The words of a living man, wafted over the still water, struck the old silent keep, and its wall gave back the echo. Prayer, man's cry to God, is the second of a series of vibrations, an echo awakened in ruined dumb humanity, by God's sweet promise coming down from heaven. We may discover the specific promise to which this prayer replies (Isa. xl. 26, 27). What a sublime position these suppliants occupy! They are admitted into the Divine counsel. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They were able to mark in the Scriptures the precise spot they had reached in the scheme of providence, as a ship-master marks his latitude on his chart. In the quiet confidence of faith they realise that hostile combinations

only accomplish the gracious purpose of God. In ver. 29 comes the most important of all their requests. Parliamentary petitions are sometimes of great length. There may be a narrative of facts, long and intricate; there may be the citation of precedents; there may be arguments and plans; but it is common to pass over all these when the document is presented, and to read only what is denominated "the prayer of the petition," *i.e.*, the clause at the end which declares what the petitioners want. Ver. 29 contains the prayer of this petition. And what was it? Not vengeance, not immunity from danger, but grace to be faithful under persecution. This exhibits a beautiful distrust of self and confidence in God. Their only anxiety was lest natural shrinking from suffering should tempt them to conceal the pungent parts of their testimony. Our circumstances are diverse from theirs; yet the pressure which tempts to timid unfaithfulness is only removed from one side to another. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," but snares are not all of one shape or material. A force that is diffused and soft may have a greater pressure than one that is sharp and hard, as the atmosphere over a man's body lies heavier on him than any other burden he ever bore. To threaten a witness for Christ with the prison or the scaffold is one way of turning him from his faithfulness, to set before him the favour of a polished but worldly circle is another. If two ships are lost at sea by the false pointing of their compasses it will make no difference as to the loss of property or life that the compass of one ship was prevented from pointing truly by a nail that fastened it to the deck, and that the compass of the other was secretly drawn aside by a mass of iron concealed in the hold. Thus an ancient preacher who held back the truth for fear of the dungeon, and a modern minister who softens and disguises the truth, because a gay, worldly, and critical congregation listen, must stand side by side. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The burnt offering of a true Church prayer*:—I. The ALTAR on which it must be placed: the fellowship of believers. II. The FIRE in which it should burn: the glow of brotherly love. III. The WIND which must blow on it: the storm of persecution. IV. The WOOD with which it should be fed: the Divine promises taken from the ever-green forest of Scripture. V. The GOD to whom it ascends: the Almighty Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. VI. The AMEN which falls to its lot; renewal and strengthening of the Holy Ghost. (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 25-28. **Why do the heathen rage.**—*Opposition to the gospel*:—I. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. 1. Furiousness, "rage," a word signifying the neighing or snorting of highly excited horses—like the prancing war-horse in the book of Job. It is metaphorically used to represent the noise and fury of insolent and overbearing men, and well represents the attitude of Christ's enemies. 2. Vanity. They "imagine vain things." Those who aspire to thwart the plans of Christ, to crush Christianity, live in a region of mad dreams. They are agents of consummate folly, and must fall victims to their own delusions. 3. Combination. "Kings and rulers" were banded together. Ungodly men that differ widely in other things, are one in their antagonism to Christ. II. ITS FRUSTRATION. All that Herod, Pontius Pilate, &c., could do was just as much as God determined they should do. How great is God! He maketh His enemies to do His work. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.**—*The hand of God*:—"For to do," or be the means of doing, that by which Christ became the Saviour of the world. This was the effect, although the secondary agents were ignorant of it. In their blindness and sinfulness they did just so much and no more than God had determined to be done. God decreed the salvation of the world by the death of Christ, but He did not decree the means—man's sin; but overruled it to the accomplishment of His purpose. This is ascribed to the "hand" of God, which in Scripture implies—I. POWER. This was displayed in the work of our deliverance from the slavery of Satan—the strong man; and this deliverance was effected by the suffering and death of Christ, in which the great power of God was displayed. II. PROVIDENCE OR DIRECTION. It was not Jewish malice that procured our redemption, but malice overruled by Divine providence. III. OPERATION. God by the death of Christ has wrought our redemption, and established His Church as a channel of salvation. IV. MERCY AND GRACE. The work of our salvation was wrought through the mercy God bears towards us. V. WISDOM (Job xxviii. 11; Ezra viii. 18; Neh. ii. 8, 18). (*W. Denton, M.A.*)

Vers. 29, 30. **And now, Lord, behold their threatenings.**—*How a Christian*

ought to pray for his enemies:—I. WITHOUT ANXIETY AND FEAR: for he prays to the King of kings. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" II. WITHOUT HATRED AND MALICE; for he prays against wickedness, not against the wicked. III. WITHOUT PRIDE AND SCORN; for he prays not for himself, but for the cause of God. (*K. Gerok.*) **Grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word.**—*The prayer of Christ's witnesses*:—I. THAT THEY MAY SPEAK AND NOT BE DUMB. 1. Speech is a chief gift of God and prerogative of man. Where there is a living spring it finds a channel, and where a living soul an avenue of egress. Neither can be imprisoned. On the other hand, where there is no spring, no channel is needed, and none is found. Among living creatures accordingly, where there is not a soul there is not speech; but in that one creature into whom God breathed a living soul, there is speech. Reverence human speech. It is the mark of a being who was made, and may be remade, a child of God; it is a Divinely formed capacity for a Divinely prescribed use. Dread false speech, proud, impure, profane speech, for these are the King's weapons used against Himself. 2. Why should they be silent who have tasted that the Lord is gracious? Let them tell to all what God hath done for their souls. Let the compressed love which glows in renewed hearts find expression in spoken praise. 3. Silence is a sin, if your cry might save a neighbour from stumbling over a precipice; if your neighbours are on the broad path and your word might lead them into the narrow one; if a brother is sliding back and your reproof might urge him on; if a believer is oppressed with doubts and fears, while your lips might pour the consolations of God into his weary heart. 4. The prayer points mainly to a public ministry, and yet nothing is said about sermons, or even preaching. "That they may *speak*." Whether the address be long or short, whether the audience be few or many, whether the style be eloquent or stammering, the pith and marrow of the whole matter is, that one man hoping in Christ and loving his neighbour, speaks to that neighbour about Christ's redeeming love. Out of this, as the germ, all true preaching springs. If its whole mass were by some chemical process reduced to its elements, this would be the essential residuum remaining indestructible after all ornaments and accessories had been melted away. II. That they may speak THY WORD. This supplies alike the authority and material of preaching. The seed is the Word; the sower need not scatter any other in his field. This alone is vital; this alone will grow. III. WITH BOLDNESS. Let none assume too readily that he has attained this qualification. Here all is not gold that glitters. Beware of counterfeits. To rasp like a file on other people's tender points, because you have none of your own, is not the boldness here prayed for, but that of some of the inferior creatures. An essential constituent of courage is tenderness. In feudal times battle courage was only one half of knightly bearing; the other half consisted of a tenderness almost feminine. The boldness of speech which costs the speaker nothing is neither beautiful nor successful. Paul was a bold man, accusing people of being enemies of the Cross, but he wept as he did so; and the tears did more than the reproving word. IV. WITH ALL BOLDNESS. Even courage may be one-sided. That is not true courage which is severe to the poor but quails before the rich. As the water of a reservoir will be lost unless the circle of its lip be kept whole on all sides, all the dignity and power of boldness vanishes when it fails on one point. Perhaps the weakest point of all the circle for every man is himself. A surgeon needs a stout heart when he has to operate on others, he needs a stouter to operate on himself. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Boldness in preaching*:—Some preachers are traders from port to port, following the customary and approved course; others adventure over the whole ocean of human concerns. The former are hailed by the common voice of the multitude, whose cause they hold, the latter blamed as idle, often suspected of hiding deep designs, always derided as having lost all guess of the proper course. Yet, of the latter class of preachers was Paul the apostle. . . . Such adventurers, under God, this age of the world seems to us especially to want. There are ministers now to hold the flock in pasture and in safety, but where are they to make inroads upon the alien, to bring in the votaries of fashion, of literature, of sentiment, of policy, and of rank? . . . Where are they to lift up their voice against simony, and acts of policy, and servile dependence upon the great ones of this earth, and shameful seeking of ease and pleasure, and anxious amassing of money, and the whole cohort of evil customs which are overspreading the Church? Truly it is not stagers who take on the customary form of their office and go the beaten round of duty, and then lie down content; but it is daring adventurers, who shall eye from the grand eminence of

a holy and heavenly mind all the grievances which religion underlies, and all the obstacles which stay her course, and then descend with the self-denial and faith of an apostle to set the battle in array against them. (*Edward Irving.*) *The servant and the slaves:*—"Thy servant David." "Thy holy servant Jesus." "Thy servants" (chap. iv. 25, 27, 29). A word or two of explanation may be necessary as to the language of our texts. You will observe that, in the second of them, I have followed the Revised Version, which, instead of "Thy holy child," as in the Authorised Version, reads "Thy holy servant." The alteration is clearly correct. The word, indeed, literally means "a child," but, like our own English "boy," or even "man," or "maid," it is used to express the relation of servant, when the desire is to cover over the harsher features of servitude, and to represent the servant as a part of the family. Thus the kindly centurion, who besought Jesus to come and heal his servant, speaks of him as his "boy." And that the word is here used in this secondary sense of "servant" is unmistakable. For there is no discernible reason why, if stress were meant to be laid on Christ as being the Son of God, the recognised expression for that relationship should not have been employed. Again, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, with which the Apostles were familiar, employs the very phrase that is here used as its translation of the well-known Old Testament designation of the Messiah, "the servant of the Lord," and the words here are really a quotation from the great prophecies of the second part of the Book of Isaiah. So, then, we have here three figures, the Psalmist-king, the Messiah, the disciples. Christ in the midst, on the one hand a servant with whom He consents to be classed, on the other hand the slaves who, through Him, have become sons. And I think I shall best bring out the intended lessons of these clauses in their connection if I ask you to note these two contrasts, the servants and *the* Servant; the Servant and the slaves. "David Thy servant"; "Thy holy servant Jesus"; us "Thy servants." I. First, then, notice THE SERVANTS AND THE SERVANT. The reason for the application of the name to the Psalmist lies, not so much in his personal character, or in his religious elevation, as in the fact that he is chosen of God for a specific purpose, to carry on the Divine plans some steps towards their realisation. Kings, priests, prophets, the collective Israel, as having a specific function in the world, and being, in some sense, the instruments and embodiments of the will of God amongst men, have in an eminent degree the designation of His "servants." But then, whilst this is true, and whilst Jesus Christ comes into this category, and is one of these special men raised up for special service in connection with the carrying out of the Divine purpose, mark how emphatically the line is drawn here between Him and the other members of the class to which, in a certain sense, He does belong. Peter says "Thy servant David," but he says "Thy *holy* servant Jesus." There are many imperfect instruments of the Divine will; thinkers and heroes and saints and statesmen and warriors, as well as prophets and priests and kings; but amongst them all there is One who stands in their midst and yet apart from them, because He, and He alone, can say "I have done all Thy pleasure," and into My doing of Thy pleasure no bitter leaven of self-regard or by-ends has ever, in the faintest degree, entered. "Thy holy servant Jesus," is the unique designation of *the* Servant of the Lord. And what is the meaning of holy? The word does not primarily refer to character so much as to relation to God. The root idea of holiness is not righteousness nor moral perfectness, but something that lies beyond that—viz., separation for the service and uses of God. The first notion of the word is consecration, and built upon that and resulting from it, moral perfection. So then these men, some of whom had lived beside Jesus Christ for all those years, and had seen everything that He did, and studied Him through and through, came away from the close inspection of His character with this thought: He is utterly and entirely devoted to the service of God, and in Him there is neither spot nor wrinkle nor blemish such as is found in all other men. I need not remind you with what strange persistence of affirmation, and yet with what humility of self-consciousness, our Lord Himself always claimed to be in possession of this entire consecration, and complete obedience, and consequent perfection. Think of human lips saying, "I do always the things that please Him"! There followed in Jesus the moral perfectness that comes from such uninterrupted and complete consecration of self to God. "Thy servant David." What about Bathsheba, David? What about a great many other things in your life? The poet king, with the poet nature so sensitive to all the delights of sense, and so easily moved in the matter of pleasure, is but the type of all other servants in the fact of imperfection. In every machine

power is lost through friction; and in every man, the noblest and the purest, there is resistance to be overcome ere motion, in conformity with the Divine impulse, can be secured. We pass in review before our minds saints and martyrs and lovely characters by the hundred, and amongst them all there is not a jewel without a flaw, not a mirror without some dint in it where the rays are distorted, or some dark place where the reflecting surface has been rubbed away by the attrition of sin, and there is no reflection of the Divine light. And then we turn to that meek figure that stands there with the question that has been awaiting an answer for eighteen centuries upon His lips, and is unanswered yet: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "The holy Servant," whose consecration and character mark Him off from all the class to which He belongs as the only one of them all who, in His fulness, has executed the Father's purpose, and has never attempted anything besides! Now there is another step to take, and that is this. The servant who stands out in front of all the group—though the noblest names in the world's history are included there—could not be the Servant unless He were the Son. This designation, as applied to Jesus Christ, is peculiar to these three or four earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. There is no sign that the proper Sonship and Divinity of our Lord was clear before them at this period. They had the facts, but they had not yet come to the distinct apprehension of how much was involved in these. But, if they knew that Jesus Christ had died and had risen again, and if they were certain that in His character of Messiah there had been faultlessness and absolute perfection, then it would not be long before they took the next step, and said, as I say, "He cannot be the Servant unless He is more than man." And we may well ask ourselves the question—If we admit, as the world does admit, the moral perfectness of Jesus Christ, how comes it that this Man alone managed to escape failure, and deflections from the right, and sins, and that He only carried through life a stainless garment, and went down to the grave never having needed, and not needing then, the exercise of Divine forgiveness? I venture to say that it is hopeless to account for Jesus Christ on naturalistic principles; and that either you should give up your belief in His sinlessness, or advance, as the Christian Church as a whole advanced, to the other belief, on which alone that perfectness is explicable: "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." II. And so, secondly, let us turn to the other contrast here—THE SERVANT AND THE SERVANTS. I said that the humble group of praying, persecuted believers seemed to have wished to take a lower place than their Master's, even whilst they ventured to assume that, in some sense, they too, like Him, were doing the Father's will. So they chose, by a fine instinct of humility, rather than from any dogmatical prepossessions, the name that expresses, in its most absolute and roughest form, the notion of bondage and servitude. He is the Servant; we standing here are slaves. The true place, then, for a man is to be God's slave. The harsh, repellent features of that wicked institution assume an altogether different character when they become the features of my relation to Him. Absolute submission, unconditional obedience, on the slave's part; and on the part of the Master complete ownership; the right of life and death; the right of disposing of all goods and chattels; the right of separating husband and wife, parents and children; the right of issuing commandments without a reason; the right to expect that those commandments shall be swiftly, unhesitatingly, punctiliously, and completely performed; these things inhere in our relation to God. Blessed the man who has learned that they do, and has accepted them as his highest glory and the security of his most blessed life! Remember, however, that in the New Testament these names of slave and owner are transferred to Christians and Jesus Christ. "The Servant" has His slaves; and He who "is God's," and does not His own will, but the Father's will, has us for His, imposes His will upon us, and we are bound to render to Him the same revenue of entire obedience which He hath laid at His Father's feet. Such slavery is the only freedom. Liberty does not mean to do as you like, it means to like as you ought, and to do that. He only is free who submits to God in Christ, and thereby overcomes himself and the world and all antagonism, and is able to do that which it is His life to do. The prison out of which we do not desire to go is no restraint, and the will which coincides with law is the only will that is truly free. You talk about the bondage of obedience. Ah! "the weight of too much liberty" is a far sorer bondage. They are the slaves who say, "Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast away His cords from us." In the wicked old empires, as in some of their modern survivals to-day, viziers and prime ministers were mostly drawn from the servile

classes. It is so in God's kingdom. They who make themselves God's slaves are by Him made kings and priests, and shall reign with Him on earth. "If a slave, then a son and an heir of God through Jesus Christ." Remember the alternative. You cannot be your own masters without being your own slaves. Better serve God than the devil; than the world; than the flesh. The Servant-Son makes us slaves and sons. It matters nothing to me that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law of God. So much the better for Him, but of no value for me, unless He has the power of making me like Himself. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **By stretching forth Thine hand to heal.** *The Gospel of Pentecost*:—I. THE HEALING HAND OF GOD IS EXTENDED. The hand is an emblem of power, and the gospel is the hand or "power of God unto salvation." The hand of God is seen in (1) The works of creation; above, around, beneath—everywhere. (2) The course of Providence; through all time, among all nations: it governs, guides, supports, defends. (3) The work of redemption. To this latter the apostles refer—"The hand of God stretched out to heal." The gospel—not a sword to destroy, not a rod to rebuke, but a gracious hand to heal. We need to be healed, for we are all bruised with the worries of life—its puzzling problems, its exacting work, its burdens and bereavements, its sins and sorrows. (*a*) The gentle ministration of the beauty and bounty of the world. (*b*) The sympathy and condolence of social love. He heals us by assuring us that He loves us; by the exhibition of His healing hand in the life of His dear Son; by actual aid; by exceeding great and precious promises. In the gospel God's hand is stretched out to heal. II. THE THOUGHTFUL ATTENTION OF MAN IS ARRESTED. The apostles prayed that signs and wonders might be wrought. They knew how prone men were to be thoughtless and inattentive, and that it needed some loud bell to be rung in the ears of the world. Under the Old Testament dispensation signs and wonders had been wrought to secure attention to the promulgation of the Law and the proclamations of the Prophets. The apostles were privileged to wield miraculous power, thus arresting the attention of their auditors. These things were (1) credentials of apostleship and (2) proofs of the supernatural in Christianity. III. THE PEERLESS NAME OF CHRIST IS EXALTED. The apostles fell into the background and hid themselves under the shadow of the Cross. In the name of Jesus they found the secret of unfaltering faith. To the glorious company of the apostles the name of Jesus was above every name; that name, as "Servant," as the Sent One, the true Messiab, excels all other names of ancient or modern times. Above the names of Peter and Paul, Augustine and Luther, Whitfield and Wesley, rises—like the sun in his splendour—the name of the world's great Redeemer, the Essence of light and sweetness, the Symbol of purity and power, the Source of life and salvation. (*F. W. Brown.*) **That signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus.** *The Eternal Child*:—I. THIS DESCRIPTION—Child—seems to be an eternally appropriate characterisation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. Is it not appropriate to Him as we dwell on the infinite past? Great as the mystery of His pre-existent life is, we cannot accept the authority of Scripture and deny that pre-existence. He was ever God's holy child. 2. Is it not appropriate of Him as we study His incarnate life on earth? There are always in His conduct and character the simple beauties we admire in a child—freshness, sensitiveness, wonder, simplicity, even to the point of exquisite artlessness, which is the child's glory. He wanted everybody else to be a child even as He felt He was a child, and so He said, "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." 3. Is it not appropriate of Him as we contemplate the life He is living now? He lives still, and lives to care for, to help, to bless us. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us; for such a High Priest became us, who is holy, guileless, undefiled." That guilelessness is the distinctive virtue of God's holy child Jesus. II. THE HISTORY OF THIS CHILD CHRIST ILLUSTRATES MUCH IN THE LIFE OF MANY AN ONE WHO IS ALSO GOD'S CHILD. As we have seen, Jesus Christ is in some senses unique as God's child—His only begotten Son. But in many aspects He is the Brother, the Type of every one who is God's child. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Remembering that, we notice—1. God's child may be born in very lowly circumstances. 2. God's child is often brought up in the midst of most adverse circumstances. We recall Nazareth where He was brought up who was "God's holy child Jesus." 3. God's child should early be accustomed to the means of grace. You find it said of God's holy child Jesus, that His custom was to go to the synagogue at Nazareth. 4. God's child will be the subject of the highest

spiritual consciousness. 5. God's child will show that he is the subject of this highest consciousness by his daily life. 6. God's child must develop into a future of beauty and strength. Growth is the law of life. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Holy Child Jesus* :—I. THE REAL HUMANITY OF JESUS. 1. While we always contend that Christ is God, let us never lose the firm conviction He is truly man. His humanity was real, for He was born. The gate by which we enter upon the first life, He passed through also. In the circumstances of His birth He is completely human; He is as weak and feeble as any other babe. As He grows up, the very growth shows how completely human He is. "He grows in stature, and in favour both with God and man." When He reaches man's estate, He gets the common stamp of manhood upon His brow. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." The carpenter's shop must witness to the toils of a Saviour, and when He becomes the preacher still we read such significant words as these—"Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well." We find Him needing to betake Himself to rest in sleep, and if sorrow be the mark of real manhood, certainly Jesus has the truest evidence of being a man. If to hunger and to thirst be signs that His manhood is no fiction, you have these. Since the day when the prince of the power of the air obtained dominion in this world, men are tempted, and He, though born pure and holy, must not be delivered from temptation. If, since we have fallen and must endure temptation, we have need to pray, so had He. Leave out sin, and Christ is the perfect picture of humanity. And lastly, as the whole human race must yield its neck to the great iron-crowned monarch, so must Christ give up the ghost. 2. Having thus insisted upon the humanity of Christ, let us gather a few reflections from it. 1. Let us marvel at His condescension. Cyprian well said, "I do not wonder at any miracle, but I do marvel at this, which is a miracle among miracles, that God should become man." That God should make a creature out of nothing is certainly a marvellous manifestation of power, but that God should take that creature into intimate union with His own nature—this is the strangest of all acts of condescending love. A prince who puts aside his crown, and clothes himself with beggar's rags to investigate the miseries of his country, is but a worm condescending to his fellow worm. An angel that should lay aside his beauty, and become decrepit, and walk the streets in pain and poverty to bless the race of man, were but a creature humbling himself to creatures a little lower than himself. 2. See the fitness of Christ for His work! He is a perfect man, and so "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing He was tempted in all points like as we are." Being not ashamed to call us brethren, He can compassionate the ignorant and those who are out of the way. 3. Behold His near relationship and union to His people. He is no stranger, He is our Brother; nay, our Head. Not a head of gold, and feet of clay, or limbs of baser metal; but as we are, so was He, that as He is so might we be. 4. See the glory of manhood now restored! Man was but a little lower than the angels, and had dominion over the fowl of the air, and over the fish of the sea. That royalty he lost. But all this is given back to us. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. It is our nature, Jesus in our manhood, who is now Lord of providence, which sits upon the throne of God at this very day. 5. Rejoice that a blessed channel is opened by which God's mercy can come to us! 6. See what a door of access is thus opened between us and God! 7. See how safe we are! Our soul's estate was once put in the hands of Adam; he was a fallible man; how unsafe our salvation was then! The salvation of every believer now is in the hand of a man; it is the man Christ Jesus! But what a man! Can He fail? Can He sin? Can He fall? 8. Here is your adoption! You become sons of God, because Christ becomes a son of man. 9. Here is your acceptance! The man, Christ, is accepted, and you, since He stands for you, are accepted in Him. II. THE HUMANITY AS IT IS HERE DESCRIBED—"Holy Child." 1. Christ's humanity was perfectly holy. Upon this doctrine you are well established; but you may well wonder that Jesus was always holy. He is conceived of a woman, and yet no sort of sin cometh from His birth. He is educated in the midst of sinful persons. It could not be otherwise. He goes into the world, and as a physician must mingle with the sick, so He is found in the very worst of society. The harlot may speak to Him, and from the publican He turns not away, yet from none of these did He receive any corrupt influence. He is tempted, but the prince of this world came and had nothing in Christ. Imputation of sin would be the nearest approach to making our Lord a sinner; but let it ever be remembered that though Jehovah made Him to be sin for us, yet He knew no sin,

and even in the conflict, when all the powers of hell were let loose against Him, and when God Himself had withdrawn—which would have hardened our hearts, but did not harden His. 2. Christ is called a "Holy Child" because His character is more aptly pictured by that of a child than that of a man. If you conceive of a perfectly holy child, you have then before you a representation of Christ. There is that in holy childhood which you cannot find even in holy manhood. You note in childhood—(1) Simplicity, the absence of all cunning. We dare not in manhood usually wear our heart upon our sleeve as children do. (2) Humbleness. There is a king's daughter, and here is a gipsy child. Leave them in a room and see if they will not be at play together in five minutes. If it had been the queen and the gipsy woman they would have sat as far apart as possible. Christ is King of kings. Yet He is always with the poor and needy. You do not find little children sitting down and planning how they shall win crowns, popularity, or applause. They are quite satisfied to do their father's will, and live on his smile. It is so with Christ. When they would have made Him a king, He went and hid Himself. (3) Obedience. Was it not so with Jesus His whole life long? (4) A forgiving temper. We know that sometimes the blood comes up in the little face, and a little angry quarrel ensues, but it is soon over. Well, with Jesus this characteristic of childhood is carried out to the fullest extent, for His latest words are, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (5) There is something very sweet in this picture of Christ's humanity, because we are none of us afraid to approach a child. Come then, and tell Jesus everything. Whatever your trouble or difficulty may be, stand not back through shame or fear. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's holy Servant* (see chap iii. 26):—The term translated in the Authorised Version here, and in ver. 21, "child" is more correctly rendered in ver. 25, in regard to David, "servant." The word is so given in Matt. xii. 18, where Isa. xiii. 1—part of the great prophecy of the Servant of the Lord—is applied to Christ. This prophecy and its fulfilment in Jesus was evidently running in the minds of the apostles throughout these discourses. The term "holy" in conjunction with "servant" suggests that God has servants who are—I. WITHOUT HOLINESS—creatures whom God has not endowed with a moral being, and can therefore render neither a holy nor an unholy service. This applies to the laws, forces, substances of nature to sun, moon, stars, the earth, and all its inhabitants except man. These perform an unconscious service. II. UNHOLY—creatures in antagonism to the Divine will; devils and evil men. These are servants by right, for God made them for service, equipped them for service, placed them in spheres for service, and gave them a work to do. But their powers and opportunities are occupied in endeavouring to thwart the Divine purpose. Do they succeed? Nay, they are servants in fact as well as by right. Let the conduct of the rulers, fitting types of their class, show this, and Judas also and his confederates in the Crucifixion. Their service is an unwilling service. III. IMPERFECTLY HOLY. Such are true Christians, whose lifelong experience is gradual separation from sin and growing approximation to complete consecration to God. In both sides of this experience the Divine and human co-operate. The blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing them from sin, and they are cleansing themselves "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," thus "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The Holy Spirit sanctifies, sets them apart for God. They "present themselves living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God." Their service is a conscious and glad service. IV. HOLY. Such was Adam; such are the angels. But the holiness was not inherent in the first, for he fell; nor in the second, for some of their order fell. Angelic purity is Divinely imparted, and for their Divine work they are Divinely sustained. V. DIVINELY HOLY. Such and such only is Jesus. 1. He is holy by nature—essentially, eternally. 2. His work is perfectly holy without a flaw, and such as God can accept without the least reservation. 3. His merits make the holiest holy. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 31. **And when they had prayed the place was shaken . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.**—*Prayer effects miracles*:—I. INTERNAL. 1. Hearts are savingly affected. 2. Spirits are mightily strengthened. II. EXTERNAL. 1. Houses are moved. 2. Churches awakened. 3. Enemies frightened. 4. Mountains displaced. 5. The world convulsed. (*K. Gerok.*) *The blessings of spiritual worship*:—I. THE DEVOTIONAL SUPPLICATION OFFERED TO GOD. "They prayed." It was—1. Earnest. 2. United. 3. Believing. 4. Sincere. 5. Specific. II. THE VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE. "The place was shaken where

they were assembled together." 1. The unmistakable proof of Divine power. 2. The reliable sign of Divine nearness. 3. The full assurance of Divine protection. III. THE INVISIBLE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." 1. The gift of the Holy Ghost was bestowed. 2. The supply of the Holy Ghost was abundant. 3. Every worshipper received the baptism of the Spirit. IV. THE CHRISTIAN COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES. "They spake the Word of God with boldness." 1. The subject of their speeches. 2. The fearlessness of their conduct. 3. The activity of their labours. Lessons—1. To plead with God should be our first thought when surrounded with difficulties. 2. God will grant to our request some token of His presence and help of the Spirit. 3. The prayers of true worshippers bring blessings if we wait patiently at the throne of grace. 4. May we seek by holy fellowship to speak Divine truths without the fear of the world. (*Alfred Buckley.*) *The gift of the Spirit dependent on prayer*:—How well I remember a sermon I preached at a great outdoor meeting in the upper part of this State! For several days in that place prayer had been offered for the success of the service, and I had myself been unusually prayerful, and we had a Pentecostal blessing while I was preaching it. That afternoon I took the train for a great outdoor meeting in Ohio. I said to myself: "This sermon was blessed to-day, and it is fresh in my mind, and I will preach it to-morrow in Ohio." And I did preach it, but not in as prayerful a spirit, and I think no one else had been praying about it, and it turned into the most inane and profitless discourse that I ever delivered. It was practically the same sermon, but on Wednesday it had on it a power that comes from the secret place of thunder, and on Thursday it had on it no such power at all. Oh! pray for us! Poor sermons in the pulpit are the curse of God on a prayerless parish. We ministers and preachers want the power a man gets when he is alone, the door locked; on his knees at midnight; with such a burden of souls upon him that makes him cry out, first in lamentation and then in raptures. Let all the Sabbath-school teachers, and Bible-class instructors, and all reformers, and all evangelists, and all ministers know that diplomas, and dictionaries, and encyclopædias, and treatises, and libraries are not the source of moral and spiritual achievement, but that the room of prayer, where no one but God is present and no one but God hears, is the secret place of thunder. Secret? Ah, yes! So secret that comparatively few ever find it. At Boscobel, England, we visited a house where a king was once hid. No one, unless it were pointed out to him, could find the door in the floor through which the king entered his hiding-place. When there hidden the armed pursuers looked in vain for him, and afterward through an underground passage, far out in the fields, he came out in the open air. So this imperial power of spiritual influence has a hiding-place, a secret place which few know, and it comes forth sometimes in strange and mysterious ways, and far off from the place where it was hidden. You can find it only by diligent searching. But you may find it, and some of you will find it, and I wish you might all find it, the secret place of thunder. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The second Pentecost*:—Notice—I. THE PRAYING. 1. The exuberance of joy, the yearnings of sympathy, the wailings of sorrow seek—very commonly—loud vocal expression. So the disciples lifted up their voice (ver. 24). 2. They prayed together. The soul loves sympathy in joy as well as sorrow. II. THE SHAKING. Praying and shaking have often been found together. The foundations of the prison at Philippi were shaken. The Lord of old promised to shake the heavens, and not the earth only. The bones were shaken when Ezekiel prophesied in the valley of vision. In mighty prayer the electric current shakes the clouds of blessing, so that heavy showers descend upon us. Hearts are shaken, knees shaken, sinners shaken. III. THE FILLING. Not half filled, not three parts, but completely. Not filled with doubts and fears, as too often people now are when they pray, but with the Holy Ghost. That is the sort of filling preachers or people, teachers or scholars, require nowadays. To be filled with the Holy Ghost is to be filled with faith, with power, with unction, with heaven. IV. THE SPEAKING. 1. What did they speak? Not the praise of man: much less slander and reproach. Not the mere shibboleth of party, not idle or mischievous words, but the Word of God. How little do many professors speak of God's Word. But as David said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it." 2. They spake it—how? Boldly. Of course, when they were full of the Holy Ghost they would little heed what men thought of them, said about them, or did at them. Many a fit of nervousness has been cured this way, (*W. Antliff, D.D.*) *Early Church life*:—Let us consider —I. THE PRAYER. 1. Its occasion. The persecution of the apostles. 2. Its substance. It was seasonable, suitable, short, as all the prayers recorded in the

Scriptures are; and though they had been so evil entreated yet they beseech God to stretch forth His hand, not to strike and to punish, but to heal. 3. Its success. God never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye My face in vain." The sign of the acceptance of their prayer seemed much more likely to produce dread than to gender hope; but so God would teach us that He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints; that He will be sanctified by all them that come nigh to Him; that there is something awful even in the dispensations of His grace; that He sometimes answers His people as the God of their salvation, by terrible things in righteousness. 4. Its effect. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." They were now called to fresh duties, difficulties, dangers; and therefore they required fresh supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Their strength was made equal to their day, and they obtained accessions of illumination, of confidence, of courage, of peace, and of joy, and were prepared to stand complete in all the will of God. II. THE PREACHING. "And they spake the Word of God with boldness." The very thing for which they had been praying. The very thing Paul beseeches of the Ephesians to implore on his behalf: "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly." You see how little they were governed by the opinions of the people around them; that they did not walk in craftiness, nor handle the Word of God deceitfully, nor appeal to the fancies and wishes of the individuals before them; but by manifestation of the truth, they commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Suppose a number of persons were to call on a minister on a Sabbath-day morning, and one of them should say, "I hope, sir, you do not mean to-day to be severe against avarice, for my heart goes after my covetousness"; and another, "I trust you will not be severe against backbiting, for my tongue walketh with slanderers"; and another, "Do not represent implacability as being inconsistent with Divine forgiveness, for I never did forgive such an one, and I never will." What would this minister say to these men? Why, if he were in a proper state of mind, he would say, "Oh, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness! when wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Our people are not likely to address us in this way, but this is the wish and meaning of many. "Three things equalise," says Bishop Hall, "the grave, the judgment-bar, and the pulpit: the grave makes no difference, the judgment-bar makes none, and the pulpit should make none." Daniel addressed Belshazzar as if he had been a common man. John the Baptist was to Herod as rough as the garment he wore. James the First said of one of his chaplains, "Why, this man always preaches before me as if death stood at his elbow." Why, death does always stand at the preacher's elbow, and he ought to be able to say with Baxter: "I preach as if I ne'er should preach again; and as a dying man to dying men." III. THE PEOPLE (ver. 32). Verily, if this be "the golden age of Christianity," we may well exclaim, "How is the gold become dim!" Note—1. Their number, "a multitude." This accords with our Saviour's representation of His kingdom as in the beginning—like a little leaven in the meal, and like a mustard-seed in the ground. But then this little leaven was to leaven the whole lump, and this mustard-seed was to become a tree. Our Saviour first opened His mind to twelve, and then to seventy, and then we read of five hundred brethren in Galilee and a hundred and twenty in Jerusalem; then three thousand at Pentecost. Then as a result of daily additions to the Church, five thousand. We concede that success by itself is not proof of the divinity of a cause. If we did, what should we then do with Mohammedism and Popery? But here we contend that the case is unspeakably peculiar, and that the instrumentalities employed were so perfectly in themselves inadequate to the result, that the effect must induce us to exclaim, "This is the finger of God." 2. Their character. "The multitude believed." The subject reported by the apostles had been unknown, or held in contempt, before; but now the people received it, not as the word of man, but as it was in truth, the word of God; and the belief became productive of godliness in the soul, and the influence of it worked effectually in them that believed. Is this always the case with belief? You believe! so do the devils—and tremble, and remain devils still; and wicked men may hold the truth in unrighteousness. Take heed, therefore; he is a vain man, says James, who says he has faith and has not works. 3. Their unity. They "were of one heart and of one soul"—one object influenced them; one cause engaged them; one principle swayed them. It must be obvious that the views, and tempers, and inclinations of men are very various; and therefore they are only to be brought into a state of social connection by an object that is important and interesting to all: and you find such an object as this in the gospel. Therefore, in the language of prophecy, it is said, "All

nations shall flow unto it," as so many streams flowing from different sources towards the same fulness—the sea. When the brazen serpent was erected in the midst of the camp, it became the centre of attraction and regard. Our Saviour, in allusion to this, says, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." If there were but one well for the inhabitants of a village or a town, why they must all repair to it or perish. Old Jacob, therefore, said when he was dying, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Isaiah said, "To Him shall men come." They were of one heart and of one soul; one in their need of the blessing, one in their desire after it, one in their valuation of it, one in their concern to diffuse it, and to extend it to all their fellow-creatures. They were as one family, as one body, where if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice. You will note here, as they were now so numerous in Jerusalem, they must have worshipped in various rooms, and have been addressed by various preachers; but though they were divided into so many parts, there were no parties among them. They had not yet learned to be carnal, and to walk as men, saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos." 4. Their liberality. You have heard often of the communion of saints, and here you have it literally. Their property, by a conventual giving and receiving, being intermingled, became a kind of joint stock, from which every man drew according to his need. (*W. Jay.*) *Waiting for the Spirit*:—When tidal rivers meet the sea, a sight may often be witnessed very strange to the uninformed spectator. The day is fine, the breeze is steady and favourable, the rippling waters dance in the sunlight; and as the anxious watcher waits for the long-absent friend who is expected from a distant land, he rejoices in the favourable conditions which will hasten the happy hour of meeting. Eagerly he scans the horizon for the expected ship. Presently it appears, rapidly draws nearer, and the bounding heart shows its restless eagerness by a hundred sighs. But lo! the great vessel slackens speed, and presently drops anchor. Then from the horizon comes another, a stately ship, her snowy sails filled by the breeze. She, too, draws near, and turns away, or furls her sails and waits. And then another and another come, and are stopped on their course by some unseen barrier. Perplexed and impatient, the watcher appeals to a seaman, and gets for answer, "Oh, it's the tide; they are waiting for the tide." And behold, even while they speak there is a change in the aspect of the shore. The hurrying waters, which have been flowing so rapidly down to the sea, are stopped; they creep up again over the strand. From far away in the southern ocean a mighty wave is flowing on unseen. It rises and flows and fills the channels, and washes against the sea-wall, and reaches almost to the dock sills, and the gates are opened, and the waiting fleet wakes up to new life; anchors are raised; sails are spread; steam is once more at work; and the stately procession comes up the stream and into the harbour—the ocean steamer with its living freight of a thousand souls, the merchantman from the East with precious cargo of silks and spices, and lesser craft from their various voyages, and with their various stores of goods. (*London Missionary Society's Report.*) *Conditions of the baptism of the Spirit*:—Some of the older States in the great Republic across the Atlantic complain sadly of excessive drought. In bygone years the rain was wont to descend in copious fertilising showers; but now the clouds hover high in the air and float away to other regions. And why? Because the old-established States have been completely shorn of their ancient forests, and as a penalty they now fail to attract the clouds; or, if they attract them, they fail to draw from them the "water of life." What then do the inhabitants do under these blighting circumstances? They plant cannons in the high places of the land, and when they see a cloud sailing high in mid-air they fire their artillery; the air shakes, and in the shock the cloud rends and pours its precious contents on the thirsty soil—rain often descends the day after battle. That is the modern way of obtaining rain; but the grey-haired settlers declare the old way was better, and they are now busily planting trees in the denuded regions—trees will draw water from the clouds easier than artillery. In like manner the Israel of God is lamenting the excessive drought in the present day—some of you are longing for a "season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," you are fervently praying for the "day of visitation." We see the clouds of the Divine promises heavy-laden with water; but they sail high in the empyrean—no showers descend. What do the Churches do? They fetch the American revivalists, they send here and there for the big guns of the Christian ministry. The guns shoot, the air trembles, the clouds burst, the torrent falls. But it is a torrent, and like all torrents it drenches the surface and soon passes, and the earth is as parched as

ever. I say nothing against your resorting to extraordinary means to force on a revival—forcing is now a complicated art, not only in horticulture, but in all departments of activity, temporal and spiritual. But I show you a more excellent way—cultivate more assiduously the "trees of righteousness," grow more vigorously in grace and knowledge, fulfil more faithfully your duties to men, and discharge more promptly your obligations to God and your Redeemer, and the clouds of the Divine promises, big with mercy, shall break in showers on your heads. Get you up, gird your loins, live lives of holiness and consecration, and soon you will hear the "sound of abundance of rain." (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The secret of power*:—I. THE OUTPOURING OF PRAYER. "When they heard, they lifted up their voice to God." It would seem that not a word was said to one another. We know it was earnest and fervent prayer, because of the men by whom it was offered, because of the special source that gave the inspiration from which it sprang, and because of the result that followed. Prayer is the only preparation by which we can be meetened for the work, and the only power by which the work can be blessed. Not mere repetition of forms, either from printed page or stereotyped memory, but the uprising and outpouring of prayer like a living power out of a living soul, in which God the Spirit shall plead with God the Father the merits of God the Son, and then shall God's work be sustained by His grace, and be prospered by His Divine power indeed. Prayer without work is mockery; work without prayer is vanity, and must lead to despair, vexation, and grief. If Israel is to rally her broken ranks to the conflict, bearing her glorious standard, to march in undaunted power and all-conquering might against the Amalekites and all that assail her, it must be preceded by the uplifting of the arms upon the mountain above the plain. It must be special prayer, prayer with point, with a purpose, for your ministers, for all your instrumentalities. Gather them all like a golden sheaf into your arms, and bring them all into the presence of the God of all grace, and the Spirit of all power. Prayer that shall spring from a sense of our own responsibility to God for everything, the utter inability for anything of ourselves; prayer that shall bring down the Divine power to make us say, "I can do all things." II. THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST. 1. All filled with it, not merely Peter, and John, and James. And so must it be with every servant of God. It shall be sought not merely for the minister, or the church officer, or the Sunday-school teacher, but for all, that it may give the tenderness of the still small voice; that it may be heard in the thunder of every Boanerges; that it may give Divine vitality and power to the sweet, soft music of every Barnabas; that it may be as a living two-edged sword out of the mouth of every Apollos; that it may be as the Divine fire that shall glow in all the reasoning of all Pauls; that the Church may become an embodiment of Divine life and power. 2. They were all filled—not merely drops and rivulets. It came like a river that proceeded from the throne of God; or rather the broad, deep tide from the fathomless ocean of the fulness of the Divine grace and glory above. It came and filled them, and overflowed, and poured its living tide throughout the world around them. And so it must be. "Prove Me now herewith, and see if I will not pour out the blessing till there shall not be room to receive it." We want more depth, and breadth, and power of religious emotion, and life, and faith, and service. Our life too often is so restricted in its dimensions, so feeble in its spirit, so low-toned in its vitality, and so circumscribed in the mode of its operation. We want as men of God to be filled with the fulness of God. 3. They were filled with the Holy Ghost—not merely with excitement, mental vigour and determination, indignation, compassion, grief, despair, but with the Holy Ghost. There is the power we must have. III. WHAT FOLLOWED. They all sprang to the work in which the two brethren had been previously engaged, "They spake the Word of God with boldness" is spoken of all the brethren. There are none who have a voice that cannot speak and sing of other things; and there must be none that do not speak of Jesus. It must be spoken at all becoming times and with all becoming promptitude, for soon our voices will be hushed in the silence of the grave. (*J. P. Chown.*) *Power to be witnesses*:—1. These feeble Christians moved the Hand that moves the world. The place was shaken, but not the people. The ground trembled, but they had found a refuge in God. It is after and in answer to prayer that the Lord arises to shake the earth. Quick and strong vibrations are felt in the political sphere. God's saints groan. God hears and answers in His own good time, and then the most firmly-rooted national, social, religious tyrannies totter and fall. The shaking was a sign that prayer was heard. They had acknowledged God as the Maker of heaven and earth. In answer He gives a token that Almightiness is

at hand for their protection. The commotions of our day are encouraging to the Christian. Hollow hypocrisies are shaken in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain (Heb. xii. 27). 2. But besides this symbol of power, a more specific answer was given. "They were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke the Word with boldness." They did not fear their enemies, they distrusted themselves lest danger should shake them from their steadfastness. Now they have obtained what they asked, they are at ease, as is the magnet on the surging sea, fixed to its pole because loosed from holds. The steadiest thing in a shaking world is a disciple whose life, loosed from the dust, is hid with Christ in God. 3. Thus endued with power, all that was required of them was to bear witness to a fact—"The resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Christ had promised them power for this purpose, and now the promise was fulfilled. (1) The main characteristic of their witnessing was not "great" eloquence or learning, but "power." When you travel by night through a mining district, you see mighty volumes of flame issuing from the furnaces. This is the ordinary accompaniment of the power, but it is not the power. The heat in the heart of the furnace is melting the metal. Do not despise dazzling accompaniments of preaching, but do not trust in them, for they may be the pithless flash from blazing straw. (2) This power seems to have been a special gift bestowed on the apostles, but a suitable portion was imparted to the whole company—"great grace was upon them all"—a specific example of which was liberality and brotherly love. And thus the world had two things to say about them—"Behold how they defy us; behold how they love one another." Alas for the Church in our day—for we are weak where they were strong; viz., in courage to bear witness for Christ, and fervent charity among ourselves. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Work for those who are filled with the Spirit:*—Is there nothing for men who are filled with the Spirit of God to do now? Are there no vile iniquities still going on buttressed up with immoral wealth and political chicaneries which may coexist very well indeed with all the pomposities of a fashionable religiousness; but to-day if there were but one stirring of the Spirit in our dead hearts would be spurned back to the hell from which they came? Look at the streets of London, shameless with prostitution; look at glaring and multiplied incentives to drunkenness which roll into the coffers of some one, a stream of wealth, tainted with the tears of women and the blood of men; look at the nefarious sweaters' dens, where greedy Jews and Christians make their vile money out of human misery. Look at the universal worldliness around us, look at the passionate mammon worship, at the reckless competition, at the desecration of Sundays in the mere voluptuous wantonness of pleasure. Look at the dangerous increase of the guilty madness of betting and gambling in every school, office, street among rich and poor. Look at the rapid degradation of our journalism by the paltry flunkeyism of gossip and the evil malice of slander; look at the bad and false spirit of our so-called religious newspapers. O God, give us saints; O God, pour out the Spirit of Thy might. Were it but in the hearts of one or two to slay these dragons and not fear their poisonous breath! O Christ, send us but two or three heroes for this new Thermopylæ. O Holy Ghost, fill one or two hearts with Thy rushing mighty wind, and mitre one or two brows with Thy Pentecostal flame! Priests we have in plenty, and Churchmen, but oh, send us men filled with the Holy Ghost! (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

Ver. 32. **And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.**—*Unity among Christians to be desired:*—Melancthon mourned in his day the divisions among Protestants, and sought to bring Protestants together by the parable of the war between the wolves and the dogs. The wolves were somewhat afraid, for the dogs were many and strong, and therefore they sent out a spy to observe them. On his return, the scout said, "It is true the dogs are many, but there are not many mastiffs among them. There are dogs of so many sorts one can hardly count them; and as for the worst of them," said he, "they are little dogs, which bark loudly, but cannot bite." "However, this did not cheer me so much," said the wolf, "as this, that as they came marching on, I observed they were all snapping right and left at one another, and I could see clearly that though they all hate the wolf, yet each dog hates every other dog with all his heart." I fear it is true still; for there are many professors who snap right and left at their own brethren, when they had better save their teeth for the wolves. If our enemies are to be put to confusion, it must be by the united efforts of all the people of God: unity is strength. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Unity requires dissimilarity:*—Unity

subsists between things not similar and alike, but things dissimilar or unlike. There is no unity in the separate atoms of a sand-pit; they are things similar; there is an aggregate or collection of them. Even if they be hardened in a mass they are not one, they do not form a unity; they are simply a mass. There is no unity in a flock of sheep; it is simply a repetition of a number of things similar to each other. But in Christian unity we find something very different, for the Christian Church is made up of dissimilar members, without which dissimilarity there could be no unity. Each is imperfect in itself, but each supplying the deficiencies of other members of the body spiritual, as do the physical members of the physical body. Now, if you cut off from the spiritual body any one member, as in the physical body, you destroy the unity of the whole body. (*T. H. Leary, D.C.L.*) *Unity assisted by fire*:—There was a blacksmith once who had two pieces of iron which he wished to weld into one, and he took them just as they were, all cold and hard, and put them on the anvil, and began to hammer with all his might, but they were two pieces still, and would not unite. At last he remembered what he ought never to have forgotten; he thrust both of them into the fire, took them out red-hot, laid the one upon the other, and by one or two blows of the hammer they very soon became one. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The social instinct*:—I. GOD'S VOICE ASSURES US THAT "IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE": and knit into the very stuff of our personality is the instinctive dread of loneliness and the craving after intercourse with our fellow-men. We know that it is only in fellowship with others that the life which belongs to us as men can find its essential exercise and development. Conscience, justice, sympathy, honour, pity, love: these are but a few of the words whose whole wealth of meaning lies in a man's dealings with his fellow-men. Every principle of morality, every safeguard of reason, every canon of taste, depends for its significance, if not for its sanction, on our position as members of a great community: and it was by a true and deep insight that the Greek declared that he who would live in solitude must be either more or less than man. The social instinct is astir in the very act of self-consciousness: and I would show something of the reality of the satisfaction which is offered to it in the Church of Christ—God's answer to the needs of man. II. THERE ARE TWO WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY MEASURE THE ADEQUACY OF ANY COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP INTO WHICH WE ARE INVITED. Sympathy lives, so to speak, in two dimensions: breadth and depth: and we may call it great either for the extent which it can cover, or for the inner depths which it can reach. So, too, it may be cramped and narrow, either because it moves within a scanty range, or else because its diffuse activity hardly goes below the surface of life. And in correspondence with these two measurements of sympathy, there are two distinct ways in which the desire for communion may seek and seem to find its satisfaction without reference to Christianity. 1. On the one hand we may find an almost infinite scope for sympathy and fellowship, if we share or understaud the wants and hopes and aims of our generation, and so bear our part in its corporate action. Probably there never was an age which offered wider range, more varied opportunity, more hopeful schemes for such an exercise and development of the social instinct. Whatever help we have to give, we can pass at once into commerce with hundreds of our fellow-men. Whether the feelings with which we go out into the world are mainly benevolent, political, or scientific, we are at once admitted to a tract of interest and work in which the social instinct moves without the fear of limitation. 2. It is when the other measurement is forced upon us that we feel the practical defect of a purely natural communion, however wide and intelligent, with our fellow-citizens or with mankind. Every human soul has energies, mysterious and profound, which find no exercise or answer in that diffusive interest which is ever losing in intensity what it gains in width. For while our inner life looks out to no horizon, in our social relations we are hemmed in on every side: in each wider range of fellowship, more of our personal feelings and convictions have to be repressed or misunderstood: as we pass from love to friendship, from friendship to acquaintance, from acquaintance to association, at each stage we feel that less of our true self is active and satisfied, that we are exchanging the full and blessed sympathy "where hearts are of each other sure," for the excitement and effectiveness of living in a crowd. And from the partial and superficial communion which thus beckons on and disappoints in ever-widening fields of ever more restricted feeling, most men turn to seek in friendship or in home a sympathy which has less to fear from the second measurement of which I spoke. Probably we all know the intense relief of passing from

the jar or compromise of society at large into some inner sphere of love where "we mean what we say, and what we would we know." 3. And having found the refreshment and confidence of such sympathy, most men come to live a double life: passing across day by day from the diffuse and shallow fellowship of the wide world to the quiet trust and swift intercourse of the chosen few: trying to supplement the extent of one communion by the depth of the other: even as the great poet of our day cries—

> "God be thanked, the meanest of His creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her."

But must we put away for ever all thought and hope of any communion which shall be at once both wide and deep? Is there any power which can bring the souls of men together in a sympathy without either exclusion or reserve? III. "I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS." THIS IS THE ANSWER OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: she, and she alone, still clings to the hope and promise of a fellowship and sympathy which shall be at once deeper than any depth which a man can fathom in his own soul, and wider than the world itself: a brotherhood into which the most ignorant and outcast and sinful may through penitence find entrance, a brotherhood in which the most sensitive and thoughtful and exacting soul shall never feel or fear the touch of cruelty or stupidity, but ever be led on from height to height, from strength to strength, from glory to glory, by the answer of a love which never is out of sight, and yet never can be outstripped. By what means then does the Church propose to make good her promise of a sympathy both wide and deep? Must we look back for the plainest answer to these questions to the days when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul"? It is, in deed and truth, a humiliating necessity. But still we cannot doubt that the Divine spirit of that communion is with us now: we know that, for all the noisy and obtrusive quarrels which are the shame and plague of Christendom, the strong love which held together the souls of martyrs and evangelists, the love which was stronger than death, is among us still: that in pure homes, in the fellowship of Christ's work among the poor and suffering, we can still see, in the perfect harmony of self-forgetful work, the inherited secret of Christian unity and the earnest of its achievement in the Church triumphant. But there is one plain ground of fellowship which lies so near to the experience of our daily life, that it is easy for all to see and measure. For at the outset, Christianity, and Christianity alone, sets before us all one Lord. Alike in earth and heaven we are to be brought into the true fellowship one with another by a service and devotion which is not mutual but common: by seeking first the same Lord and Saviour. The real secret of sympathy is to love in the first place, not one's friend, but that which he loves better than himself: and the fulfilment of the social instinct is found in the concentration of all hearts upon the one true God. We shall better understand what the communion of saints may be, in proportion as we can give our hearts, our strength, our lives, to Him who gave Himself for us—to Him who, since He was lifted up from the earth, alone can draw all to Himself, and link them in the one sufficient sympathy of one unending Love. For "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (*F. Paget, D.D.*) **Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.**—*Nothing our own*:—Their conduct was answerable to so great a change as had been brought over their spirits. In several respects it was singular; such as befitted their special condition, but was nowise applicable to any other community or any after generation. Among these was the community of goods;—a usage into which they fell by a natural consequence of the relation in which they stood to one another and to the rest of mankind, and even by their own position and expectation upon the earth. They were few, and they were brethren. If they had been numerous, or if they had been divided, the idea would have been from the first as impracticable as it soon became. But at the outset it almost forced itself upon their observance. What was wealth to them? They were set upon a profession of self-denials. There was nothing that they cared to purchase or inherit in the places that were so soon, as they imagined, to be destroyed. Their minds were attracted but by incorruptible treasures and enduring abodes. For this reason it was, that none of them said "that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but

they had all things common." Let us trace a few lines of reflection over so great a subject. What can we consider our own? Relatively, in certain connections, and to a certain extent, everything that we can conceive of. All the objects that delight the senses, all the pursuits that interest the attention, all the truths that occupy and nourish the mind, are ours. We have no need to become the proprietors of anything, in a commercial sense, in order to make it belong to us. The poor borderer upon a rich domain may use and enjoy it more than its real occupant and lord. He who borrows a book from a wealthy library may render it more truly his than it is the collector's, whose name is written in it, but whose understanding has never grown familiar with its contents. Whatever we can avail ourselves of for the purpose of our instruction, of our profit, of our happiness, is our own. Whatever we can put away at a calm distance from us, doing without it and feeling above it, is more than our own. The fruits of our endeavours are ours, the days of our being, the circumstances of our condition, the pictures of our fancy, the associates of our hearts. The universe offers itself to the eyes that can love its beauty, not only as a spectacle, but as a gift; and the very Lord of that boundless whole is manifested as the portion of obedient souls. Since everything we know is imaged in the mind, and the mind is ourself, we may call the powers of nature and the lessons of wisdom our tributaries, wherever those powers are surveyed or those lessons embraced. But if we are ready to be elated with such a description of the extent of the authority that has been committed to men, we have but to take into view that opposite truth which accords better with the expression of the text, and account that none of the things which they possess are theirs, in any absolute sense. We may say, with the apostle to his Corinthians, "All things are yours." But then we must add, in the words of the same great testifier, "Ye yourselves are not your own; ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Let us turn to this side of our theme, and remark some of the leading particulars that belong to it. None of the things which we possess are absolutely our own. 1. Not our worldly goods. Who created them? He who made them to be transitory. Who bestowed them? He who has a right to take them back. For what purpose have they been lodged in the hands of prosperous men? For their special benefit and gratification? Yes. But for their occupation, their exercise, their trial also, and more. In the first place, the changes of events prove to us that we do not hold by any absolute tenure what we seem to hold; for how often it is suddenly snatched from us, or drained gradually away! So much for chances. And then come in the settled decrees of our condition and the demands of our consciences. Consider them both, and you will see how amply they vindicate the expressions of the text as applicable to all men and times and places. You will have no community of goods; and indeed we can scarcely conceive of any social project so unnatural, so unjust, so impracticable. Yet still the goods of the wealthiest cannot choose but flow into the community. He must part with them, whether he will or not, and regularly part with them. He can have no enjoyment from them but by their use, and their use is their perishing. They are not his but as they pass, and when they are gone whose are they? They must be spent and distributed, and return into the common stock from which they were amassed. Reflect further on what the various obligations of life admonish us ought to be. Are we not stewards and debtors, rather than owners and lords, in the portion that is allotted to us? Much is due to the service of our brethren; and all is in pledge to Him, to whom the whole must be accounted for. Benevolence, justice, and truth are greater apostles than Peter and James and John; and honest contributions must be brought and laid down at their feet. 2. Our friends and the objects of our affection are not our own. You look into the faces of those you love, and take them by their cordial hands, and they seem to be yours, because their countenances have been always bright towards you, and you are well assured that their help is ready in the time of your need. But how many such have circumstances parted, and misunderstandings estranged! And how often has death severed the tie which no trials of life could weaken! Children are in a sense your creatures. None can share with you your parental rights. I will not say, that they may so disappoint your hope as to leave little disposition to rejoice in their belonging to you; that they may so grieve and burden your lives as to lead you to wish that you had been childless. But at least you are well aware, that what no temptations of after days might be able to make unworthy of your regard, the decree of heaven may remove from your side. The infant and the youth are as liable to be summoned away in their unsullied freshness, as the grown man

in the fulness of his strength and the midst of his labours; and how can you claim as yours what is so changing and so frail? Rejoice, rather, that they are in better hands and at a wiser disposal; that their portion is in the assignments of an eternal Providence; and that their true Proprietor is the Holy Father, whose angels have a charge over them here, and who will never dismiss those blessed ministers from their office of love. (*N. L. Frothingham.*) *The unity of the early Church*:—I. THE UNITY. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul." The Church of that day was a great contrast with the world, where there were "wars and rumours of wars," envious and jealous hatreds. Unity ever set forth in New Testament as a fundamental conception of the Church. Christ prayed for it. Apostles strove to preserve it. The ideal we should ever keep before us. II. THE MANIFESTATION. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things that he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." This a convincing evidence of their unity. Teaches the surpassing love of that brotherhood of Christ. The principle is just as true to-day. The Church is a partnership in preaching the gospel and in good works. III. THE CAUSES. By examining the context we may discover some of the causes or conditions. 1. Fidelity. They had been entrusted with the gospel. They had faithful leaders (chaps. ii. 14; iii. 12; iv. 3–8; xiii. 19). They had faithful people (vers. 24–30). 2. Prayer (vers. 24–30). 3. Recognition of God's providence (ver. 28). 4. Holy Spirit (ver. 31). Notice it came in answer to prayer. To believers (*cf.* chap. ii. 4). Churches need renewals (*cf.* chaps ii. 4 and iv. 31) of Holy Spirit. IV. THE RESULTS. 1. Great spirituality. Scatter the embers of a dying fire and it goes out. Rake them together and you have warmth and glow. So with a divided and a united Church. 2. Great power. "A city set on a hill," &c. Such a Church can make the powers of darkness tremble. Keep this ideal before us and we shall be a united, spiritual, and aggressive Church. (*E. E. Curry.*) *Apostolic socialism*:—I. THE REASONS WHICH LED THE FIRST CHRISTIANS TO FORM THEMSELVES INTO A COMMUNITY HAVING ALL THINGS COMMON. 1. From the moment of the founding of Christianity the duty of living for others was insisted on. John the Baptist said, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none," &c. Nor was Jesus less explicit. "Sell that ye have and give alms." "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and many other passages which embody the principle of true socialism. 2. Doubtless some would urge that Jesus set the example of founding such a communistic society—not that He required all to part with their possessions, but it would seem that He did require this of the inner circle of apostles. "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee." "Go sell that thou hast . . . and come follow Me." Of this community Judas was the treasurer. 3. Remember again that this took place immediately after the outpouring of the Spirit, the natural effect of which would be the kindling of an enthusiasm which would make them capable of a self-sacrifice impossible to the natural man. It is evident, too, that poverty was very rife, and the newly invigorated affections rendered it impossible for a Christian to feast while others starved. II. WHY WAS THIS SOCIALISTIC SCHEME ABANDONED? For it is evident that it did not last long, since we find it nowhere else, nor even here a few years later. The truth is experience taught them that in the existing state of society Socialism would not work. Why? Just the sinfulness and selfishness of men. For society can only prosper if men's faculties are sharpened, and their energy and industry exerted to the utmost. And it is found that only competition can supply the motive which will induce men to do their best. No doubt if men were perfectly unselfish it would be otherwise, but they are not. When a man's comfort no longer depended on his own efforts, so that even if he worked harder than others he would fare no better, the spur to exertion would be gone, and he would do less, or even nothing, and thousands would prey upon others. Even the sharp law under which we live, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat," is evaded by idle impostors and beggars, but how indefinitely would the number of these social parasites be increased if all had a common right to the wealth of the community. And then again Socialism would give scope for fraud and dishonesty. The basis of any such scheme is that rich and poor give alike all they possess into the common fund. Selfish men, like Ananias, would seek to evade this and to live at the public expense while retaining what others had relinquished. It was this that probably broke up the scheme. III. WHY ARE THESE FACTS RECORDED? Not merely to teach that Socialism is a mistake, but that it is true as an ideal, but false as a practical system. Its essential underlying ideas are true. It is a Divine instinct which makes us long to give the

same blessings to the poor which the rich possess. It is right that each should labour not only for himself but for all. And while we cannot bring all humanity into a communistic society, we must nevertheless keep the ideal of social regeneration on the basis of brotherly love ever before us. (*A. M. Mackay, B.A.*) *Baptised purses:*—Miss Margaret Winning Leitch, one of two sisters from Ryegate, Vermont, U.S.A., of Scottish parentage, formerly of the United Presbyterian Church, now missionaries of the American Board in Ceylon, lately told her scholars the following incident: "A man, being converted, was about to join the Baptist Church. When he was going down into the water to be baptised, upon a profession of his faith in Christ, he handed his pocket-handkerchief to a friend to hold. In doing so, his purse fell out. The friend said, 'I will hold that too; you will not want it to get wet.' But the man replied, 'No, when I go down into the water I want my purse to be baptised with me, for that, as well as myself, must be consecrated to the service of the Lord.'" We may well agree with the missionary in her wish that there were more Christian workers with baptised purses. *Remarkable liberality:*—Perhaps there never was a more charitable man than John Wesley. His liberality knew no bounds but an empty pocket. He gave away, not merely a certain part of his income, but all that he had; his own wants being provided for, he devoted all the rest to the necessities of others. He entered upon this good work at a very early period. We are told that when he had thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year, receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave two and thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two. During the rest of his life he lived economically; and in the course of fifty years, it has been supposed, he gave away more than thirty thousand pounds. *Accumulated riches rightly used:*—If you go to St. Paul's Cathedral in London, I ask you to find out the monument to John Howard the philanthropist, and you will read upon it that the man who devotes himself to the good of mankind "treads an open but unfrequented path to immortality." Thank God, that path is not unfrequented now, and many capitalists realise their responsibilities. I was chaplain in Switzerland during August. One morning I was walking up a lovely valley by the banks of a river, and through a rich pasture land, enamelled with flowers, when I was overtaken by a young Swiss lad. He pointed to a mighty mountain at the head of the valley, covered with perpetual snow, and said in French, "Why should the good God have made snowfields and glaciers?" I pointed to the stream, and to the rich grass beneath our feet, and told him that the streams which enriched the valleys all around came from this snow mountain. So there are men who rise above their fellows like mountains above the valleys; riches have accumulated upon them as snow upon the lofty heights; but the sunshine of Divine love has melted the snow, which has flown down in fertilising streams, spreading gladness and prosperity around. (*Canon Bardsley.*)

Ver. 33. **With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.**—*The power of the Apostolic testimony to the resurrection:*—In what did this great power consist? I. IN THE GREAT NUMBER OF WITNESSES. Here were more than were necessary for the fabrication of a cheat, and too many to keep it long a secret (1 Cor. xv. 5, 6). II. IN THE WELL-KNOWN CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLES. They were poor, timid and friendless; and, therefore, unlikely to devise, and unable to execute, a scheme for imposing a falsehood of this nature upon the world. Above all, they were proverbial for integrity in principle and conduct. Such qualities would render any evidence respectable. Will it be said that their simplicity exposed them to delusion? There were among them Peter, sufficiently acute, and Thomas sufficiently scrupulous. Will it be said that, as followers of Christ, they were interested in the success of this story. Alas! in what way could the story advance the interest of any of them, if Jesus was not risen? It would have been much more natural, as well as reasonable, for them, as indeed they did after the crucifixion, to have shrunk from the public view. III. IN THAT THERE WAS AMONG THEM CONSISTENCE, BOLDNESS, AND CORRESPONDENT BEHAVIOUR. 1. They were perfectly consistent. Numerous as were the testifiers, there were no divisions, contradictions, or separate interests: and if there were some little variations in their narratives, respecting minute matters, these are reconcilable, and tend rather to confirm their accounts, by evidencing that there had been no combina-

tion. 2. They were undaunted. Though before, mortified with disappointment, and shaking with terror, they shunned even the light, they now openly and eagerly proclaimed that He who had been crucified, was risen from the dead. 3. There was also correspondent behaviour. They exhibited that life which the resurrection necessarily enforced. They were animated with that joy which it was calculated to inspire. They manifested that anxiety and diligence to maintain and propagate the religion of their Lord which it could not fail to produce. IV. IN THAT THEY BROUGHT TO THEIR SUPPORT THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES OF THE WORD OF GOD. The argument was of wonderful power with those Jews who had cherished the revelations which the Most High had vouchsafed to them; and it is of astonishing import, of irresistible force to every man, who considers soberly the wonderful, the supernatural, the connected, the singularly significant nature, of the Jewish economy. V. IN THAT IT LEFT HIS ADVERSARIES DESTITUTE OF ANY SATISFACTORY OR REASONABLE REPLICATION. Much it behoved the rulers of the Jews to prove to the people, who were many of them struck with the miracles of Christ, that they had not "crucified the Lord of Glory." In their care to secure the sepulchre, they betrayed their anxiety to do so. And, blessed Lord, could they have produced Thy sacred body after the third day, with what triumph would it have been exhibited! But there was no such refutation of the resurrection. VI. IN THAT IT WAS ACCOMPANIED WITH THE CONFIRMATION AND BLESSING OF GOD, AND PRODUCED GREAT AND EXTENSIVE CONVICTION. The establishment and rapid progress of a religion, whose Author was crucified, and its propagators twelve of the most despised men; of a religion so opposed to the strongest propensities of nature, so different from anything to which man had been accustomed, and so destructive to ancient, venerated, and congenial systems; and this, too, by means so simple, and seemingly inadequate to the object, is of itself a demonstration of the wisdom and power with which its witnesses unto the people spake. (*Bp. Dehon.*) *Preaching the resurrection of Jesus*:—Notice—I. THE GREAT FACT TO WHICH THEY GAVE TESTIMONY. 1. This fact was of essential importance in the Christian scheme. All the great events of our Lord's history are of vast importance, both in themselves or in their relation to each other. What would the death of Christ have availed if He had not also risen? 2. The apostles were witnesses of it. Hence they were prepared everywhere to vindicate the doctrine of the Resurrection. II. THE CHARACTER OF THEIR TESTIMONY. "Power" may refer to—1. The miracle they wrought. 2. The unction, the energy, the extraordinary influence of their ministry. 3. Their marvellous success. III. THE ABUNDANT GRACE WITH WHICH THEY WERE ENDOWED. "Great grace." Application: 1. Let us learn to give great prominence to the fundamental doctrines and facts of Christianity. 2. Let us remember that the success of our labours depends not only on what is preached, but very greatly on how it is preached. 3. Let us all, and always, mind to have great grace—the grace of humility, of patience, of charity, of faith—if we would have great success. (*W. Antliff, D.D.*) *The resurrection of Christ historic*:—1. The resurrection of Christ is the most important event in all history. It expresses in itself the whole gospel of God to man. When a new apostle was elected it was that he might be "a witness" to it. (1) This fact is the demonstration of all the other vital things in the gospel that went before it. By it Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power. By it God publicly owned Him in the face of earth and heaven, and testified to all things vital in His life and mission, to the sinlessness of His character, to the Divine truth of His teaching, and to the sufficiency of His atonement. (2) It is also the pledge and promise of all that is yet to come. It opens the gate of a future life; it is the pattern and the assurance of our own resurrection; the Church arose again in Christ, and each individual member of it has power and privilege to say, "Because He lives, I shall live also!" 2. With truth therefore, this fact is put in the Scriptures, and in derived systems of theological thought, as the key-stone of the arch of Christianity. Take it away, and the whole system crumbles to pieces. Our preaching is vain; your faith is vain; we are yet in our sins; we have no more hope in Christ for this life, or for any other. 3. Such a fact, from its very importance, requires the very strongest confirmation, and, being a fact of history, confirmation of a strictly historical kind. I. THE FACT itself. 1. It is a fact quite capable of proof. There is no difficulty in imagining it to have occurred. There are no invincible laws against it. There are no natural principles or instincts of the human mind which reject it. All that can be averred is that it is not in the line of our experiences. 2. What is sufficient evidence? All human laws assume that the testimony of two witnesses, when

that testimony is unchallenged and when it is confirmed by collateral evidence, is enough. This is not to say that any two men would be believed in anything they might choose to say. They must be honest men worthy of belief, and must be able to show that they had adequate opportunity for ascertaining or observing the thing to which they give testimony, and that they were the dupes of no illusion, and that they were in full possession of their faculties. Then, the human mind is so constituted that it must receive their testimony. If it were not so, human society would be no longer possible; no important case could be decided in any court of law; in fact, no law could be administered at all. II. THE WITNESSES. 1. How many are they? The first to see the risen Lord was Mary; then her companions, the other women, shared the privilege with her. Then John and Peter saw Him. Later in the day He met the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the evening He appeared to the brethren as they sat at meat; and again, a week later, to them in presence of Thomas. He came to the apostolic company by the lake; on the mountain more than five hundred brethren at once saw Him. It is probable that six or seven hundred people, at least, saw Christ after He was risen. True, we have not a separate testimony in writing from every one who saw Him. Writing in those days was not an easy matter. We have the testimony of the four Evangelists and of James, Peter, and Paul—to what? Not only to what they themselves saw and heard, but to the fact that a great many others saw and heard with them; and there is no denial from any of these. Here, *e.g.*, is a letter which Paul writes to the Corinthians, which he must have known would not be kept a secret; and he asserts in it that Christ was seen after His resurrection by more than five hundred men, most of whom, he says, were then alive; and yet there is no contradiction. Corinth was full of objectors, and some of them would have been nothing loth to undermine his authority. The casual observation, "Some have fallen asleep," indicates that he knew many of the persons referred to, and that, had it been necessary, he could have given further details respecting them. 2. Are they honest men? Let any one read the Gospels and see. True, and honest, and simple-hearted are they, if ever such men were in the world. 3. As to their soundness of mind. Where is there any sign of weakness or of hallucination in these Gospels, or in the Epistles, from first to last? They seem almost too calm. It is impossible to conceive evidence more perfectly given. They were the subjects of profound emotion; but they knew that the world could have no interest in the state of their feelings, and that what they had to do was to tell faithfully and truly the great facts which had excited such feelings. 4. As to their opportunities for ascertaining the truth. They saw their risen Lord many times and in many places. They heard Him speak; they talked with Him; they touched Him; they saw Him eat; they felt His breath; they saw Him ascend to heaven. 5. But had they not something to gain by this history? Yes; they gained disrepute, persecution, spoiling of goods, as the price of their faithfulness. They gained bonds and martyrdom. If they did not believe it, their course of action makes them the greatest madmen the world has ever seen. 6. Their testimony was received undoubtingly by men of their own generation. It has been said that eighteen centuries is a long time across which to verify important historic truth. But it was grasped and held by those to whom it was near, who could judge of its truth as we judge of the occurrences of our own time, and who could not be deceived. Remember the wonderful effects this belief produced then; and now Christendom, with all the light and love and tenderness it contains, is the fruit of the faith that there is a risen Christ. Conclusion: Eighty years before the resurrection Cæsar landed on the coast of Kent. Who thinks of doubting that? I suppose, if eternal salvation depended on believing it, there is not a sane Englishman alive who would fail of heaven; and yet the actual historic proof of this is far less complete, cogent, convincing, than the proof that Christ died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Men believe without any doubt or difficulty in the Sabine farm of Horace, where his friends quaffed the Falernian wine. We believe that Virgil died on a journey, and that he lies buried, at his own request, at the second milestone from Naples on the Puteolan way. We believe in the plough of Cincinnatus, and in the poison-cup of Socrates; but all kinds of conscientious scruples and honest doubts, which must be treated with great tenderness and delicacy, arise in some minds when they are asked to believe in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. We feel inclined to say of such, everything in its own place. We would not break any bruised reed, or quench any smoking flax; but if any one will not take the

trouble to examine the evidence for the resurrection, and yet will complain that he is unable to believe it, sympathy with such a person may be unfaithfulness to truth, and a slight even upon rationality, because he asks for comfort while rejecting light. Let men be honest and earnest in this great matter. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The gospel of the resurrection*:—Let us consider some of the reasons why the apostles attached such importance to the resurrection. It proved: I. THAT CHRIST WAS STILL LIVING AND HAD RETURNED TO HIS CHURCH. His death had struck them with confusion and dismay, and their first feeling was one of profound loss. The resurrection was the return of their beloved Master. So we do not worship a dead Christ. He is not a memory but a presence. II. THAT CHRIST HAD NOT FAILED IN HIS WORK. This was once their impression (Luke xxiv. 21). But after the resurrection all was changed. Here was—1. Triumph over death. 2. The proof that God had accepted the great sacrifice. 3. The evidence that what seemed a hindrance was the very means by which the Saviour effected His work of redemption. III. THAT CHRIST WAS MORE THAN MAN. It was a triumphant refutation of Jewish error. They had mocked at His claims (Luke xxiii. 35). Here was the vindication of them. Accordingly the apostles pressed this fact with great persistency (chap. iii. 15). He could be no mere man that could break the bars of the grave. IV. THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY. If this is granted it is vain to cavil at lesser miracles. Admit this, and all anti-Christian objection crumbles to dust. V. THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MAN TO BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD (1 Cor. xv. 20). (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) **Great grace was upon them all.**—*Manifestations of Divine grace*:—Grace sometimes denotes the full and undeserved compassion which our Heavenly Father manifests to a lost world. At other times, the term is employed to describe the subduing and sanctifying effects of this marvellous love. In the text it is to be understood as referring to both. Great grace was manifest—I. IN THEIR EARNEST AND UNITED PRAYERS. They held frequent communion with the God of all grace. This practice was habitual (chap. i. 14). On any unusual occasion of trial, prayer was their first and last resort (chap. iv. 31; xii. 5; xxi. 5). If "great grace" is to rest upon believers in our time, it will be when they realise the cheering promise of their Lord (Matt. xviii. 20). No matter how small, or how great the number, nor from what quarter, nor the place of assembly, He—the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church—will be present to bless. II. IN THEIR STEADFAST DEVOTION TO SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE. Indifference to Divine truth is always the sign that the spark of grace in the heart is near extinction. The first-fruits of the day of Pentecost, instead of dividing themselves up into rival factions, to suit their individual caprice, "continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine" (chap. ii. 42). III. IN THEIR LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER (ver. 32). When a company of Christians in Numidia had been taken prisoners by barbarians, and the churches to which they belonged were unable to pay their ransom, they sent to the Church in Carthage. Bishop Cyprian no sooner heard of this than he set himself at work, and never relaxed his efforts until he had collected the necessary sum. This substantial token of brotherly kindness was not more gratifying than the letter of Christian sympathy and tenderness which accompanied it. "In cases like these," wrote the bishop, "who would not feel sorrow, and who would not look upon a brother's sufferings as his own?" As the apostle says, "When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. xii. 26). Therefore, we must consider the captivity of our brethren as our own captivity. We must see Christ in our captive brethren, and redeem Him from captivity who redeemed us from death. IV. IN THE HOLY JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING WITH WHICH THEY TRIUMPHED IN EVERY PLACE. V. IN THE SPIRIT AND DEPORTMENT WITH WHICH THEY RECOMMENDED THEIR RELIGION TO THE WORLD (chap. ii. 47). A Christian young man was asked what had led him to turn aside from his wild and thoughtless career to become a follower of Jesus. Was it a sermon or a book that had improved him? He answered very emphatically, No. Had any one spoken to him specially on the subject of religion? "No. It was a Christian man, who boarded at the same house with me." "Did he ever talk to you about your soul?" "No, never, till I sought an interview with him; but there was a sweetness in his disposition, a heavenly-mindedness about him, that made me feel that he had a source of comfort and peace, to which I was a stranger. His whole life was a sermon. I sought an interview with him. He pointed me to Jesus Christ, prayed with me and counselled me." In this, and in all such cases, religion is preached most eloquently to the world. About twenty years ago, a Christian woman of

London was asked to take charge of a Bible-class of three young women. Although the work was a very humble one, she shrank from its responsibilities, and, with many misgivings, consented to the trial. The first month's experience was so encouraging that she consented to go on with the work, and the class constantly increased in numbers. From fifty, it soon grew to eighty, and a larger room was provided. In the course of a few years the Bible-class became five hundred strong; and now, at the age of sixty-nine, the faithful teacher (Mrs. Bartlett) has fallen asleep in Jesus. She was not a woman of marked ability, but simply one who gave up her whole self to the service of the Lord. This was the secret of her success. She knew the members of her large class, and called them by their names. She visited them at their homes, and wrote letters to the absent ones. For each, and for all of them, she prayed unceasingly. Her pupils are scattered over the whole earth, and many of them are telling to others the good tidings she brought to them. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Happy state of the primitive Church*:—We shall now seek an illustration of the text, by inquiring wherein such eminent grace appeared in these primitive believers. 1. Great grace appeared in their earnest and united supplications. 2. It appeared in their steadfast adherence to the apostles' doctrine. 3. In a constant adherence to the worship and service of God. 4. In their great love to one another. 5. These primitive Christians were full of holy joy and peace in believing, and they triumphed in every place. 6. Their spirit and deportment were such as recommended their religion to the word (chap. ii. 47). They abounded in those Christian graces which are lovely even in the eyes of men in general. (*Theological Sketch-Book.*)

Vers. 36, 37. **Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas.**—*Barnabas*:—Surnames become necessary as soon as men form themselves into societies. They are then no longer adequately distinguished by the simple "James" or "John," for others also bear the same name. Some personal characteristic, therefore, has to be selected: the trade, stature, complexion, or disposition of the man will suggest a title for him; he becomes known as James the Smith, or as John the Black, and probably transmits the surname to his posterity. When our Lord chooses His apostles they have to be distinguished in this way. There is Judas Iscariot, and Judas the brother of James. There is Simon Zelotes, and Simon surnamed Peter, &c. The apostles in their turn give surnames, and in the present instance the second name thrust the first out of recollection. "Joses" is from this time known as "Barnabas" alone. Our English translation interprets the name as "the son of consolation." Take "consolation" in a strong sense, and that is right. The word is elsewhere rendered "exhortation." It answers to the old English use of "comfort," in the sense of strengthening, as well as soothing, as we have it in the phrase, "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost." I. WE SHALL BEST UNDERSTAND THE NAME BY SURVEYING THE HISTORY. We know little of the antecedents of Barnabas. He was a native of Cyprus, the first stepping-stone across the great sea to the lands of the Gentiles. Its population was partly Greek, partly Oriental; and the kind of education which such a society would afford may have helped to make Barnabas a broader man than his brethren who had been born and bred in the closer atmosphere of Jerusalem. Tradition marks him out as among the seventy sent forth by Christ. Or he may have been one of the fruits of Pentecost. Some of those converts, we know, were "men of Cyprus and Cyrene." His first appearance has more of action in it than of speech. It was at the moment when, under the fresh impulses of their awakening, the disciples who had "houses or lands" were parting with them for the relief of their poorer brethren. Conspicuous among them was Barnabas. It was a good beginning for a Christian ministry. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The interest deepens as we proceed. Six or seven years pass, and an unlooked-for and almost unwelcome proselyte presents himself. It is Saul, who finds himself an object of alarm and undisguised mistrust. The way is opening for a schism between them and this "last of the apostles," who seeks their sympathy, but who can dispense with it, strong in his own independent authority, and in the promised presence of the Lord. There was needed at that moment some well-known and trusted leader, large-hearted enough to become surety for the former persecutor, and to stand his friend. This friend was found in Barnabas. It was he who joined Peter's hands with Paul's, and who told the tale of the wonderful conversion in such a manner as to dissolve all doubt. The "son of consolation" appears here at his appropriate work, reconciling those opposing forces with the sweet reasonableness of his own

gentler spirit. He was selected, shortly afterwards, for a mission in which the same spirit would find scope. Tidings had reached the apostles of strange successes attending the gospel in Antioch, and they were not prepared for such an event. The baptism of Cornelius was in obedience to a direct revelation from heaven, but this larger movement appeared unauthorised, and might prove unwarranted. Barnabas was accordingly chosen to visit the spot and make inquiry. Now it is not altogether easy for any man to give unstinted commendation to a work in which he himself has had no share. He is apt to point out what might have been done better, rather than what has been done well. Finely in contrast with that tendency stands out the candid and generous behaviour of Barnabas. He "saw the grace of God," "was glad," and expressed himself in terms of warm congratulation and approval. Nay, he threw his own energies into the glorious enterprise, and "exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord." When he departed he left many further converts added to the infant Church, and the impression that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Next we find that by his urgency Paul was brought from the seclusion of Tarsus, and introduced to the field of work which lay ready for him in Antioch. It was through his generous co-operation that the ministry of the apostle of the Gentiles found favourable opportunities of exercise. But from that hour the lustre of his name begins to pale beside the fervent and forward energy of his incomparable companion. We find in the history no trace of any jealousy; but rather tokens of a noble modesty, akin to that of the Baptist when he drew back into the shade before the perfect light of Christ. This man, who, when others shunned Paul, had become his patron and protector, laying him under no common obligation, is now content to yield the precedence, and to walk loyally and lovingly at his side. When the missionaries differed—if we have to choose between the two—surely it was Barnabas who erred upon the generous side; for what he did was to take a faint-hearted brother whom Paul was too impatient to endure, and to give him that fresh chance of honourable service which made Mark "profitable" ever afterwards to Christ and to His Church. II. All will acknowledge THE PECULIAR CHARM WHICH ATTACHES TO THE TRUE "SON OF CONSOLATION." There are men who everywhere leave behind them a sense of irritation, like winds that blow dust into face and eyes. They are the opposites to Barnabas. There was sunshine where he came. At his approach the feeble gathered strength, and trembling souls crept out of their hiding toward the light. Hard words were hushed in his company; the sternest grew gentle, and the very churl tried to be liberal. Yet it would be a mistake to suspect him of moral weakness and irresolution. The sunshine has its strength, as well as the wind, though it makes much less noise. Barnabas was once, to Paul's great wonder, "carried away by the dissimulation" of others; but his very wonder—"even Barnabas!"—shows how unusual the symptom was. For "sons of consolation" are also sons of strong encouragement, who can themselves burn against injustice or hypocrisy, and inspire others with a kindred zeal. It is significant that heathen men "called Barnabas Jupiter," the name that embodied their poor conceptions of what was greatest and best, most fatherly, and most benignant. We recognise the presence of such men in our own generation. The temper of the moment may not tend to exalt them, or to press their example on our imitation. The sterner gifts may be mostly in request. We watch with mingled awe and admiration as some impetuous missionary spirit sweeps by, rousing the dull Church to a measure of its own activity. We applaud the controversialists, who contend for separate sides of truth, or for principles which they reckon overlooked. No doubt there is great need of them. Is there not need also of "the son of consolation," and may he not do as good a work as they? Surely it is not below the ambition of the strongest to play the part of Barnabas among the Churches of to-day. As long as so many timid, undecided souls remain, needing the tenderest touch and a patience almost motherlike to bring them to decision; as long as there are little children to be drawn into the Saviour's arms; as long as the Church has her backsliders to reclaim, and her doubters to direct and encourage; so long there will be ample occupation for such a man, and abundant reward. Nor will he live in vain, but rather to the highest purpose, if he be made instrumental, like Barnabas, in dissipating suspicions, and confirming friendships, between Christian brethren. (*W. Brock.*) *A son of consolation:*—While some good people are overpraised, there are others who hardly get their dues. One of these too much neglected worthies is Barnabas, the "son of consolation," or "son of exhortation," as some Bible scholars prefer to render it. How seldom do we hear his name mentioned either

in the pulpit or the lecture-hall or anywhere else! Yet, to my fancy, he is one of the very noblest of the New Testament heroes. As a blind person may detect the presence of a rose by its fragrance, so this good man's character exhales a peculiarly sweet perfume of godliness to those who will study it. He was just the sort of Christian needed in all our Churches in these days. The Bible is very chary of eulogies; but it does not hesitate to call him "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit." In some vital points he is a Christian to be copied. 1. He was a native of the island of Cyprus, which was renowned for the worship of Venus, and the very name "Cyprian" is still a synonym of impurity. But, as the brightest light is kindled on a point that comes out of a bed of charcoal, so this light-bearer of the gospel came out of a very dark region of debauchery and idolatry. His original name was Joseph; but another name was given him after his conversion to Christ. They christened him Barnabas, the son of consolation. That is a name to be proud of, and it comprehends a vast deal; it signifies a helper of the weak, a guide to the wanderer, a comforter of the sad, a succourer of the perishing, with an eye to discover misery and a hand to relieve it. My old friend William Arnot has well said that this name bespeaks a fine character. "To possess consolation is to give it; not to give it is not to possess it. The more of it you have, the more you may give; and the more you give to others, the more you retain for your own use. This circle, when it is set a-going, moves perpetually, like the sea giving out its waters to the sky, and the sky sending back the boon by rain and the rivers to the sea again." The power of this man lay in the same quality that characterised nearly all those first converts to Christianity, and that was their superabounding sympathy. Barnabas, if in New York or Brooklyn or London now, would likely be found in a mission church for the half or the whole of every Sabbath. He would show us how to bridge the chasm between wealth and poverty, and between Christian culture and city heathenism. On many an evening during the week he would be found beside the squalid bed of sickness, or amid the swarming outcasts of the slums. When the members of our Churches become "sons of consolation" in the broadest sense of the word, bestowing not merely their dollars, but their time, their presence, and the sympathy of their hearts upon the unchristianised masses, we shall have a primitive and Pentecostal revival. Personal sympathy is worth more to the poor, the suffering, and the neglected than silver and gold. Pulpits speak only for an hour or two, and then only to those who fill pews before them; it is by sermons in shoes—and plenty of them—that the suffering and the sinning only can be reached. The curse of too much of what passes for Christianity is itself selfishness. 2. There is another plume in the coronet of Barnabas. He was the father of systematic beneficence. We are told that having land he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Having given his heart to Christ, he consecrated a goodly portion of his property to his Master's service. Some others of the new converts may have done this as soon as he; but he is the first one mentioned. He is, therefore, to be regarded as the pioneer in that long procession of systematic givers which reaches on to our times, and numbers in its ranks the Nathaniel Ripley Cobbs and James Lenoxes and William E. Dodges, and many other bountiful stewards of the Lord; and not only they who gave of their abundance, but every conscientious Christian who gives according to his means—however humble—and gives spontaneously. Barnabas did more than fling loose money into Christ's treasury. He sold real estate and contributed the proceeds. That looks as if there were real self-denial in the transaction, and that the man would stand a pinch for Christ's sake. When he was converted, the work reached not only the bottom of his heart, but the bottom of his pocket. (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *A son of consolation*:—Who is the man who, in his bereavement or pain, receiving comfort from God, radiates it, so that the world is richer by the help the Lord has given him? It is the reverent, the unselfish, and the humble man. The sunlight falls upon a clod, and the clod drinks it in, is warmed by it itself, but lies as black as ever, and sheds no light. But the sun touches a diamond, and the diamond almost chills itself as it sends out in radiance on every side the light that has fallen on it. So God helps one man bear his pain, and nobody but that one man is a whit the richer. God comes to another sufferer, reverent, unselfish, humble, and the lame leap, and the dumb speak, and the wretched are comforted all around by the radiated comfort of that happy soul. *A son of consolation*:—I. Barnabas was a Levite, YET HE POSSESSED LAND, which was contrary to the old law of Israel, but probably on account of great and frequent changes it was found impossible to maintain the ancient constitution in its integrity. Barnabas was a

good name; but how rife is its opposite—the son of complaint, of gloom. To such a man everything appears in its darkest colours. He sees no green on the earth, and in the heavens no blue—all is seen through the medium of a jaundiced eye. Barnabas had much comfort himself because he had much to bestow on others. If we see streams flowing to refresh a neighbourhood we argue that the spring is full. His great contributions did not embitter his spirit. The flow of bounty from that man's hand acted as the flow of water from the drain on a ploughed field—it sweetened and made fertile the whole breadth of his life. It is the gorging up of water for want of outlet that makes the land sour and leaves it barren. Barnabas was a rich man, and therefore able to bestow practical consolation; but in thus expending his wealth he acquired the better and more enduring riches. II. Barnabas was a Levite, YET HE WAS A SON OF CONSOLATION—how unlike many of the class to which he belonged, who "despised others." See, *e.g.*, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Yet is not this note added to show that an order must not be blamed for the vices of individual members? Levi had a remote descendant called Caiaphas; he had another surnamed Barnabas. Let those who assail the ministry and other professions remember this. III. Barnabas was a Levite—A RELIGIOUS TEACHER. He could administer comfort from his lips as well as from his purse. Many can only give lip comfort; what we have, then, let us give cheerfully. (*W. Arnot.*) **Of the country of Cyprus.**—*Cyprus*:—An island in the Mediterranean, one hundred and sixty miles long by fifty broad. A range of mountains runs through its entire length, called Oympus by the ancients, but now known by several names. Salamis, afterwards called Constantia, was one of the principal cities, and Paphos another. The island was colonised by Phœnicians at a remote period, and afterwards divided among petty tyrants when it became subject to the Persian yoke. Next it fell under the sway of Alexander, upon whose death it fell, with Egypt, to the share of Ptolemy Lagos. In the course of time it passed over to Rome, in whose hands it was during the New Testament period. Paul and Barnabas visited the island, and preached at Salamis and Paphos, where they left Christian Churches. When the empire was divided, Cyprus became part of the Eastern section. Richard I. took it in 1191, and sold it to the Templars, whose oppression drove the people into revolt. Richard resumed the sovereignty, and gave it to Guy of Lusignan, the expelled king of Jerusalem, in 1192. The Lusignans retained it for nearly three centuries, which was a flourishing period for Cyprus. The Venetians were its next masters, but in 1470 Selim II. seized it. "No grass grows where the Turk sets his hoof," and ever since ruthless despotism has wasted the fair island, so that from 1,000,000 in the days of Barnabas, the population has dwindled to 100,000. Now under British protection, and with British enterprise, capital, and missionary zeal, Cyprus may become prosperous once more. (*F. A. Warrington.*) **Having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**—*Practical Christian beneficence*:—The good Duchess of Gordon set her heart upon the erection of a school and chapel in a needy district of her neighbourhood. The Gordon estates at the time were so encumbered that she did not know where to find the necessary funds. In a letter to her friend Miss Howe, she described some of her efforts and the consequences. "I took up to London," she says, "a gold vase that cost about £1,200 in hopes of selling it, but could not find a purchaser even at half price. I have still left it to be disposed of. The Duchess of Beaufort, hearing of my vase, thought of her diamond earrings, which she got me to dispose of, for a chapel in Wales, and her diamonds made me think of my jewels; and as the Duke has always been most anxious for the chapel, he agreed with me that stones were much prettier in a chapel wall than round one's neck, and so he allowed me to sell £600 worth, or, rather, what brought that, for they cost me more than double. The chapel is going on nicely, and I have still enough jewels left to help to endow it, if no other way should open. I do think I may with confidence hope for a blessing on this. It is no sacrifice to me whatever, except as it is one to the Duke, who is very fond of seeing me fine, and was brought up to think it right." The chapel cost rather more than was expected, and the Duke, following up his wife's example, offered of his own accord to sell some of his own horses to make up the deficiency. (*A. Moody Stuart, D.D.*) *The profit and rule of Christian beneficence*:—"Since I began to obey the law," said a thriving merchant to me, "I have not only been greatly prospered, but I have found my ability to give somewhat largely the greatest luxury of my life. The money is laid by; the call comes, and I am not tempted to the baseness of inventing excuses; I generally have something, not always enough,

for every deserving appeal; I make short work of it, for time I cannot spare, and as soon as I get the facts, and am sure as to the claimant, I give him cheerfully what I think I owe to his cause." I know another and a wealthier man, who said he and his wife had an understanding. When his wife thought they were rich enough to set up their carriage, the answer was, "Yes, my dear; it will cost just so much a year; we can afford it, and you deserve it if you approve my increasing my charities by an equal sum." Is not this the law of Christian luxury? I can buy such a picture, or give such an entertainment, only when I give an equivalent to Christ's poor and to the glory of His cross and crown. (*Bp. Cleveland Coxe.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1-11. **But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.**—*Ananias and Sapphira:*—The word Ananias means "grace of God"; and the word Sapphira signifies just "a sapphire," the familiar jewel of brilliance and beauty. We should suppose these two people had an unusually bright prospect in the outset. Somebody there was who loved them enough to give them very fine names when they were little. Ananias lied; then it was that "the grace of God" went out of him for ever. Sapphira lied; when a woman loses the truth, it is as if the last light went out of a sapphire. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira:*—Hitherto all has been progress and triumph. Faith has become enthusiasm. Earth caught the colouring, yea, the very life of heaven. Private ownership was swallowed up by social beneficence, and little restrictions and classifications were swept away by a generosity akin to the love of God. Now we come upon another aspect of affairs. We find a twist in the golden thread. The whole thing must come to a stop until this be rectified. Think of the Church standing still, though glowing with the enthusiasm of love, until judgment be satisfied! Why not treat the offence as a trifling one? Why not pass it over without notice? Because the Church is called unto holiness, and sin must ever bring down the anger and judgment of God. From the conduct of these people we see—I. THE VITAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SPIRIT AND THE FASHION OF CHRISTIANITY. We might say between a principle and a mere rule. Ananias tried to be a Christian from the outside. He put the hands of the clock to the right time, but left the mainspring broken and the pendulum still. 1. We may imitate Christ, and yet not know Him after the spirit. 2. We may mingle with Christians, and yet know nothing of the spiritual power of Christianity. The incident says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." II. THE FATAL TEMPTATION TO GIVE THE PART AS THE WHOLE. Observe not the part instead of the whole: not to give the part distinctly and avowedly as the part; but to give it as if it were really all. This is illustrated —1. In speaking half-heartedly as if sincerely. 2. In giving a small contribution as if it exhausted our resources. "I cannot afford more," is the chief lie of the Church. 3. In concealing our convictions by using words with various meanings. 4. In having outward associations which do not express the whole tendency and trust of the heart. 5. In modifying vows according to changes in circumstances—young man dedicating himself to the ministry: young tradesman vowing to consecrate his property: young Christian vowing to offer a solemn testimony for Christ. III. THE CONCEALED SIN AS WELL AS THE PUBLIC INIQUITY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" 1. There is yet to be a reading of hearts. 2. Not only what we have done, but what we have left undone is to be judged. 3. Sins which apparently do no harm to society are to be punished. The voice of the judgment is, "The wages of sin is death." Application—1. The Church is to be holy. 2. Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished. 3. Discipline is of greater consequence than numbers. 4. The Christian power which heals one man destroys another. Contrast the cripple with Ananias. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira:*—The apostolic Church had been welded into a remarkable unity of experience and purpose. All hours and places seemed filled with the presence of God. Men had forgotten their selfishness, and lived for each other and their Lord. Pentecost and

millennium were apparently but a little way and a short time apart; and then suddenly, like lightning from a clear sky, came the crime of Ananias and Sapphira. The Church was the Church militant, and not triumphant, after all. The Judas among the apostles had, and was to continue to have, his descendants. The Church in the world was to be crippled and compromised by the world in the Church. The transaction was typical and the narrative suggestive. Notice, then—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE SIN. It was not simple falsehood. Misrepresentation, deceit, lying, in the ordinary affairs of life, are evils of incalculable magnitude; but this sin was the attempt to deceive and defraud God. In the fervour of their new-born faith and experience, men were parting with their property, and consecrating the price of it to Christ and His Church. Ananias and Sapphira had seen enough of the new religion to wish to be numbered among its followers; so they plotted to buy discipleship at a cheaper rate than their neighbours. In this they thought that they were measuring their business capacity against the business ignorance of Peter; in fact, they were trying to deceive the eyes that look through eternity. Many a man since has ventured upon the same experiment. In every community there are some who are convinced of the worth of religion, and outwardly unite with the Church. Neither their conduct nor their neglect is such as to subject them to discipline; and yet they are far from having made a complete surrender of themselves to God. Their religious life is a compromise. The bulk of their time and energy is devoted to self and the world; the dust and sweepings are offered to God. Fingers that glisten with diamonds drop dimes into the contribution-box. Luxuries are cheerfully paid for; but poverty and prudence are urged as excuses for mere pittances towards the cause of God. Ananias in broadcloth and Sapphira in silk sit in the churches every sabbath, trying to cheapen the bargain with God, and cheating as well, by offering less than complete surrender. II. THE ORIGIN OF THE SIN. In general it was due to an evil heart, but its specific root was the love of money. 1. Ananias and Sapphira, while they were not averse to the reputation of having made great sacrifices for the gospel, could not give up the pleasure of feeling that they had property; and so, as avaricious people, they "kept back part of the price." 2. Perhaps they desired to have the means of purchasing more luxuries than were enjoyed by those who "had all things in common"; and so, as selfish people, they "kept back part of the price." 3. Not impossibly, they were uncertain as to the permanence of this new faith, whose collapse would leave them without means of support; and so, as prudent people, they "kept back part of the price." In our day, when men are called to choose between piety and property, there are many who prevaricate, and end with a compromise. The great aggressive enterprises of the Church are crippled for lack of financial support, and yet a very considerable portion of the wealth of Christian lands is in the hands of professed disciples. They are prodigal in their prayers and hymns and exhortations, but close-handed with their money. Like the tree in the ancient legend, which uttered a moan and bled whenever a twig was broken off, they writhe when forced to give for the glory of God and the salvation of men. The old poison of avarice is still in the veins of the Church; and Christ is dishonoured, and thousands perish, because so many, who call themselves His followers, "keep back part of the price." III. THE DISCOVERY OF THE SIN. It seemed unlikely that the transaction would be made public. The land was probably sold to some one outside the company. Ananias and Sapphira would not circulate the story of what they had done. But there was an uncalculated factor in the equation. It affected the kingdom of God, as well as the real estate market. It was fair dealing as between man and man; as between man and God it was fraud, and so it was sure to be discovered. It is a truth which men are slow to learn, that there is a Divine detective system in the universe. It is easy to deceive the world. Men may consider us generous, when in reality we are pinched in our charities; they may call us self-sacrificing, when in fact self-pleasing is the sovereign motive of our lives; they may esteem us devout, when we are cold and formal: but what is our trickery worth, so long as there is One that knows us altogether? Dionysius constructed a prison, so that he could hear all that was said by the prisoners, and so made them self-accusers in the day of their trial. To God this world is one vast whispering-gallery, and every sin which men commit reports itself to Him. What a wonderful day that will be when the secrets of all hearts are made known! Men ought always to live as in the light of the Great White Throne. IV. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SIN. 1. It was startling and severe. One moment Ananias and Sapphira stood before the apostle in the flush of life and health, with the lie upon their lips; the next they were in eternity,

beginning the experience of its unchanging awards. The penalty might be judged extreme for a single sin: but (1) At the outset of the Christian Church it was important to emphasise the fact that the liberty of the gospel was not license. (2) More than that, the sin itself was significant. As the single blossom is evidence whether the stock is weed or flower, so this action was proof of a heart alienated from God. Grace is ample in its provisions, but strict in its conditions. The Redeemer will have the whole of men, or He will have none of them. "Every branch that beareth not fruit, He taketh away." 2. It was anticipative and representative. The judgment continues to be executed. Men now who attempt to defraud God are not beaten down as with a lightning-stroke; but, all the same, they die spiritually. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Deception exposed and punished:*—I. IMPIOUS DECEPTION. 1. The possession devoted. "Ananias with Sapphira his wife sold a possession" (chap. iii. 45; iv. 34; Lev. xxvii. 28; Eccles. v. 4). 2. The part kept back (Mal. iii. 8; Josh. vii. 11; John xii. 6; 1 Tim. vi. 10). 3. Counterfeit benevolence. Lessons: (1) Has as its motive the praise of men rather than the approval of God. (2) Aims chiefly at making a big impression upon people. (3) Aims to give in such a way as shall most advertise the donor. (4) Always tries to get credit for giving more than it actually does. II. IMMEDIATE DETECTION. 1. The source of the sin (ver. 3; John xiii. 27; Eph. iv. 27; Jas. iv. 7). 2. The inexcusableness of the sin (ver. 4; Lev. i. 3; Exod. xxv. 2; 2 Cor. ix. 7). 3. The nature of the sin. Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Psa. li. 4; Gen. xxxix. 9; Luke xv. 21). Lessons: (1) Sin is suggested by Satan. (2) No sin is unavoidable—"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie?" (3) Sin is inexcusable—no one can plead compulsion. (4) Sin is never concealed from the eyes of God. (5) Sin is not so much a trespass against men, as a trespass against God. III. INSTANT DEATH. 1. Ananias. (1) The judgment. "Fell down and gave up the ghost" (chap. xiii. 11; Numb. xvi. 32; 2 Kings i. 12). (2) The effect. "Great fear" (Lev. x. 3; Numb. xvi. 34; Deut. xiii. 11). (3) The burial (Lev. x. 5; 2 Sam. xviii. 17; John xix. 40). 2. Sapphira. (1) Her examination (Rev. ii. 21; 2 Pet. iii. 9). (2) Her sin pointed out (Prov. xi. 21; Exod. xvii. 7; 1 Cor. x. 9). (3) Her sentence (Prov. xix. 9; Psa. lv. 23; Job xxxi. 3; Prov. xxix. 1). 3. The great fear (Psa. cxi. 10; Matt. x. 28; Phil. ii. 12). Lessons: (1) Judgment may tarry, but it is sure to come at the last as a lightning stroke. (2) In the day of judgment all hypocrites will be exposed. (3) Judgment is not pronounced until opportunity for repentance is given. (4) Judgment upon one or two often is mercy to the many. (5) The judgments of God upon iniquity should cause a wholesome fear of the Lord. (6) The judgments of God are to be feared by the workers of iniquity. There are limits even to His forbearance. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Ananias and Sapphira:*—I. THE SIN. It was of no common magnitude. If we consider the circumstances we shall find—1. That this falsehood was an imposition on the society with which Ananias was himself connected. 2. That it was designed to defraud the apostles and the whole Church. 3. That he could plead no appearance of external temptation. 4. That his purpose was veiled under the pretence of religious principles. 5. That his sin was deliberately and presumptuously directed against the Holy Spirit of God. II. THE PUNISHMENT. 1. It was death. 2. It was inflicted without warning. 3. It immediately followed the presumptuous transgression. 4. It produced great fear upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard of it. III. REFLECTIONS. 1. That men may enjoy high advantages, may make a fair profession of religion, and may obtain admission to its most sacred external privileges, and yet may remain slaves to vicious dispositions, and strangers to the fear of God. Other examples we have in Cain, Esau, and Judas. 2. That men may travel far in the journey of life before they meet with those peculiar circumstances which are fitted to discover and display their true characters. So it was with Balaam, Hazael, and Judas. 3. How corrupting, enslaving, debasing is the spirit of avarice (Prov. xxi. 26; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10). 4. The encroaching nature of sinful principles and dispositions. Covetousness led to deliberate, aggravated falsehood and fraud, and to impiety so presumptuous as to provoke the immediate judgment of God. One transgression of the Divine law renders others in some degree necessary, and at the same time renders the mind blind to the sad consequences that must result from them. 5. The odious nature and pernicious tendency of the vices of lying, fraud, and hypocrisy (Prov. vi. 16, 19; Hab. ii. 9; Jer. xxii. 13; Mal. i. 14). Conclusion: The fearful punishment of these two false disciples leads to the consideration of—1. The omniscience of God. No human eye saw Cain murder his brother. Gehazi flat-

tered himself that he was perfectly secure from detection. Ananias and Sapphira had no doubt prepared their plan with all possible secrecy; but they all forgot that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." 2. How tremendous is the power of God over His creatures! He can bestow life, and He can withdraw it at His pleasure (Deut. xxxii. 39). (*H. Thomson, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira*:—The sin and punishment of this pair of hypocrites present the first trace of a shade on the bright form of the young Church. As in Eden the enemy could not assert his evil sway in his proper form, so in his efforts in the Church he assumed a guise suited to effect his purpose—the guise of goodness. A foe within is more to be dreaded than a foe without. But no sooner did evil reveal itself within the Christian circle than the Spirit detected and judged it. The word "but" put the conduct of Ananias and his wife in sharp contrast with that of Barnabas. Matthew Henry calls it the "melancholy *but*." We pass suddenly from the warm sunshine of the "son of consolation" to the gloom of hypocrisy and fraud. Evil is often a close neighbour to good. "The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them." How near to each other are chaff and wheat! but the chaff is not wheat, and is finally separated from it. Teaching by opposites is an impressive method of instruction. I. THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. "Lying unto the Holy Ghost." In vers. 3 and 4 the personality and deity of the Spirit are asserted in an incidental way. Peter varies the charge of lying to the Spirit in the third verse to lying to God in the fourth. It is noteworthy that a similar exchange of expression occurs in Psa. lxxviii. 36—"lied unto Him," and ver. 41, "tempted God." Numb. xi. and xiv. clearly show that the righteous judgment which Israel's "lying" to God and "tempting" Him provoked was quite analogous to this of Ananias and Sapphira. Their case was aggravated far beyond that of Simon Magus or of Elymas. It resembles more closely that of Nadab and Abihu, of Achan and of Gehazi (Lev. x.; Josh. vii.; 2 Kings v. 20–27), but was more criminal, because committed against greater light and intensified by a more profound hypocrisy. Let us note some of its aggravations. 1. Their act was gratuitous. 2. It was marked by covetousness. 3. Unbelief also entered into their guilt. (1) They distrusted God. "Suppose this community of goods should become exhausted, what then?" (2) There was the feeling that they would not and could not be detected in their deed. 4. The sin was preconcerted. They "agreed together" to deceive the Church and the Spirit in the Church. The plan was concocted deliberately and dispassionately. 5. The devil's agency in the sin. The question "why" implies that resistance to Satan's influence had been possible. Ananias is addressed, not as a helpless creature whom the enemy had made his tool, but as one who had made him his partner and abettor. "Filled thine heart" means something more than to suggest or to encourage; it means affections engrossed and will dominated. II. THEIR PUNISHMENT. It was instantaneous. As their sin challenged both the omniscience and justice of God, He at once vindicated the holiness and majesty of His character. But why were these persons so swiftly and severely judged? Have not men lied to God since? Let these points be noted—1. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was peculiarly heinous and odious. 2. At their death "great fear came upon all." To produce this was doubtless one of the objects intended. It was important also as a permanent testimony against similar offences in every age of the Church. 3. This judgment connects with God's dispensational ways. At the opening of an economy a standard is established designed to characterise the entire period. At the beginning any gross departure is immediately punished. The first sabbath-breaker, the trespass of Nadab and Abihu at the first founding of the priesthood, and that of Achan at the first entrance into Canaan, were punished with death. Such inflictions are at the start the exhibition of God's thoughts as to what the economy should be. Nothing false, hypocritical, or presumptuous is to be tolerated in it. III. THE LESSONS. 1. The Divine abhorrence of prevarication. If falsehood kindle among men the deepest resentment, what must be God's feelings toward the hypocrite? 2. The certainty of the exposure of hypocrisy. All that is required is some pressure. "Be sure your sin will find you out." 3. Religious enthusiasm without grace is dangerous. People run fearful risks when they profess more than their spiritual strength can carry. In times of great religious excitement men pledge themselves to what they cannot fulfil. Or remarkable experiences are claimed; then trials are encountered, and failure succeeds. Pride forbids the acknowledgment of failure; professions are as loud as ever. And for all this there is no basis in fact—it is a mere mask to hide the true state of the

heart. How much safer and nobler is the honest confession of a break-down than such loud and hollow protestations! (*W. G. Moorehead, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira—the enormity of religious pretension:*—I. THE SIN GENERATING POWER OF AVARICE. "The love of money is the root of all evil." II. AN UNDUE ATTENTION TO PUBLIC SENTIMENT. Ananias and Sapphira, without any heart sympathy with the community of goods, professed to adopt it because it was popular. They wished to appear as good as others, and did outwardly that for which they had no real respect. III. A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION WITH THE EVIL ONE. "He is a liar and the father of it." IV. RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS REGARDED AS CRIME (ver. 4). There was no necessity for them to give it. God does not want our property except as it expresses our loving loyalty. Better far to hold money as a miser than to give it if the heart does not go with it. Gifts to pacify conscience or for display, or to get it back with interest, is an insult to Omniscience. Great contributions may be great sins. V. A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE UPON GOD AND HIS CHURCH (ver. 9). VI. A SOLEMN DISPLAY OF DIVINE DISPLEASURE. Conclusion: 1. Social benevolence is the law of Christianity. 2. The tendency to depravity is to counterfeit goodness. 3. Satan's influence is no palliation of man's crime. 4. Hypocrisy must one day be unmasked and punished. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The sin and the doom of Ananias and Sapphira:*—Note—I. A PARTICULAR STATE OF THINGS occasioned by peculiar and temporary circumstances. Many who were strangers in Jerusalem would wish to remain; many would be detained longer than they anticipated; there might be serious consequences to some of them in relation to the synagogue, and they might be in danger of the confiscation of their goods; and perhaps there was an impression that the time was nigh when Christ would come, and when all property would cease. But, along with that, there was the gush of new feeling filling their hearts under the influence of their new faith. And so they clung to one another as really "members one of another"; and they showed it in this way. But—1. It was never laid down by the apostles as a principle of the Church. This is distinctly stated by Peter. It was necessary, however, for money to be got. The most spiritual society and plans cannot go on without money. Here were many who at this time, and as public men, could not be doing anything, and many who were likely to be drawn into difficulty through their new faith; and the easiest and simplest way, to men who were not political economists, was just to throw the money into a common fund, and to live upon that as long as they could. But it is evident from the Epistles that it never was taught as a part of Christianity, for they recognise differences of rank and circumstance, and they do not call upon the rich to throw everything into a common fund. They prescribe appropriate duties to rich and poor, but they do not say that these distinctions are to be done away. Christianity is not so absurd a thing. If it were a matter of positive obligation upon a Christian to part with private property because wrong in itself, terrible consequences would follow. If it is wrong in me to have house or land, it is wrong for me to sell it to anybody else. True, indeed, you may come in with the idea that it is wrong for a Christian to have these things, and that a Christian (or a church) is to sell house and land. But are you going to doom a part of the earth to be eternally "the world"—unbelievers, to whom you will sell these things? Let us remember that the gospel is intended to be universal, and that you are not to lay down as a positive duty of the Church anything which all men cannot do. And all men cannot do this. As long as the earth lasts, there will be the land and fields and houses and private possessions; and if Christianity is to be a thing filling the earth, depend upon it, it never can do that if all people are to part with their possessions. Why, if Christianity is to be universal, the time will come when there will be nobody to buy. I do not think, therefore, that this is laid down as an obligation, or intended to be permanent, or that it involves in it a fixed principle that can become universal. 2. It should, however, be remembered that a strong religious faith will bring Divine and eternal things very close to a man; and under its deep influence he will learn to hold cheaply the possessions of time, feeling that he knows not at what hour the Son of Man may come, when he must pass away from these things if they do not pass away from him. 3. Christians are to feel that they are members one of another, and that if one member suffers others must sympathise. But then the principle should be carried out fully; all men should remember that they are called upon to do this. And in this way the operation and influence of institutions and laws and habits are to be looked at and regarded, and everything which will operate with any crushing power upon a part of society; and the principle of pure humanity and Christian feeling should lead men to take out of the way what will injure a

brother, and to impart of their substance and their sympathy for the promotion of universal happiness and tranquillity and comfort. 4. There are extraordinary times and circumstances when very extraordinary things may be required. There may be times when a peculiar and extraordinary call shall be made upon the liberality of the Church. And men in the Church may feel themselves called to a peculiar vocation; they may feel that God is urging them by His providence to the fulfilment of a mission for which they must free themselves from any entanglement. Barnabas had land, and he sold it, and he stood from that time forth a poor man, resting upon the Church; but then he was free to go anywhere—and he did go, fulfilling a mission to mankind. But you cannot make that universal with respect to all men. II. THIS STATE OF THINGS BECAME A SNARE TO ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, AND LED THEM INTO SIN. I daresay a public opinion sprung up among Christians, and perhaps they might look rather coldly upon those that did not do what others were doing. I daresay there was some kind of distinction thrown about those who were conspicuous for sympathy of this sort. And it made Ananias and his wife wish for the distinction without being willing to pay the price for it. And so they agreed to sell their property, and to lay down a part of the price, pretending it was the whole, and then to stand there as if they had stripped themselves, and to be claimants upon the common fund. This sin had some tremendous aggravations. Note—1. The hypocrisy of the whole procedure. They were pretending, of course, to be moved by a Divine influence; to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit; pretending to give a sacred thing, "Corban," given up for the service of God and of His people—and yet they were not doing it. And it was to get an odour of sanctity. 2. The deliberateness of it. It was not a thing done upon sudden temptation. They had their object; they formed their plan; they determined upon it, and went about its execution. When they met again, could they pray? Oh! what an extinction there must be of everything like personal and conjugal piety when they rose up to do this thing! Ah! when men agree together to do a great sin, all religious exercises, religious intercourse are gone. 3. The public lie to the apostles in the presence of such of the Church as might be standing round, to the apostles as the ministers of God, to God Himself in the apostles by His Holy Spirit. There was the determination thus to tell this lie, and there was the performance of it up to the last point. 4. The dishonesty that would be involved in the after conduct of this man, in his taking (as he would) his share from the common fund, as if he had given up all, and yet he had secreted this something upon which he could fall back. The man had no faith; he could not trust God, nor the Church, nor the apostles of God; and yet he pretended to do it. 5. The source of the sin, which was his giving way to the suggestions of the devil. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" And there was the consummation of Satanic suggestion—his presenting the fruit of it to the Church as if it was the result and work of the Spirit of God; for he stood there, not as doing a common act, but as doing a thing which was pre-eminently the fruit of the Spirit, and yet it was the fruit and the suggestion of the devil—as he might have known. III. THE PUNISHMENT. 1. It was extreme and instantaneous. It was not a moderate act of discipline; the extreme penalty was inflicted in a moment. He was not put away—afforded time for confession and prayer, repentance and return, but he was struck dead as with lightning from heaven. A terrible thing this must have been. Only think of the members of the Church gathered about the apostles, and Ananias coming in with this money in his hand. Perhaps it might have been a considerable sum. Think of the feeling with which he was looked at by the poor and afflicted members of the Church; how they were gazing upon him, and thinking what an act of munificence it was, what a trophy to Divine grace, what a glorious manifestation of the power of faith and of religion and of God upon this man's heart; and in a moment Peter strips him, and God strikes him dead. 2. Observe that Peter merely charges him with the sin, accuses him, puts it to his conscience, and the man trembles and falls. Peter did not inflict the punishment; Peter had no more power to strike him dead than I have to strike any of you dead. The apostles were not so put in possession of omnipotence. In every instance where omnipotence was put forth, it was not man that wielded it; it was God. The volition of the Divine Mind went through the man, and that did it. It was not the man Peter—aye, and it was not the priest Peter (as some would be disposed to think). We will leave to other priests the pretension to this power; we will leave to the Pope the pretension that he makes to employ the secular sword because Peter did it. We say it was not Peter that did it; it was God employing Peter. Let us see it so done again; and if the Pope with a glance of his eye can strike

a man dead, let him do it if he likes; but no priest, no pope is to claim secular power if all that they can do is to fulminate their curses or to put us into gaol. When Sapphira comes, Peter goes further, and he tells her that she shall die, which he had not told her husband. I think the difference results from this—that Peter himself had had a revelation made to him. 3. There is every reason to fear that this outward visible punishment was but the prelude of utter separation from God—the condemnation of both. We can hardly suppose that there was an act of forgiveness at the very same moment with this act of indignation, and that while these persons were sinking down dead under the expression of the Divine anger their souls were in that state that they could be received to the Divine bosom—"meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." 4. Things like these should make us very careful how we push short, general statements too far and erect too much upon a particular statement. It is said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Ananias and Sapphira were a part of that multitude. Was this the "one heart and one soul" that was diffused through them all? God forbid. It is said, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." He added these; is this a specimen? They were either converted, or they were not. If they were really converted, and added to the Church, this is the issue; a dreadful fall. Or they were not converted, and yet added by an outward profession; and then they were not in that state in which they could be ultimately saved. Let us not build too much upon a single expression. They might as a whole be "of one heart and of one soul," but there might be many exceptions; the mass of those that were "added to the Church" might be truly converted, but there might be exceptions. 5. The intention of such a punishment as this. (1) It was a strong manifestation of God's condemnation of hypocrisy in religion—saying one thing and meaning another—religious pretence, profession, without religion in the heart. God can do without your money, but He cannot do without your heart. If you profess to be His, you must be a reality. (2) Perhaps it might be intended also as a kind of guard and protection to the Church, to keep the Church from being increased and enlarged under the influence of motives that might arise from the temporary state of things in it—motives which might be connected with the casting of themselves upon the fund of the Church. God would rather keep the Church small, if it might be kept pure, than enlarge it by those who might come in from questionable motives and with questionable intents. (3) Another thing would be to produce a salutary awe upon the minds of the Church. "Great fear came upon all the Church." At the beginning of that He came forth with this majestic demonstration of His presence in order to make them feel how holy He was, and how purely and spiritually He was to be worshipped. Lessons: 1. While extraordinary proceedings in the ancient Church cannot be literally precedents to us, there may be a principle in them worth following. The conduct of the Church is not a precedent to us with respect to property, but yet there is a principle in it, showing how Christians ought to feel with respect to being members one of another. So with respect to the conduct of the apostle, and the manner in which God interfered through him; that cannot be literally imitated, but that is no reason why there should not be discipline and an anxiety to preserve the fellowship of the faithful such as a Christian fellowship ought to be. 2. The seriousness that there is about a religious profession. I suppose none of you would like to be denied the name of Christian. Now I do not ask you what you are giving or professing to give to God, but I wish you to ask yourselves what you are keeping back. Some of you give your bodily attendance—your ear, eye, attention. Where is your heart? Are you keeping that back? and will this be acceptable? Some of you are giving your intellect; are you keeping back your affections? Some of you are professing publicly, like Ananias and Sapphira, to give up all by the manner in which you are associated with the Christian Church. What are you keeping back? Those of you "that are rich in this world"—what are you keeping back of that which the Church needs? In a world like this, in the movements of the Church, this great missionary institution (and that is the proper idea of the Church, moving onward until it embrace the world), money must be had. God must have your money. How much are you keeping back? What driblets are the donations connected with religious societies compared to what some of them might be! And God has His eye upon that which is kept back as well as that which is given. Ah! there are some rich men in the Church who might dread indeed if Jesus Christ were to say, "I will come unto you"; if He were to come with the purpose of going over all their documents, and looking at all their books, and examining all their

accounts, and seeing the actual state of their affairs, and marking and pointing out how accumulation was going on after accumulation, and if He were to look them in the face, and say, "Well, now, after all this, what is it you do for Me? I give you all this; it is all Mine; by a waive of My hand I could deprive you of it to-morrow—every bit of it; and I entrust it to you; you are My steward; do you keep anything back?" 3. Even the honours, distinctions, reputation, that may be to be possessed or acquired in God's Church are things that are to be jealously watched lest they become temptations to sin. 4. The perfect confidence that Peter must have had in his own honesty when he acted in this way. If he did not thoroughly believe the resurrection, then he was a "false witness for God," and the apostle, standing up and accusing these persons of lying to the Holy Ghost, would himself be the great incarnation of a far worse lie. I think that impossible. 5. The devil cannot fill your heart and lead you into sin unless you let him. (*T. Binney.*) *The beacon—Ananias:*—1. The case of Barnabas and that of Ananias sprang from the same movement and illustrate the same principles, yet they are reciprocally opposites. It is as necessary to moor a buoy over a rock or sand-bank as to show a light in a line with the safe entrance to the harbour. Barnabas is a light at the pier head; Ananias buoys a rock where many have perished, and warns the mariner from the place of doom. Both examples are useful. We may reap profit alike from the truth of the true and from the lie of the false. When our Lord taught His disciples how to pray, He placed near the humble suppliant of mercy a solemn hypocrite. When He taught the blessedness of pressing in while the door was open, He taught also how dreadful it is to be, even by a little, too late. This dual method is adopted everywhere in Scripture to enforce moral lessons. In morals as well as in physics you exert greater power when you apply an attraction on one side and a pressure on the other. 2. "But a certain man." The little word "but" is the hinge on which great issues turn, *e.g.*, "The righteous is cast away in his iniquity, but the righteous hath hope in his death." The door that swings on this sharp pivot opens and shuts the way of life. Sometimes, as here, it turns from light to darkness, and sometimes from darkness to light. 3. The deep, sad cause of the conduct before us was the stirring of the religious emotions without a corresponding quickening of the moral sense. There may be much devotion of a certain kind where honesty, truth, or purity is feebly rooted and liable to die out. It is often said in certain quarters that a non-professor is more trustworthy than a professor, the common fallacy of magnifying a few glaring examples into a general law. If those who count that all piety is a mask worn to gain an end would only think, they would find that their theory destroys itself. Because honest men seem to be religious people trust them. But if it were the common rule that religious men were dishonest, they would cease to obtain credit; it would not pay a villain to assume religion, and when it ceased to pay he would cease to assume it. So the argument goes to prove that pious men, as a rule, are honest; and yet there is truth in the calumny, and because of this it lives. Apart from conscious scoundrels there are those who, although moved in a period of religious fervour, have not acquired a proper sense of the binding character of the Ten Commandments. The Antinomian is not a dried fossil in tomes of polemical theology; he is a living species. But true believers need not faint. Tares grow up with the wheat, but the wheat prevails even here, and at the end the separation will be complete and eternal. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira—lessons of the narrative:*—I. IT IS VAIN TO EXPECT THAT IN THIS WORLD THE CHURCH WILL EVER BE PERFECTLY PURE. I mean not only that imperfections will always adhere to the members of the Church because "there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not," but farther, that hypocrites will be found intermixed with the saints. The wheat and the chaff lie together on the barn floor. No precautions, however strict, can prevent their admission; no discipline, however vigorous, no doctrine, however faithful, will be able to expel them. II. WE OUGHT TO GUARD AGAINST THE PREDOMINANCE OF ANY SINFUL PASSION, whether it be avarice, ambition, sensuality, envy, pride, or any other lust of the flesh or of the spirit. As "one sinner destroys much good," so one sin reigning in the heart counteracts the efficacy of the best means, and may carry us to a very great length in depravity. If the restraints of providence be removed, and a strong temptation be presented in favourable circumstances, it will precipitate us into such excesses as shall dishonour us in the eyes of men, and provoke God to pour out upon us the fury of His wrath. III. IMPENITENT SINNERS ARE ALWAYS IN DANGER OF PERISHING BY THE VENGEANCE OF HEAVEN. Judgment, indeed, is God's "strange work," but it is a work which a regard to His glory

sometimes calls upon Him to perform. And when one victim falls, it is impossible to tell who shall be the next. A sentence of death is passed upon all unbelievers, the execution of which is delayed only by the long-suffering and patience of God. Let not men presume upon His patience, for, although Divine, it has its limits, beyond which it will not extend (Isa. xxxiii. 14). IV. LET US, ABOVE ALL THINGS, STUDY TO BE SINCERE IN RELIGION. What will hypocrisy avail? Can our artifice impose upon God? (Heb. iv. 13). In vain did Ananias and Sapphira secretly concert their plan and assume the confidence of conscious integrity to quash any suspicion of their baseness. A good name, the esteem and friendly offices of Christians, and even worldly advantages, may be the recompense of dissimulation in this world, but what awaits it in the next? (Job xxvii. 8). (*J. Dick, A.M.*) *The first sin:*—There is an old saying, "The corruption of the best is worst." The better a thing is, the worse is its spoiling. The greater the elevation, the greater the fall. And this is true both of profession and of reality. When a man who has talked loudly is at length unmasked as an impostor, his exposure is more terrible than if he had never affected great virtue. And when a man who has felt the truth and power of religion is overtaken by the enemy, it is sometimes found that he gives himself over more entirely to the grasp of evil than one who had never known what it was to serve another master. We look upon this scene almost as we look upon man's original fall; we seem to be reading of a paradise regained, when we are suddenly shocked and startled by the narrative of a paradise for the second time forfeited. Observe from the narrative—I. THAT THERE IS SUCH A THING AS ACTING A FALSEHOOD. 1. Ananias did not expressly say that the sum was the whole price. It was his wife who told an express falsehood. Ananias only gave it to be understood. We have to do with a God of truth, and where truth is not, there in His sight is falsehood. We often think that, if we can avoid saying the exact opposite of the truth, it is enough. Learn, then, that wherever deception is, there is falsehood. And how many of our words are "an attempt to steer dexterously between the truth and a lie"! 2. But, even beyond this, there may be an acted falsehood. Ananias, witnessing the honest self-devotion of others. He, too, will seem to have counted all things but loss for Christ. Just as Barnabas brought the profits of his sale of land, so does Ananias bring his. Every one gives him credit, and he intends that they should do so, for a devotion which thinks only of things above, and a self-forgetfulness which cannot enjoy so long as others suffer. No word, it may be, is spoken, but the act itself says all this, and the doer intends that all this should be understood. Alas! how much of the conduct of many of us is indeed no better than an acted lie! How much is done to throw dust into the eyes of others as to our real motive, our real self! Even apart from the positive purpose of deceiving, how impossible it is to give others a true and just idea of us as we are! How does confession itself turn upon our lips into self-parade and boasting! It is so, perhaps, in mercy to others. We might draw others downwards if they saw how low are our own attainments; we might tempt them to acquiesce in imperfections against which God would have them struggle on in hope. God save us all from the falsehood of the tongue, and from the falsehood of the life, from the lie acted as well as from the lie spoken! II. WHAT AN ILLUSTRATION HAVE WE HERE OF "THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." What made Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Ghost? Was the lust of money the wish to save something out of the surrender of their all to Christ? Thus it was that they lost both worlds, even by trying to gain both! What is it but the love of money which creates some of the most characteristic evils of society? I speak not now of that honourable industry in the business of a lawful calling, which is as much the duty as it ever can be the interest of a Christian. I speak of those precarious, adventurous, idle methods of gaining, upon which God's blessing cannot be asked, and upon which God's curse almost visibly rests. I speak of wants created by an expenditure habitually exceeding income, and supplied by the exorbitant profits of a single week in the year. I speak of examples set to the young of unlawful ventures, by which many a life has been drawn astray from the beginning, and many a hopeful career cut short by crime and infamy. I speak of a love of gain, which has made sons indifferent to a father's command and a mother's happiness, reckless in destroying the inheritance of sisters, and at last regardless even of a country's laws and the terrors of a wrath to come. Earnestly and affectionately would I warn the young of the fearful risks run by the first step into the region of chance. III. WHAT A RESPONSIBILITY IS INVOLVED IN BEING

BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD AS MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH! Well may this be recorded as the consequence of the fate of Ananias, that great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things. Yes, there is a reality in our connection with Christ which must tell upon us for good or for evil. These means of grace, these opportunities of worship, have a meaning, whether we will or no, and we ourselves are fearfully and wonderfully concerned in it. We must spend our lives, think our thoughts, speak our words, and do our acts, in the sight and hearing of God. IV. HOW TO CAST OUT THE FEAR OF ONE ANOTHER BY THE STRONGER AND MORE IMPRESSIVE FEAR OF GOD. Ananias and Sapphira committed this great sin in the hope of purchasing to themselves the good opinion of the Christian congregation to which they belonged. And they would have succeeded in this endeavour but for one consideration which they left out of sight. They would have succeeded in winning the esteem of man if they could only have kept God silent. And we also are daily tempted to live for the honour which comes to us from one another, and not for that honour which is of God only. When shall we give up this fatal habit of asking at each turn, What does the world say? what does the world do?—my world, I mean—the world of my family, my friends, my neighbourhood, and inquire rather, Is this right? Does Christ approve? Let me look up to Christ for direction. Let the whisper of His Spirit be my voice of admonition. And let me in all things thank the Lord for giving me warning. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The first tare among the wheat:*—I. HOW THE WICKED ONE SOWS IT. II. HOW THE LORD OF THE FIELD PLUCKS IT OUT. (*K. Gerok.*) *Hypocrites appear after revivals:*—After a refreshing shower which has made all the flowers to smile till the teardrops of joy stand in their eyes, you will see your garden-paths spotted over with slugs and snails. These creatures lay concealed till the genial rain called them forth to make their slimy way towards whatsoever they might devour. After this fashion revivals, of necessity, develop hypocrites; yet who would deplore the shower because of the snails, and who would rail at "times of refreshing" because mere pretenders are excited to make a base profession of a grace to which they are strangers? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Divine judgment on duplicity:*—The Church may defy the malice of her foes, but cannot afford to pass over faithlessness of professed friends. The Jews are borne with; hypocritical pretenders are visited with Divine vengeance. The sin here consisted in false pretence and misrepresentation. I. THE CHURCH IS NOT A PURE, UNMIXED SOCIETY OF PERFECTED BELIEVERS. Members of the Apostolic Church fell into gross sin. Perfection is not to be looked for in the nursery or school. The Church is a training-ground of the immature, and yet men unreasonably expect perfection. II. THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE SAFETY IN THE CHURCH. There is danger necessarily involved in the weakness of all undeveloped life. The Church is not shielded from temptation. Wilfulness may lead to shipwreck of faith. New conditions of life involve new dangers. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," &c. III. MORAL DANGERS MAY BE INCREASED BY THOSE WHO ARE NEAREST TO US IN THE RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE. A man and his wife joined together in this sin. The perversion of family and social life to the degradation of spirits is not enough considered. If a husband induce his wife or a master his servant to violate conscience, neither need be surprised at reaping bitter fruit. IV. WILFUL SIN PERSISTED IN BY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH INVOLVES THEM IN DIRE AND AWFUL CALAMITIES. "Whose fan is in His hand." (*W. H. Davison.*) *Ananias and Sapphira:*—Eden hardly puts forth its flowers before sin enters to cast a blight over everything. The Church is hardly founded before punishment falls on two of its members for their crimes. The fate of Ananias and Sapphira may seem hard. Their sin was not so heinous as some others that went unpunished. I. SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SERVE TO MITIGATE THE SEEMING SEVERITY OF THE PUNISHMENT. 1. The Church was in its infancy. Influences brought to bear upon it at that time were more effective than later on, when its character was more fixed. A sin was more consequential then. To have permitted Ananias and Sapphira to do wrong with impunity would have soon resulted in the corruption of the whole Church. An example must be made to deter others from repeating the sin. 2. The complete character of the sin is undescribed. Peter twice refers to it as a sin against the Holy Spirit (vers. 3 and 9). This would suggest that the main element of the sin lay not in the external act, but in the condition of heart back of it. Sins are like icebergs—the larger part of them is unseen. We must not estimate the sinfulness of Ananias' sin by its external impression upon us. 3. The Apostle Peter, in his relations with these unfortunate people, was under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. There was nothing of spitefulness or malice in

Peter's conduct. The will he obeyed was the will of another. The outcome was therefore due wholly to the immediate interposition of God. 4. All life is God's, who gave it, and who may take it back to Himself whenever and in whatever manner He pleases without doing any injustice to any rights of the creature. That He took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira would have involved no injustice even if they had not sinned. 5. The loss of two lives was a means of saving many more. Others were deterred from sin. II. THE SIN ITSELF. 1. The action which turned out to be so wrong originated in a praiseworthy motive. To give up one's property in part or in whole for the helping of the other Christians was a noble sacrifice. The act was praiseworthy. 2. We are led to suspect, however, that their whole hearts were not set on this disinterested view of the matter. They felt the force of others' example. The approbation of the Church which followed such gifts was worth securing. There was a considerable enthusiasm aroused in their hearts. They could anticipate the happiness of hearing others praise their noble giving. But their hearts were not truly in the gift. The act conveyed the idea of a higher type of feeling than they really had. 3. The difference of extent between his good feeling and the larger deed was at once filled up by another feeling, a bad feeling. How often in producing good actions are two quantities of diverse kinds thus at work! 4. In the heart of Ananias selfishness grew until it predominated, and correspondingly unselfishness diminished until it was outweighed. The formal act of benevolence of Ananias was a good act, but it was made bad by the preponderance of vanity among the feelings which led to it. He wanted to seem more generous than he truly was. There was more of vanity than benevolence in his gift. He sinned really, therefore, in doing what was formally good. 5. For his act was a falsehood. The two persons were not brought to death for telling a falsehood so much as for acting a falsehood. They pretended to be giving a whole estate when they were giving but a part of it. 6. Their act was purely voluntary. True, Peter recognises the agency of Satan in the matter (ver. 3), but this is to be recognised in every sin. He is the tempter. He cannot compel us to sin; he can only suggest. Sin is null and void until of our own volition we affix our sign-manual to it. 7. Hence we are not surprised to find that Ananias and Sapphira were perfectly deliberate in their wrong-doing. Peter said to her, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" (ver. 9). That word "agreed" points to a plan. This is not an instance of a man's yielding to a furious onslaught of temptation when he has let himself be caught unprepared by it. Ananias and Sapphira show a fox-like shrewdness in their sinning. They planned it deliberately, and they carried out their plan. Their sin was not as light as it seems before we analyse it. III. THE BEARINGS OF THEIR SIN. 1. It immediately affected men. Ananias defrauded his fellows. By not doing as he declared he intended to do he was defrauding others of that which, to be sure, had once been his, but had now, by his own voluntary profession, passed out of his ownership. He virtually acted the part of a thief. 2. His sin was also against God. He lied to the Holy Ghost (ver. 3); he tempted the Spirit of the Lord (ver. 9). His soul was in a certain relation to God, and every sin of whatever character was a violation of that relation. We owe obedience to God. Duty is obligation heavenward. Sin, whatever it be in act, has its determining element in the heart. It is the heart's rebellion against its obligation to do the will of God. It is an offence against the sovereign Lord. 3. The two are identified; sin against man is sin against God. Ananias lied to the apostles; they were acting under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whatever he did toward them he did toward the Spirit which was in them. A man who shoots a prince strikes at a kingdom. Whoever sins against a fellow-man aims a blow at God. Lying, stealing, adultery, murder, are sins against men, but at the same moment they are sins against God. God hides Himself, as it were, in humanity, so that what we do to men we do to God. 4. Ananias' sin affected the Church. The importance of Ananias' sin is raised to a higher power by the fact that it concerned the welfare of the Church of Christ. His punishment is interpreted by this special bearing of his sin. Sin is thus reduplicated. Every man has special functions and relations, and every sin committed against him passes on and has an unlimited reach in these relations. One man shoots another. He sins against that man. But he does more. He makes a wife a widow; he makes children fatherless; he bereaves parents, relatives, and friends; he removes a man from the community who has a special function in it; he offends against the whole commonwealth, against all humanity indeed. Oh, the awful reach of sin! No man liveth to him-

self, and no man sinneth to himself. 5. The sin returned upon Ananias and his wife, who connived with him, in terrible retribution. Its wages were paid to the last farthing. As these unfortunate people were carried out to burial how impressive the reply to the heart's question, "Does sin pay?" 6. Yet this affliction was made to bear good fruit under the providence of God. The effect on the Church was salutary. There were no more Ananiases. IV. THE INFERENCES from this study. 1. Man's accountability for sin. Satan suggests it, but man accepts his suggestion and is responsible for the result. 2. The folly of sin. As we look at Ananias and his wife, with their silly vanity, they seem almost irrational. To sin is truly, according to the plain-spokenness of the Book of Proverbs, to be a fool. To escape it we must be made wise by God. 3. Sin reaches to God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight," says the most heart-searching confession of sin ever penned. 4. The consequences of sin are more than we can anticipate—more as they develop after we have planted them in the field of the world's life, more as they come back to us in the harvest of retribution. 5. Lying is an especially bad sin. So bad is it, that among sins which specifically exclude from heaven lying is particularly named. God is truth Himself. We are made to be like Him. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Ananias and Sapphira*:—The question may be asked, Was not this punishment of Ananias and Sapphira too severe? No time was given for repentance; no opportunity was offered for them to consider their transgression, and to cry unto God for pardon. We may find answer to this inquiry, I think, in the following suggestions:—1. Their sin was an aggravated one. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God," were Peter's words to Ananias. The peculiar enormity of their sin consisted in its being committed against the Holy Ghost. They knew of the Pentecostal gift; and now they come with a definitely settled purpose to deceive the Spirit of God in the persons of God's chosen ones, thinking Him to be such a one as themselves. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that Ananias was not an ordinary believer, but a minister, and one that had received the gift of the Holy Ghost with the hundred and twenty. Yet he dared thus by dissembling to belie and shame that gift. 2. It was a deliberate sin. It was not committed as the result of a sudden temptation; but these two had consulted together about it, and had entered into a mutual agreement to work this deception upon the apostles and the Church. It was cold-blooded in every respect. There was apparently no necessity laid upon them by outward circumstances. Ananias shows himself to have been by deliberate choice a hypocrite. 3. Sin must have become the settled purpose of their lives. God does not pronounce condemnation unto death for an initial sin or for a series of sins. It is only when the soul becomes saturated with sin, when there is no longer hope of the man's bearing fruit unto righteousness, that God casts him off. It must have been a crisis in their inner lives marking the determination of their souls—a crisis not apparent to men, but open and plain to the eye of God. 4. The severity of this punishment may have been due in a measure to the conditions surrounding the Church at that early period. The Church was in its infancy. We may further learn from this lesson—(1) That those who presume upon security and impunity in any sinful course are reckoning ignorantly and foolishly. "Be sure your sin will find you out." (2) It is useless to bring half of self to God in consecration. (3) The wheat and the tares ever grow together in the earthly Church. (*G. C. Osgood.*) *Ananias and Sapphira*:—I. THE SINS OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. No sin stands alone. 1. There was love of praise. 2. There was covetousness, an inordinate love of money. They clung to their gold. 3. There was lying. 4. There was hypocrisy, the pretence of godliness where none existed. II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER. Every Divine act is a revelation of God. What does this event show? 1. God's omniscience. He saw the sin, though it was secret. 2. God's impartiality. He deals with His followers no more leniently than with His enemies when they do wrong. 3. God's justice. 4. God's power. III. THE TEACHINGS CONCERNING THE CHURCH. 1. Its high moral standard. The power of the Church is in its purity. The Church must be better than the world if it is to save the world. 2. Its human imperfection. Let us not expect all the people in the earthly Church to be perfect. 3. Its responsibility. The Church is held to a high account for its members, and must put away every branch which is known to be dead. *Ananias and Sapphira*:—A well-matched pair, alike in ambition and in falsehood, Ananias and Sapphira. There are thousands of ways of telling a lie. A man's whole life may be a falsehood, and yet never with his lips may he falsify once. There is a falsehood by look, by manner, as well as by lip. There are persons who are guilty of dishonesty of

speech, and then afterward say "may be," call it a white lie, when no lie is that colour. The whitest lie ever told was as black as perdition. There are those so given to dishonesty of speech that they do not know when they are lying. With some it is an acquired sin, and with others it is a natural infirmity. There are those whom you will recognise as born liars. Misrepresentation and prevarication are as natural to them as the infantile diseases, and are a sort of moral croup or spiritual scarlatina. Then there are those who in after-life have opportunities of developing this evil, and they go from deception to deception, and from class to class, until they are regularly graduated liars. I. FIRST OF ALL, I SPEAK OF AGRICULTURAL FALSEHOODS. There is something in the presence of natural objects that has a tendency to make one pure. The trees never issue false stock. The wheat-fields are always honest. Rye and oats never move out in the night, not paying for the place they occupy. Corn shocks never make false assignments. Mountain brooks are always current. The gold of the wheat-fields is never counterfeit. But, while the tendency of agricultural life is to make one honest, honesty is not the characteristic of all who come to the city markets from the country districts. You hear the creaking of the dishonest farm waggon in almost every street of our great cities, a farm waggon in which there is not one honest spoke or one truthful rivet from tongue to tailboard. The tendency in all rural districts is to suppose that sins and transgressions cluster in our great cities; but citizens and merchants long ago learned that it is not safe to calculate from the character of the apples on the top of the farmer's barrel what is the character of the apples all the way down toward the bottom. Milk-cans are not always honest. The producer sometimes practically says to the merchant, "You get your money easily, anyhow." Does he get it easily? Let those who get their living in the quiet farm and barn take the place of one of our city merchants, and see whether it is so easy. It is hard enough to have the hands blistered with outdoor work, but it is harder with mental anxieties to have the brain consumed. God help the merchants! And do not let those who live in country life come to the conclusion that all the dishonesties belong to city life. II. I PASS ON TO CONSIDER COMMERCIAL LIES. There are those who apologise for deviation from the right and for practical deception by saying it is commercial custom. In other words, a lie by multiplication becomes a virtue. There are large fortunes gathered in which there is not one drop of the sweat of unrequited toil, and not one spark of bad temper flashes from the bronze bracket, and there is not one drop of needlewoman's heart's blood on the crimson plush; while there are other fortunes about which it may be said that on every door-knob, and on every figure of the carpet, and on every wall, there is the mark of dishonour. There are large fortunes upon which God's favour comes down, and it is just as honest and just as Christian to be affluent as it is to be poor. In many a house there is a blessing on every pictured wall, and on every scroll, and on every traceried window, and the joy that flashes in the lights, and that showers in the music, and that dances in the quick feet of the children pattering through the hall has in it the favour of God and the approval of man. But you and I know that there are in commercial life those who are guilty of great dishonesties of speech. A merchant says, "I am selling these goods at less than cost." Is he getting for these goods a price inferior to that which he paid for them? Then he has spoken the truth. Is he getting more? Then he lies. But there are just as many falsehoods before the counter as there are behind the counter. A customer comes in and asks, "How much is this article?" "It is five dollars." "I can get that for four somewhere else." Can he get it for four somewhere else, or did he say that just for the purpose of getting it cheap by depreciating the value of the goods? If so, he lied. Who would take the responsibility of saying how many falsehoods were yesterday told by hardware men, and clothiers, and lumbermen, and tobacconists, and jewellers, and importers, and shippers, and dealers in furniture, and dealers in coal, and dealers in groceries? III. I PASS ON TO SPEAK OF MECHANICAL FALSEHOODS. Among the artisans are those upon whom we are dependent for the houses in which we live, the garments we wear, the cars in which we ride. The vast majority of them are, so far as I know them, men who speak the truth. I am speaking now of those who promise to do that which they know they will not be able to do. They say they will come on Monday; they do not come until Wednesday. They say they will have the job done in ten days; they do not get it done before thirty. So in all styles of work there are those who are not worthy of their work. IV. I PASS ON TO SPEAK OF SOCIAL LIES. How much of society is insincere! You hardly know what to believe. They send their regards; you do

not exactly know whether it is an expression of the heart or an external civility. They ask you to come to their house; you hardly know whether they really want you to come. We are all accustomed to take a discount from what we hear. Social life is struck through with insincerity. They apologise for the fact that the furnace is out; they have not had any fire in it all the winter. They apologise for the fare on their table; they never live any better. They decry their most luxurious entertainment to win a shower of approval from you. On small incomes we want the world to believe we are affluent, and society to-day is struck through with cheat and counterfeit and sham. How few people are natural! V. I PASS ON TO SPEAK OF ECCLESIASTICAL LIES, those which are told for the advancement or retarding of a church or sect. It is hardly worth your while to ask an extreme Calvinist what an Arminian believes. He will tell you an Arminian believes that a man can save himself. An Arminian believes no such thing. It is hardly worth your while to ask an extreme Arminian what a Calvinist believes. He will tell you that a Calvinist believes that God made some men just to damn them. A Calvinist believes no such thing. Then how often is it that there are misrepresentations on the part of individual churches in regard to other churches, especially if a church comes to great prosperity. VI. LET US IN ALL DEPARTMENTS OF LIFE STAND BACK FROM DECEPTION. "Oh!" says some one, "the deception that I practise is so small it don't amount to anything." Ah! my friends, it does amount to a great deal. "Oh!" you say, "when I deceive, it is only about a case of needles, or a box of buttons, or a row of pins." The article may be so small you can put it in your vest pocket; but the sin is as big as the Pyramids, and the echo of your dishonour will reverberate through the mountains of eternity. There is no such thing as a small sin. They are all vast and stupendous, because they will have to come under inspection in the day of judgment. My friends, let us make our life correspond to what we are. Let us banish all deception from our behaviour. Let us remember that the time comes when God will demonstrate before an assembled universe just what we are. The secret will come out. We may hide it while we live, but we cannot hide it when we die. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Privileged with the gospel, but not improved by it:*—In a room glazed with yellow glass the photographer would get heat and light from the sunshine, but he could not produce a photograph because yellow glass, while it lets in the light and heat of the sun, keeps out the chemical or actinic ray necessary to produce a portrait. And so it is true of many that, while they live in the free light and warmth of the gospel day, while the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world shines upon and all round them, they are not savingly changed, they are not transformed by the light into the image of God. So in the case of Gehazi, Judas, and Ananias, covetousness prevented the shining of the example of those around from converting and blessing the heart. *Hypocrites in the Church:*—An ingenious attempt to defraud was detected at the United States Mint recently. A package purporting to contain gold grains was delivered there by express from Little Rock. The general appearance of the grains was much like that daily received, and they also bore successfully the acid test. Subsequently a careful analysis was made to ascertain what the article really was and of what it was composed. The result was astonishing, revealing an ingenious device for the deception of parties dealing in gold bullion. The grains were found to be nothing more nor less than steel filings, and to give them the appearance of grains of the precious metal they were covered with fine gold, which was made to adhere by the use of a composition of turpentine. The Church and the world are often similarly imposed upon. Hypocrites are often able to pick up a coating of cant phrases and wear a sanctimonious appearance who are really base metal. Though the deception may succeed here, and for a time, ultimate detection is inevitable. *Fraudulent benevolence:*—Christians say that they will give a tenth of their incomes, or more, to the work of Christ; and then comes a hard year of tightening in the market. They now think to themselves with a sweet caution, "I must retrench in benevolence this season." Sometimes Christians make a show of contribution, but adroitly manage to get back a fair percentage. *The hardship of hypocrisy:*—Now, half the trouble which many people take to be smooth and worthless impostors in religion would make them genuine Christians. A lie is a great deal harder to tell than the truth. It is actually harder to be a successful hypocrite than to be a successful Christian. In the one case God is continually helping us. In the other case God is hindering us, and all the time is exposing us to detection and disgrace. It is really easier to possess a sincere heart-piety, and to let that inward light shine out naturally

from the countenance and the conduct, than it is to go through life wearing the mask of false profession. To *be* a true Christian is a constant joy. To *seem* to be one when we are not is to wear a hateful galling yoke of bondage. In order to keep up appearances an insincere professor is incessantly obliged to do many things which are exceedingly distasteful and even loathsome. He must utter many a solemn falsehood which sticks in his throat. He must forfeit all self-respect. He must perform many a penance, and call it a pleasure. He lives in the constant dread that his mask may slip aside and reveal his real character. For no man ever went through a whole false life of professed piety without awakening occasional suspicion of his "godly sincerity." Sometimes a sudden emergency jerks the mask aside and exposes the dissembler. Oh! what a wretched life is led by him who, in trying to "keep afloat" before his fellow-creatures, is constantly striving to caulk up those fatal leaks which he knows are sending him to the bottom! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Dangers within the early Church*:—We have here the first great danger that arose from within the Christian Church. In the foregoing chapter a serious danger arose from without. Two of the apostles were cast into prison. This was the first storm of human rage that broke upon the infant Church, and it passed away, like many a storm of wind upon the tender plants of nature, without doing serious damage. But dangers from within are more to be dreaded. One traitor in the camp is more terrible than a host of enemies. One little worm in the heart of a plant is more destructive than the wildest tempest. Many a noble youth and many a young congregation have been sadly injured by worldly-mindedness. Note—I. PETER DETECTING HYPOCRISY. The sin of these people was the common crime of great profession with little principle and less practice. They wished to be counted generous, while they were really selfish; and seeming to care little for the world, they were intensely ambitious, and anxious to get as much as possible of human praise and worldly commendation. This is an evil against which we have need to watch. Liberality is now fashionable in the Church. A man was famous in ancient times as he laid his axe upon the thick trees of Lebanon, and brought them down to build the Jewish temple. A man is famous at the present day when he is able to give ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand pounds, for the support of public charities or the extension of the gospel. These are noble deeds, which we cordially commend, but it is not impossible that in accordance with the generous fashions of our period many a large gift may be laid upon the altar of benevolence from no higher motive, and with no better purpose, than to stand well in public estimation. When Ananias and Sapphira came into the presence of Peter with their hypocrisy they were detected. Most likely the good Spirit endowed him with the power of discerning evil spirits. Certain it is that God is able to read the heart and motive of every man; and though we may succeed in imposing upon men, we must remember that God looks, with perfect eye, into all our professions, and thoroughly tests their sincerity. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." II. PETER EXPOSING FALSEHOOD. "Be sure thy sin will find thee out," is written on one page of God's Bible and on many pages of God's providence. The efforts made to conceal a fault enhance its crime, and make the consequences more serious. Sin is often more than doubled before it is detected or checked or punished. "He that does one fault at first, and lies to hide it, makes it two." The two or the two thousand faults spring from one. There was a first fault with the man who complained that his iniquities were more than the hairs upon his head. 1. The apostle calls the sin by its proper name, and traces it to its evil source. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie?" Falsehood for the sake of worldly gain is one of the coolest and meanest crimes which a man is able to commit. The man smiles, and smiles again, to do his villainy. He is not only Satan-taught when his heart is filled to lie, but Satan-like, for every movement is crooked and cunning as the motions of a serpent. We read of Satan, in the days of Job, presenting himself, like an angel of light, with an air of piety, among the sons of God. He told our first parents (Gen. iii. 5) great lies, which have their counterpart in those which men utter, by speech or action, when they wish their heartless worship to be taken for true devotion; put on a fair robe of friendship to cover the worst of enmity; or condescend to the meanness of a base transaction, as if it were a royal road to wealth, fame, and happiness. 2. Peter also exposed the essence of the crime. It was a daring offence against high Heaven—"unto God." These words must have had a startling effect upon the transgressor. We have seen a child suffused with crimson shame and tears of bitter sorrow when caught and checked in the utterance of falsehood. We have seen a man grow pale as a winding-

sheet, struck silent as the dumb, and unable for a time to breathe a word of apology or a prayer for pardon when shown that he had been uttering a list of untruths. You can fancy what a person must feel in an open court, before a crowd of people, when a letter is produced in his own handwriting to show that he has spoken and sworn deceitfully. The man who sows handfuls of falsehood may be expected to reap sheaves of shame and sorrow and suffering. "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." III. PETER CONDEMNING THE GUILTY. His words embodied a severe reproof—"Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" The question is sharper than any two-edged sword, and must have cut the guilty man most deeply. He was, no doubt, expecting great praise for his liberality. It was a meeting of the Church, where the apostles were waiting to receive the Christian offerings for the common treasury. Ananias stepped forward with an air of peculiar importance, and when he told of selling the estate and laid down the money he would look for a hearty commendation from Peter and a round of applause from the people. But what is this? Peter looks oppressed with sorrow and displeasure; the people are silent and still. And when the apostle proceeded to describe the sin and curse of falsehood, his condemnation would fall upon the soul of Ananias like a thunderbolt. It did so fall, not from the hand of Peter, but the hand of God, and the deceiver was laid prostrate in the stillness of death. His wife, three hours afterwards, appeared at the place of meeting with similar expectations to those of her husband. She anticipated many tender and hearty greetings from the assembled disciples; but when she entered all was solemnity and sorrow. The poor woman looked round in vain for a smile or sign of approbation. Her husband, too, was absent: none had dared to whisper to her that he was away to his grave; and when Peter asked about the land and its price she was ready to repeat and confirm her husband's falsehood. Foolhardy presumption! Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. Like Ananias, she must be carried to a dishonoured grave; and in an instant she fell down and yielded up the ghost. Such was the first great danger within the Christian Church. The early Church was delivered by a stroke of judgment that must have clothed every member in sackcloth. We read that when Achan was taken from his tent and stoned for stealing the spoils of Jericho the impression made upon the Israelites was so profound that the scene of execution was named the Valley of Achor; or, the Vale of Sorrow. And here we have the Achor of the Christian Church; for assuredly the apostles and their people would retire from this awful meeting with bitter tears and bleeding hearts to mourn the terrible doom of Ananias and Sapphira. (*J. Thompson, A.M.*) *A broken vow*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. 1. Like ourselves, they belonged to a nation greatly blessed by God. 2. Like us, the heirs of religious memories and influences. 3. Like all of us, believers in the doctrines of Christianity; not infidels. 4. Like many of us, Church members—members of the Jerusalem, pentecostal Church—the Church of James, Barnabas, and Philip, noted for its orthodoxy, faith, and good works. 5. Like many of us, they did not go to the prayer meeting (compare chap. iv. 31 with chap. v. 3). They missed the blessing and exposed themselves to temptation. 6. Like most of us, probably neither very rich nor very poor (Agur's prayer). 7. A harmonious couple (chap. v. 9). (1) Are you helping your husband or wife to heaven or hell? (2) Marry only in the Lord. 8. On the whole they were very reputable and highly-esteemed disciples. II. THEIR TEMPTATION. 1. Temptation common to all. Its uses. 2. The particular temptation—a desire to gain popularity without losing their property. III. THEIR SIN. 1. Lying without speaking; giving a part of the worship of God for the whole. 2. Its essence a broken vow, aggravated by—(1) Lying; (2) Irreverence. The guilt of our broken vows aggravated by—(3) Greater light, and—(4) Greater mercies. IV. THEIR PUNISHMENT. 1. Sudden death a mercy to those prepared. 2. A blessing to Ananias and Sapphira, because it saved them from a long life of lying and hypocrisy. 3. Why, then, were they slain? Not because their guilt was greater, but—4. As an example to us: like Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1–3), and Uzzah (2 Sam. vi. 1–9). APPLICATION. Our broken vows. 1. Unpaid subscriptions. 2. As Church officers. 3. As Church members. 4. At baptism. 5. At the Communion table. 6. To dying friends. 7. In sickness. (*J. B. Converse.*)

Ver. 2. **And kept back part of the price.**—*The sin of pretence and its punishment*:—They desired to have all the credit the Church would give them for acting as generously as Barnabas did, and yet, while getting credit for

unselfish and unstinting liberality, to be able to enjoy in private somewhat of that which they were believed to have surrendered. And their calculations were terribly disappointed. They tried to play the hypocrite's part on most dangerous ground, just when the Divine spirit of purity, sincerity, and truth had been abundantly poured out, and when the spirit of deceit and hypocrisy was therefore at once recognised. It was with the apostles and their spiritual natures then as it is with ourselves and our physical natures still. When we are living in a crowded city we notice not strange scents and ill odours and foul gases; our senses are dulled, and our perceptive powers are rendered obtuse because the whole atmosphere is a tainted one. But when we dwell in the pure air of the country, and the glorious breezes from mountain and moor blow round us fresh and free, then we detect at once, and at a long distance, the slightest ill odour or the least trace of offensive gas. The outpoured presence of the Spirit, and the abounding love which was produced thereby, quickened the perception of St. Peter. He recognised the hypocrisy, characterised the sin of Ananias as a lie against the Holy Ghost; and then the Spirit and Giver of life, seconding and supporting the words of St. Peter, withdrew His support from the human frame of the sinner, and Ananias ceased to live, just as Sapphira, his partner in deceit, ceased to live a few hours later. It may well have been that this incident was inserted in this typical Church history to correct a false idea which would otherwise have grown up. The apostles and their followers were now realising their freedom in the spirit; and some were inclined to run into licentiousness as the result of that freedom. They were realising, too, their relationship to God as one of pure filial love, and they were in great danger of forgetting that God was a God of justice and judgment as well, till this stern dispensation recalled them to a sense of the fact that eternal love is also eternal purity and eternal truth, and will by no means clear the guilty. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *The nature of the sin*:—That it was simply the sin of lying, is impossible to believe. He who calmly told them of their instant fate had himself lied most foully, and been forgiven. It is more plausible to maintain that their sin was something far worse than mere falsehood—that it was hypocrisy of the lowest type—that they could not endure to lack the praise of the noblest Christian conduct, or to make the necessary sacrifices—that they schemed to be considered the best, whilst they were, and knew that they were, very far below the best. All this is true and terrible, but does not satisfy us as an explanation of their awful end. I venture to suggest that Ananias and Sapphira suffered the extreme penalty, not as sinners, but as criminals; not in revenge for a flagrant insult offered to the Almighty, but as the due reward for a frightful wrong inflicted upon their fellow-men; not to accentuate the hideousness of a sin (for which purpose it had been unneeded and ineffective), but to mark the enormity of a crime which blasted the fairest prospect ever opened before the sons of men. It seems to me that they suffered death just as the dynamitards ought to suffer death, because in the recklessness of political hatred they destroy the lives of innocent people. Their crime was beyond all possible reach of human justice, therefore God Himself intervened to mark for once and all how great a crime, how vast a wrong they had committed in the sight of Heaven. Of what, then, were they guilty? What did they do? *Before* the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira communism was the rule within the Christian fold. It was practised freely as a natural, nay, a necessary part of a whole-hearted following after Christ. *After* the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira communism ceased to be the rule—apparently it ceased to exist. In the very next chapter we find, not communism, but "charity," with all its paltry greeds and grudges. Why was this? What became of the communism? I say that Ananias and his wife killed it. Such a state of things depends essentially upon mutual confidence, and they killed that confidence. The fatal blow had been given: and what had been an actual working system, perfect in its principle, and boundless in its promise, faded at once into a beautiful dream. . . . Co-operation in the labours of life does very well for beavers, for they do not deceive one another, nor does one desire to grow fat at his neighbour's expense, neither does another wish to take credit for having done what he has not really done. Why cannot Christian men be as true to one another, and to the society of which they form a part, as beavers? Ask Ananias and Sapphira. Before they began, there were no suspicions, no grudgings, no wealth, and no poverty, "neither was there any among them that lacked." When they had ended there were rich and poor, there was "a murmuring" of one class against another, there was the foretaste of those monstrous evils which we deplore to-day. They only "told a lie," but that lie gave a mortal blow

to the mutual confidence on which any system of communism has to rest. If it is only to-day that we are beginning to face the social problems of advanced civilisation in their naked ugliness, if it is only to-day that we are in a position to estimate the results of unlimited competition, and the reign of universal greed; if it is only to-day that we are becoming thoroughly frightened at the hideous contrast between the professed principles and the existing facts of Christian society; it is for this very reason only to-day that we are able to appreciate the true moral of that tremendous and unexampled judgment. The socialism of the first believers was the fairest work of the Holy Ghost—it was the truest following after Christ,—it was the loftiest faith and the broadest charity translated into that simple language of everyday life, which must be read and loved of all men. The "Magnificat" is the inspired hymn of gospel communism, it is the Marseillaise of the Christian socialist. Striking at once to the heart of the matter, rising at once to the principle of the new order, forestalling (like all inspired strains) the end from the beginning, it pronounces without mitigation, it exults without qualification, that "He hath put down the mighty," &c. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *Making gain out of a pretence of godliness*:—When Nineveh was burned under Sardanapalus, great quantities of treasure were known to have fallen into the fiery ruins. Belesis, governor of Babylon, had been one of the conspirators against the dead king, and was aware of all the circumstances of the sack of the city. He told the other generals that in the midst of the fight he had at one time despaired of success, and then he had solemnly sworn to the immortal gods that, if victory were vouchsafed him, he would convey bodily all the ashes of the conflagration to Babylon, and deposit them in a vast temple which he would erect to receive them in honour of the propitious deities: he added that his tender conscience would not permit him to delay the fulfilment of his vow. No one could object to so pious a proposal; so Belesis set the whole army at work to gather up the remains of the fire. When the valuable mass reached Babylon he smelted the heaps in great furnaces, and enriched himself to a fabulous amount with the gold and silver that came forth. This he had understood all along; but he was neither the first nor the last man who has put forward his conscience to make gain out of godliness with a villainous deceit. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Keeping back the price*:—We read in French history that Louis XI. once proffered the entire department of Bologne to the "Blessed Virgin Mary." He drew up a deed, signed, sealed; he delivered it to the proper ecclesiastics of the Church. But with a peculiar perversity he kept all the revenues and taxes, appointing every year new collectors who might secure the income rigidly for himself without any peril of being tampered with by the priests. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost.**—*Satan* is a Hebrew word meaning adversary or opponent, whether in war (1 Kings v. 4) or litigation (Psa. cix. 6), often applied to human enemies, but in one place to an angel (Numb. xxvi. 22), and with the article (2 Sam. xxiv. 1), was a proper name without it (1 Chron. xxi. 1), to the evil spirit or prince of the fallen angels, as the adversary and accuser of mankind (Job. i. 7, ii. 2; Zech. iii. 1, 2; *cf.* Rev. xii. 9, 10). In this sense and application it is nearly equivalent to Diabolus (Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2), meaning slanderer, informer, false accuser; to which the English devil may be easily traced back, through the intermediate forms of the French *Diable* and Italian *Diavolo*. As the same being is the tempter of our race from the beginning (2 Cor. xi. 3), the name Satan sometimes has that special meaning (Matt. iv. 10, xvi. 23; Mark viii. 33), and so it is used here. (*J. W. Alexander, D.D.*) *Satan filling the heart*:—The question contains more than one truth in reference to Satan. I. THE EXISTENCE AND REALITY OF SATAN, that is to say of the evil spirit who is the prince of darkness, is throughout undeniably to be understood. It cannot here be considered as a mere allegory; the matter was too serious, and the speech of the apostle is much too impressive, severe and direct for that. II. EVIL DOES NOT EXIST AND GROW ISOLATED IN THE HUMAN BREAST, but is connectively interwoven with the kingdom of evil in the invisible world. And precisely the worst sins, the subtlest hypocrisy, where evil clothes itself in the holiest garments of light, are the operations of Satan. III. THERE ARE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF THE WORKING OF SATAN, from the smallest temptation to the filling of the heart, *i.e.*, entirely and completely taking possession of it, which is the terrible contrast to the "fulness of the Holy Spirit." IV. MAN IS RESPONSIBLE, AND HIS WILL FREE EVEN IN RELATION TO THE POWERFUL PROMPTINGS OF THE DEVIL. For Peter says not only Satan has filled thy heart, but asks why. And the reason he seeks lies evidently not in Satan, but in Ananias. "Why hast

thou permitted it?" The apostle indirectly testifies that man, if he will, may resist the devil (1 Pet. v. 9; James iv. 7). There is no irresistible power of Satan. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *Lying to the Holy Spirit*:—Falsehood is particularly a sin against the Holy Spirit. It is a sin against—I. HIS NATURE. One of His titles is "the Spirit of Truth." It is essentially inherent in Him. He cannot Himself be false, and falsehood cannot dwell in His presence. II. HIS WORD. Christ prayed "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth. This is the instrument by which He accomplishes all His purposes; and He will use no other. He tells all the truth as it regards God, man, sin, and salvation, time and eternity. Of such Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A lie is the rejection of the truth, and a direct resistance to the testimony and word of the Spirit. III. HIS WORK IN THE HEART. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." When God writes His law upon the heart it is as a standard of truth which He sets up there. Establishing it within us, He entwines around it all our principles, affections and practices, He makes us "true men." IV. THE CHARACTER WHICH HE FORMS IN HIS PEOPLE. They are "of the truth," "do the truth," "speak the truth in their heart," and are "girt about with truth." (*J. Morgan. D.D.*) *The resistibility of evil*:—The Bible is a book of personalities—it has nothing to do with personifications, streams of tendency, &c. Here the personality of the Holy Spirit is clearly recognised, and Satan is no figure of speech. The resistibility of evil is the greatest moral of the text. Satan's action is fully assumed, but Ananias is held responsible for the result: "Why hast thou permitted it?" Now we are all quite ready to blame the tempting power for our bad conduct. Supernatural evil comes in like a flood, and we think there is much to be said for us if we are swept away. We are told that in the East robbers employ magic to effect their nefarious purpose, their victims lying, with their eyes open, helpless spectators of the spoliation of their homes. Some men persuade themselves that they are similarly helpless in the presence of the arch thief. Not so, says the text. You can resist the devil and he will flee. There is no enchantment in wickedness which may prevail against a sincere and steadfast soul. I. THE VERY EPITHET WE USE TO EXPRESS THE ACTION OF EVIL IMPLIES THE RESISTIBILITY OF EVIL. Satan is the tempter, the initial action of evil is temptation. This is only another word for experiment or trial. It was the design of God (Deut. viii. 2), through certain discipline, to show Israel what was in His heart. Satan also tempts men, makes experiments upon their moral nature. But there is always this great distinction. God is ever aiming to realise the good that is in us, and to purge the evil; Satan to realise the evil and to purge the good. But uncertainty is of the very nature of temptation. When Satan makes an experiment upon us he may possibly succeed, he may possibly fail, according to the quality of our nature. He cannot coerce. Christ affirmed, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me"—nothing that owned his sway. He was pure gold, and as such He went into the crucible, and as such He came out again. The alchemist sought to transmute base metals into gold; the devil seeks to turn gold into cinders, which can never be done in the physical world, much less in the ethical. If you are of baser metal in your inmost self—I do not care how much gilt you put on the surface, nor whether you have got the hall mark of the Church—if you are at the centre base metal when you are put into the crucible, base metal you will come out. But if there is nothing of the devil in us he can get nothing out of us. Loyal to the truth in your deepest thought and sympathy, the black storm may bow you down, but having done all, you stand; rotten at the heart, when the storm comes upon you, great is your fall. Experiment demonstrates: it does not necessitate. II. THE METHOD OF ITS APPROACH AND ACTION INDICATES THE RESISTIBILITY OF EVIL. The devil uses deceit. Temptation is cajolery. Evil comes in the wriggle of the serpent. All this is consolatory so far as it reveals the weakness which underlies all wickedness. Strong men do not resort to these equivocal methods; they wear no masks, proffer no bribes, tell no lies. The devil comes as a conjurer, not as a conqueror. The fowler setting his net shows that we are free; the destroyer proffering his sorcerous cup confesses that he has no authority to smite or bind; and seeing the serpent wriggling in the grass, it flashes on us in a moment how easily we may bruise his head. Irresistibility does not trick itself out in motley disguises. Be true in the inward parts and you shall be more than conqueror. The "properties" of a sorceror—mirrors, vapours, charms, incantations—will prevail nothing against the armour of light; the liar of ages will not deceive the simplicity of a little child (2 Thess. ii. 7-12). The root of the whole matter is here. Do you love the truth in your inmost heart, and are you

prepared to follow it at all sacrifices? Then no mystery of lawlessness or lying wonders, &c., shall lead you astray, but you shall hear a heavenly voice saying, "This is the way," and walking in it you shall be safe from the fear of evil. III. IF EVIL WERE IRRESISTIBLE IT WOULD POSSESS A POWER WHICH GOD DOES NOT PERMIT HIMSELF TO EXERCISE. God respects the nature He has given, and does not compel us along any line of action. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The heart of man seems but a hut of clay, yet before its lowly door stands the Majesty of the skies asking admittance. God respects the freedom He first gave, and if ever He enters we shall have to turn the key. He *knocks*, but He does no more. God made the human heart to be opened only from within; and be sure what God will not do no other power shall be permitted to do. We have kept God out, and surely we can keep the devil out. The deceiver may post himself before the windows of our soul, and we cannot drive him away; but as sure as we are men he can never put his sooty foot across the red threshold of our heart except we agree to it (Luke xxii. 31). The French proverb is right, "The devil goes away from a closed door." The door of the soul is sacred: keep it shut, latch it with caution, bolt it with resolution, lock it with prayer, and all hell may gather about, as the Sodomites did about the door of Lot, yet they shall be baffled. But once have the door open, begin coquettings with evil, and the devil will soon be your guest and master. IV. EVIL IS BEING CONSTANTLY VANQUISHED. Nothing is more terrible than that we should be convinced of the invulnerability of evil. Cortes sought to make the Mexicans believe that a Spaniard could not die, an illusion which unnerved them in the day of battle. We must entertain no such belief about evil. The spirits of wickedness are being tramped under foot every day. The Bible is full of the records of victory over temptation and sin. What is the lesson of the victory of our Lord in the wilderness but the powerlessness of the devil in the presence of faith and purity. In His strength His victory is being ever repeated "What's done we partly may compute, but we know not what's resisted." We see the ugly side of life: if anybody goes to the bad we all know it. But all around us magnificent moral victories are being scored: if our eyes were opened and we could see everything that is going on many a sublime spectacle would inspire us with exultation. Now a young man has the cup of guilty pleasure pressed to his lips, but in the critical moment, on which hangs eternity, he dashes it to the ground; now a young maiden, by the grace of heaven, turns away from some alluring cluster, keeping her purity and her paradise; now a struggling tradesman prefers honesty to gold; now a politician loses an election rather than self respect. Poor human nature! We often get the worst of it, but not always. You have innumerable brothers and sisters in tribulation, who by God's grace in miry pathways walk with unspotted robes, and the same grace shall be perfected in your weakness. The Jewish tradition says, "The devil cannot overcome except he first see your face." Turn your face to the light and your back to the devil, and you shall never perish. Conclusion: 1. If you do not want Satan to fill your heart, take care that God fills it first. Satan filled Ananias' heart because it was empty. Of his brethren we read "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Satan could do nothing there. Here is our safety. When the devil finds an empty brain he fills it with false ideas, wicked plans; when he finds empty hands he fills them with mischiefs; when he finds an empty heart he fills it with vanities, burning passions, vicious sympathies and delights. If you wish to be saved from temptation's power, keep your heart full of the love of God, your hands full of noble work, your mind full of high thought and desire. 2. You say, "Satan has filled my heart; oh wretched man that I am." There is hope. The dispossessing power is sufficient. It is hard for a landlord to dispossess a bad tenant. He will not go out for the telling, you cannot frighten, coax, starve him out, it is only when the king's officer comes that you will get rid of the objectionable party. It is terrible work indeed to get the diabolism out of our heart. The Rationalist says, "I will persuade him out," but iniquity does not yield to argument. The Optimist says, "I will coax him out," but passion does not yield to blandishments. The Legalist says, "I will frighten him out," but lust will not yield to law. The Ascetic says, "I will starve him out," but pride, selfishness, and sensuality do not yield to discipline. The Pessimist says, "Death shall pull down the tabernacle, and so give us relief from the ghastly dilemma," to find relief only in the destruction of the house is to confess ourselves utterly vanquished. Appeal from earth to heaven. The strong man armed shall bind the strong man and eject him. Seek the delivering Christ, and although your fetters have been riveted

through years of transgression, you shall be led into liberty and peace. Evil irresistible! never. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power," &c. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Insincere Christians an easy prey to Satan:*—A good coloured man once said, in a class-meeting: "Brethren, when I was a boy, I took a hatchet and went into de woods. When I found a tree dat was straight, big, and solid, I didn't touch dat tree; but when I found one leaning a little and hollow inside, I soon had him down. So when de debbil goes after Christians, he don't touch dem dat stand straight and true; but dem dat lean a little and are hollow inside." *The devil's trade wind:*—One of W. Jay's peculiarities was the manner in which he would surprise his hearers by a startling sentence. Preaching on the repentance of Judas he took occasion to attack the love of money, and at the close of one of the divisions of his subject, he cried out, "Avarice, avarice is the monsoon, the devil's trade wind from the Church into hell." At another time, speaking of the inconsistency of many professors of the gospel, after making a powerful appeal, he exclaimed, "Some of you, my dear brethren, are so inconsistent and undecided that if at this moment I saw the devil running away with you, I could not call out, 'Stop thief!'—he would but carry off his own property!" *Satan's worms of avarice:*—A journal devoted to the interests of horticulture states that a gardener in the employ of a gentleman at Pittsford, New York, has recently solved a problem which has long perplexed him. In the garden under his care is a large lawn, on which he has bestowed much labour, and which was his especial pride. For some time past a small patch on this lawn disfigured it, for the grass that grew there was poor and withered, in marked contrast to all around. For a long time the gardener vainly endeavoured to discover the cause of its decay. One day, as he stood meditatively gazing at it, he saw several birds settle upon it and thrust their beaks through the sod with much diligence and satisfaction. The gardener had the curiosity to turn up a portion of the punctured turf, and discovered, to his amazement, that the earth beneath was alive with a greedy multitude of large white grubs, which had completely consumed the roots of the grass. He continued the work, and at every fresh removal of the sod the same phenomenon presented itself, until quarts of the larvæ were gathered and destroyed. It is to be feared that the lack of vigorous life in some portions of Christ's vineyard, the Church, may have a similar cause. The root of the piety of the members is being destroyed by Satan's worms of avarice, ambition, and love of pleasure. (*Christian Herald.*)

Ver. 4. **Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.**—*Lying unto God:*—I. THE SIN. Men lie unto God—1. When they use their profession as members of the Church for an instrument of self interest. 2. By making false pretences in their routine of worship. 3. By breaking their covenant of consecration. 4. By the offering of insincere prayers. 5. By self seeking in acts of Christian zeal. II. THE RETRIBUTION—1. Was the visitation of God. 2. Often comes in the form of a demoralisation of soul, which renders recovery impossible at the last. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The permanence of a lie:*—A little boy to sell his paper told a lie. The matter came up in the Sunday school. "Would you tell a lie for three cents?" asked a teacher of one of the boys. "No, ma'am," answered Dick, very decidedly. "For ten cents?" "No, ma'am." "For a dollar?" "No, ma'am." "For a thousand dollars?" Dick was staggered. A thousand dollars looked big—it would buy lots of things. While he was thinking another boy cries out "No, ma'am, because when the thousand dollars are gone and the things you have got with them are gone too, the lie is there all the same." Ah, yes! That is so. A lie sticks. Everything else may go, but that will stay, and you will have to carry it round with you, whether you will or no—a hard and heavy load. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Self deception:*—A man never deceives himself so much as when he attempts to deceive God. (*J. Caryl.*) *The retribution of falsehood:*—George Eliot, in "Romola," powerfully illustrates in that remarkable book the embarrassments involved in one cowardly departure from truth. In the chapter headed "Tito's Dilemma," the occasion arises for Tito to fabricate an ingenious lie. Many chapters on we find him experiencing the inexorable law of human souls that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character, and it becomes a question whether all the resources of lying will save him from being crushed. At another time we read: "Tito felt more and more confidence as he went on; the lie was not so difficult when it was once begun, and as the words fell easily from his lips, they gave him a sense of power such as men feel when they have begun a muscular feat successfully." The penalty is enforced a

few pages later. "But he had borrowed from the terrible usurer Falsehood, and the loan had mounted and mounted with the years, till he belonged to the usurer, body and soul."

Vers. 7-10. **It was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.**—*Plain language:*—I think that one of the master incantations, one of the most signal deceits, which we practise upon ourselves, comes from the use of language. There are words that we learn in childhood which we abandon when we come to manhood. Generally speaking, our fireside words are old Saxon words—short, knotty, tough, and imbued with moral and affectional meanings; but as we grow older these words are too rude and plain for our use, and so we get Latin terms and periphrases by which to express many of our thoughts. When we talk about ourselves we almost invariably use Latin words, and when we talk about our neighbours we use Saxon words. And one of the best things a man can do, I think, is to examine himself in the Saxon tongue. If a man tells that which is contrary to the truth let him not say, "I equivocate"; let him say, "I lie." Lie! why, it brings the judgment day right home to a man's thought. Men do not like it, but it is exactly the thing that will most effectually touch the moral sense; and the more the moral sense is touched the better. If a man has departed from rectitude in his dealings with another, let him not say, "I took advantage," which is a roundabout long sentence: let him say, "I cheated." That is a very direct word. It springs straight to the conscience, as the arrow flies whizzing from the bow to the centre of the mark. Does it grate harshly on your ear? Nevertheless, it is better that you should employ it; and you should come to this determination: "I will call things that I detect in my conduct by those clear-faced, rough-tongued words that my enemies would use if they wanted to sting me to the quick." (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The sin in the purpose more than in the act:*—It is said by sceptics that St. Peter's question to Sapphira, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?" was a temptation to the sin of falsehood; but it is plain, from the story in the fifth chapter of the Acts, that Sapphira had committed herself to a fraudulent undertaking. The sin had been already committed when she adopted her sinful purpose. Peter's question was only to make the secret purpose known. It is an abuse of language to speak of tempting one to do what he has committed himself to do. We do not tempt a shopkeeper when we propose to buy what he wishes to sell. No more did Peter tempt Sapphira to become a liar. She was a liar before his question, quite as much as after her answer. The ethical principle is that it is the purpose, not the act, which constitutes the essential sin. *The sin of Sapphira greater than that of Ananias:*—1. She had longer time for consideration. 2. Peter, by a yet more pointed question, gave her a much better opportunity for reflection, and for giving glory to God. 3. She answered still more shamelessly. 4. And is, therefore, obliged to listen more fully to her sentence, and to hear what has happened to her husband. (*Rieger.*) *The perversion of the marriage bond:*—In families where marriage is nothing more than—1. A fellowship of goods and a business transaction to become rich instead of a union of hearts in the Lord; or, 2. A union to the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, instead of a pious resolution. "I and my house will serve the Lord." And, 3. A walking together to hell, it may be to a hell on earth, or to eternal perdition, instead of the married pair being helpers of one another's joys and blessedness, and striving how the one might bring the other to heaven. "How is it that ye have agreed together?"—a serious question to every married pair. (*K. Gerok.*) **Then she fell down straightway at his feet and gave up the ghost.**—*Death by the visitation of God:*—It would not be difficult to find some instances of direct and swift punishment even in modern times. In the old town of Devizes the tourist is led up to see an interesting inscription in the public market-place. It reads thus: "The mayor and corporation of Devizes avail themselves of the stability of this building to transmit to future times the record of an awful event which occurred in this market-place in the year 1753; hoping that such a record may serve as a salutary warning against the danger of impiously invoking the Divine vengeance, or of calling on the holy name of God to conceal the devices of falsehood and fraud. On Thursday, the 25th of January, 1753, Ruth Pierce, of Pottera, in this county, agreed with three other women to buy a sack of wheat in the market, each paying her due proportion towards the same. One of these women, in collecting the several quotas of money, discovered a deficiency, and demanded of Ruth Pierce the sum which was wanting to make good the amount. Ruth Pierce protested that she had paid

her share, and said she wished she might drop down dead if she had not. She rashly repeated this awful wish, when, to the consternation of the surrounding multitude, she instantly fell down and expired, having the money concealed in her hand." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 11–16. **And great fear came upon all the Church.**—*After judgment, revival:*—The case of Ananias served several important ends. I. IT BORE A VERY EMPHATIC TESTIMONY TO TRUTH. Falsehood in the world was a great barrier in the way of the Church. It was difficult to build even that Divine edifice without a foundation, without something in humanity of which it might take hold. Unless the Church find or generate truth it will not overcome the world; it will sink as in a mire. And so at the outset a miracle was employed to set truth as on a rock for ever. The death of Ananias and Sapphira is the arm of the Lord revealed to deliver the body of the Church in her youth from a consumption which, if not so checked, might have brought her down to an early grave, although no breath of persecution had ever blown upon her. We learn here the work of God to cast out of the body the poison that would undermine life is as stupendous as His work to shield the Church from the power of her foes. II. GREAT FEAR CAME UPON THE CHURCH. It is a healthful symptom, a needed discipline. "Lord, is it I?" "Let him that thinketh he standeth," &c. It was Christ who said, "Remember Lot's wife." Many centuries after the event, He directed that it should be kept in memory. These dark monuments have obtained a place in the Word that liveth and abideth for ever, that their warning may be available in all nations and times. Fear also came on as many as heard. As a natural consequence, "of the rest durst no man join himself to them," *i.e.*, those who were not of them dared not pretend to be of them. The stroke of judgment scared the hypocrites. III. BELIEVERS WERE THE MORE ADDED. The judgment on false professors hastened instead of hindering conversions. The terror of the Lord effectually persuaded men to take refuge in His mercy. 1. Believers were added to the Lord; not merely to the communicants roll. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." The life of the branch depends on being in the vine; although its fairness may depend on its being interlaced in bonds of love with other branches. 2. Multitudes were added. This is the common experience still. A great number came at one time with a rush: and a period of comparative barrenness supervenes. Again there is a revival, and again a time of coldness. Ask yourself, Has the tide risen in my time and carried in many on its wave, and am I left behind? But even when the heaving of the spiritual tide in our neighbourhood has ceased, the door is not shut. We are as welcome when we come one by one as when we press in with a crowd. 3. "Both men and women." There was a reason for specifying this. The gospel enfranchises and elevates woman. She owes to Christ not only her home in heaven, but her rightful place in the world. Nor women exclusively; for when the Word comes in power it makes quick work with that lordly pride in which men wrap themselves when they select philosophy or politics as their sphere, and leave religion to women. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought.**—*Contrasts:*—The wrath of God by the mouth of the apostles had consumed two hypocrites; but relief by the hands of the apostles happened to a great number of miserable people. The Lord proved thereby that judgment is His strange work, but that He delights in mercy. And as He shows His zeal against the wicked, so He does not turn His heart away from the wretched. (*Apostolic Pastor.*) *Phases of the young Church:*—The text presents the young Church as—I. AN ORGAN OF RESTORATIVE POWER. The works were miraculous and material, but they may be regarded as specimens and symbols of those spiritual works which the true Church is constantly performing for the benefit of mankind. This restorative power was—1. Manifestly Divine. So little did the people regard the works as the effects of the natural powers of the apostles, that they considered the very shadow of Peter sufficient. The moral power of the Church to restore souls is also incontrovertibly Divine. No man, however exalted his piety, extensive his attainments, or brilliant his talents, can restore one lost soul. 2. Very extensive. Great were the crowds of sick folk, and various their diseases; but they were healed every one. So the healing power in the Church is equal to every case. II. AN INSTITUTION DIFFERENTLY AFFECTING DIFFERENT MEN. 1. In some it produced a revulsion. "And of the rest," the class to which Ananias had belonged, "durst no man join himself to them." A church whose discipline is so severely pure, which will not tolerate untruthfulness, dishonesty, or selfishness, is sure to keep aloof the carnal, mercenary, and false. 2. In some it awakened admiration. "But the people

magnified them." Incorruptible sincerity and high spiritual purity will always command the honour and respect of the unsophisticated multitudes. The common people heard Christ gladly, because He spoke the true thing in the true spirit. And so the people will always honour the Church for what is pure and noble in her members. 3. In some it effected a conversion (ver. 14). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The power of God with the apostles*:—1. As when the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram and their company, the people fled at the cry of them, and said, "Lest the earth swallow us also"; so the fate of Ananias and Sapphira operated as a warning to all who were of a like spirit, and made them afraid of tempting God by a false profession, lest they should be struck dead in like manner. But though the false hearted were thus restrained, those whose consciences bore them witness that they were upright before God were not discouraged, nay, they were even induced the more to unite themselves with the company of disciples. 2. The peculiar words, "Added to the Lord," do not stand in the text without a strictly appropriate meaning. Ananias and Sapphira had been added to the Church, but not to the Lord. The judgment executed upon them guarded the growing society from being corrupted in spirit as it increased in numbers. Alas! how often is this the case. The visible Church increases in numbers but decays in piety. The real prosperity of the Church, then, consists in two things—in its being enlarged, and in its being edified; in multitudes being added to the community, and believers added to the Lord. And there seem to have been two causes of this happy state of things. The apostles had prayed that the Lord would give them boldness to speak the Word by stretching forth His hand to heal, &c. In the text we find that the prayer was answered. And as the support which they asked was given, no doubt it was given for the end for which they asked it, namely, to embolden them in speaking the Word. We have then three things for consideration. I. THE WORD PREACHED. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Men cannot call on that only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved unless they know it; and they cannot know it unless it be revealed to them. And though it is in the power of God to reveal it without the instrumentality of men, yet such is not His ordinary method. "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth." If we are begotten again, it is "not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Though he that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth nothing; though God alone giveth the increase; yet there must be the planter and the waterer. To expect the fruit from man without the blessing of God would be vain confidence; to expect it from God without the human means which He has appointed would be presumption. The true path of wisdom—the golden mean—in this case is, not to neglect the means of grace, and not to rest in them; to use them diligently, yet to look beyond them. There is a regard to instruments which is faulty, and when men glory in one above another, so as to say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," &c., this is to ascribe to man what is the work of God; nevertheless, the preaching of the Word is a Divine ordinance, and ought to be attended to. II. THE WORD ACCOMPANIED WITH SIGNS CONFIRMING IT. Though it has pleased God to withdraw the miraculous confirmation, is therefore all Divine confirmation of the Word withheld? Though gifts of healing have ceased, is there no way by which the Lord bears witness to His truth? Yes: there surely is, and that the most important of all. The body might be healed, but that healing would be only for a time; it must at length die, and the soul might be lost. The blind eye might be opened, and the natural light poured in upon its before insensible organs; but in a little while it must be closed again in death: and the soul might be consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever. The most important confirmation, and what is equally above the power of man, is that which quickens the soul that was dead in trespasses and sins; which opens the blind eyes, so that he who was spiritually blind may say, I see. He who is brought out of darkness into light, has the witness in himself; and while he lets his light shine before men, he may be a witness to others also; proving to them that there is a power of Divine grace working mightily in them that believe, and enabling them to do what in the strength of nature they could not perform. III. THE BENEFITS OF HEALING CONFERRED IN ANSWER TO FAITH. These "signs and wonders" were an evidence to all men of the power of God with them, a proof of their commission from Him, who thus set His seal to their preaching, and confirmed the truth of the doctrine which they taught. And the doctrine thus delivered and confirmed was variously received. Some believed, and some believed not. But multitudes believed: and these showed their faith by acting as men always do when they are fully persuaded of the truth of any report. They

hasted to make their sick friends and relations partakers of the benefit. And we should go ourselves to Christ for the healing of our own souls in the first place; and then do what we can to carry our friends to Him. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) **Of the rest durst no man join himself to them.**—*The ungodly repelled*:—I. THAT A LIVING AND SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY REPELS THE UNGODLY FROM THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH. 1. It does so by awakening a feeling of hatred—(1) Of God (Rom. i. 30). (2) Of Christ (John xv. 24). (3) Of Christ's disciples (John xvii. 14). (4) The Church is hated by the world in proportion to its purity (John xv. 19). (*a*) The sinfulness of seeking to make religion pleasing to the world. (*b*) The condition of the Church, or believer, loved by the world. 2. It does so by producing feelings of fear and reverence. (1) When God comes forth in the more visible displays of His majesty in nature—in providence—in the judgment, the wicked tremble. (2) When the image of God is visibly on the character of man, reverence is thereby extorted from the wicked. (3) In like manner, when God is in the visible Church—when He makes it His pavilion, the world regards it with a constrained reverence (Psa. xiv. 5). (4) This feeling is not inconsistent with persecution. (5) Such a feeling will keep the world out of the Church. 3. It does so by acting upon the conscience. (1) Church membership, combined with practical irreligion, shows a conscience asleep. (2) This is encouraged by a low general standard among believers. (3) A living Christianity would be a check. II. THAT A LIVING AND SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY IS NOT EASILY IMITATED. 1. It is by feigning Christianity that ungodly men enter the communion of the Church. 2. Human nature has a wonderful power in counterfeiting religion—assisted by the devil. 3. But the more spiritual that religion is, the less easily is it counterfeited—detection is more likely. 4. And the self-denial being generally greater, is not likely to be practised. 5. Hence, a spiritual Church will not be joined by worldly men. III. THAT, BEING IN A SPIRITUAL STATE, THE CHURCH POSSESSED MUCH OF THE SPIRIT OF JUDGMENT 1. The Spirit is promised to the Church as "a spirit of judgment" (Isa. xxviii. 6). 2. The statement of the text is connected with its exercise (vers. 1–11). 3. This spirit is still needed—should be asked. 4. The ground of admission into the Church is a credible profession; when it is declared credible, there is a judgment. 5. When the Church is spiritual, the possession of this Spirit of judgment will be more apparent. (1) The grounds of each judgment will be more ample (Matt. xviii. 15–18). (2) The rule of judgment will be more Scriptural. (3) The application more enlightened. (4) The decision given, more free from the influence of worldly consideration. 6. This matter rests with the members of the Church. A languid body will not cast off disease. IV. THAT PERSECUTION WAS A TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP. 1. The world applies a test as well as the Church—sometimes a severer and more searching one. 2. But only when the Church is living. 3. The Church is not diminished (ver. 14). (*Jas. Stewart.*) *Authority and faith*:—This beautiful picture of the apostles ruling the infant Christian community and bearing a never-ceasing testimony to their Risen Lord, displays to us the great principles on which the Christian Church is founded. We find here the principle of authority and the existence of office in the Church—office and authority cheerfully recognised and submitted to. Of the rest of the Christian body none durst join himself to the apostles. Their office was of Divine appointment. There was nothing in this exceeding reverence with which the apostolic office was viewed inconsistent with the personal belief of every Christian in the Saviour as his Saviour, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit as given directly to him. How different would the Church of the present day be from that of those primitive times if there were now, as some suppose, an inconsistency between authority and faith, and a man must needs believe the less in Christ his Saviour the more he believes in the Church of Christ as a Divinely ordered system of authority and government! Rightly regarded by those who use it, and by those for whose benefit it is used, there is no earthly means which ought to help men so much to faith in the Lord as the Christian Church, set before men's eyes, witnessing to His story by its very existence, which began with the apostles, whom He chose and educated through all their weakness to carry on His work on earth when He had entered heaven, to help them from thence by His unfailing grace, and to fit them for an office and a work which, without Him, they could never have fulfilled. (*Dean Travers Smith.*)

Ver. 15. **Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick . . . that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them.**—*The shadow of Peter*:—The miracles of Christ and His apostles were mainly miracles of healing—a fact to be

well noted. The power to work these has been withdrawn; but the same object is still accomplished by the prayerful use of natural means. Still the heart of the believer is alive to the tender offices of compassion; still, in the shadow of the Christian, the sorrows of the unfortunate obtain relief. Charity may be not unaptly denominated the Christian's shadow. A shadow is the reflection of a substance: charity is a habit of conduct, reflected from a Christian disposition. A shadow represents, in some degree, the form and aspect of the substance; charity pourtrays, in outline, the figure of the child of God. A shadow moves with the substance it represents, attends and imitates it in every step and posture: charity accommodates itself, in equal vigour, to every change of capacity and circumstance;—in prosperity, is liberal; in adversity, considerate; humble in joy, cheerful in affliction. But a shadow can only be reflected by a stronger light than that in which the substance stands or moves. And what is that light? I. Shall we find that ray WITHIN? In the tenderness and fervency of our own affections? Many are the deeds of kindness prompted by instinctive feeling: but are not deeds of very different hue as often prompted by the same emotions? Are not "evil thoughts, adulteries," &c., things which "defile a man," the offspring also of the heart? And shall we think to derive our light from such a source? Shall we follow, in security, a guide so blind and treacherous? Nay, we are assured that "the heart," with all its flexibility of control, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." So far from directing our judgment, it must itself be brought perpetually to justice; instead of holding "a light unto our path," it ever needs "a lantern to its own." II. Shall we look AROUND us for that ray? And shall we find it in the selfishness and ambition of the world, the blandishments of man's admiration? It has become a practice somewhat too prevalent to urge the contributions of the wealthy, without regard to rectitude of principle or motive, on the pretext that, so long as charitable institutions are upheld, no matter with what design of their supporters, the object of such application is substantially realised. But there is a case of the giver to be taken into consideration; and the effect on his mind is decidedly injurious. He is taught to repose a merit upon actions which, under existing circumstances, assume a character entirely the reverse of meritorious. He is taught to attach an undue value to wealth, as a vital source, and not an accidental garb, of beneficence: to allow to charity its plenary importance in the rank of virtues, but to limit the scope of charity to the bare performance of alms-giving. And lastly, he is taught to look to man, and not to God, for his reward. Why else are we reminded of the generosity of those who have thought to make their peace with heaven for the defects of an unprofitable life by bequeathing their possessions to the poor, when the near approach of death withdraws the further prospect of gratifications which have constituted the chief endearment of their lives? The poor enjoy their pittance, it is true; but at whose and at what expense? to those who give, the probability of that mortifying reproof hereafter, "Who hath required this at thy hand?" To those who urged the gift, the sure and certain recompense of the ceremonious Pharisee, who preached sacrifice and not mercy, and put other burdens on the souls of men than the covenant of their Lord and Master. III. If we find it neither within us, nor around us, it remains only that we lift our eyes ABOVE us, even to that "Sun of Righteousness," who rose, the offering for our redemption, and the example of our duty, with "healing in His wings." "From Him have we this commandment, that he who loveth God, should love his brother also." "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is only under the influence of this prevailing motive that our principles and habits can be warmed into a generous concern for the whole household of Christ; it is only under the brightness of His presence that the Christian's shadow can be reflected. The frame of mind required for such an exercise of benevolence is the repose inspired by a firm and humble trust in the providence of the Almighty, and the efficacy of His Son'S atonement; a calm and holy peace, which leaves the mind at liberty to toil, for righteousness' sake, amid the sneers and censures of the ungodly, and, like the pattern of its daily practice, to "go about doing good." And what other influence can be named, capable of producing this blessedness of tone and spirit, but the constraint of the love of God? Will you say that inducements, at least of equal weight, are given us, in the dread of future punishment. But fear is, after all, but a flickering and inconstant meteor, totally incapable of reflecting that steady shadow we are now employed in contemplating. Think not I would deny the efficacy of an arrangement which converts even the fears and apprehensions of the sinner into occasions and instruments of good, and thus not seldom penetrates his soul through the only avenue unchoked by the brambles of worldly-

windedness. I merely argue that the sensations of fear and terror are incompetent of themselves to generate that steadiness of principle and habit, that abandonment of selfish and carnal interests, that devotion of the heart and life to the will and purposes of the Creator, which manifests itself in a regard and concern for all the creatures of His hands. I say that an intermediate process must take place; that the inner man must be purified as well as roused; must first learn to love God, and then, and not till then, will love his brother also. There is not a star that twinkles in the firmament on high but has its appointed sphere of service and occupation: but from the sun alone we behold our fair proportions represented. There is not a motive, a feeling, in the constitution of a human being but may be made conducive, by God's blessing, towards the great end of his probation; but it is only beneath the love of God that the Christian's shadow lies unfolded. (*P. Hall, M.A.*) *Casting shadows:*—We all cast shadows, *i.e.*, exert unconscious influences. Some men are always, without seeming effort or thought, making other people happy. But there are others whose presence depresses and saddens us. This is so in the secular sphere; but our unconscious influence spreads into wider areas. God works out His grandest purposes by undemonstrative agents. The earthquake and lightning are as nothing compared with attraction and heat. And so with human influences. 1. Because our voluntary efforts are only occasional and interrupted, while our unconscious energy is everywhere operative and constant. 2. Our constant and silent energy is most expressive of our real character. Consider a few practical applications. I. IT SHOULD IMPRESS US WITH A SENSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE. II. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE. We may think to evade this on the ground that the evil we do is unintentional. But apply this to physical evil; to the case of Solomon's lunatic who said, "I am in sport"; or to the man who, exerting no positive influence, lets a blind man fall over a precipice. Just to do nothing is to do terrible evil; but in such a world no man can do nothing. Our whole mortal life is embodied force. III. DEATH DOES NOT DESTROY THIS UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE. The Greeks used to term the disembodied spirit a shadow, an invisible presence, haunting the scenes of its former life, and though not in this sense yet, as abiding influences, the dead are still with us. On the one hand, Lord Byron, Bonaparte, Voltaire, &c., yet stalk the earth and gibber their influence; on the other, Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Chalmers, still live. This truth is a warning to all workers of iniquity, but an encouragement to every true child of God. (*C. Wadsworth, D.D.*) *Casting shadows in life:*—Our text shows—I. THE POWER THERE MAY BE IN COMPARATIVE TRIFLES. As a metaphor few figures are more frequently used in the Scriptures than that of the "shadow." Sometimes it is suggestive of blessing, as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," or "the shadow of the Almighty"; sometimes the opposite, as "the shadow of death." A shadow! What is more insignificant? Intangible and unsubstantial, is it not the veriest trifle? Yet how solemnly impressive it is. 1. The most irresistible forces of the world in nature are those that we can neither see nor hear. The earthquake's tread makes us tremble, and so does the roar of the hurricane. How appalling the thunder and lightning; but how far inferior are they in either benign or blasting influence to the quieter, subtler force of electricity, gravitation, heat, or light. 2. In science and civilisation the quieter forces have counted most. The grandest discoveries have usually emerged from some by-way of accident. The most thrilling pages of history are but chronicles of events that have nearly all turned on the pivot of some trivial circumstance. Mohammedanism was the product of a spider's web woven behind the fleeing prophet and deceiving his pursuers. The battle of Waterloo was suspended upon the co-operation of Blucher, whose life escaped the enemy's sword by the simple circumstance of wearing the cap of a common soldier, and for the reason that the clasp of his own helmet had broken. 3. Just so it is in religion. Are we not astonished often to find that the little things we say and do tell more radically and widely than some of our most demonstrative actions? Then, too, the very constancy of those trifles tells. Repeated blows of a little hammer may be more effective than the single downfall of the ponderous sledge. The clock strikes at intervals, the ticking is momentary; we hear the one, we do not notice the other; yet the hour stroke comes not if the ticking fails. II. AS NO SHADOW CAN BE CAST WITHOUT LIGHT, OUR TEXT ILLUSTRATES THE ESSENTIAL PLACE CHRIST HOLDS IN ALL TRUE RELIGION, IN THE WORLD AND IN THE SOUL. If the sun be clouded, or the atmosphere hazy, no distinct shadows can be cast. The sun must shine out to make shadows. So the distinctness of shadows of grace indicate the strong or feeble shining of the "Sun of Righteousness." 1. Nationalities like Italy and Russia and

South America tell us of "the cloudy and dark day." England and America, on the other hand, bourgeoned with beauty, tell of the sun shining warmly and clearly from a gospel sky. 2. As in the world, so in the soul. Saul of Tarsus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," stands in striking contrast with Paul, the singing pilgrim in the dungeon of Philippi, and the same man near martyrdom exclaiming, "I am now ready to be offered up," &c. Whence came the difference? Ah! Christ commenced shining upon him near that Damascene gate, and the light grew brighter and sweeter and clearer every day, so that he shouted, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Peter and James and John exclaimed on a glory-lit summit, "It is good to be here!" because "Jesus in the midst" was the centre of the glory. Shadows of noble action and happy feeling can come from those only who are wont to bask in the light of "One above the brightness of the sun." III. EVERY ONE EXERTS AN INFLUENCE, QUIET BUT REAL, UNCONSCIOUS BUT A FACT. Every one casts a shadow. The ghost of Banquo no more persistently refuses to "down at the bidding" of Macbeth than the ghostly shadow of the person or thing on which the sun is falling refuses to disappear. A man may simply stand still in a thoroughfare, he will soon find all eyes upon him, and all excitement about him. Every act, word, look, attitude, is a moral dynamic upon those around us. They are forces with which we are building or destroying. A whisper has often been clothed with the attribute of thunder. Unconsciousness of it is no argument against the fact. Peter was not thinking of the shadow he threw; much less how eagerly the sick sought it. So lasting is the influence that it lingers behind when the living have passed away. "He being dead yet speaketh." "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." How startling the warning to the worker of wickedness, while the good may take its lessons of perpetual encouragement. "The evil that men do," and the good, too, "lives after them." This is true of great lives; it is equally true of the humblest. The intoning of Niagara can be heard farther away, but the rippling of the rill is just as real and sweeter. Mont Blanc witnesses to Divine power, but not more effectually than the violet tells us of the Divine skill and goodness by its beauty and fragrance. The eagle may soar higher, but the little canary has a sweeter song. As I mark the trivial act of the poor widow dropping her two mites, unconscious that any eye was watching, and then remember what a sermon that lowly act has been preaching to the world from that day to this; then am I ready to express the deep conviction that a shadow of influence beyond conception clings to the most obscure person; and often the humblest act. How this fact shows the dignity and importance of human life, and with what tremendous responsibility it invests it! IV. THE SOMBRE AND EMPTY CHARACTER OF SOME KINDS OF RELIGION; only a shadow. The shadow is dark and intangible; alas if our religion be "only that and nothing more"! Pity that any should get but a gloomy, and so a false, impression of religion from the representation we give them. It has been said that "every one lives for a funeral"; but can we not wait for the funeral till life is over? Must we see it every day? "We meet such people," says a writer, "every day, and they have always some new distress for us. Their sweetest smile is suggestive of the neuralgia, and their most cordial greeting depresses like an east wind. They go home at night like an undertaker to a funeral, and children cease singing, and wives refrain from smiles. They go abroad in the morning like a Scotch mist from the Highlands, to drizzle discontent in the street and market-place. They enter the house of God to render its songs of praise requiems, and its oil of joy ice water; and their religious light shines before men as heaven's sunshine through stained glass, and the priest at the shrine looks like a variegated ghost, and the reverend worshippers like brindled hobgoblins. A croaking raven is the device on their shields—a coffin with cross-bones the blazon on their banner." Surely such a religious spirit and demeanour argue a wrong idea altogether of God and of truth. Peevish, morose, severe, fault-finding and censorious Christians are guilty, though they may not mean it, of dishonouring their Lord and defaming the Church by the cheat of a shadow. True religion is sweet as the light, joyous as childhood, and benevolent as love. So the Scriptures represent it, and true hearts have ever felt it. V. THE REAL BENEVOLENCE AND CHEER THERE IS, OR OUGHT TO BE, IN GENUINE RELIGION. Peter's shadow was eagerly sought by the sick ones or their friends, not because it was a shadow, but because to them it was the symbol of healing and cheer. So on whatever threshold the shadow of a Christian falls, in whatever company he moves, his coming should start a smile of pleasure; a manifest benison should beam in his face. "Good-will to men" was the cradle song over the Saviour, and it should be perpetuated as an echo in the life of every child of God. Heaven, as represented

to us, is all joy, and earth should resemble heaven as far as sin and suffering will allow, by the prevalence of an atmosphere of cheerfulness over it. There are those whose presence is like the ripple of water by the wayside, or the shadow of groves on a hot day like an oasis in a vast sandy desert, or the singing of the nightingale in the darkness. (*J. M. McNulty, D.D.*) *The healing shadow*:—Who ever heard of the shadow of a person acting the part of a physician? They had no right to suppose that any good would come of such an extraordinary plan. And they had certainly no right to make Peter cure their friends in their own way, by a device of their own, without consulting him first as to whether it would be agreeable or not. Now the remarkable thing is, though these people were thus ignorant and superstitious, neither God nor Peter found fault with them. They used Peter's shadow as a charm, and God made it to them what they wished it to be. Now, why was this? Because of the simplicity of their belief. And does not God often throw His power into the means which we ourselves devise, if we have only childlike faith? Little children come to church with their parents, and they are not always able to understand the meaning of the service. But their attendance is not useless on that account. If they place themselves in their simple faith under the shadow of God's house, the blessing will assuredly not be wanting. It is not an intellectual knowledge of deep mysteries that God values, but a simple faith in Himself. The shadow of a tree or rock is a very delightful and refreshing thing on a burning summer day. It cools the heated frame, and imparts vigour and strength to the languid body. And if an inanimate thing can do so much good by its shadow, you would expect that the shadow of a human being would be more effectual still. I do not know that the shadow of our bodies would help much to keep off the too hot sun from a friend, but most certainly the shadow or influence of a good character can help others a great deal. We read in the fairy tale of a Peter Schlemihl, the man without a shadow, who frightened everybody else, and was miserable himself. But in real life there is no such thing as a person without a shadow. We have all a shadow to our natures as we have a shadow to our bodies. They say that it was from the shadow thrown by the figure of a girl on a wall, on a sunny day, that the art of drawing a picture was first found out. And so from the shadows which people cast as they pass by on the way of life, we can draw their portraits in our own mind; and these portraits are wonderfully like—much more true to life than the old silhouettes that used to be cut out of black paper. "If people's tempers should cast shadows, what would they be?" said a little boy once, as he walked beside a companion, and saw his shadow on the road. "John's shadow would be a fist doubled up, for he is always quarrelling; and Andrew's would be that of a dove, for he is always amiable and pleasant; and Jane's would be that of a letter X, for she is as cross as two sticks; and my own shadow, what would it be?" He stopped short. He was afraid of what kind of shadow his own temper would cast. Now supposing you follow out the little boy's idea, and believe what is actually true, that you are throwing off impressions of what you really are all around you, and in fact can no more help doing so than you can prevent your bodies from casting real shadows on the road as you walk along; and each of you should ask himself or herself, What kind of shadow is my temper casting? It might perhaps surprise you to see yourselves as others see you. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Healing and hurting shadows*:—This record is the indication of a belief that stirred some human souls in old times, and ought to stir them still—a belief that there is something in a shadow cast from one over another, of a deep and potent power; a deed done sometimes the hand has no part in; a word said the tongue never utters; a virtue going out of me, or a vice, apart from my determination; a shadow of my spirit and life cast for good or evil, as certain and inseparable as my shadow on the wall. For instance, there is some mysterious force by which men, the first time we meet them, cast a shadow of light or darkness we cannot account for, and cannot overcome. What these subtle influences are no man has ever told us.

"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell;
But—I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,"

is the inner and instinctive verdict we pass on some men; probably, also, that some men pass on us. Their shadows hurt us: our shadows hurt them. Foremost of all shadows is the shadow of the home; where, four times in a century, God makes a new earth, and out of which he peoples a new heaven. I have sat bareheaded in

the noblest Gothic cathedral on the earth. And for years I sat, in my youth, in a simple country church, joining in the old liturgies that, in one form or another, had been said or sung ever since the Saxon embraced the Christian faith. And once, I remember, I rose in the grey light, and stood alone by Niagara, while the sound of its mighty thunder rose up fresh and pure, unbroken as yet and undefiled by the clamour of those many changers who deserve a whip of not very small cords for profaning that place in which, of all places, the soul longs to be alone with her God. These were sacred places. But the holiest of all, the place whose shadow stretches over forty-five hundred miles of earth and sea, and forty years of time, and is still a shadow of healing, is a little place built of gray stone. There, bending over the picture in the great Bible, or listening to psalm or song or story, the child lived in the shadow of that home; and it became to him as the very gate of heaven, so dear and good, that no great cathedral, no grand scene in nature, no place for worship anywhere, can be what that grey-stone cottage was. I wonder whether we have any deep consciousness of the shadows we are weaving about our children in the home; whether we ever ask ourselves if, in the far future, when we are dead and gone, the shadow our home casts now will stretch over them for bane or blessing. It is possible we are full of anxiety to do our best, and to make our homes sacred to the children. We want them to come up right, to turn out good men and women, to be an honour and praise to the home out of which they sprang. But this is the pity and the danger, that while we may not come short in any real duty of father and mother, we may yet cast no healing and sacramental shadow over the child. I look back with wonder on that old time, and ask myself how it is that most of the things I suppose my father and mother built on especially to mould me to a right manhood are forgotten and lost out of my life. But the tender, unspoken love; the sacrifices made, and never thought of, it was so natural to make them; ten thousand little things, so simple as to attract no notice, and yet so sublime as I look back at them—they fill my heart still and always with tenderness when I remember them, and my eyes with tears. All these things, and all that belong to them, still come over me, and cast the shadow that forty years, many of them lived in a new world, cannot destroy. To make this question clear, if we can, let me open to you a glimpse of some shadows that are being cast in some homes every day, not over children alone, but over men and women also. 1. Here is a man who has been down town all day, in the full tide of care, that from morning till night floods the markets, offices, and streets of all our great cities. Tired, nervous, irritable, possibly a little disheartened, he starts for his home. If it is winter, when he enters there is a bit of bright fire, that makes a bad temper seem like a sin in the contrast; a noise of children that is not dissonant; and an evident care for his comfort, telling, plainer than any words, how constantly he has been in the mind of the house-mother, while breasting the stress and strife of the day; while a low, sweet voice, that excellent thing in woman, greets him with words that ripple over the fevered spirit like cool water. And the man who can nurse a bad temper after that deserves to smart for it. There is no place on the earth, into which a man can go with such perfect assurance that he will feel the shadow of healing, as into such a home as that. It is the very gate of heaven. 2. But I will open another door. Here is a home into which the man goes with the same burden on him. When he enters querulous questions meet him as to whether he has forgotten what he ought never to have been required to remember. Plaintive bewailings are made to him of the sad seventy-seventh disobedience of the children, or the radical depravity of the servants; and a whole platoon-fire of little things is shot at him, so sharp and ill-timed, that they touch the nerve like so many small needles. It is in such things as these that the shadows are cast, that hurt, but never heal: that drive thousands of men out of their homes into any place that will offer a prospect of comfort and peace, even for an hour. 3. But let me not be unfair. The evil shadow may just as certainly come from the man. Here is another man in the mood I have tried to touch. All day long he has fretted at the bit; but society has held him in. He goes home too, but it is to spume out his temper. The very sound of his foot casts a shadow that can hurt, but can never heal. If his wife is silent, he calls her sulky: if she speaks, he snaps her. If his children come to him with innocent teasings he would give a year of his life some day to bring back again, they are pushed aside, or sent out of the room, or even—God forgive him—are smitten. He eats a moody dinner: takes a cigar; bitter, I hope, and serves him right; takes a book, too—not Charles Lamb or Charles Dickens, I warrant you—and, in one evening, that man has cast a shadow he may pray,

some day, in a great agony, may be removed, and not be heard. 4. Then again, what shadows of healing fall, in their turn, from the children! No affliction that can ever come through children ever equals that which comes with their utter absence; while the heaviest affliction to most, the death of the little one, often casts a shadow of healing that could come in no other way. I went one day to see a poor German woman, whose children had all been down with scarlet fever. Four were getting well again; one was dead. And it was very touching to see how the shadow of that dead child had come over the mother, and sent its blessing of healing through all the springs of her life. "These are beautiful children," I said. —"Oh, yes! but I should have seen the one that died." While he was with her, he was like the rest. But now, when he was gone, he cast the shadow. The little shroud was turned into a white robe, that glistened and shone in the sun of Paradise, so that she was blinded; the broken prattle had filled out into an angel-song; the face shone as the face of an angel; and, all unknown to herself, God had laid her where the shadow of the little one up in heaven could touch her with its healing. And no shadow is so full of healing as that shadow of the child that is always a child in heaven. The most gentle and patient will sometimes feel a touch of irritation at the waywardness of the one that is with us; but no father or mother in this world ever did bring back any sense of such a feeling toward the one that is gone. The shadow of healing destroys it for ever. (*R. Collyer, D.D.*)

Unconscious influence:—All things are engaged in writing their history. The plant, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river, its channel in the soil; the animal, its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf, their model epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or stone. Not a foot steps into the snow or along the ground but prints, in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. Every act of man inscribes itself on the memory of his fellows, and in his own manners and face. The air is full of sounds, the sky of tokens; the ground is all memoranda and signatures, and every object covered with hints which speak to the intelligent. *Unconscious influence*:—Here was the apostle who had gone forth purposed to heal men; and one by one as they were brought up he commanded them to stand; and they stood whole. Thus he exerted a conscious and voluntary power. But as he passed along the streets, his shadow fell upon many, and they sprang up behind him, he knowing little or nothing of it; so that his shadow or unconscious influence, also, was working at the same time. Now, all of us have both kinds of influence or power—that which we understand and mean, and that which falls like a shadow, the existence of which we do not understand or recognise. I. Unconscious influence in A BAD SPHERE. Men may act unconsciously in the production of trouble, far more than they themselves suspect; for their unconscious influence works according to the quality of that which is in them. When men pursue voluntary courses, they often hide the reality, and put forth that which is not real but simulated. Thus, perhaps, one makes himself friendly to a person whom he does not like, for purposes of business. Sometimes men suppress anger because good-nature will carry their purposes better. So that a man's overt and open conduct may not be in the line of nature. But there is an influence derived from that which you actually are. 1. A proud man may carry himself intentionally in such a way that every one he meets is made to feel his inferiority. But a man may carry himself in such a way that without the slightest intention he shall insult his fellow-men, and make a perpetual aggression upon them. Your pride does not always exert itself according to your will. It has a magnetism of its own. A man may carry in his hand, if he please, a mignonette, and he may carry it because it is sweet. He may also put fetid odours in his clothes. He may hide them, not wishing that others shall know that they are there. But they will make themselves known, whether he wants them to or not. So a man may carry himself in the strong qualities of his nature, wishing well; but if those qualities are harmful in their tendency he will produce mischief in spite of his good intentions. 2. A man's selfishness may act as good conductors of heat do. If you put your hand upon wood it seems relatively warm; and if you put it on iron it seems excessively cold. They are of the same temperature, as measured by the thermometer, only the iron, being a good conductor, has the power of drawing heat rapidly from your hand, while the wood, being a poor conductor, draws it but sparingly. So it is with men. Some men exhaust you, they suck you dry, and you know not what is the matter. A man may have a nature such that when you are in his presence you are perpetually conscious that your sympathy is drawn upon and exhausted. He is

a good conductor. His effect upon you is to chill you. And he does not intend any harm. Unconscious selfishness always works in that way. A man may be consciously selfish and not half so offensive as a man whose selfishness is never positively aggressive, but who carries an inward nature that all the while and everywhere draws upon men, making the whole room and house uncomfortable. 3. So combativeness may take on forms which will detract from the happiness of every one. The more obvious forms, bad as they are, probably, if measured by the mischief which they work, would not be found to produce one-half the discomfort of society which arises from the latent forms—what we call ill-nature. It hovers in the air. It is in silence as much as in the short, sharp reply. So men oftentimes fill the circles in which they live with malign influences. They poison the air with suspicion, with envy, with jealousy. A look, a hint, a shrug, may convey the wretched insinuation; or the unconscious atmosphere of jealousy make itself felt. 4. I may mention, also, the unconscious wrong which sorrow commits upon those who are about it. Sorrow is not a thing to be controlled altogether; and yet we must exhort meu to beware of the extremely selfish tendencies and qualities of sorrow. You have a right, as far as you can, to lean on sympathising friends, and so relieve your sorrow: and men should help the sorrowful; but, after all, one has no right to distribute his sorrow. This is true, too, in the matter of ill-health. Invalids are privileged persons; but they should not privilege themselves. Because one is sick he has no right to set aside all laws of love, and disinterestedness, and honour. 5. Men's good qualities even may act unfavourably upon other men. For example, a man may be perfectly upright, and yet carry his conscience in such a way that it is perpetually condemning men. There is a kind of arrogance of goodness. Deliver me from a person who never does wrong—and knows it; from one whose tongue never makes any mistakes—and keeps account of that fact. If there be anything that is provoking to a poor sinner—and most of us are poor sinners—it is one of these perfect people who move about without much temptation—a perpetual rebuke to us all the time—a kind of stinging censure to our infelicities and inferiorities. II. Unconscious influence IN A GOOD SPHERE. If the predominant faculties are sweet and gracious, then you will carry with you a sweet and gracious atmosphere, so that while you are doing good on purpose, you will be doing more good without purpose. There be men whom we might almost wish to have walk up and down in the street, in order to shed abroad their disposition—unconscious to themselves. There is goodness that means to be good; and there is a great deal of goodness which is better, that comes out from the eye, from the lips, or from the pores—I had almost said from the skin—and that is not conscious of being good. And when one dwells in such a royal bounty of kindness and goodness in himself, that his very shadow, falling on men, makes them happy, that unconscious kindness and goodness is wealth indeed. When the train is stopped, the engineer springs from the locomotive and oils the machinery at every point, so that the oil runs in at all the joints. We look at him and at the engine, and admire them. But we never say a word to the oil, or about it. And yet the engine, and what it does, are largely dependant upon the lubrication which the oil brings. Now there are lubricators among men who keep the machinery of society oiled, so as to prevent its joints from wearing, and its journals from heating. 1. Such a man is one who is thoroughly good-natured. Men are as much perceived that carry good-nature in society as spicewood is that carries sweet odours. There is no danger of there being too many men who are not easily irritated, who look on the bright side of things, and who tend to solace—men that you can cushion on, and not touch the hard angles of an exacting, conscientious spirit. It is a great comfort just to look at a man who is good-natured. I remember once riding on a cold night. I was so cold that I almost feared that I should freeze. After awhile I came across a blacksmith's shop. I saw a bright light on the forge. I wanted to get off and warm myself, but I was afraid that I should be so numb that I could not get on again. So I sat and looked at the fire a moment; and then I said: "Well, I feel better just for looking at you," and rode on. I have seen persons whose very presence, when the night was dark, and the way was difficult, and all things were freezing, filled you with comfort. There are thousands of times when men want to be thawed out. Men have power enough, but it is frozen; they need sympathy. And there are men who are supplying this element without knowing what they are doing. Many men are shot along the way of encouragement, and made to triumph, by some man who never dreams that he is doing anything for them. It is a good investment to have good-nature, and so much of it that you exhale it, as flowers do

their odours; for you do not know who will take the comfort of it. 2. So, too, there is great inspiration in humour and in wit. Among the gifts which have been made to humanity, none in the lower sphere of virtues should call forth our thankfulness more than these. They civilise life. They carry with them a perpetual blessing. 3. Still more are trust, devotion, humility. We think more of what Christ was, than of what He said or did. He always seems as one with a shining face. None go near Him without feeling the sanctity of His presence. None go near Him without feeling inspired toward good. 4. And so while we do and teach, our best work is that which we perform without knowing it. Silence under provocation is better than doctrine to many and many a man. Fortitude under trouble is a testimony to religion which is far better than a thousand proof-texts. In your boyhood, as you will very well remember, you used to write with invisible ink; and there was nothing for the recipient to do but to take the paper and hold it to the fire, and straightway out came the message. You are writing with invisible letters on thousands of children's hearts; on the hearts of passers-by; on the hearts of those whom you meet in every circle where you move. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Personal influence*:—I. WE ALL EXERT SOME KIND OF INFLUENCE. The law of influence every atom has to obey. A bird can neither scatter its songful notes in the air, nor soar in the heavens, without setting in motion pulsations which vibrate through all space. So man is so closely united to his fellows by various ties that he cannot live unto himself. In our social gatherings we meet with some persons around whom there is a kind of atmosphere charged with enkindling and attractive elements; and we meet with others who have a something about them which is dampening and rapelling. As leaven influences the meal, so we in some way affect those with whom we come into contact. Now this influence is—1. Voluntary. Our Lord declared that the apostles should heal all manner of diseases. In this chapter we have a fulfilment of this prediction. The apostles voluntarily touched the sick and healed them. So, whenever we do anything with an aim, we exert voluntary and conscious influence. 2. Involuntary. The shadow which Peter cast upon the diseased restored them. Unintentionally and unconsciously a curative virtue went out from him. It is this influence which we all possess, an influence which flows from us, and floats about us insensibly (1) Like our shadow, this involuntary influence is noiseless in its working as the darkness of night, or as the moonbeams which transfigure the sea. But we do not imagine that its power is less because it operates so quietly. The shadow of Peter was heard not, yet it cured the suffering ones by the wayside. Time and sunshine are ever soundless, but are there any forces more omnipotent? (2) As our shadow is the similitude of our form, so our involuntary influence is the type of our actual self. Good words and deeds do not always spring from a good disposition. Young, in his "Night Thoughts," writes scornfully of worldly glory, and yet no man sought for it more eagerly than he did. Voluntary influence does not always indicate what a man really is, but involuntary influence does. How many there are who try to pass for what they are not. But in spite of their mask we feel when in contact with them that they are playing a false part. Our involuntary influence is as much the outcome of our real nature as the scent is the outcome of the plant's life. It is a something which we cannot imprison—a something that will out. Our unintended influence, then, is the key to the quality of our being. (3) Our involuntary influence, like our shadow, is ever with us. It is not a mere appendage—a robe of which we can divest ourselves. Voluntary influence is necessarily intermittent, but involuntary influence is incessant. It is co-extensive with our existence. As a pebble when flung into a lake causes ripples to extend over its surface, so as soon as we enter the world we influence it in some degree. II. THE SECRET OF BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE. Christian character. A man may have but little of this world's goods, and may occupy a lowly sphere; but if he has the Christ-like disposition, his influence, as was the shadow of Peter, will be rife with benediction. On the other hand, a man may possess extensive knowledge, immense wealth, and may move in the highest circles; but unless he has the Christ-like spirit, his treasures and status may fill him with pride; he may use them as instruments in the service of the god of this world, and render his influence as deadly as a pestilence. Or, prompted by some selfish motives, he may devote them very largely to benevolent purposes; but, lacking the true spirit, he produces in our minds a feeling of his hollowness and insincerity. If such an one would really benefit his fellows his heart must be renewed. Spirituality of character alone will give weight and value to riches, learning and position, when used in the service of Christ. If our voluntary influence is to be good,

our involuntary influence must be good, and if our involuntary influence is to be good we must be right at the core. We must be quickened ere we can quicken. We must be recipients of the Divine ere we can be its distributors. Lord Peterborough said of Fénélon: "He is a delicious creature; I was forced to get away from him as fast as I could, else he would have made me pious." Thus our influence will be a wondrous force for good in proportion to the holiness of our life. III. A FEW REASONS WHICH SHOULD URGE US TO EXERT A BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE. 1. Because of our responsibility. We are as responsible for the influence which our character pours out apart from our own will, as we are for the influence of the words we intentionally utter, and the deeds we intentionally perform. Surely, then, it should be our supreme effort to model our character according to the Divine plans. We should see to it that our foundation and materials are such as shall endure the fire-tests of the Judgment. 2. Because we owe so much to such influence. The good that men do is not interred with their bones. What would have been the character of our laws, literature, art, commerce, and morals, apart from the influence of those whose footfalls are no longer heard on earth! Do not sceptics and infidels owe their best privileges to the influence of those who were animated by the faith which they reject! 3. Because it will be a source of infinite joy. It will cause joy to well up in the heart now—a joy which springs from the sense of duty done, from a quiet conscience, from making others happy and noble. But who can depict the joy to which it will give rise in the future? 4. Because it is the will of Christ. "Let your light so shine," &c. (*E. H. Palmer.*) *The mysterious power of a man filled with the Holy Ghost*:—1. He repels the wicked (ver. 13), and attracts the good. 2. He is the torment of unclean spirits (ver. 16), but gives rest to the weary and heavy-laden (ver. 18). 3. To the enemies of truth He is as the savour of death unto death—Ananias and Sapphira; the priests and elders—and to souls desiring salvation, a savour of life unto life—the sick, and those who were added to the Church. (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 17–26. **Then the high priest rose up.**—*Vain efforts to oppose the gospel*:—I. THE EFFORT IN THIS CASE; by the imprisonment of the leaders of the gospel (vers. 17, 18). The whole Jewish authority was in opposition. II. ITS VANITY. 1. Because God was on the side of the gospel (vers. 19–24). (1) Sending His angel to release. (2) Infusing courage. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" 2. Because the people wanted and needed the gospel (vers. 20, 21, 25–28). The rulers were fighting against the deepest requirements of the human soul. The gospel is for the people. 3. Because Christ is a Prince as well as a Saviour (vers. 29–32). (*Christian Age.*) *The priests and the preachers*:—I. THE DEVIL SOMETIMES MAKES USE OF THE BEST INSTRUMENTS FOR THE BASEST OF HIS PURPOSES. The Sadducees the best sect: the high priest the pick of his nation. II. PERSECUTION MUST BE RECKONED AS THE COST OF CHRISTIAN COURAGE. The age of martyrdom not yet closed. III. GOD'S DELIVERANCES OF HIS CHOSEN OFTEN APPEAR LIKE MIRACULOUS INTERVENTIONS OF HIS OWN HAND (Psa. xci. 11, 12). IV. THE TRUE PURPOSE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN CAREER is to "go stand and speak to the people all the words of this life: by testimony or works." V. THE DEVIL'S MINIONS ARE USUALLY THE EARLIEST TO BECOME FRIGHTENED WHEN THE FIGHT REALLY BEGINS. VI. WHAT SATAN FEARS MOST IS GOOD DOCTRINAL TEACHING (ver. 28). VII. THE GRAND PRINCIPLE OF THE GOSPEL IS UNQUALIFIED OBEDIENCE TO GOD. VIII. THE ENTIRE GOSPEL IS CONTAINED IN THE STORY OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION. IX. THE LIMIT OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IS FOUND IN STATING THE TRUTH AND LIVING UP TO IT. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The Sanhedrin and the apostles*:—In considering the lessons to be drawn from this history we see—I. How GOD OVERRULES OPPOSITION FOR THE GOOD OF HIS CHURCH. It seemed indeed a dark hour for the cause of Christ when the apostles were shut up in the common prison, and left, apparently, in the power of their bitterest enemies. They were now beginning to realise the truth of their Lord's words: "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you," &c. But they had no reason for despondency, for in that same prediction was also the promise of help: "And it shall turn to you for a testimony." In the faith of this they waited on the Lord. Nor did they wait in vain. It was a triumphant answer to the teaching of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of angels, and it was also calculated to instruct and elevate the faith of the Church. Nor was the lesson lost. As mercies granted make us bold to ask for more, so, we may believe, this deliverance was remembered on a subsequent occasion, when the disciples met together to pray for the release of Peter. But more especially was this event blessed to the apostles

themselves. The angel who delivered them said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Their trial and deliverance, after all, increased their qualifications to preach. Satan defeated himself. So it has ever been in the experience of God's faithful ministers. Many a sore trial or dark night of sorrow has fitted them to proclaim more clearly and positively the words of life. The apostles in prison, Paul in Nero's dungeon, and John Bunyan in Bedford jail, are events which show how God can make the trials and persecutions of His servants advance His glory and turn to them "for a testimony." We cannot but admire the prompt and faithful obedience of the apostles. To stand in that public place and teach in the name of Jesus was to expose themselves again to danger and death. Carnal prudence might say, "You are now delivered; hide yourselves until this storm of indignation has swept by." But no; these were men who thought more of Christ than of their personal safety. II. RATIONALISM CONFOUNDED. The high priest and his council slept undisturbed by the visits of angels. On the morrow they were to pass sentence. But instead of their anticipated triumph came their discomfiture. Evil is never so near its defeat as when it seems to be in the hour of its triumph. The morrow came; the high priest, his council and the Sanhedrin were assembled, and officers were sent to bring in the prisoners. The officers return, with their faces proclaiming their amazement, saying, "The prison truly found we shut with all safety," &c. (ver. 23). Here was something that confounded all their plans and put a new phase on the matter before them. Just when rationalism thought to put down the supernatural, lo! it appears in a new manifestation before them. The perplexity of the council is further increased when one came saying, "Behold, the men whom ye put into prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people." When men escape from prison it is to hide themselves, but these prisoners go at once to repeat their offence. It was this conduct, as much as the strangeness of their deliverance, that impressed the senate. Then, as often since, men were made to see that there is a hidden spiritual force about the gospel which cannot be accounted for, save on the ground that the life of Christ is in it. III. THE ENEMIES OF THE GOSPEL MADE TO FEAR AND RESPECT THOSE WHO ARE FEARLESS IN PROCLAIMING IT. The high priest and his council have now heard where their former prisoners are, but how were they to arrest them? A short hour before they deemed it enough to send the ordinary officers to drag them to their tribunal. But now (ver. 26) they were compelled to show special consideration to the apostles, and the latter are set before the Sanhedrin with something of honour and deference. The meeting is most significant: it presents one of those striking contrasts between the old and the new which history now and then furnishes. On one side are men of this world, who have no aims or hopes beyond the grave—men of policy and self-interest, controlled in their actions by "fear of the people"; on the other side, men who are living for eternity, and who through the risen Christ have seen the glorified life beyond the grave—men whose conduct is shaped only by the fear of God. The issue between them is the struggle of the ages; they represent the parties of to-day. Which side are you on? (*S. J. Niccolls, D.D.*) *Persecution renewed:*—1. THE APOSTLES IN PRISON. The high priest and the Sadducees "were filled with jealousy." 1. Because of the popularity and success of the apostles (ver. 12–16). The rapid growth of the Church was a threat to them. It presented to them the uneasy suggestion of some day being called to account for having crucified the Head of the Church (ver. 28). 2. Because the apostles were still giving, with great power, their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (chap. iv. 33). They were tolling the knell of the Sadducees as a sect. 3. The apostles represented the vital energy of this new sect. If they only could be silenced, the propagating power of the new faith would be gone. II. THE APOSTLES RELEASED. Observe—1. Its manner. By an angel in such a way that the prison guards were unaware of their going (ver. 23). 2. Its suggestions. (1) As to the power of God. Men had incarcerated His followers, but He took them out of their prison as easily as we take a fly out of the meshes of a cobweb. (2) As to the vigilant care of God. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. It was not in His design to leave the apostles at the mercy of the Sanhedrin in this time of the genesis of His Church. By miraculously delivering them first, He would warn the rulers not to proceed too far. (3) As to the ministry of angels. For illustrative instances, take the succouring of Elisha under the juniper tree (1 Kings xix. 5–7); the invisible celestial host round about Elisha at Dotham (2 Kings vi. 16, 17); the delivery of Peter from prison (chap. xii. 1–11), &c. For the scriptural teachings relative to the mission of angels with regard to God's servants refer them to Psalm xiv. 7; Hebrews i. 14. But just

here a caution is needed. Generally speaking, it is true that the Lord delivers those who fear and trust in Him, but it is not always so. He brought the apostles out of prison, but he suffered Stephen to be stoned. He delivered Peter, but He permitted James to be slain with the sword. There are circumstances where death is worth more than life. Whether He delivers or permits one to suffer, God acts towards His servants in the best, the wisest, and the tenderest way. III. THE APOSTLES IN THE TEMPLE. Note—1. That the apostles were not allowed to flee, they were released that they might return to the thick of the fray. 2. That with the release of the prisoners the mission of the angel ceased. They were to speak the words of eternal life. It is not by the eloquence of angels, but by the often faltering testimony of men, that the world is to be won to Christ. 3. That the apostles were to speak "all the words," not a part merely—to speak without fear and favour—to speak just as freely as though no Sanhedrin or prisons or crosses were in existence. 4. That they must have spoken that morning with peculiar power. The circumstances suggest that they could not have done otherwise. IV. THE APOSTLES ON TRIAL. Before they were brought to trial, the Sanhedrin "were much perplexed," and were particularly concerned as to "whereunto this would grow." They were in dread of miracles and of the influence of miracles. In the midst of their perplexity, the astounding information was brought that their late prisoners were doing openly what the Sanhedrin had forbidden them to do. But on account of the manifest favour of the people toward the apostles, the officers brought them without violence, fearing to be stoned if, in any way, they roughly treated them. When brought before the council the apostles—1. Were reminded of the prohibition which they had just been disregarding—a prohibition which the apostles, at the time, intimated that they must disregard. 2. Were accused now of trying to bring "this man's blood" upon them. This man's blood, however, they had invoked upon themselves (Matt. xxvii. 25). V. THE APOSTLES' ANSWER. 1. It was bold. It laid down the principle, "We must obey God rather than men." That was like the reply of that heroic trio (Dan. iii. 16, 17). So Socrates at Athens, "I honour and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you." 2. It was faithful. In reciting the facts that impelled them to speak in spite of the prohibition of the Sanhedrin, Peter again pressed home the guilt of the rulers before whom he stood. God had raised up Jesus, whom they slew, and exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. 3. It was suggestive of mercy. Peter pointed out that God had exalted Jesus "to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." In this was an answer to the charge that the apostles were endeavouring to bring the blood of "this man" upon them. They were—but for their redemption! Peter's address is short, but it contains the substance of the gospel. To the rulers as well as to the people in the temple, the apostles were enabled to speak "all the words of this life." 4. It gave the reason why they must speak. They were "witnesses of these things." They were chosen of Christ to speak. They were not alone in their witness. The Holy Spirit witnessed with them, and through them, and through others—thus Divinely confirming their testimony. And here was a hint to the rulers. If they would not accept the witness of the apostles, they should accept the higher witness of the Spirit. (*M. G. Hazard.*) *Persecution renewed*:—I. THE APOSTLES IMPRISONED AND RELEASED. 1. Put in prison (chaps. iv. 1, xiii. 45, xvii. 5; Luke xxi. 12). 2. Led out of prison (chaps. xii. 7, xvi. 26; Heb. i. 14). 3. Teaching in the temple. (1) The command given (Matt. x. 27; John vi. 68; Acts xx. 20). (2) The command obeyed (Prov. xxviii. 1; Isa. viii. 13; Matt. x. 28). 4. Sent by the council. (1) The sending. (2) The report (Psa. cxxiv. 7, xci. 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 22). (3) The perplexity (Isa. ix. 7; Dan. ii. 44; Mark iv. 32). 5. Lessons: Faithful witnesses for Christ—(1) May count upon exciting the jealousy of those who are the enemies of Christ. (2) May count upon some kind of hostile interference by the enemies of Christ. (3) May count upon the ministries of angels in their behalf. (4) May count upon God's being alive to any dangers they may incur by witnessing for Christ. (5) May count upon God's delivering them when it is best for His cause that they should be delivered. (6) Are called upon to speak to the people all the words of this life. (7) Still cause the enemies of Christ to be perplexed with the question as to whereunto this gospel is to grow. II. THE APOSTLES ON TRIAL. 1. The apostles brought (Matt. xiv. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 13). 2. The apostles examined. (1) The reminder (chap. iv. 18; Dan. vi. 12, iii. 10). (2) The accusation. (*a*) Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. "Ye shall be My witnesses . . . in Jerusalem" (chap. i. 8). "Shall go forth . . . the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. ii. 3). "The earth shall be filled with knowledge . . . of the Lord" (Hab.

ii. 14). (*b*) "And intend to bring this Man's blood upon us" (Matt. xxvii. 25; Acts ii. 36, iii. 14). 3. Lessons: If the disciples of Christ are faithful—(1) They will secure the respect and favour of the people. (2) They will find that deliverance from one trouble will not secure them from further trial. (3) They may sometimes be compelled to disobey the mandates of the authorities. (4) They will yet fill the world with their teaching. (5) They will bring the blood of Christ upon all men, either for their redemption or for their condemnation. III. THE APOSTLES' ANSWER. 1. The declaration. "We must obey God rather than men" (chap. iv. 19; Dan. iii. 18, vi. 10). 2. The reason for the declaration. (1) The facts. (*a*) "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew" (chaps. ii. 24, iii. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 13). (*b*) "Him did God exalt . . . to give repentance to Israel" (chap. ii. 33; Phil. ii. 9; Matt. i. 21). (2) Their relation to the facts. "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost" (Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8; Heb. ii. 4). 3. Lessons: (1) The fundamental rule for Christians, "We must obey God rather than men." (2) Christians should obey God rather than men. (*a*) Because of that which Jesus has done to purchase their perfect obedience. (*b*) Because of the exaltation of the One whom they serve. (*c*) Because they are witnesses for Christ, their witness being effective in proportion to their fidelity to God. (*S. S. Times.*) *The activity and bafflement of the persecutors:*—I. THE APOSTLES' ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT. The new attack was occasioned by the things described in vers. 12–16. Note—1. The feeling of the persecutors—"Indignation." 2. Their conduct. They laid hands upon the apostles and put them into the common prison, of all places the most revolting and disreputable. Thus, as ever, bigotry shows the weakness of its opinion and the malignity of its aims, by substituting force for argument, might for right. II. THEIR DELIVERANCE AND COMMISSION. 1. Their deliverance. On the former occasion they were released by the timid and apprehensive policy of their oppressors; here by a direct messenger from heaven. Prison walls, iron gates, massive chains are nothing to an angel. 2. Their commission. (1) Its subject. "The words of this life." The gospel is a record of "words" that generate, nurture, develop, and perfect the true life of humanity. (2) Its sphere—"the temple," the most public place, when the greatest numbers could be reached. (3) Its expedition. They set themselves to work at once "early in the morning." 3. This deliverance and commission had a twofold effect upon their enemies. (1) It confounded them with disappointment. The wicked work in the dark, and Providence makes them the victims of their own plots. (2) It filled them with apprehension. "They doubted whereunto this would grow." Well might they fear. III. THEIR ARRAIGNMENT AND DEFENCE. 1. Their arraignment (ver. 28). The language expresses—(1) Their mortification at the disregard of their authority. (2) An assumed contempt for Christ. (3) Their reluctant testimony to the progress of Christianity. (4) The foreboding of a terrible retribution. To "bring blood on the head" is a Hebrew idiom for having to answer for the death of another. They had cried, "His blood be upon us," now they deprecated that as the direst of judgments. 2. Their defence (vers. 29–32). We have here—(1) One of the grandest of principles (ver. 29). (2) One of the most wonderful of facts. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus." (3) One of the most appalling of crimes. "Whom ye slew," &c. (4) One of the most glorious of communications (ver. 31). Here observe—(*a*) That Christ is exalted to the highest dignity—"the right hand of God." (*b*) That He is so exalted for the sublimest functions—"to be a Prince and a Saviour." (*c*) That in these functions He has to communicate to the world the greatest of blessings—repentance and forgiveness. (5) The most exalted of missions (ver. 32). They were fellow-workers with the great Spirit Himself. (6) The most intense exasperation (ver. 33). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The imprisonment and deliverance of the apostles:*—I. THE CONFLICT OF FORCE. 1. On the side of the persecutors (vers. 17, 18). 2. On the side of the persecuted (vers. 19, 21). II. THE CONFLICT OF ARGUMENT. 1. The Sanhedrin (ver. 21). 2. The apostles (vers. 29, 32). III. THE CONFLICT OF POLICY. 1. The violent party (ver. 33). 2. The moderate party (vers. 34–42). Lessons: 1. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. 2. The moral cowardice of bravado. The Sanhedrin put the apostles in prison, but dared not ask how they got out. 3. "We ought to obey God rather than men." 4. The inefficacy of force to crush the truth. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *The apostles persecuted:*—1. (vers. 17, 18). There all evil power ends. The policy may admit of great variety in detail, but it is all summed up in that poor sentence. How differently it might have read remembering the dignity and culture of the Sanhedrim—"Let us instantly dare them to controversy, and in the hearing of all the people put silence

to their doctrine." No; their only resource was physical force. It is the same thing in all ages. No man can answer the truth; he can only lay hands on the truth-teller. 2. But having looked at the darkness, let us see if it be all darkness (vers. 18, 19). So the affairs of men are not bounded by what we can see, and measure, and add up. There are invisible agencies over which we have no control. All the stars fight for God, all the angels of heaven assist the good man. They have always identified themselves with Christian effort. They were with Christ in all the crises of His life; and now they were with Christ's servants in theirs. Men can shut us up; angels can deliver us. Men can do the destructive work upon our persons and ministry, whether in the pulpit, in the home, or in business; but God can do the constructive work, and set up again what has been shattered by violence. To know this is power, emancipation. The great difficulty is to realise the invisible. Lord, increase our faith! Give us those inward, all-piercing eyes that see angels everywhere, as the prophet saw them when the hosts of Samaria encamped round about him. 3. "And when they heard that they entered into the temple early and taught." The apostles were always prepared, never better at one time than at another. They could preach early in the morning; they could study in prison; they could face the highest men in the nation; they could answer questions extemporaneously and completely; they could heal the sick and teach inquirers at once. Are we in the apostolic succession? Have we not to go to books of reference? But the Christian professor ought never to have to go away in order to find a word for his Master. The Church is losing power by not living in the atmosphere of Christian thought, service, love. The apostles received their commissions from the angels; but had a little child said, "There are some poor people in the temple who want to hear about Jesus," the apostles would have accepted the call instantly. How can we teach Jesus if we do not know Him? But if He be our heart's delight and supreme love, then we shall always be prepared in the best sense to speak for Him, not artistically and in a literary sense, but with that all-piercing power that touches every man to the core. 4. No angel had called upon the Sanhedrin during the night. So they came in the morning to go about their day's work. But the prisoners were not forthcoming. Think of a whole court being put *hors de combat*. God is always making fools of those who oppose Him. The officers return. Hear their statement (ver. 23). This is an aspect of the terrible power of God. He lets things remain just as they are, to all human appearance, but sucks the life out of them. He leaves prisons great shells. God can work so secretly, so completely. Circumstances have been your prison, and bewilderment, and prejudice, but an angel has come in the night-time and delivered you. 5. What a message was that of verse 25! Your expostulation has come to nothing. God has not touched a key in the girdle of the prison keeper, but He has used His own. The men were brought before the senate, and they said, "We ought to obey God." This was their strength. Not "We had a vision, and were compelled to this act, otherwise we would have remained in prison and come." Be gentle with some men. Peter denied his Master, and some of us would have expelled him for ever from the Church. But Jesus recovered him, and here he is, a hero. Have any of us slipped? There is no reason why we should slip for ever. Give a man an opportunity of getting up again. Those who heard Peter were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay him. I would we had more such preaching. Whether it is the knife is too short or blunt, or the hand too cowardly, we never get down into the heart. 6. There was one wise man in the council—Gamaliel. He called them to common sense. He told them of two men of marvellous pretensions who subsided into oblivion, and his argument was, "Give the men time." Time is the enemy of the bad—the friend of the good. If this be a nine-days' wonder, do not let us be angry on the fourth day: five days more will show us what it is made of. He prevailed, and the council compounded with the occasion by simply beating the men they intended to slay. 7. When the apostles were dismissed, what think you they said? "No more of this; we cannot endure being trampled on. We have done enough, now we will resume our ordinary tasks." Nay, read verse 41. Their wounds were medals. You could never have had a sentence like this from a mere artist. No literary man could have hit upon this expression. Have you ever suffered shame? Did they obey the prohibition? No: daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to preach, teaching Jesus Christ. There was a new tone in their voices. Peter's suffering developed that womanly element without which a man can never be complete in any great ministry. What examples we have to follow! We see from their history the worst

that can be done to us. "Fear not them that kill the body." 8. This history shows us whence true power comes. The power that bears affliction comes not out of our own hearts, but from heaven. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 19, 20. **But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors.** —*Miraculous interposition*:—Observe—I. THAT HUMAN AUTHORITY IS POWERLESS TO OPPOSE THE WILL OF GOD. The king on his throne, the judge on the bench, the soldier in his rank, &c., can only claim Divine protection when they discharge the functions of their office on the ground of truth, honour, and justice. Nowhere is obedience to true authority more emphatically enforced than in the Word of God; but nowhere is human authority, exercised contrary to righteousness, condemned with greater severity. Be assured that every sentence against the truth will be reversed. Every attempt to hinder the progress of the gospel will be punished. II. THAT GOD HAS INSTRUMENTS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER TO CARRY OUT HIS BEHESTS. There are many records in the Bible of the glorious services which angels have done to the Church. Are they not all ministering spirits? &c. When ordinary means are unavailable God can command extraordinary help for His people. Let us strengthen our faith by this truth. It is not wise to indulge in any speculation as to the manner or mystery of such interposition. Neither is it expedient to indulge in the sentimentalism which hands everything over to the Lord to be done by Him to save human energy. True faith never pries into God's mysteries; if it did, it would no longer be faith. True faith inspires all our energy in fulfilment of our duty. But, beyond this, faith trusts in a higher power when other means are exhausted. III. THAT NO PRISON CAN DETAIN THE MEN WHOM GOD REQUIRES FOR THE WORK. The greatest of all teachers had devoted all His time to instruct these men in the principles of the kingdom. They witnessed His mighty deeds, and were made participators of His power. The evidences of Christianity were inscribed on their consciousness, and that was the book which the ages would read. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost had descended upon them, and had endowed them with additional qualifications for their work. Many souls had been saved, and the Church duly formed. If the world might be redeemed, evidently God intended it to be done by their instrumentality. Can you conceive of any prison, or authority, that could silence the voice of truth, the voice of the Cross, the voice of God? A necessity was laid upon them to preach the gospel which not only they felt, but all the world must feel. The angel came, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and preach the words of this life." When the Lord says *go*, it is of no use for man to stand in the way with his feeble *no*. If we have a mission from Jesus to the world, however circumscribed our sphere to-day, God will send His angel to open the prison. If we are straightened, it is in ourselves and not in Him. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *Divine interposition*:—A tide was kept back strangely for twelve hours once, and so a host of Christians in Holland were saved from slaughter by the Duke of Alva. A tremendous wind once scattered the Armada of Spain over the wide wastes of the North Sea, and so Protestant England was spared to the world. John Knox moved his usual seat away from before the window one night, pressed by a feeling he could neither understand nor resist; an hour later there came a musket-ball crashing through the glass and burying itself harmlessly in the opposite wall. Such things occur almost every day in some conspicuous and exposed lives. One man has a conviction that he must not take a certain train; another feels that danger lies in his embarking upon a certain ship: the train is afterwards wrecked, or the vessel is lost: now the man knows that God interposed and protected him; and he offers a new consecration of his life thus spared as the only return he can make. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Angelic interference and apostolic work*:—The apostles might well say, as Elisha did, "They that be with us," &c. It is only to carnal eyes that the world ever seems to get the better of believers. Very formidable machinery is set in motion to silence the apostles; but the touch of an angel's hand makes it all vain. This, the opening of the prison doors, the angel could do; but there was a part of the work to be done which no angel could fulfil. And the mighty one who set the apostles free, bore the message which bade them, "go and preach all the words of this life." Let us accept these two lessons for use to-day and every day. By His angel hosts, as well as by all other means, the Lord works out our well-being. And if we rightfully boast that the agency is none the less mighty because unseen, so the blessings and deliverances administered to us are often unseen also, but no less

real. Along the channel and amidst the circumstances of ordinary things, our welfare is being as certainly wrought out, as if we saw prisons broken, or sickness healed, or the bitterness of death pass us by. It were but a poor faith that would limit our Lord's help only to extraordinary interferences of His power. The next lesson is two in one. The Master sends us help, and works mightily on our behalf to this end, that we may go and witness for Him. Next, we must never so trust in the forces of Divine aid put at our service as to look to them either to do our work or to make it needless. The weakest and most helpless of us, being helped of God, has some mission entrusted to him to make known "the words of this life." If we make it our rule to "obey God rather than men," we shall be maintained by God's resources instead of man's help. (*G. S. Rowe.*) **Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.**—*The proclamation and the power of the gospel:*—Observe—I. THE MANIFESTATION OF A POWER WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE CONTINUED PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL. An attempt was made to suppress truth by the imprisonment of its heralds. Evidently men are not to be judged by the positions they may be compelled to occupy. The best, as well as the worst, of mankind have occupied dungeons. God seemed to take no notice of the monstrous iniquity. But oftentimes there is a great calm before the storm. How breathlessly calm the army is just before making the terrible charge! And when God appears blind and deaf to the wrongs done under the sun, then it is that avenging angels grasp their swords and await in dread silence the word of command. For Jerusalem there was in store an all-consuming penalty; but the hour for its infliction had not yet come. Nevertheless, it was necessary for the enemies of the Church to be taught the absurdity, as well as the wickedness, of their opposition. First, they are allowed every advantage. They lodge and carefully guard their captive; then, as easily as light passes through the air, the prisoners pass through to liberty. You might as well attempt to chain down a ghost as any man, or cause, or truth, when God has said, "Go forth." II. THE ATTRACTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE GOSPEL couched in the phrase, "The words of this life." How often God comes to win our poor confidence, love, and service! It was when Jesus had scarcely done reproving the cities of Galilee that He said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour," &c. Marvellous in themselves, these words are more marvellous as coming from Christ at that particular moment, as if, though He seemed to have no fruit of His labour, He would plead with men again. And, similarly, the apostles had not only to preach, but to illustrate, in their own graciousness, the grace of God. They escaped from bondage, not to flee nor to be avenged, but to proclaim again the truth for which they had suffered. 1. Such a proclamation involved of necessity a profound view of sin. We are dead, physically, when the air is no longer inhaled; mentally, when the truth produces no impression upon the mind; and spiritually, when God is unloved by our hearts. We may be the cleverest of the clever, and yet "dead in trespasses and in sin." 2. But Christ brings to believers a new life. He confers the Holy Spirit, who creates the blessed life—Christ in you, in your thoughts and aims, your consciences and affections. And if Christ be in you ye shall not be barren and unfruitful; sinful habits will fall off the soul, just as dead foliage drops to the earth in this spring-time, when the rising life within the tree puts forth tender shoots to dislodge the withered leaves which all the winter may have defied the angriest wind to tear them from their boughs. 3. Christ nourishes that life. All ministers, &c., are commanded to speak to the people all the words of this life. But can life be nourished by words? It depends. Golden plates, being empty, are of no avail for those perishing with hunger. Perfect wires, unconnected with a source of electricity, convey no message. Words also may be empty platters or mere wires; but may they not be infinitely more? "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Some one announced to you, "She is dead"—merely three words; but their meaning froze your blood. We have heard these words: "Christ came into the world to save sinners." Are they mere words? They may be; and yet they may be so filled with life by the Holy Ghost that they shall quicken in men's hearts a vitality that shall never fade away. III. THE PUBLICITY OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. No doubt the temple was a very convenient place because of the multitudes that resorted there. But who can fail to see another kind of appropriateness? It was there that men had seen types and shadows age after age. The gospel was to be preached as an interpretation of the old revelation; a key was supplied which made plain the cypher which had been obscure. 2. Further, it is evident that Christianity courts publicity. Christ is uplifted for all to see. So His missionaries are bound to be as plain

and clear as possible. Who ever heard that the apostles arranged a dark *séance*, or preferred to speak their words in corners? The gospel is addressed not to a clique, but broadly to humanity. There is no man or woman or child anywhere who does not need Christ; and there is no one upon whom Christ would not shine. (*W. J. Henderson, B.A.*) *Divine idea of Christianity*:—There is a strong tendency to place the religion of Christ by the side of other kindred systems, and the Word of God on the same level with the Koran, Shasters, and writings of ancient philosophers and poets. This arises from a forgetfulness of—I. THIS DIVINE DEFINITION OF CHRISTIANITY. "This life." As a life Christianity is distinguished from all other systems. It is the one only life—God given and God sustained. This life is confined to no sect. It is co-extensive with faith in Christ. It is a life which breathes, feels, loves, and hates. It has its own sphere, literature, food, work. II. THIS DIVINE DESIGNATION OF THE GOSPEL. As "all the words of this life," the gospel stands alone. When the Bible speaks all other books are silent. Men who try to discover the truth by the aid of ancient philosophers and religions are as those who light a candle in the middle of a cloudless day in order to discover the sun. The gospel is "all the words of this life," because it is the Word by which this life is —1. Discovered. Here the gospel stands alone. What amongst the vanities of the heathen ever discovered to a soul "this life" spoken of in the text? These leave men still in darkness and uncertainty, while "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." 2. Imparted. Here again the gospel stands alone. Men try to draw unfavourable comparisons between the writings of Scripture and those of uninspired men, but assuming that such comparisons are just, they give no advantage. The man who wants to reap a harvest does not scatter glittering pearls in his field because they look much better than his "bare grain," but knowing that his corn possesses an inherent vitality, which will reproduce itself manifold, he commits it to the soil. The gospel was never intended to satisfy the cravings of critics, but to impart "this life." 3. Sustained. This life has wants and cares, emotions and hopes, peculiar to itself. In the gospel we have that which exactly meets its necessities. You have soul needs, which all the words of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and Shakespeare together would not satisfy, but which are more than satisfied by the gospel. In "the words of this life," you have that which strengthens and consolidates life's trust; inspires and sustains life's hope, and rekindles and inflames life's love. Christ is in them! That is the secret. He in the Word sustains the soul. 4. Governed. Here again the gospel is without a rival. The daily prayer of a true heart is, "Order my steps in Thy Word," and its daily testimony is, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." III. THIS DIVINE DELEGATION OF THE CHURCH. "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people," &c. There is no ambiguity here. The Divine commission was clear and simple. In this we see the Church's work to-day. 1. "The words of this life" are to be preached. Not by ministers only. "Let him that heareth say, come." 2. They only are to be preached. "Speak," &c. The apostles were not to go and draw comparisons between these words and others, they were to preach the gospel. They knew nothing amongst men but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 3. They are to be preached earnestly. "Stand and speak." Let conventional forms and usages be forgotten. The theme demanded zeal. The old masters might sit and teach their philosophies, but as "Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink," so we must consecrate our whole manhood to this surpassing work. 4. They are to be preached exhaustively. "All the words." The pleasant with the painful; the doctrine with the promise; the warning with the invite. It was Paul's boast that he had not "shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." 5. They are to be preached universally "to the people." They were to classify men. Every creature is God's limit, and who is he that shall dare to circumscribe? To the converted and to the unconverted; to the "elect" and to the "reprobate"; "to the people," indiscriminately and universally, we are to "stand and speak all the words of this life." (*W. H. Burton.*) *The religion of the people*:—Before Christ came, truth was considered to be the benediction of the few rather than the birthright of the many, the property of certain classes rather than the possession of the masses. But when Christ appeared He broke down the caste of light and learning, and brought the glorious truths of the gospel into the open market of the world. I. THE COMMAND OF THE ANGEL. It was in direct opposition to the command of the Jewish hierarchy. There occurs a period in all lives when there is a conflict between the higher and the lower, between the external voice of authority and the inward voice of

conscience, a period when the soul must dare to assert the majesty of eternal right in the face of the whole world. When the Lord speaks to us, either in the written Word or through the voice of conscience, or it may be in the events of providence, we must disregard custom and creed and yield to the dictates of the still small voice within. II. THE PLACE OF THE APOSTLES' MINISTRY. The temple of nature is one vast symbol of God. In the circle of sky above our heads, in the round ocean beneath our feet, we see the image of His eternity, in the light we see His perfection, in the lily His purity. Every common bush is aflame with the glory of God. And so it was in the temple at Jerusalem. It contained the symbols and the shadows of redemption. We have in the action of the apostles the recognition of the great principle of the right and privilege of every man who is filled with the Spirit to teach and to preach in the temple of the living God. III. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE APOSTLES SPOKE. It is the crowning glory of the gospel, that it appeals to the people and admits the masses into the inner shrine and sanctuary of truth. It is impossible to estimate the transcendent blessing which a cheap Bible has conferred upon mankind, and the liberty to read the sacred oracles in one's native tongue. IV. THE PURPORT OF THE APOSTLES' MESSAGE. The life of Christ challenges the attention of the world. "This life" is the life of God manifest in the flesh, the life of the Divine and the human in one person, the life of the Eternal looking through the windows of time. In Christ is the fountain of life. He came to give life, and to give it more abundantly. (*J. C. Shanks.*) *Christianity, a voice to the people*:—The record is instructive. Why not send the angel straight to "the people"? An angel could not be imprisoned. The Divine system of operation is not to get certain things done, but done in a certain way. He does not go out of the common course of things, unless it is absolutely necessary. He honours His laws and arrangements. In using men in the promotion of Christianity, He best advances its process of education, discipline, and development. Human thought, sympathy, and affection are awakened and matured both in the dispensers and recipients of the gospel, and thus this ordinance "blesses him who gives and him who receives." If angels are not employed to preach the gospel, then, it is because they would not be the best preachers. To angels they might be, but not to men. Note here—I. THE PROCLAMATION. "The words of this life." 1. The reference is to Sadducean unbelief. A truth is most needed when it is least liked, and the age that rejects it should have it kept, with martyr constancy, before its eye. 2. "Life" is the burden of the message. This, in its lowest state, is prized above all temporal blessings. Under a law of death, Christianity assures us of the perpetuity of our existence. It thus gives an infinite multiplication of the present life of man. What was a probability in the minds of wisest philosophers, became a proclamation in the mouths of Jewish rustics. 3. The existence of man hereafter is not, however, the only, nor the chief, prospect of blessing afforded by the gospel. Existence may be the bier of souls. Life, in its fulness, consists in the healthful and unfettered activity of the whole man. It includes, therefore, a perfect nature and a perfect state. Hence it is so frequently put for the whole of gospel goodness. "He shall have everlasting life," is the entire promise made to faith. Man is a moral being. This supposes that he has moral powers and moral responsibilities. Sin is a violation of his nature, and it subjects him to punishment. As sinful, he is evil within, and he is exposed to evil as an infliction. Both these are called "death." Carnality is "death." Punishment is "death." The design of the gospel is to remove and prevent this death; to renew our nature, and then put us into a scene and sphere in which all its dispositions and principles may have free course and be glorified; to make us right, and surround us with a right lot. The whole work of Christ, and the operations of His Holy Spirit are designed to quicken the soul, to bring out, unite, and purify its powers, and prepare it for a state in which there shall be no hindrance to, but every facility for its love and joy and work: in one word, that it may "have life, and have it more abundantly." Through Christ we are restored to God, His law, His likeness, His love, His service; and no otherwise can we find our true place and rule and end. 4. And what a beautiful light is the gospel thus presented in! How accordant is it with the deepest and most advanced thought! How natural is its mercy! How agreeable its provision! And how indispensable its blessing! How every other method and object would miserably fail! All ornaments, instruments, advantages—what are they apart from life? II. THE PLACE. "The temple." Do we not see in this publicity—1. The truthfulness of the gospel? The first preachers of the gospel did not secrete themselves,

choose select audiences, go to strange people, nor wait until the matters of which they spake had been forgotten, or could not so well be sifted. Their message, intended for the people's benefit, was committed to the people's scrutiny. Based on history, they proclaimed it to those who had the fullest opportunities and means of trying its historical integrity. They knew that they spoke the truth, and knew that others knew it too. And what could convince them but Christ's resurrection and ascension? The gospel is the same to-day. It is open to the inspection of all. It comes before the people in its full utterances and evidences. It especially challenges investigation. It allows of no means of bringing men to its adoption but their conviction of its truth. And it promotes, as all reason and history go to show, a spirit of intelligence, dangerous to any system that cannot stand the test. 2. The indifference of Christianity. The whole state of the Jewish Church was corrupt. And the time had come when the gorgeous ceremonial ceased to be obligatory, and realism took the place of ritualism. I can imagine some who would not have used the temple at all. There have been reformers who would have shunned the place, or only have frequented it to warn men of the sin and folly of making use of it. So did not they. And this is but one instance of the moderation of the first preachers of Christianity. Jesus did not shrink from contact even with doubtful things around Him. And His servants addressed the people through their familiar ideas, and conciliated them by conformity to their habits. We find one now prudently circumcising a disciple, and now as prudently joining some who had a vow. These things bear marks of the healthy character of apostolical religion, not to say proofs of apostolical inspiration. Men always work fresh theories to death. And when I find the first preachers of the gospel as calm as they were earnest, making no account of secondary matters, but every account of matters of first importance, I cannot but admire the reasonableness of their faith, and am disposed to admit that, in this, they were "taught of God." 3. There is still a higher suggestion. The temple was the great symbol of the Jewish religion which had virtually passed away. In declaring the gospel in its porch, the apostles declared the fulfilment of all it was designed to signify. When the temple became a church, it was in the natural order of Divine Providence. What more meet than that the spot which had witnessed the premonitions of the gospel, should be the scene of its complete announcements? Nor must we stop at Judaism. There have been other great religions among men. In Christianity you have all these met and satisfied, and in it alone. It stands in the porch of humanity, and "speaks all the words of this life." III. THE PEOPLE. "Speak to the people." 1. We have here a specimen of the genius and design of the gospel. (1) It knows nothing of the artificial distinctions of men; it regards man as man. "There is neither Greek nor Jew," &c. "The common salvation" differs widely in the universality of its aspects from many false religions and philosophic systems. Christ addressed Himself not to a class exalted above the rest, but to the people generally. So did the apostles. No anxiety to reach and win the learned and mighty class prompted them. They preached to the Sanhedrin when brought before them, but their mission was not to classes, but to the "people." (2) And in speaking to the "people," they not only recognised their right to the gospel, but their power to understand and to profit by it. Their gospel was not a problem to be solved only by faculties specially trained, but a truth to be apprehended by undisciplined understandings, to be tested by common sense and common honesty, to be felt and appreciated by hearts untutored save by the Spirit of Divine love. While skill has often served only to perplex, and learning to encumber, and worldly pomp to corrupt, the gospel, the simple and the unlettered have "received the kingdom of God as little children," and felt it to be "in power, and not in word." While "these things have been hidden from the wise and prudent, they have been revealed unto babes." While the first have been making elaborate comments on the architecture of the temple, the last have been humbly worshipping before the glory; while the first have been cleverly criticising the wording of the invitation, the last have been feasting joyously at the table of the Lord. As men have sometimes altered it, it has been adapted only for the few; as God has given it, it is designed and fitted for all. (3) We say, "for all." For it is possible to err in two directions. We may leave out the great and wealthy as well as the poor and mean. We may depreciate humanity in high places as well as in low places. There is an aristocracy of poverty as well as of rank and riches. Pride may look up as easily as look down. The haughtiness of supposed unrequited merit may be a severer, bitterer thing than that of satiated self-esteem. The people may be flattered as well as nobles.

And I am not sure that this danger has no existence now. There were two disciples in the Sanhedrin, as large a proportion probably as there were among the people. There were "saints in Cæsar's household." If "not many mighty and noble and wise are called," it must be remembered that there are not many, speaking comparatively, to be called. But if the gospel do not exclude them, it includes others. For its design is to bless with "life," and the need and power of life is in the man, in every man. Might does not create it, weakness does not destroy it; riches do not buy it, poverty does not lose it. The blessed child of God may be clothed in rags; the heir of heaven may lie at the rich man's gate, covered with sores; "the woman that was a sinner" may be the loved and commended of Christ. The poor widow may be the most honoured contributor to God's cause; and the crucified robber the first of His converts to be with Christ in paradise. 2. Let us obey the angel's charge. There are temptations to restriction. This mission may be harder and, in some respects, less profitable than that of others. But remember also, that, in others, it will be most fruitful. And "the people"—the great body of the people—are in special need of these "words of life." Christianity, by the influence of its truths and principles, has raised the people, and will yet raise them to a higher social position. The views it gives of man's nature and relations must excite a desire for a position which the masses have not yet attained. It is impossible to mark the tendencies of our own day, without seeing that power is being wonderfully diffused. Whatever our views, whatever our apprehensions, be it desired or be it dreaded, persons and classes will be of less importance than they have been, and men in general will be of more. We may forbid the tide, but it will come in. With this destiny before the people, our duty is—(1) To prepare them for their inheritance. Believing that the gospel alone can guide and develop and sanctify all our powers, give "life" to nations as well as individuals, let us endeavour to diffuse Christianity, that the people may be faithful stewards in their solemn trust. I do not mean, however, do this from policy, but from principle. There is something mean and almost dishonest in using the gospel simply as a means of keeping people in order. It is as a "word of life" in all its channels—social, political, moral, religious life—that you should proclaim it. Proclaim it not from fear, but love. (2) To represent the gospel as intending to bless man by and through His soul. The gospel looks benignly on all attempts at reform and advancement. It never forgets, though its professors have forgotten, that men have bodies, and through their bodies are to be reached. But let us not forget that the condition of men may be elevated without their hearts being sanctified; that ungodliness may dwell in circumstances of plenty, cleanliness, and health; that good wages may be associated with bad conduct, and healthy neighbourhoods with diseased souls. To hear some people talk, you might suppose that "the kingdom of heaven" is nothing to sanitary reform, that there are no sanctuaries like improved dwelling-houses, no baptism like that of baths and wash-houses, no Lord's Supper to be compared to soup-kitchens, no method of quickening men in towns like that of having cemeteries out of town. We say not a word against these things. We wish them God-speed. But let us not estimate too highly the religious influence of these things, and while ye attend to them attend also, and supremely, to the greater things of spiritual salvation. (3) To exactly understand, and be well assured of, the nature and necessity of our own spiritual agency. We should guard against the precipitance of mere zeal and fear. It is said of a modern statesman (Lord Melbourne) that he was never alarmed except when he heard people say, "Something must be done." We must avoid the idea that there is mystery or miracle in the question. There is no great discovery to be made. We must not be impatient, supposing any sudden and surprising change is probable. We must beware of attaching too much value to institutional and instrumental changes, as if the great cause of popular alienation from the gospel lay in ecclesiastical buildings, offices, or economies. Above all must we not substitute the conversion of the Church to the world for the conversion of the world to the Church; not fall into the terrific blunder of trying to remove unbelief and sin by denuding Christianity of its peculiar truths and peculiar sanctities. The work of the gospel is not to change the wine into water, but the water into wine. The "earth" suffers dreadful loss when the "salt" no longer retains its "savour." (*A. J. Morris.*]

Christianity a life:—1. There are two ideas of life—necessary existence and voluntary action. Thousands of men live, pass away, and are nameless for ever. Others live in a higher sense—live an idea—and hence leave behind them a heritage of good deeds and life-inspiring words. 2. The unit of life is the most

strongly marked fact in the universe of God. It begins with an eternal thought in the existence of a supreme personality, and is traceable through every order of beings. We speak of a nation's history. What is it? The history of men and women in the aggregate ends of their actions. The Magna Charta and the Declaration of Independence, while expressions of national sentiment, are yet histories, to that extent, of every man whose voice and hands were raised in their defence or promotion. Every great working principle, every theory of reformation and progress must have a life-force behind it. Its recommendation, its truth, and its power are one with this vital force. The gospel of Jesus Christ has behind it this vital force in a transcendently striking fulness. It is pre-eminently a life. It is not a theory, but an experience; not a speculation, but a certainty; not an abstract idea, but a vital truth. I. IT WAS SPOKEN. Men live by what they speak. All that is left of human life in the past are the few scattered words of poets, seers, and philosophers, gathered up after the banquet of time. The words of the gospel were spoken by a man, the man Christ Jesus. It came welling up from the life-fountains, as His holy eyes looked on sin and sorrow. "Language was given man to conceal his thoughts." But the language of Christ brought them forth in a revelation of beauty and power. So Divine were these words in their meaning that, when rough men were sent to bind the people's Teacher, they were disarmed and went back to those who sent them, saying, "Never man spake like this man." But His words were also linked with the power of life. Each was a life-principle. "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Yea, He was Himself the living Word—the eternal Logos—spoken from the beginning. Peter read this truth in the Master's early utterances, and boldly asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." II. IT WAS ACTED. Its precepts and promises were not spoken, like the philosophy of Greece, in the retirement of the academy, to a few disciples, but they were given to the thirsting multitudes in the midst of arduous toils. Christ worked while He preached. In the highest sense the gospel is a drama, enacted upon the stage of the universe. It represents itself, and its effect is its own eternal life-necessity and life-efficiency. The sympathy provoked in the hearts of its spectators also deepens the life-idea. It is not an æsthetic sentiment awakened by its delicate finish of language and character, or of profound emotion stirred by its tragic colouring, but of deep self-felt interest in the letter of its purpose and the efficacy of its sacrifice. Every scene in the grand drama is real. The real feet of the "Man of Sorrows" pressed the sands of Galilee; a hand of flesh touched the blind eyes; a human heart wept tears through human eyes over the grave of Lazarus. Human blood was found on the cross, and stained the grass in "the place of a skull." A real body was laid in the new tomb of Joseph, and a glorified human body rose through ethereal depths, and on a cloud-chariot ascended to the kingdom above. III. IT WAS LIVED. Christ practised what He preached. The great truths and heavenly virtues which He held up to others found illustration and shone with Divinest radiance in His own life. In an absolute sense, then, this gospel may be styled a life—a perfect life. None other is. It stands out in chiselled beauty and symmetry. The Child of children; the Brother of brothers; the Friend of friends; the Man of men; His life was confined to the proper channels of duty, while the perfect balance of His whole nature made Him ever the Just, the True, the Good. IV. IT WAS FELT. It felt not only for humanity, but felt with it; and came not only with a relief for human woe, but came to share that woe. 1. There is a time in every life when sorrow and care are a strange and pathetic poetry. But after a while they become strangely real. Experience makes them part of life, and thus the chords of sympathy are struck through all the race. It was thus that Christ learned to sympathise with man. With man He quaffed the bitter chalice; with man, trod the path of thorns; with man, tasted death, and with him, slumbered in the grave. But He rose as the earnest of immortality to man's slumbering dust. 2. But this sympathy is not only with human sorrow, but also with human joy. It is a lyre strung with chords of grief and chords of joy. Sometimes they are struck in unison, sometimes singly, but always to throbs of human hope. The gospel is a religion of light. Gloom was never on His face. (*H. M. Dubose.*) *Distinguishing properties of spiritual life:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL, AS HERE INTIMATED. "All the words of this life." It is the design of the gospel to restore man to a certain life. With regard to its matter, the gospel is styled the word of truth; with regard to its end, the word of life. The apostles embraced Jesus Christ as "having the words of eternal life." There is a life, lost by the fall to man, restored by the gospel.

Christians experience a great transition, no less than from death to life. Jesus Christ came to give life, and to give it more abundantly; the gospel being a fuller ministration of the blessings related to spiritual and eternal life than the Old Testament. This life consists in the effects of the gospel on the spirits of men. Their state is essentially changed by the introduction of this life: "all things become new." God, who was the object of aversion, becomes the object of love; God, who was disregarded, becomes the chief source of happiness; His favour, which was left out of sight, becomes the great prize and end of our being; we press after this beyond all beside. II. SOME DISTINGUISHING PROPERTIES OF THIS LIFE. None can form an adequate conception of it but those who experience it. This is the case with every kind of life; you could not judge of the life you live, unless you had experienced its functions, its pleasures and its pains. Similarly, the natural man cannot know the things of the spiritual; they must be spiritually discerned. This is—1. A supernatural and spiritual life. It is not produced by any natural causes or means; none can impart it to another, none can produce it in himself. God must give it; it is called a "new creation," "born of the Spirit—born of God." It is a life quite distinct from every other kind of life; there is vegetable life, distinct from sentient or animal life; and, above this, there is the life of reason, which reaches to the past and the future by reflection and anticipation, and diffuses existence over interminable space; but as far superior to this, as this is to the life of mere sensation, is the life of spirituality. 2. A most elevated life. It brings us into an alliance with the Father and the Spirit by Jesus Christ. He who has this life places his interest in heaven. He would not exchange the sufferings of this life for all that riches could purchase, all that pleasure could offer, all the glory of time; for he feels himself called to the station of those who are "kings and priests to God"; he is enabled to reign over his fleshly appetites and desires, and to sit down with Jesus Christ in heavenly places. Never shall we know what real dignity is till we experience this life. This is the life that Jesus Christ lived. 3. A holy life. It partakes the nature of its Author, the Holy Spirit; it is given for the very purpose of recovering man from sin to holiness; the necessity that existed for Christ's interposition springs entirely out of this design. It is a life which creates pure desires; wars against everything base and evil; makes men strive against sin even unto death. 4. A progressive life. All life is such, vegetable, human, and Divine. The views of a Christian become clearer, his faith strengthens, his consolations improve, and, if he has not so much fervour as at first, his increasing stability amply compensates for the decrease. The saints are described as rich and flourishing in old age. Grace is represented as at first a blade, then an ear, then the full corn; as a little leaven leavening the lump. The Christian pilgrim, forgetful of things behind, presses on to things before; he is never satisfied until he is with God; his path is like the light shining more and more to the perfect day. 5. An eternal life. "I give My sheep eternal life." As this life commences with the eternal purpose and Spirit of God, so it is destined to flourish with God for ever and ever. The life of believers is the same, in its essential spirituality, with the life of those who live in heaven; they have the same pleasures, the same devotion; they feed on the same bread, taste the same salvation, sing the same new song. Conclusion: 1. He that has experienced this life has a knowledge of its value that surpasses all that description, even the description given in the Word of God itself, can impart to others. He has had realising foretastes of unutterable, unchangeable, interminable glory and felicity; he seems almost to have entered within the veil. 2. But without this life, heaven itself, as it is the exhibition of God, must prove a most unsuitable element. There must be a new heart, new tastes, a new life in the soul. They that have not this grand specific, must die in their sins. (*Robert Hall.*) *The gospel message*:—I. THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR MESSAGE. It consists of "words." Too great a distinction is sometimes made between words and things. Brought together, ranged in the order of living thought, they are among the mightiest things on earth. But above all words of law and literature, statesmanship and science, military despatch and moral disquisition, pictorial and philosophical history, poetical and pathetic sentiment—are the words of this life. 1. It is life from death. Not life following death, as in the order of vegetation, where the sap that has fallen down into the root comes up again to vitalise the dry and barren branches. Men do not carry in their souls the seeds of this new life; its appearance is not through a development, but through a regeneration. 2. It is life through death. You get this life through the sacrifice of the Great High Priest.

God breathed into "man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." That was all which was necessary for the first life. That you and I might have the second the Eternal Word becomes a man, that through death He might destroy and "deliver," becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." 3. It is life for death instead of it. Death in trespasses and sins is but the forerunner of another death, a death to deepen, grow, intensify itself, and not to end with the destruction of the body, but to go on consuming the soul without annihilating it. Our message includes words of death; we would solemnly repeat them, but they are in service to the words of life, they illustrate them by contrast. If the gospel proclaims life in exchange for death, then the terrors of the death enhance our conceptions of the life that delivers us from it. II. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF OUR MESSAGE. Whether the apostles were sent to the temple because there so many types of the words of life were before them and the hearers, or not, certainly the temple was like an open picture-book, from which they could illuminate what they had to say. Judaism was "a shadow of good things to come." The apostles as they declared the words of this life stood in the midst of the shadow. 1. Entering the temple, the apostles passed the brazen sea (Exod. xxx. 17–21). Through purification the Jews were to be saved from death. Through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost we live. The defilement of sin is the power of death—cleansed from that defilement we escape that death. Through the deep evil of our hearts we are shut out of God's presence, bathed in the water of the Spirit, made clean through the new birth, we can cross the threshold of God's palace, and bow before His throne, and minister in His service. 2. Beyond the brazen sea stood the altar. It proclaimed that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Death for life; no life for the sinner but through the death of another. 3. Beyond and at the end of the temple was the veil (Lev. xvi. 2). There was not access within the veil at all times even for Aaron, for the people at large there was no access at all. Most emphatically did this declare the holiness of Jehovah and the sinfulness of man. The drawn curtain before the Holy of Holies means that the gospel undraws it; rather, the death of Christ rends it in twain (Heb. x. 3; x. 16–22). Such are the words of this life, they show the way open; they offer the privilege of the High Priest to all; they offer it continually. III. THE ENDS OF OUR MESSAGE. 1. The inspiration of this life. "How shall they call on Him on whom they have not believed? . . . Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Thus we speak that men may live, believing that God will put life into His own words when we utter them. We do not try to play the philosopher, but we would walk in the steps of the Hebrew prophet. We would study Ezekiel's vision, believing there is a lesson in it for us. 2. For the nourishment of this life. Peter describes the believer "as born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," and that which he recognises as the germ of life, he presents as the food of life. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." The new life, God connects with means in its nurture as in its inspiration. The minister is not simply a herald, he is to be a pastor feeding his flock, a father taking care of his family. Christians want what will feed their spiritual life, and strengthen it, and refresh it, recover it when faint, revive it when feeble. 3. The diffusion of this life. It is communicative. He who conveys it to another has no less of it himself, but more. The heavens drop down rain; through a million channels does it flow to fertilise the land. Spiritual life comes from God, who makes you and me bearers of it to others. Conscious of having it and enjoying it, how can we help striving to give it to others who perish through the want of its blessing? (*J. Stoughton, D.D.*) *The burden of the preacher—speaking in the temple*:—The religion of the Pharisee was one of bodily forms, that of the Sadducee one of intellectual negations, and thus both were opposed to a religion the crowning characteristic of which was life. The ever-new life of the gospel comes to burst every lifeless ceremony, and so confound the Pharisee; it comes to open the graves and confute the Sadducee. The apostles were the representatives of this new life. Their touch brought health where there was sickness. Their words enlivened souls. What were the arguments of infidels and the authority of priests before this all-prevailing power? One of the last shifts of despotism was resorted to—they laid hands upon the men and dragged them out of sight. But as the Prince of Life Himself burst the common prison of death, so He led these His servants forth from the common prison of Jerusalem, saying, "Go, stand and speak in the temple," &c. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE

PREACHER'S COMMISSION. 1. He is sent by Christ. "No man taketh this honour to himself." Even Christ was the Sent of God. And of His disciples He said, "As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." The twelve were called apostles because they were sent by Him. When He left the earth He said, "Go ye therefore. . . . And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." How was He to be with them but by working and ruling spiritually in the midst of His Church, "giving some apostles, and some prophets," &c. They are the true successors to the apostles who, called from the world into the Church, are still further moved by the Holy Spirit to devote themselves to the work of the ministry. 2. Is furnished and supported by Christ. The question is, How is one man to minister to the wants of a congregation of men, and sympathise with all its multiform life—rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; guide the erring, cheer the disconsolate, convince the doubting; have a word for the young, for the middle-aged, and for the old. Who is sufficient for all this? Looked at from the human side alone, no one is sufficient. He may have the strength of Samson, the brain of Shakspeare, the courage of Luther, the tenderness of Howard, the eloquence of Chrysostom; but if he has nothing more than what is human, he is unfit for his work. Whatever his natural advantages may be, he requires an unction from on high—he must be upheld and nourished, and guided by the Spirit of Christ. And he is so upheld. 3. Is responsible to Christ. To have Christ for one's Master is the chief of blessings. Men may misunderstand us, deal out scant justice, fail in sympathy, and forsake us, but Christ will not. No faithful act of any servant of Christ can pass unnoticed or unappreciated by Him, but we have this consideration also for our warning. If our faithfulness is noticed, so is our unfaithfulness. If Christ has done so much for the world, He will look after those whose business it is to watch for souls. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE PREACHER'S MESSAGE. The subject is—1. A definite one. (1) It is all contained in one book; and it is embodied in one Person who is called "The Word." It is necessary that Divine truth should be put into human words, for they give stability and perpetuity to the Divine message. We can lay hold of them and keep them before the mind, and study them until they bud out with meanings thick as the buds and blossoms on Aaron's rod. They are the flowers from which we may sip the nectar of truth that is sweeter than the droppings of the honeycomb. If God's message had been delivered to men merely as a spoken word, and had come down through time as an unwritten tradition, it would have wanted clearness, certainty, and authority. (2) The preacher's message, then, has been written down in definite words, and he must keep to these. He is not at liberty to speak on any subject he pleases. There is truth in the stars, and it is the business of the astronomer to unfold that. There are sermons in stones, and it is the work of the geologist to make the stones preach their sermons. There is much wisdom in the conditions of human society, and it is the business of the statesman and the lawyer to teach us what it is. But the preacher has to expound the Word of God. Science and politics may illustrate his subject, but they do not form it. Passing events may present us with striking lessons, but we have to preach from the Bible, and not from the newspapers. But it may be said, Did not Jesus Christ preach from nature? Did He not find texts in the lilies, birds, waving corn, and little children? Not texts exactly, but illustrations. He Himself was the text, for He was the living incarnate Word of God, and He is our subject. The preacher makes no pretence to absolute originality. He is not the discoverer of a new country, but the guide to a country that has been discovered. As from the original languages the Bible has been translated into the living languages, so from the primitive life it must be translated into the modern life. The experience of the nineteenth century before Christ requires to be translated into the experience of the nineteenth century after Christ. (3) But although the Bible is the preacher's text-book, it does not follow that every one who takes a text from the Bible is a gospel preacher. The Bible has been used to arrest the march of science; to rivet the chains of the slave; to justify every form of despotism. From the words of Christ men have preached against Christ. They have taken His own words to disprove His divinity. Yea, Satan himself has often preached from a Bible text. The mere fact, then, that the text is taken from the Bible is no guarantee that the sermon is really a gospel-sermon. (4) Neither does it follow, although we select no particular text, that we do not preach Scriptural truth; for a discourse might be attached to no particular verse of Scripture, and yet be full of the Spirit of Christ. 2. A profound one. Life is a great deep. Who can fathom the soul amid the dark-

ness that is within? disclose its origin in the darkness that is behind? tell its issues in the darkness that is before? If the gospel, then, has any reality and power it must say something satisfactory as to what we are, whence we have come, whither we are going, and what we ought to do. The gospel does this. The Bible is emphatically a Book of Life. Everywhere it is full of life. In the Old Testament there is the life of God; in the Gospels there is the life of Christ; in the Epistles there is the life of the Spirit—everywhere the life of regenerated man. It is not a book of skeletons, but of beings clothed with flesh and blood. Like nature, it has an appearance of abruptness and disorder, which rests, however, on the eternal order. 3. A broad one. "All the words." "The commandment is exceeding broad." The gospel-kingdom is "a place of broad rivers and streams." What richness and variety there is in the Word of God. As the book stretches over a great breadth of time, so it stretches over a corresponding breadth of spiritual life. It has its high mountains on which the clouds of heaven are resting, in the doctrines of the Divine fore-knowledge, predestination, and sovereignty. It has its fruitful plains in the moral activities and good works of men. It has its city life in its civil and ecclesiastical arrangements. It has its quiet valleys in which lie the beauties of domestic life. And it has its great rivers in the principles that run from the beginning to the end of the book. The preacher, then, should not dwell exclusively on the mountain tops of high doctrine, nor should he stand always on the plain, preaching what is called mere morality. If men will insist on opening their eyes to one set of facts, and shutting them to another equally true set of facts, it is not probable that they will preach "all the words of this life." And whence come the narrowness of sectarianism and the bitterness of bigotry, but from a disregard of this truth—that the Word of God has many sides? III. THE SUITABILITY OF THIS MESSAGE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND WANTS OF ALL MEN. The Word was to be spoken to the people in the temple, where they were wont to congregate, in a language they could understand. The types in the temple had now served their purpose as forms of worship, and preaching had now become the chief work of the Church. 1. Speech is a noble faculty, whereby man resembles God, in that He reveals Himself by a word, and so comes into closer contact with his fellow-man. As an institution in society, public speech can never become obsolete; and as a part of the service of the Church it is coeval with the Church. Preaching is more essential to the Church than any other form of worship. Forms of worship belong to particular dispensations, but the preacher belongs to every dispensation. Whatever the form of worship in the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, there were always preachers. In the Jewish Church all the prophets were preachers. The reason is that the preacher's function, being simple and direct, is suited to every age. 2. It is sometimes said that the press is invading the domain of the pulpit. Not so; the press is a handmaid of the pulpit, and instead of silencing the preacher it gives him a voice that extends to the ends of the earth, so that every week we may hear one divine preaching in New York and another in London. As a propagator of religious literature the press ministers to the pulpit; and with regard to other matters, the publication of things secular and ephemeral, the press is here altogether out of the province of the pulpit, which has to do with the spiritual and eternal. The question is, How is a man to be most deeply impressed with Divine truth? We cannot answer by saying that he ought to stay at home, reading the Bible or a sermon, for in private he wants three influences which he has at Church. (1) The person of the preacher. There is a mysterious power proceeding from personality. The tones of the human voice and the look of a living man have great power to impress truth upon the soul. (2) Now this is wanting in books. There is the sympathy of numbers. The rapt attention of one may convict us of inattention, and the careless look of another may call forth a prayer, while the feeling that each is but the fragment of a great whole is fitted to solemnise the mind, as if there fell upon it the shadow of the myriads who worship God in heaven, and that that multitude shall stand before the throne of God. Such influences are wanting in solitude. (3) There is the influence of the other parts of the service, prayer and praise, in rendering the mind more susceptible of true and saving impressions, and this does not exist to the same degree in private. But some one may say, "I get better ideas, and a greater number of them, from reading a book in private." Well, it is a good thing to read and get ideas; but we all know a great deal more than we put in practice, and what we want, therefore, is gracious impulses to the performance of duty. And how are we to get these if we do not

seek them in the way of God's appointment? In short, if books merely could convert the world, why did not God allow books to do it? Along with the written Word there has always been the spoken Word. 3. The words of the Bible suit all phases of life. It has pleasant pictures for the simple-minded, grammatical difficulties for the scholar, deep problems for the philosopher, guiding precepts for the practical, visions of beauty for the poet, hoary wisdom for the experienced, and songs for the dying in the dark valley. It has words for the father in his family, for the master among his servants, for the teacher among his scholars, for the judge on the bench, for the king on the throne. It has words for different states of mind: words of enlightenment for the ignorant, of conviction for the sceptical, of consolation for the bereaved, of warning for the thoughtless, of condemnation for the impenitent, and of forgiveness for the contrite in heart. 4. All earnest persons who come to the temple to worship God in simplicity of heart will hear words that will suit their case. And how varied are the wants represented in a congregation of worshippers! No two hearers altogether alike, but all alike in this, that they are by nature under one common condemnation, and must become partakers of a common salvation. The young are here with the world before them untried and unknown; they need a Saviour to keep them from the bitterness, unbelief, and vanity of the world. The middle-aged are here, with the world's work resting on their shoulders, and they need strength, wisdom, and the sweet charity of the Christian life to enable them to do that which is true, faithful, and kind. The old are here, with their histories in time about to be closed for ever; and they require to have their anchor cast within the veil, and to be at peace with God, and there are words of life for all. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Preachers must reach the people*:—A minister whose congregation numbers about forty all told rejoiced in the smallness of it, because he professed that a greater work could be done with a few than with a large number. In answer, a friend suggested that he should infer from that statement that a greater work could be done with no people at all. This reduced the hypothesis to an absurdity. "I am sure," said one, "that the better a man preaches the smaller his congregation will become." This shows what a large number of very excellent preachers we have in London. But our business is to reach the people somehow. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christianity and the people*: We read of Jesus, that "all the people were very attentive to hear Him." Moreover, the people retain the truth when they receive it. Note this fact in history: the Reformation in Spain was among the nobility, and it was the same in Italy, and the work soon subsided. In England the common people received the truth from Wycliffe, and it never died out. If you wanted to burn a haystack, you would set it alight at the bottom; and if you want a whole nation to feel the power of the gospel, it must first be received by labourers and artisans. The martyrs of England were largely taken from weavers, and such like. The people love the man "chosen out of the people." The Bible is their charter, the gospel is their estate, and when they know it they will retain it with heroic constancy. What is more, they will spread it. Christ's first preachers were of the people, and in the streets of London to-day, and in the Sunday-schools of England to-day, you will find that the people are to the front in holy work. We are glad to see the noble, the great, the rich, the cultured dedicated to our Lord, but, after all, our chief hope lies among the people. (*Ibid.*) *Ministers must preach the whole gospel*:—Dear brethren, it is forbidden us to omit any part of the gospel. I am very glad it is, for if we were permitted we should sometimes shirk the unpopular parts of it. Yet surely it would be very *dangerous* to omit any part of the gospel, would it not? It would be like a physician giving a prescription to a dispenser, and the dispenser omitting one of the ingredients. He might kill the patient by the omission. The worst results follow the keeping back of any doctrine; we may not see those results, but they will follow. Possibly only the next generation will fully display the mischief done by a truth concealed or denied. It would be a dangerous experiment for any one of us to make. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 21–26. **And when they heard that they entered into the temple. . . . But the high priest . . . called the council together.**—*The characteristics of opposition to the truth*:—The contrast is very graphic. The apostles in public disseminating the truth: the Jewish authorities at the same moment plotting in private for its suppression. The conference suggests at once the characteristics which mark opposition to the truth, and the motives by which the opponents are actuated. Sometimes, in a given conflict, the characteristics are displayed in the same natural

order of development as here. At other times each mark distinguishes some individual or movement. I. CONFIDENCE (ver. 21). The apostles were locked up and therefore safe. It only remained to summon and sentence them. Then all would be over: the position of the authorities secured, and Christianity a thing of the past. So, in effect, have persecutors argued all through time. Christ was a babe at Bethlehem. All the babes at Bethlehem were murdered; therefore Herod was safe. Diocletian inscribed on pillars that the name of Christian was everywhere destroyed. Intellectual opponents have argued in the same way. How many times has Christianity been killed and buried from the time of Celsas and Porphyry to those of Voltaire and Tom Paine. II. DISAPPOINTMENT. The prison doors were locked, and the sentries were at their posts, but the prisoners were gone. So, in effect, has it ever been found. Doors do not always open and close at an angel's bidding to set the prisoner free; but his influence and his message finds its way somehow through the thickest walls. Paul was not less effective in a dungeon, nor was Bunyan. And though opponents may be permitted to wreak their full vengeance on their prisoner, martyrdom only enhances power. John the Baptist's influence is all the greater for his tragic death, and Christ lifted up on the Cross is drawing all men unto Him. Bishop Tunstall may burn Tyndale's Bibles, but that only provides Tyndale with the means of publishing more. III. BAFFLEMENT (vers. 23, 24). The authorities felt themselves fairly brought to bay, and began to cherish the secret suspicion that these Galilean peasants would in the long run be too strong for them. And no wonder. The possibilities of the men for whom prison doors would open were boundless, and so they doubted whereunto these things would grow. And now the information comes that they were not only at liberty, but were doing in the most public place the very thing for which they had been imprisoned. This would only increase the baffiement. It was the same in the great persecutions of the early Church. The doubt whereunto these things would grow made even the philosophic Hadrian a persecutor, but eventually made the politic Constantine a Christian. The same doubt agitates the heathen as he sees his cherished convictions and constitutions crumbling and Christianity slowly but surely rising on their ruins. The same doubt agitates the sceptic as he sees his books dwindling in circulation and Bibles multiplying. IV. FEAR. 1. Seen in the method of arrest (ver. 26). 2. But more powerfully in the dread lest their own imprecation, "His blood be upon us," should be fulfilled (ver. 28). "Conscience makes cowards of us all." Nor can it be denied that a large share of the anti-Christian attack all through the centuries is due to the fear of consequences. This will explain a good deal of its virulence. Conclusion: 1. Christians must expect the truth to be opposed. "What concord hath Christ with Belial." 2. In spite of opposition Christians must maintain the truth. It is a sacred deposit to be defended at all costs. 3. Let Christians be animated by the thought that truth is mighty and will prevail. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 27-29. **And when they had brought them, they set them before the council.**—The accusation this time is simply that the apostles had not complied with the former judgment—they were guilty of contempt of court. They had not, however, broken their parole, for they had given none, having declared that they would continue to preach in the name of Jesus. And now the judges are thinking not of truth and justice, but simply of their own safety (ver. 28). They believed that the apostles were working up the multitude to revenge the murder of the Saviour. It is interesting to observe how shy they were of introducing the name of Jesus; but in proportion as the rulers avoided it, the apostles proclaimed it. It was a stone of stumbling to the former which might grind them to powder: it was a strong tower to the latter, into which they ran and were safe. Peter's reply to the question was, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Whence had this man this wisdom and this courage? How much the world owes to Peter's reply! It is the foundation of all true liberty. Peter's defence is one of the finest specimens of pleading on record. It is clear and cogent; it is very short, but long enough. The speaker says all that is needful, and then stops. In this short space he defends himself, confounds his adversaries, and commends Christ. The address assumes the form of a syllogism which would not have been so remarkable on the lips of Paul, but which we are surprised to find in the unpremeditated defence of a simple and impetuous fisherman. After announcing the general principle that wherever God claims obedience man's claim must stand in abeyance, he shows that this case comes under the rule. "The God of our fathers" he takes care to trace all up to the God

of Israel whom the Sanhedrin acknowledged—"raised up Jesus whom ye slew." The point of the arrow is at their breast again. In one sense he is in their power; in another they are in his. "Him God hath exalted." He pillories the priests as enemies of God and crucifiers of the Messiah. But this is not the dictate of revenge. He is feeling for an opening into the consciences of the judges, that he may introduce the gospel; and therefore now offers through the exalted Prince and Saviour remission of sins. The preachers have an eye to the magistrates, the bystanders, the officers, the young advocates, such as Saul of Tarsus, who might be hanging about the court. And who shall tell whether Saul, through Peter's word, received an arrow into his heart which would not out for all his intemperate zeal until he surrendered at Damascus. The witnesses were careful to sow beside all waters, not knowing which might bear fruit. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The apostles persecuted*:—I. THE ARREST BY THE COUNCIL. The arrest of Peter and his brother apostles took place at the instigation of the council before whom they were brought. It was the intent of the rulers to make the new doctrine odious by making its teachers criminals. Thus reasoned the rulers. Moreover, they believed that truth confined behind bars and stone walls could not be very dangerous. But how little they understood the nature of the truth! There is a vitality in ideas utterly beyond the power of man to conceive. When once they are fully grasped by and instilled into the mind they become living, permanent influences. The teachings were safely lodged in men's hearts outside the prison, and not confined within the prison. The rulers also made the mistake of supposing that they could prevent the growth of the gospel by the power of authority. "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this Name?" They had no doubt as to their power to suppress it. But human authority takes no account of the intense enthusiasm which truth inspires in men who believe it, and the degree of self-sacrifice which it can evoke. You can never be sure that your authority has stopped up all loopholes of escape. You can never be sure that your authority can inspire fear enough to terrify the advocate of it into silence. II. PETER'S REPLY TO THE COUNCIL. Here was another instance in which Christ's words were to come true, for He had said some time previously, "But when they shall deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak" (Matt. x. 19). Peter, in his reply, admitted the truth of the charges. The apostles had indeed refused to recognise the authority of the council, because they recognised a higher authority. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Peter, however, goes still farther. Not satisfied with merely answering their charges, he assumes the aggressive by re-affirming the doctrines he had been teaching the people, and boldly sets forth the claims of Christ. There is no shadow of a spirit of compromise in his words. Peter makes the startling announcement that Christ was a Prince. "Him hath God exalted . . . to be a Prince." Peter, nevertheless, unflinchingly declared the new truth, that salvation was not in a system, but in a man. There was one more step necessary to complete Peter's argument, which was that he and his fellow apostles had irrevocably committed themselves to these truths. "We are His witnesses of these things." Thus the reply of Peter's threw the necessity of action upon the council. III. THE RELEASE BY THE COUNCIL. They began in bluster and ended in ignominious defeat. Gamaliel, the master mind among them, rises to state his position, having first, however, secured a temporary removal of the apostles. In private session he pleads for caution, his fundamental ground being that they cannot decide upon the merits of the case. They cannot tell yet whether this new movement is of God or of man. If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; if it be of man, it will come to an end of itself. They had had two marked instances in their own history of the schemes of men coming to an untimely end—namely, those of Theudas and Judas. This incident in the history of the early Church clearly shows two or three things which it is well to note. And one is that ideas cannot be suppressed by persecuting their advocates; and yet the world is very slow in learning this lesson. To shut Peter in jail is no answer to the doctrine he taught, that salvation is of Christ. Fanatic, dreamer, bigot, heretic, are names freely hurled against individuals who are doing what they can for their fellow-men. But these titles have no more power to prevent thought or action than a thistledown can keep back the tides. The personal equation in persecution makes it the infernal thing it is. Another thing to be remarked is that persecution serves the hated truth a good turn by causing it to be clearly stated before the public. If you will consider the causes that called forth four of Peter's sermons, you will find that it was the opposition or doubt of unbelievers. (*E. S. Tead.*) **Did we not**

straitly command you . . . and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.—*Fidelity under intimidation*:—Basil being offered the alternative of conforming to the Arian creed or of resigning his bishopric, he answered the prefect, who was interrogating him, with calm dignity, that he could not obey the emperor's will, "because it was inconsistent with that of his Sovereign Lord, and he could not worship any human creature, being himself a subject of that Lord, and commanded to be like Him." "Do you know his dignity to whom you speak?" asked Modestus. "I do," was the reply, "and I respect it, but that of God is greater. We are both His servants, and among Christians greatness depends not upon rank, but upon faith." The prefect threatened him with pains and penalties. The bishop smiled as he answered, "What are such threats to me? He who has nothing to lose can scarce fear confiscation, and I have no possession save these mean garments and some few books. Neither does he fear exile who counts no spot on earth his home, being here but a pilgrim and sojourner, seeking safer place of rest; heaven is my home. Nor do I fear torture; my frail body would endure but little—you could strike but one blow, and my pain is past; I should but depart the sooner to Him, for whose service alone I am willing to live, and after whom my soul yearns." Modestus could not forbear expressing his surprise at the boldness of the bishop's speech. "Perhaps," was the answer, "you have not before met with a Christian bishop, or under such circumstances you would have found the same conduct." The emperor yielded, and, his child being dangerously ill, the Empress Dominica even sought Basil's prayers on the young Galatus' behalf.

Ver. 29. **We ought to obey God rather than man.**—*Ought*:—The word "ought" is but an old past form of the verb "owe"; it is, in fact, but another spelling of "owed." What, therefore, we *ought* to do, we *owed* to do; what we *ought* to be, we *owed* to be. To God we owe our lives; we ought to pay Him with our lives. What we owe to our fellow-man, is that which we owe it to God to do for an honoured creature of God. We ought to do it because we owe to do it. And yet we go on saying we *ought* to do and we *ought* to be, never thinking that what we ought we owe, and that what we owe we do not pay! (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Ought* is the word which sets forth the sense of duty. It differs from all the other words of the language save those of cognate meaning—a word without moods, tenses, conjugation, above time, space, and circumstance, a word like eternity, perfect and complete in itself. Ought! Whence came it? Not from time, for it is not subject to the laws of time as other words; it is a stray word from eternity. In virtue of this word, the central word of conscience, man is in eternity, and eternity is in man. This word "ought," or, if you like, the truth which this word symbolises, the momentous truth of duty and obligation, is a "great light" hung up in the sky of the soul for ever; and however bright the lustre of the sun in the material firmament of the senses, it pales by the side of the exceeding brightness of the "great light which rules the day" in the inner heavens of the spirit. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Obedience to God*:—I. ITS NECESSITY. 1. Commanded (Deut. xiii. 4; x. 12). 2. The condition of acceptance with God (Exod. xix. 5; Jer. vii. 23). 3. The condition of securing God's help (Exod. xxiii. 22; Deut. vii. 9). 4. Expected of God's people (Deut. xxvii. 9, 10). 5. More than burnt-offerings (1 Sam. xv. 22). 6. A fit return for God's mercies (1 Sam. xv. 24). 7. Must obey God rather than man (chaps. iv. 19, 20; v. 29). 8. Exhorted (Jer. xxvi. 13; xxxviii. 20). 9. A proof of friendship to Christ (John xv. 14). II. WHAT IT INCLUDES. 1. Obeying God's voice (Exod. xix. 5; Jer. vii. 23). 2. Obeying God's law (Josh. i. 7; Isa. xlii. 24). 3. Bringing every thought into obedience to Christ (2 Cor. x. 5). 4. Obeying the gospel (Rom. i. 5; vi. 17; x. 16). 5. Keeping God's commandments (Eccles. xii. 13). III. HOW TO BE RENDERED. Should be—1. From the heart (Deut xi. 13; Rom. vi. 1). 2. Willingly (Psa. xviii. 44; Isa. i. 19). 3. Faithfully (Josh. xxii. 2, 3). 4. Undeviating (Deut. xxviii. 14). 5. Constantly (Phil. ii. 12). IV. MOTIVES TO. 1. Promises to (Exod. xxiii. 22; 1 Sam. xii. 14, 15; Isa. i. 19). 2. Blessedness of (Deut. xi. 27, xxviii. 1–14; Luke xi. 28; Jas. i. 5). 3. Disobedience punished (Deut. xi. 28, xxviii. 15–68; Josh. v. 6; Isa. i. 20). (*S. S. Times.*) *Obedience to God*:—The proposition is one which receives an unanimous assent. It is a truth seen by intuition. If there be a God, and He has any will respecting our conduct, we ought to obey Him. We owe Him obedience on every account. He is our Maker, Proprietor, Benefactor, and a Being infinitely perfect, incapable of willing anything inconsistent with the strictest rectitude. We ought to obey Him. Ought we! Then why have we disobeyed Him? Out of thy own mouth

will He judge and condemn us. But since there are mistakes as to what obedience is and is not, let us—I. DRAW SOME DISTINCTIONS. 1. The mere doing of what God commands does not constitute obedience, unless we also abstain from what He forbids. Negative precepts are as obligatory as positive precepts. 2. Obedience must be universal. It must not only have respect to *all* that is forbidden and required. The same reasons exist why we should be conformed to the whole will as to any part of the will of God. If, therefore, any one disobeys God in any respect, he forfeits the character of obedience; and hence it is written, "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." 3. To obey God is not simply to act according to His will, but because it is His will. An accidental conformity of the will of man to the will of God is not obedience. It must be intentional. An atheist may do what God requires, but you would not therefore say that he obeys God. A man may do some things which God requires from some inferior consideration. Thus some are scrupulously honest, because dishonesty is disgraceful, or an inherent principle of integrity, and not out of regard to the Supreme Lawgiver. The very same elements go into the constitution of filial obedience. A dutiful son is one who does what his parent instructs, not because it falls in with his own inclination, or because he is to gain anything by it, but out of regard to the will of his parent. It is apparent, then, that there may be a great deal of morality and right acting among men where there is no obedience to God. 4. A doing according to God's will, out of a regard to God, does not alone constitute obedience. It depends on the nature of the regard. The regard may be servile—dread of the effects of God's displeasure at disobedience. It may be mercenary—expectation of reward for obedience. But the regard that is had to God in all acceptable obedience is the union of respect and love. 5. Obedience, to be acceptable, must be internal as well as external. External actions are really but the expression of obedience. In what is the law of God summarily comprehended but in a twofold exercise of the heart? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." All pious and charitable acts must, in His account, pass for nothing, unless they are the expressions of love, the obedience of the heart. II. CHARACTERISTICS OF OBEDIENCE. It must be—1. Constant; not occasional and interrupted. There exist the same imperative reasons why God should be obeyed at all times, as at any time. And the love of God, the principle of obedience, is not a fitful and feverish excitement, but a regular and healthful pulsation. 2. Unconditional. We ought to obey God, whatever the difficulty, the circumstances, or the consequences. There is no power of dispensation. And yet how many exceptions are taken on the mere score of inconvenience—*e.g.*, as regards the Sabbath law. And must the laws of the great and dreadful God, whose majesty is such that all nations are before Him as nothing, bend to human convenience? What! is it our duty to obey God only when it is convenient and agreeable, or when it does not seem to interfere with any of our secular interests? 3. Supreme and primary, and not subordinate and secondary. This obligation takes the precedence of every other. They must bend to it. It will bend to none. Whoever is disobeyed, God must be obeyed. 4. Immediately, without hesitation. Delay is disobedience, even though it should be accompanied with the determination to obey hereafter. Is God's law fulfilled by good resolutions and dutiful purposes? 5. Unquestioning. We have no right to ask the reason of His commands, or their utility. It is enough that He commands. Some little Sunday-school girls were questioned in reference to the petition, "Thy will be done," &c. "How do angels in heaven do it?" "Immediately," said one; "actively," said another; "unitedly," replied a third; and then there was a pause, when one little girl said "without asking any questions." 6. Submission. The reasons for obedience to God's perceptive will are the same as those for submission to His providential will. "Thy will be done," means "be Thy purposes accomplished, as well as be Thy commands obeyed." 7. Sinlessness is necessary to the perfection of obedience, but not to its reality. Yet the desire and prayer, and aim and effort, and struggle to be free from it is. (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) *Three classes of people:*—I. THE SPIRIT OF THE BELIEVER. This is shown in the conduct of the disciples under persecution. 1. A working spirit. As soon as set free, they are found in the temple at work for Christ. 2. A conscientious spirit. "We ought" is the principle controlling their conduct. 3. A witnessing spirit. Notice how strong and how clear is their testimony (vers. 30–32). 4. A rejoicing spirit (ver. 41). They were glad at the privilege of suffering for their Master's cause. II. THE SPIRIT OF THE UNBELIEVER. Notice how this stands in marked contrast with the believer's

spirit. 1. There is the fear of men (ver. 26). While the apostles are fearless of popular opinion, their persecutors are fearful, and stand in awe of the people's wrath. 2. There is hatred against the truth (vers. 28, 33). These men were not sincere seekers after the truth. The truth was the particular object of their enmity. 3. There is the spirit of persecution (ver. 40). Either the disciples were right or they were wrong. If they were wrong, the priests' party need have no fear—their cause would come to naught. If they were right, it was a crime to beat them. But to repress truth by violence has been the aim of persecution in all ages. III. THE SPIRIT OF INDECISION. This we observe in the counsel of Gamaliel. His plea may be interpreted as the utterance of a noble toleration or of an unprincipled expediency; perhaps both elements entered into it. *Obedience to God rather than man*:—A stern father one day, when he came home from his business, heard a noise as if some one were talking in his little boy's room. He asked his wife what it was. She told him it was Johnnie praying. This made him angry. He told his little son, in a decided tone, that if he dared to do it again he must leave the house and find another home. Like Daniel, dear Johnnie knew all he must suffer; but he determined to keep on praying. The next day his father came home and found him praying again. He went at once to his little room, and in a gruff voice said, "Pack up your things and be off. I'll not have any of your praying in my house. You shall not live with me." And so the poor fellow packed up the little that was his, and took his bundle and walked downstairs to say "good-bye." He went first to his mother and sister, and gave them the "good-bye" kiss; and then, with a full heart, he leaned over the cradle and pressed his quivering lips to those of the little one he loved so much. His mother stood by weeping. How could he part with her? At last, throwing his arms around her neck, and with tears in his eyes, he sobbed, "Good-bye, mother!" And then the little hero turned kindly to his stern father, and, holding out his hand, said, "Good-bye, father." But the father could not bear it any longer. He could not keep the hot tears from his eyes. No, he could not, after all, drive away his noble boy. "Johnnie, you need not go now. Pray for me. I have been a wicked man to try to keep you from praying. I was wrong; you were right in praying. Oh, pray for me!" was all he could say. And Johnnie did pray. Yes, and the father prayed too. He became a converted man, and loved, with his family, to bow before the mercy-seat. (*E. P. Hammond.*) *Obedience to God in spite of danger*:—One Saturday there was a little boy named Jamie Brown pushing along the road on his way home. He had only travelled about a mile, when, at a turn of the road, three or four very wicked boys, who disliked him for going to church, and refusing to join them in mischief, came rushing out from a clump of trees with a fierce bull-dog, and said, "Brown, you must say the bad words we tell you before you go another step, or we'll send the dog at you." And then they began to swear, and speak the worst of words. Now there was one thing Jamie had learned at his mother's fireside, and that was, that it was wrong to take God's name in vain, and wrong to foul the tongue with bad words. But he simply said, "Let me go; I want to get home." "Not one step farther," said the biggest fellow, "until you say these words after me. Swear this oath, and we'll let you go," and he repeated wild and wicked words. "I dare not say that," replied the boy; "and you have no right to ask me." "Swear the oath this moment, or we will let slip the dog." "I will not swear that oath; and you have no right to let slip the dog on me." They gave him one more chance, and then let loose the dog. That night, as his mother and the other children sat round the fire, the brave boy told the rest of the adventure. It came into his head, as his savage persecutors were unloosing the dog, that God, who shut the mouths of the lions in the den where Daniel was, could shut the mouth of the fierce dog on that lonely road. And God did shut the mouth of the dog. The big, hulking scoundrels, more brutal than their dog, yelled it at the harmless boy. The dog barked furiously for a second or two, and went rushing up to him. But it neither bit nor offered to bite. And Jamie was delivered out of their hands. (*N. T. Anecdotes.*)

Ver. 31. **Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**—*The end of the Saviour's exaltation*:—Elevation is necessary to influence. Of what advantage is a candle under a bushel? While the sun is below our earth, all is dark and cold; but when he rises, he scatters his enlightening and enlivening beams. When the shrub rises up out of the ground, it requires support; but when it becomes a

tree, the birds lodge in its branches. A man in the obscurity and contractedness of private life can only pour forth benevolent wishes and shed ineffectual tears. But give him pre-eminence, and thousands are protected by his power and enriched by his bounty. Take the case of Joseph, *e.g.* But a greater than Joseph is here. Jesus suffered from the hands of sinners; but His sufferings led to His exaltation. Some are exalted as princes who are by no means saviours. They sacrifice the lives of their subjects to save their own; but He sacrificed Himself for the welfare of His subjects. They are princes of war; but He is "the Prince of peace." They are princes of death; but He is "the Prince of life." They are princes and destroyers; but He is "a Prince and a Saviour." Let us take three views of the blessings which the exalted Saviour gives. I. Their MEANING. 1. What is repentance? The inquiry is necessary because of the counterfeits of repentance. Pharaoh, Ahab, and Judas repented, and yet died in their sins. An old divine tells us that "Genuine repentance consists in having the heart broken for sin, and from it." (1) The subject of repentance, then, is convinced of sin. He sees that it is the greatest evil in the universe. Hence he feels shame, grief, and contrition—especially when he apprehends the goodness of God. This dissolves the heart, and makes him "sorrowful after a godly sort." For the tear of evangelical penitence drops from the eye of faith; and faith while it weeps stands under the Cross. The pressure of these various feelings constitutes what we mean by having the heart broken for sin. (2) But the man has now new dispositions and resolutions; and hence a new course of life. He is delivered from the love of all sin, however dear before. He is freed from its dominion, and avoids its occasions. And this is what we mean by having the heart broken from sin. 2. And what is forgiveness? It does not render a man innocent. Sin contracts guilt, and guilt binds over to punishment; forgiveness cancels this obligation, and restores the offender to safety. And frequently among men forgiveness extends no further. But God takes pleasure in those whom He pardons, and indulges them with the most intimate friendship. When two individuals have been at variance, the hardest to believe in reconciliation is the offender. A man once offended Augustus, and the emperor, to show his greatness of mind, declared that he pardoned him. But the poor creature, fearing the declaration was too good to be true, desired his majesty to give him some present as a proof that he had really forgiven him. Thus anxious is the awakened mind. Such a free and full forgiveness after all his heinous provocations seems incredible; he therefore desires a token for good: and many pledges of the most perfect reconciliation the God of all grace affords. II. Their CONNECTION. This is not a meritorious connection, as if repentance deserved forgiveness, for they are both given; and how can one gift merit another? But there is between them a connection of—1. Propriety. It would not accord with the wisdom of God to forgive one incapable of enjoying or serving Him—yea, one who abhors Him. If a servant or a child were to behave improperly, though goodness may incline you to pardon, you would naturally require a proper state of mind, and signs of sorrow, confession, and reformation; otherwise your forgiveness would look like connivance or indifference, and encourage a repetition of disobedience. 2. Certainty. No one ever really enjoyed forgiveness without repentance; and no one ever truly exercised repentance without forgiveness. On the other hand, "He that confesseth, and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy." III. Their SOURCE. Some think repentance a very legal subject; but there never was a greater mistake. For, not to mention that our Lord "came to call sinners to repentance," and that the apostles "went forth preaching everywhere that men should repent," repentance is peculiarly evangelical. The law has nothing to do with it; it does not even command it; all it has to do with the transgressor is to condemn. It allows him neither liberty nor ability to repent; but the gospel gives him both, and Christ was exalted to effect the purpose of the gospel. And if repentance be a gift, can the forgiveness be a purchase? Hence two things follow. 1. If we possess these blessings, we learn to whom we are to address our praise. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." 2. If we want them, we see to whom we are to address our prayers. (*W. Jay.*)

Exalted to give:—1. The murderer is haunted by the ghost of his victim. This is a part of the sublime machinery of providence for the punishment, and so for the prevention of crime. All history teems with examples of this. Witness Herod—"John the Baptist, whom I beheaded, is risen from the dead." These high priests were compelled to undergo this inevitable sentence, "Whom ye slew, God has exalted." Their victim has risen, and the murderers tremble. They showed Him no mercy, and expect none from Him. But now that He is exalted, and His

enemies in His power, instead of taking vengeance He offers remission. 2. The water is exalted into the heavens that it may give rain. In the same way He who comes as rain on the mown grass was exalted that He might give Himself as the Living Water. The exalted Giver bestows every kind of good. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." But the fundamental benefit, without which all others would be of no avail, is the twin gift promised in our text. 3. Repentance and forgiveness constitute one entire redemption. These two God has joined as He has joined the right and left sides of a body to make one organised life. To separate them is to destroy them. Forgiveness is an act of the Supreme God, repentance the act of sinful man, and yet both are the gift of the risen Redeemer. It is not like two portions of an extended straight line, but like two halves of a great revolving ring—as it goes rapidly round it seems as if this half were impelling that, and sometimes as if that were impelling this. From one point of view repentance seems to draw forgiveness, from another forgiveness seems to work repentance. It is true Christ says, "If any man open I will come in"; but it is also true that no one would open unless moved by the plaintive voice, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." It is opening from within that lets the Saviour enter, but it is the pressure of the Saviour that causes the fastenings of the heart to give way. 4. We cannot determine the precise point at which the process begins. I do not know the point in the circle which the Spirit touches to communicate motion. All I know is that He gives it motion, and that when one point moves all move. And this wheel is like Ezekiel's, so high that it is dreadful. The upper part is in heaven, while its lower edge rolls upon the earth. Forgiveness is an act done by God; the official act of the Judge on the great white throne. Repentance is a rending and a melting of the heart here upon earth. The lower part of the circle is in the chambers of the sinner's soul, and yet every movement of a hair's breadth is accompanied by a corresponding movement on high. So "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." These two were joined in Peter's own experience. When he had denied his Lord, "the Lord looked on Peter"; that look conveyed pardon, and the repenting disciple went out and wept bitterly. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Christ an exalted Prince and a glorified Saviour*:—I. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST, properly speaking, consists of four parts—His resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, and His coming to judge the world. It is to His sitting at the right hand of God, however, that our attention is here called. And, regarding it, three circumstances are noticed in the text. 1. The dignity to which Christ is raised. (1) The expression, "with His right hand," does not denote the agency by which, but the glory to which He is exalted. It intimates that our Mediator enjoys Divine honour at the Father's right hand, exercises Divine authority, and dispenses Divine government. This is a situation which no mere creature can occupy. I admit that the divinity of Christ being necessarily unchangeable, could not, strictly speaking, be humbled or exalted. But inasmuch as He took our nature into personal union with Him, He was humbled. And when His work was finished He dropped His lowly character, but not His human nature. Clothed in it He gloriously appeared before God on our behalf, and, as the reward of His undertaking, received, at His Father's hands, universal authority. (2) And let none suppose that the right hand of God in heaven denotes any visible proximity to the infinite Spirit, like nearness of place in the case of a prince at the right hand of an earthly sovereign. The human nature of Jesus, indeed, requires a local residence. But who can describe His dignity and glory in heaven? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," &c. 2. The character in which He is raised, "a Prince and a Saviour." (1) As a Divine person, Jesus was never deprived of His royal supremacy, and therefore could never be exalted to a dignity from which He had never descended. But there was a dignity to which, as God and man in one person, He had never hitherto been formally raised, although from the beginning He had acted as King of the Church and Lord of the Universe. But this princely office arose entirely from the covenant made between the Father and the Son, which required from the latter obedience unto death, as absolutely necessary to His being formally installed into His regal authority as King in Zion. (2) And as the nature of Christ's kingly office is peculiar, so also is its exercise. His law, indeed, is still the immutable rule of righteousness. But there is exercised to obstinate sinners the most marvellous long-suffering; and to believers the freest and most astonishingly gracious forgiveness, joined with the choicest spiritual blessings. Such a mode of administration can only be accounted for on the principle that a system of mediatorial authority exists, in consequence of which "sentence against an evil work is not speedily exe-

cuted" on unbelievers; and pardon, purity, spiritual protection, comfort, and eternal glory, secured to all the faithful. (3) But Christ is not only an exalted Prince, but also a glorified Saviour. We have seen that as a Prince He completely secures the happiness and dignity of His people. But deliverance from sin could never have been realised unless, like the high priests of old, He had entered into the holy place, and presented the blood of His atonement as the ground of His intercession. He saves to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them. 3. The agency of the Father in the exaltation of His Son—"Him hath God exalted." We are here carried back to the council of peace, the agreement of the Divine persons in reference to the salvation of men. The Father was bound to exalt the Mediator when His work of humiliation was accomplished. II. ITS BLESSED CONSEQUENCES. Amongst these are the glory of God, the establishment of order and harmony in the universe, the increased light thrown upon God's character and designs; but what chiefly concerns us is that the exalted Saviour bestows—1. Repentance. 2. Forgiveness. Conclusion: This subject ought to be improved, especially by—(1) Those who have good reason to conclude that they are already in possession of these blessings. Such are under infinite obligations to the God of all grace, and forget not that it flows through the channel of Christ's mediation; and while you admire this salvation in its rise and progress and application, forget not to pray for the continued communication of grace to your soul. Remember that faith needs to be strengthened, and repentance deepened. (2) Those who doubt their interest in Christ are here encouraged. Your very sorrow is a hopeful symptom. It is well that you feel your unworthiness; and instead of making it an argument against coming to Christ, use it as a strong argument to lay vigorous hold of Him. (3) To those who are as yet destitute of Divine grace. These are of two classes. (*a*) The hypocrite knows that he is not what he pretends to be. Yet, notwithstanding your aggravated guilt, you are invited to the Saviour. (*b*) Let the self-deceiver open his eyes to his true state and character. You say you repent; but yours is a legal repentance, which consists in a dread of the Divine wrath. Such a sorrow works death. Repentance unto life, on the other hand, is that sorrow which flows from a believing view of the atonement of Christ and of the evil of sin, as manifested in the Cross, and is recognised to be genuine only by the fruits of holiness which result from it. (*W. Orr.*) *A Prince and a Saviour*:—I. NOTE CHRIST'S TITLES and learn their meaning. 1. A Prince. This tells of—(1) Honour as the reward of His sufferings on earth. While He was here He was treated as a felon. What presents the Prince of Wales brought home from his travels! But the Prince of Glory took home with Him His wounds only. But the shame and the rejection are now ended, and in glory Jesus is manifestly a Prince, reverenced, obeyed, and honoured. (2) Power. His is no nominal princedom—He has both glory and strength. Unto Him is given the mediatorial kingdom, which includes all power in heaven and in earth, so that He is well styled "the blessed and only Potentate." There is no bound to this power. (3) Dominion. If Christ is to be yours you must let Him rule over you. "He must reign." He claims to be Master and Lord to those who ask salvation at His hands; and is not the claim a just one? Whom should we serve but the Lord who became a servant for our sakes? It must be so, or salvation is impossible. You must accept Jesus to be a leader and a commander to you, or you cannot win the battle of life. You must yield Him loving obedience, or He will not be married to your souls. His dominion is sweetly tempered by love; so that, as the prophet writes, "Thou shalt call Me no more Baali," that is, "My Lord," with a hardness of rulership, but Ishi, "My Lord," because Thou art my Husband. 2. A Saviour. Observe here—(1) The perseverance of the Lord's love. He was a Saviour here; He is a Saviour now that He has reached His throne. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost," and now "He is able to save them to the uttermost," &c. (2) The prevalence of the work He achieved here. Here He was able to save, but His salvation was not complete, for He had not yet said, "It is finished." Now His redeeming work is done, and saving is a simple matter to Him. (3) His approachableness. You might be abashed at coming to a prince, but you may be encouraged in coming to a Saviour. 3. Put the words together—(1) Prince-Saviour: one who is kingly in the salvation which He brings, and deals out no stinted grace, but makes us to receive of His fulness grace for grace. (2) Saviour-Prince whose glory it is to save, whose kingdom and power and dominion are all turned in full force to achieve the work of rescuing His people. II. APPROACH HIM, THEN, UNDER THESE TWO CHARACTERS. 1. As a

Prince. And how shall we do that? (1) With the sorrowful confession of past rebellion. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry." (2) Accept His great purpose and submit to His rule. He is a Prince, therefore yield yourself to be His subject. The object of His rule is to make you love God, and to be like God. (3) Surrender everything to Him. If He has redeemed you then you belong to Him; henceforth you are not your own, you are bought with a price. (4) Pay your loving, loyal homage to your Prince. Behold Him in His glory, where all the angels cast their crowns before Him, while the elders adore Him with vials full of sweet odours. 2. As Saviour. (1) Confessing that you need a Saviour. (2) Believing that He is able to save you. (3) Submitting entirely to His processes of salvation. He will not save thee in thy way, but in His way; and His way of saving thee is to make thee feel the smart and bitterness of sin, to make thee hate that sin, and so to turn thee from it for ever. (4) Trusting Him as Saviour. III. MARK HIS GIFTS. 1. Repentance. This does not mean to give space for repentance, nor to make repentance acceptable, but to give repentance itself. What is repentance? (1) It is a change of mind. (*a*) He can give thee to change thy mind about all the past, so that the things which pleased thee shall grieve thee, that which charmed thee shall disgust thee. (*b*) He can also change thy mind as to the present and the future, so that instead of looking for present pleasure thou wilt find thy delight in future glory realised by faith. (2) It includes a most needful sense of sin, and the Saviour can give thee this by His Spirit. (3) He can work in thee desires after holiness and hatred of every false way; He can take the guile out of thy soul as well as the guilt out of thy life. 2. Forgiveness. (1) He can pass an act of amnesty and oblivion for all thy sin. "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and as a thick cloud thy transgressions." (2) When full forgiveness comes it brings with it the eternal removal of the penalty. The forgiven man cannot be punished. (3) With pardon there shall come a restoration of every privilege. IV. ASK HIM FOR THESE GIFTS. 1. Humbly. You do not deserve them. You have no claim to His love, and must not set up any. 2. Importunately. Do not come with a cold heart and a trifling spirit. Come with this resolve, "I will not leave the Cross till my sins have left me." 3. Believingly—believing that Christ can give, and that He is as willing as He is able. 4. Now. The Romans when they meant to bring things to an issue with an Oriental tyrant, sent their ambassador to bring his answer back—yes or no, war or peace. The messenger when he saw the king stooped down, and drew a ring upon the ground round the monarch; and then said, "Step outside that ring, and it means war; before you leave that circle you must accept our terms of peace, or know that Rome will use her utmost force to fight with you." I draw a ring round you, and I demand an answer. Sinner, wilt thou now be saved or not? To-day is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus Christ a Prince and a Saviour*:—I. A PRINCE. According to—1. His heavenly origin. 2. His Divine credentials, even when in the form of a servant. 3. His glorious exaltation to the right hand of God. II. A SAVIOUR. 1. Already in the manger by His self renunciation. 2. On the Cross by His sacrifice. 3. On the throne by His intercession. III. A PRINCE AND A SAVIOUR. 1. If He were not a Saviour He could not be a Prince—His fairest princely ornament is His crown of thorns. 2. If He were not a Prince He could not be a Saviour—the efficacy of His sacrifice depends on His Divine dignity. 3. As a Prince we must honour and obey Him, and as a Saviour love and confide in Him, in order to become partakers of His salvation. (*K. Gerok.*) *Repentance the gift of Christ*:—The doctrine of the gospel appears to be not only that Christ taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what He did and suffered for us; that He obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life; not only that He revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation by what He did and suffered for them. And it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit by performing the conditions on which it is offered, on our part without disputing how it is procured on His. (*Bp. Butler.*) *Repentance and remission of sin*:—I. THE OFFICES OF CHRIST THE LORD IN HIS HEAVENLY STATE, or what He is exalted to be, viz., "a Prince and a Saviour." II. THE GIFTS AT HIS DISPOSAL, or what He is able to bestow, viz., "repentance and forgiveness of sins." Application: 1. Give to Him whom God hath exalted an exalted place in your thoughts and affections. 2. Give to Him, at all times, the daily homage of your faith and love and obedience. (1) Go to Him as the only Mediator between God and man, the sole appointed medium of all your communica-

tions with the most High God. (2) Go to Him, and give heed to Him, as presenting you at once with the noblest model, and strongest motives, in every duty. (3) Go to Him farther as the authorised source and dispenser of spiritual blessings to your souls. 3. See that you value these blessings which He is exalted to bestow, and that you faithfully seek them according to His Word. 4. Take, then, the full consolation and encouragement of having such an exalted Redeemer. (*Jas. Brewster.*) *Repentance and forgiveness*:—There are some who would object to this phraseology as unsound, if it were not the phraseology of Holy Writ. It appears to savour too much of legalism, both because it is repentance — not faith — with which the forgiveness of sins stands connected, and because in the statement of the two things, repentance is placed first in order. But it will be seen upon examination that here, as everywhere else, the grace of the gospel and the authority of the law are equally recognised, and that there is not the slightest sacrifice of the one of these Divine dispensations to the other. I. REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS ARE HERE EMPLOYED TO DENOTE THE WHOLE EXTENT OF THAT SALVATION WHICH CHRIST HAS EFFECTED IN OUR BEHALF. 1. Forgiveness of sins denotes it as applied to our condition. We are in a state of guilt—liable to God's displeasure, and under a sentence of condemnation. But Christ by "suffering, the just for the unjust," procures for us "redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." And thus, the only thing which separated between God and us being effectually removed, we are restored to His favour, and regain a title to every blessing. 2. Repentance denotes it in reference to our character. A change of character is as essential for us as a change of condition. Though pardon and eternal life had been procured for us, yet these we could not enjoy so long as we were alienated from God, by whom that pardon was to be granted and with whom that eternal life was to be spent. And accordingly provision is made in the gospel scheme for producing the revolution in our moral nature which is thus found to be indispensable. Of this revolution Christ is the author, as He is of every other benefit. In this way our salvation is complete. 3. The circumstance that faith is not specified does not amount to an underrating of its value, or a depriving it of its just province. Repentance includes faith, not only as one of its component parts, but as its essential feature. Faith, whether considered simply as a belief in the Divine testimony respecting Christ, or as an actual embracing of Him, and trusting in Him, enters into the very substance of repentance. Note that it is the "repentance of Israel" that is especially spoken of. They had crucified Christ. Their repentance must necessarily have mainly consisted in a transition from their obstinate infidelity to faith in Jesus as a suffering Saviour. In like manner the predominant sin of all who have not repented, is that Christ has been offered to them, and that they have refused the offer. So that when they repent, the great thing they have to do is to open their ears and hearts to the message which the gospel brings them concerning the Saviour, and to flee for refuge in His Divine person and finished work. II. THOUGH REPENTANCE IS FIRST IN ORDER, IT DOES NOT BEAR TO FORGIVENESS OF SINS THE RELATION OF CAUSE TO EFFECT, AND IS NOT THE CONDITION OF FORGIVENESS. Were there nothing in the passage itself to indicate this we should be entitled to explain it by what the Bible says as to the nature of repentance—viz., that it cannot meritoriously contribute to the attainment of any blessing from God; and by the general analogy of Scripture, one of whose great objects is to strip all human moralities of every thing like good desert, or in cancelling the guilt of man. But we have no occasion to wander from the text. Forgiveness comes to us from Divine mercy. Christ is exalted to give it. And, represented as His gift, it is not traced to repentance as its source. Nay, the very juxtaposition of the two benefits serves to put them on the same footing. Repentance is just as much a gift as forgiveness. And if this be so, does it not exclude altogether the idea of forgiveness being earned or deserved by repentance, and virtually prohibit us from attaching any merit to the change that is effected in our character, more than to the change that is effected in our condition? And by teaching us to assign the whole of our salvation to the achievement of Christ alone, does it not discountenance every feeling of confidence in our own performances, and bid us cherish as profound humility, in respect to our need of repentance, as in respect to our need of forgiveness? We must therefore simply regard ourselves as the mere undeserving recipients of both. We may recognise the distinction, that while the one is bestowed upon us, the other is wrought in us; but still for neither of them must we feel indebted to any virtue or efficiency of our own. III. REPENTANCE IS INDISSOLUBLY LINKED WITH FORGIVENESS, AND UNLESS THE FIRST IS

WROUGHT IN US, MOST CERTAINLY THE SECOND IS NOT CONVEYED TO US. Men are very apt to overlook this. The fear of hell is felt to be so awful that they are desirous to escape from it, and the hope of heaven so delightful that they willingly entertain it. And as the gospel proposes a plan, whose tendency is to deliver from the one and to encourage the other, they cherish the expectation that, through Divine mercy, all will be well with them at last. But all this while they have overlooked that moral change without which punishment cannot be shunned, nor felicity reached. Now it requires no elaborate train of argument to demonstrate the utter groundlessness and danger of such views. 1. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent"—Christ has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish"—and, with all the rich mercy which it unfolds, the gospel gives no one the slightest ground to hope for salvation, if the exhortation to repent is neglected. And do not you perceive that this position is a proof more ample and conclusive than anything else, that repentance is essential? Men are so much in love with sin that they not only cherish the prospect of going into heaven, though unprepared for it, but resolutely shut out from their view all that the God of heaven has told them of the necessity of a moral renovation, and deliberately rest upon the grace He has manifested, while they as deliberately maintain the character with which that grace is declared by Him to be completely irreconcilable. Wherefore, I would say to all such, look to this declaration of the Apostle Peter, in which repentance is as emphatically announced as forgiveness. It is honoured by having conferred upon it the precedence to forgiveness. At any rate, so closely are the two conjoined that you cannot look upon either without seeing both. 2. And besides this, consider repentance and forgiveness as proceeding alike from Christ. He died to purchase them—He is exalted to communicate them. And could this have been the case, unless both of them had been necessary for you? If both of them are thus demonstrated to be necessary for you, upon what principle consistent with duty or with safety can you be contented with only one of them? Are not you, in rejecting the other, doing what you can at once to frustrate the Saviour's sufferings on the Cross, and to dishonour the power which He exercises, the mercy which He manifests, on His throne? (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *The salvation in Christ*:—I. OFFERED BY HIM—as the Prince and the Saviour. II. TO BE APPROPRIATED BY US—in repentance and forgiveness of sins. (*K. Gerok.*)

Ver. 32. **And we are witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost.**—*The witness of the Word and of the Spirit*:—The book of Acts is one continuous testimony to the Ascension. As the Gospels contain the record of what Jesus began, so the Acts contain the record of what He continued "to do and teach" (chap. i. 1). Our Lord prolongs His days, and some of the earliest of the new "days of the Son of Man" are recorded here. This word of St. Peter sums up the witness to the Ascension in a more compendious form than any other. It unites the two testimonies—of God and man—as they are not elsewhere—united. Let us consider these as—I. THE SUM OF THE HISTORICAL TESTIMONY TO THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL. That which the evangelists afterwards wrote the apostles now preach under the inspiration of the same Spirit, viz.—1. The Divine mission of Christ. "The God of our fathers raised up His Son Jesus." Peter is here, and as long as we follow him in this book, a minister of the circumcision. Jesus in His preaching is the promise given to the fathers of the Jewish covenant. "Beginning at Jerusalem" He testifies to the council, who, however, could only receive the first principles of the doctrine of the dignity of Christ. Hence the reserve with which the holy name is always introduced. It is not God's "only begotten Son," but His "Servant" Son, whom He raised up of the seed of David, a prophet approved of God as the other prophets were. But St. Peter did not preach only for Jews. His words are so ordered as to bear the higher and broader meaning. The "Servant" was not only a descendant of Abraham and a prophet like unto Moses; God "raised Him up" in a sense that has no parallel. As Divine, Christ's goings forth were from everlasting; as human, He was raised up by a peculiar and heavenly generation. St. Paul at Antioch takes up Peter's words, and gives them the wider application. 2. The death of Christ. Here also we mark the specific application to Jewish hearers. St. Peter proclaimed Christ's death as it could only have been proclaimed to the actual crucifiers. The same message that offered them pardon painted their crime in its most awful colours. The death of Christ is the central theme of New Testament testimony as declared by human witnesses under the direction of the Holy Ghost. As a fact, it has the largest place

in the record. Here only all the evangelists unite, and wherever we turn in the later scriptures the Crucifixion is always near at hand. This, however, is a light thing compared with the meaning of the event. The "tree" becomes the "Cross," and it is placed in the centre of New Testament theology. While the work of Christ's mission is the whole sum of truth, the Cross is the whole sum of Christ's work, and it is at the foot of the Cross that the apostles survey the whole truth as it is in Jesus. 3. The exaltation of Christ. Once more we mark the influence of Peter's hearers. Every word is chosen to mark the contrast between the act of men and the act of God. They raised Him up to the tree; God raised Him up to a glory that was the measure of His humiliation. This is the testimony of the Holy Ghost to all mankind, and in a special sense. The apostles could only witness to Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, but the Spirit throughout the entire New Testament proclaims through the apostles that Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. II. THE SAVING SUPREMACY OF CHRIST AS OUR PRINCE AND SAVIOUR AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER. It was declared by our Lord that the Spirit should glorify Him after His departure, and one part of that office He discharged by giving Him the new names acquired by His death. 1. Christ became, by His ascension, the Prince of His people. He was not that in the deepest and widest sense until He was received into the heavens. Then God highly exalted Him because of the suffering of death. 2. So also He became our Saviour, in the most comprehensive sense only, when, all His offices complete, He began His mediatorial reign. "His name shall be called Jesus," said the angel; and by that name He was always known. "Unto you is born a Saviour," said the angels; but we never hear that name given Him till now. 3. But the full significance of the new name is found only in the combination. (1) He is the Saviour of the subjects of His kingdom, and none are His true subjects who are not delivered by His power from their guilt, their subjection to sin and the empire of Satan. The whole tenor of His instructions is faithful to the one idea of the gathering out of the world a people who are saved from their sins. As He began, so He ended with the "kingdom of heaven." This also was the burden of apostolic testimony. St. Peter (chap. ii.) proclaims a saving grace that rescues souls from an untoward generation and adds them to the Church as saved. And the Holy Ghost everywhere bears the same testimony. The kingdom is still not of this world. (2) And He is the Ruler over those whom He saves. Absolute submission to His authority is the law of His Church—a law to which the Spirit everywhere bears testimony. Our salvation is made perfect by holy obedience. This testimony, added to the former, completes the witness to the Redeemer's lordship in heaven. Those who would make Him a king over all men alike are rebuked by the declaration that He is a prince only as He is a Saviour. Those who would make Him only a Saviour are rebuked by the declaration that He is a Saviour only as He is a prince. III. THE SALVATION WHICH OUR PRINCE IN HEAVEN BESTOWS ON MAN UPON EARTH. And here St. Peter preaches, as the organ of the Holy Ghost, the "common salvation," to use his own phrase, in a manner that is by no means common. 1. Jesus in heaven is the Giver of repentance and pardon. These two words express the whole sum of salvation provided in Christ and proclaimed in His gospel. The former comprises all that is to be wrought in man as preparation; the latter comprises all that man, thus prepared, receives from Christ's mercy. The two together comprise "all the words of this life." 2. To these things bear the apostles witness, and so does also the Holy Ghost—(1) As the vindicator of Christ's claims to all who hear the gospel, but more specifically to those who obey. (2) As the revealer of Christ's mercy. (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*)

Christian witnesses:—I. THE RESPECTIVE WITNESSES—the apostles in the first case, and the Holy Ghost in the second. With regard to the APOSTLES: we may remark, that their evidence, as it will bear the strictest scrutiny, so it is worthy of universal credit. 1. These witnesses must have had the strongest reasons for what they affirmed, concerning the Saviour's resurrection—or they would not have espoused a cause so extremely unpopular and hazardous. 2. Next to their peculiar situation—the nature of the evidence which these persons gave affords the strongest grounds of confidence. They were eye-witnesses of the fact. 3. And this is further strengthened by the number of witnesses herein concerned. 4. The place where they declared the fact strongly confirms it. They chose the spot where the event happened—the city where dwelt the very murderers of the Son of God—as the first place in which to spread their report. 5. The time which they chose also is another evidence of their integrity. While the transactions of Calvary were yet fresh in

the memory of all, and while the enemies of the Saviour were still in transports of joy on account of their supposed victory, His disciples boldly declared that He was raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven. II. But there is a higher kind of evidence: THE HOLY GHOST also (Mark xvi. 20; Acts iv. 33). 1. This He did by enabling them to work miracles in confirmation of the truth. 2. The transforming effects of the gospel on the hearts and lives of men afford us another proof. 3. Consolation and peace afforded to the mourner are also in proof. His smile makes the poor, the needy, the trembling rejoice. Conclusion: 1. The evidence of an ascended Saviour gives us encouragement for faith and prayer, and love, and praise. 2. How dangerous for sinners to disobey and dishonour Him! (*American National Preacher.*) *God's chosen witnesses* (text, and Isa. xliii. 10):—Men bear for God two kinds of testimony—involuntary and voluntary. I. THE JEWS WERE INVOLUNTARY WITNESSES. They had "the law and the prophets." They glorified in this. But their formalism and worldliness prevented them from seeing the meaning of these oracles of God. They were called into court, as it were, by God. "Bring forth the blind that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears"; "Let all nations be gathered" and confronted with these Hebrews. Who among the heathen can announce coming and far-distant events, or even show former things? But the Jews can. The law and prophets in their hands—books seven centuries old—declare the history of man from the Creation and announce the coming One—"My servant whom I have chosen"—seven centuries in advance. You Hebrews, God said by Isaiah (xliii. 8), "with eyes but seeing not," hold these books in your hands. "Ye are My" unconscious, involuntary "witnesses." So He may say still. These Hebrews have, most tenaciously, and often at the hazard of their lives, held fast these sacred volumes through all these centuries. Peeled and scattered over the earth, they have guarded these documents while they have misread them; "a blind people that have eyes"—shrewd, far-seeing, and intelligent in all other matters, but perverse and ignorant in this, they have remained involuntary witness-bearers to the veracity and supremacy of God. II. CHRISTIANS ARE VOLUNTARY WITNESSES in a twofold capacity—as a Church and as individuals. 1. Against atheism asserting there is no God, the Church proclaims: "There is, and we know, worship and obey Him." 2. Against paganism, with its many gods, the Church testifies: "The Lord our God is one Lord." 3. Against many-faced infidelity denying that there is any revelation from God, if there is a God at all, the Church avers: "We have. God spake at sundry times and in various ways to the fathers by the prophets. In these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son." 4. Against those who deny the manifestation of God in three persons, the Church keeps uttering its benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." 5. Those who deny the necessity for any atonement may hear the Church declare: "The wages of sin is death, but we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins," and see her "showing forth His death till He come" in her holy communion. 6. To sceptics who scornfully ask: "Where is the promise of His coming?" the Church testifies: "We wait for the Son of God from heaven. He will appear, and then all mysteries will be solved." 7. To Romanists who assert that there are other mediators than Jesus, the Church proclaims "one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." 8. False liberalism may say to the sinner: "Be sincere and you need no more"; the Church echoes her Founder's words: "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," and those of His beloved disciple: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (*J. Hall, D.D.*) *The evidence from experience:*—Does the religion of Christ stand the test of the Baconian philosophy? I. WE SHALL PROBABLY FIND CHRISTIANITY A RELIGION THAT WILL SUBMIT TO THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE, because—1. It is a religion for all men. There is nothing in Christianity narrow, exclusive, sectarian. Now how can this be unless it be put to the test of fact? The masses cannot reason closely. 2. Only by commending itself to his experience will this religion do for any man all the time. There are times when philosophy and theology cannot sustain a man. In trouble and death mere reason will not sustain him. He must then know his support. 3. The method of experience has been found to be better fitted to give an understanding of things. The world knew little of the sciences till Bacon's time. One pound of fact is worth a ton of argument. It is probable, therefore, that God designing a religion for all men would so arrange that it could be sub-

jected to the most convincing test. II. DOES CHRISTIANITY SUBMIT ITSELF TO TESTS THAT MAN CAN TRY? Yes; let us observe them—1. A verification of the promises of the Bible as touching (1) charity. Ask any man who has tried charity for twenty or thirty years if it pays. (2) Prayer. 2. Let us come to the heart of Scripture. We are told that he who believes will be saved. Can we *know* we are saved? If there is a fact in the universe of which we may be certain, it is that Christ reveals Himself to the believer as his Saviour. III. A FEW QUESTIONS TO THOSE WHO STILL OBJECT. 1. Is mystery confined to Christianity? I will undertake to explain the mystery of the Trinity to any man who will unfold the mystery of a single seed. 2. On the testimony of a few competent witnesses we believe in the wonderful revelation of the spectroscope. Millions of competent witnesses declare that they know by experience Christianity to be true. 3. Owen finds a fossil five hundred feet down. He says that animal lived on the surface because there are sockets for eyes. Nature makes nothing in vain. It must have lived where light was. Now in man we find yearnings, hopes that nothing but immortality can satisfy. Can you believe that God made light for the eyes, but nothing for the soul? Conclusion: Many doubt the possibility of knowing the forgiveness of sins. I say to a man, "Saturn has three rings and eight satellites." Says he, "That cannot be, for I have conversed with many men who have looked at Saturn, but they never saw any rings or moons." I apply the telescope to his eye; he looks, but sees nothing. Why? He is blind. (*C. D. Foss, D.D.*) *The test of experience*:—There are two methods by which conclusions are reached—the method of argument and that of experience. These have their representatives in Aristotle and Bacon. By the first we are led by reason; by the second fact. Which is the better method? A farmer ploughing his field turns to the light a bit of yellow substance. He examines it. It seems to be gold. He reasons; gold has been found in the neighbourhood; the geological conditions are all favourable, and it has the appearance and gravity of gold. This is the first method. But suppose he takes that substance to the metallurgist, and an acid is applied that will take hold of nothing else but gold. He now knows through experience that it is gold. Take the case of character: you wish to know if a man is honest. You say he looks honest, has honest associates, comes of an honest stock. Now that is all argument. But suppose his partner says, "I *know* he is honest; he has been with me for twenty years." That is the method of Bacon—experience. Is it not the most conclusive? (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 33–42. **When they heard that they were cut to the heart.**—*Cut to the heart*:—The strict meaning of the verb describes the action of a saw, as in Heb. xi. 37. Used figuratively, it seems to imply a more lacerating pain than the "pricked to the heart" of chap. ii. 37, leading not to repentance but to hatred. The persons spoken of are principally the high priest and his Sadducean followers (ver. 17). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Preaching to the heart*:—What would be thought of a doctor who, when called in to a suffering patient, should not at once prescribe the best and swiftest remedy without note or comment; but should proceed to discuss the comparative merits of homœopathy and allopathy, with sly sarcastic glances at massage, hydropathy and faith-healing, then go on to describe, negatively, all the medicines which have been, or might be given; then positively to describe a remedy recently discovered by a young German doctor, saying he was not quite certain whether it would be effectual, but it was worth trying; that, in any case, with or without medicine, the patient would probably be cured, in this world or the next, and that in the course of a few years, such is the march of intellect in this enlightened age, a better remedy would, no doubt, be discovered? Equally foolish and wrong it is for a Christian minister, standing before a congregation, all suffering more or less from mental and moral disorders, doubts and fears, sins and sorrows, ignorance and self-deceit—all hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or if not, the more needing a warm-hearted gospel of truth and love to awaken in them a sense of unrighteousness—to make the staple of his discourse a series of clever hair splitting of words with all the opinions of commentators (A B C to Z) who had tried to find out (say) what St. Paul meant, perhaps winding up with the consolatory remark, that after all, it was not so much to be regretted that the true key to his meaning had been lost, as probably, if Paul had lived now, he would not only have used different words but held different opinions! Let us learn all that grammar and theology can put into our heads, but when we go into the pulpit we go not as grammarians, theologians, scientists, or philosophers, but as preachers

to speak from the heart to the heart. Our people ask for bread, not flour and water; for water, not oxygen and hydrogen. (*R. Bruce, D.D.*) *The victory of the truth*:—Whoever will not receive truth into his heart, will perhaps be pierced to the heart by the truth. Even this is a victory. (*Starke.*) *Four characters*:—I. The character of THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS; persecuting the servant as they had persecuted the Lord. 1. One new feature there is in this persecution. Among the impugners of our Lord's own doctrine the Pharisee is the more conspicuous: it is he whose hypocrisy made him dread Christ's discernment and holiness, and whose very orthodoxy gave a self-sufficiency to his judgment peculiarly unfavourable to the reception of the truth. But no sooner has Christ left the earth than the opposite party becomes the assailant. And most natural it was that a gospel built upon a resurrection should irritate most strongly the sect which denied that great hope of man. While it was a mere tenet they bore it with composure; when it became a statement of fact, it was at once a struggle for life and death. Great as were the faults of the Pharisee, he had a shorter path to traverse if once his steps should be turned in the direction of Christ's kingdom. The Sadducee was a cold, scoffing, irreligious materialist. 2. And if there be a body of professed Christians who seek to divest the gospel of its supernatural character; who resolve its whole system of duty into respectability rather than holiness and good nature rather than charity; who practically make their nest here, and leave out of sight the world to come; then that body is the type of the Sadducee of other days; and those who have seen anything of the working of that spirit will be at no loss to understand how the Sadducee should outrun the Pharisee in the bitterness of his hostility to all that is distinctive and characteristic in the gospel. The spirit of the Sadducee is in all of us by nature, struggling in us for the mastery with that of the Pharisee and the Herodian. Each of these is but the development of one attribute of fallen nature. What is the Sadducee but the man who avows his disbelief in mysteries of which we all have too feeble a grasp? And what shall we say of those who have accustomed themselves to treat everything lightly till nothing is serious, who have a jest ready for every revelation, and a scoff for every demand of duty, till at length they can neither tremble at God's terrors nor believe in God's love? The Sadducees of our day do not gather themselves together in council to judge the disciples of the Lord: they themselves use the same name, and would be indignant at the denial of the title. But they hate, none the less, and they persecute too, those who truly believe; point at them as ignorant, as old-fashioned, as righteous overmuch, as slaves of the letter, as exclusive and positive and self-sufficient. May such persons ask themselves seriously this one question, Am I certain that I shall never want Christ in loneliness and sorrow, in age and sickness, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment? II. And when we turn from this hostility are we not struck with the existence in these days of many a GAMALIEL; of many a man who is at once observant and candid, anxious to do nothing rashly, waiting, rather to examine credentials, or even to see the end, before he pronounces himself decisively either for or against the gospel? 1. These men have much in them that is attractive, and at first sight all that is reasonable. What but good can come, we might inquire, of that prudent and sensible reminder, in a time of religious excitement and enthusiasm (ver. 38)? And no doubt such a voice is useful. Happy the nation which has such men amongst its counsellors, when an act of hasty tyranny is in danger of treading out the spark of grace and truth! This was the part of Nicodemus, when the case of One greater than the apostles was at issue. Not long afterwards this timid and doubting ally is found testifying a love and a devotion refused by men who owe to Christ their all. 2. But yet we must not overrate a quality which has so much in it of good. Candour, moderation, an open mind and a calm judgment are useful qualities, and at certain times may rise even into great virtues. But not all of them together will suffice to save a soul. There are just a few great questions on which minds ought to be made up; on which if the evidence we possess be not sufficient for conviction, it is our first and most bounden duty to seek and to obtain more. Such a question, above all others, is that of the truth and power, of the person and work, of the Messiahship and Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To be candid on this subject is better indeed than to be prejudiced, scoffing, or hostile; but he who is merely candid concerning Christ is in danger of a life-long suspense, of an ultimate indifference. Men of mere candour, are commonly men who in great emergencies disappoint, and in critical decisions are even worse than foes. Their presence is fatal to generous impulses, to noble enthusiasms. Erasmus was the Gamaliel of

the Reformation; calm, critical, deliberative, discerning: but where would the Reformation have been if beside Erasmus there had not been a Luther? If all had waited to see whether this counsel or this work was of men or of God, by watching for its issue, the blow for truth had never been struck, and a reformed faith had never emerged from the mists of Papal darkness. In details, or on subjects of minor moment, it is harmless, it is right, to be Gamaliels; but on the one great question, of having, or not having a Saviour, that man is a fool who postpones his decision, a lost man who dies without making it. III. THE COMMON PEOPLE who magnified the believers though they durst not join them, and who gladly used their beneficent and healing power. These too have their counterpart amongst us. There are men and women who reverence religion, who count the Christian alone happy, who delight to profit by Christian converse and to record the triumphs of the gospel, but who yet shrink from membership. Such persons are not against Christ, nor are they yet quite with Him. They are something more than candid inquirers; something far beyond men waiting, like Gamaliel, to see the end. Would that they could be induced to take just that one step which divides them from every hope and every comfort of a Christian! Would that they could be led to become not spectators only, but inmates of the sacred porch of Solomon! Believe only, not that Christ died for some, but that He died for thee; no longer an admirer but a partaker of the promises, yea, a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the very household of God! IV. THE ALTOGETHER CHRISTIAN. Hear his creed as it is rehearsed in this record. I believe that I ought to obey God rather than men; that God has exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour; that the very purpose of that exaltation is that He may bestow repentance and bestow forgiveness; that God for His sake gives His Holy Spirit to all who set themselves in His strength to obey. This was the faith which enabled apostles to brave persecution, nay, to rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame, or even death itself, for the one sufficient name in which alone is salvation. Conclusion: Who can doubt which of those four characters is the one which it would be happiest to live with, safest and most glorious to possess in death? Believe only, and it shall be yours! (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation of all the people.**—*Gamaliel:*—I. IT IS STRANGE HOW A SINGLE NAME HERE AND THERE SECURES REMEMBRANCE. 1. It is almost as when one looks out across the sea, and upon the surface, all grey and monotonous, there comes one flash of silver. Why should that especial wave have such peculiar privilege? It is not any larger than the rest, and is made of no different water; it is simply that it happened to leap just where the sun was smiting, and so it becomes illustrious. So the sun of history shines on this great sea of human life; and the special career which happens to leap just where the sun is striking catches his glory and seizes men's notice and remembrance. If the man's life is larger than other lives, so much the better,—it catches so much more of sunshine. If it is of special fineness, made of more lustrous stuff than other men's, so much the better still—it turns the sunshine into a peculiar radiance. But still the essential thing is that it should leap at the right moment and should be turned the right way. With these conditions even a very common life becomes illustrious; and without them the largest and the finest character melts back into the bosom of the humanity out of which it sprung, unnoticed, unremembered. 2. These illustrious men when they appear are of more than merely phenomenal value. In their illumination the whole mass of humanity finds its illustration and understands itself. Each of them becomes the representative of some smaller group, to which he almost gives his name. Often, indeed, it is only a degenerate caricature of the higher nature which they present. The dogmatist names himself by the great name of St. Paul. The feeble sentimentalist counts himself the twin-brother of St. John. The dainty sceptic, dabbling in unbelief, takes the name of earnest, puzzled, simple-souled St. Thomas to himself. But, after all, there is a constant tendency in their association with the highest types of their several natures and tendencies to draw them upward and to make each of them a more worthy expression of his characteristic qualities than he could be if he knew it only in himself. In this truth lies one of the greatest advantages of the study of the representative men of human history. 3. I ask you to turn to the story of a man whose name flashes for a moment as the light of the New Testament history falls upon the life of Jerusalem at the beginning of the Christian Church. The flash is only for a moment, and yet the impression which it leaves is very clear. He is peculiarly a representative man, and the nature which he represents is one which appeals peculiarly to our modern life. II. LET US

RECALL THE HISTORY OF GAMALIEL. He was one of the most famous teachers of the Jewish law. 1. All Jewish history declares that he was one of the ablest of the learned men of the nation. There were two schools among the Jews—that of Shammai, which was strict and narrow; and that of Hillel, which was liberal and free. Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, and belonged to his school. He was one of the few rabbis who allowed their students the study of Greek literature. He taught that all persons engaged in works of mercy, duty, or necessity, should be exempt from the more stringent Sabbatical traditions; he bade his disciples greet even the pagans on their feast-days with the "Peace be with you." In ways like these he showed the largeness of his spirit, and the people loved him. He was one of the seven among the Jewish doctors who alone have been honoured with the supreme title of Rabban. He lived to a good old age, and died about 60 A.D. 2. In the New Testament Gamaliel appears twice, and both times in the most interesting way. (1) As a great preacher of toleration. Every great teacher and scholar ought to be aware of the mystery and of the mightiness of Truth, and therefore be prepared to see Truth linger and hesitate, and even seem to be turned back, and yet to keep a clear assurance that Truth must come right in the end, and that the only way to help her is to keep her free, so that she shall be at liberty to help herself. There is something in Gamaliel which reminds one of Milton. The one, like the other, seems to feel that any attempt to help truth save by securing her liberty is impertinent; that all attempts to make truth strong either by disarming her enemies or by choosing for her what weapons she shall fight her battles with, is not a homage to her strength, but an insulting insinuation of her weakness. The scholar of Truth must trust Truth; that is Gamaliel's ground. (2) And this character has close connection with the fact that he was the teacher of St. Paul. Such a teacher as that has a special interest. He is one of those men who give other men the chance to make history rather than make it themselves. They themselves are almost of necessity relegated to obscurity. The very splendour of the career of their pupils makes it impossible for the world to see them; as the flash of fire from the gun's mouth, and the rush of the burning shell on its tremendous way, makes it impossible to see the gun itself in whose deep heart the power of the explosion was conceived and born. (*a*) We can picture to ourselves Gamaliel watching Paul, and we can think of the calm large-minded teacher following the career of his fiery-hearted scholar, and, however he disagreed with what he thought his delusions, rejoicing in his faithfulness and force. (*b*) And if we look the other way, there are few things finer than to see the reverence and gratitude with which the best men of active life look back to the quiet teachers who furnished them with the materials of living. Even from the midst of his missionary journeys, and his prison in Rome, we are able to believe that St. Paul looked back to the lessons of faithfulness and generosity which he had learned of the great teacher of his youth. (*c*) There are some of us whose work in life seems to assume mainly this character. Parents, teachers, quiet helpers of other lives, it seems as if we were rather providing other souls with the conditions of living than living ourselves. In the apparent stationariness of much of our experience, seeing life flow by us, as the river flows by the tree, it is good to live thus by the life to which we try to minister, as the tree lives by the river whose waters it at the same time does something to colour and to direct. (3) But there is a larger view of Gamaliel than this. He has his relation not merely to St. Paul, but to the whole opening history of Christianity. There are some men whose whole influence is to keep history open, so that whatever good thing is trying to get done in the world can get done. The counsel of Gamaliel seems to point him out as being such a man. There are men who seem to shut up a community, so that, as far as their influence extends, if a new thought were waiting to be spoken or a new deed all ready to be done, it would be thrown back and made hopeless. Was not this exactly what Jesus charged upon the Scribes and Pharisees: "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye neither go in yourselves; neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in"? They made great deeds, fresh thoughts, enthusiastic consecration to first principles appear impossible. There is a still stronger instance of the same blighting power in the record that Jesus "could there do no mighty work, because of the people's unbelief." It was possible for men so to shut up a whole district of the land that even Christ's marvellous power could not do its work there. And in our little circles are there not men so distrustful of the higher impulses, men so unbelieving and so scornful, that we see the young people, the earnest people, shut up their lives before them as the flowers shut up at night; and there is no hope for any great thing to be

done or thought while they are there. I do not mean the sober, thoughtful, accurate, critical men who act like the healthy frost, which kills the gnats and mosquitoes, but makes every higher being live with a fuller life; but the men who are set upon making all the world live in their way, and who have no real faith in God, nor therefore in man. But there are other men who, not doing themselves perhaps great deeds, seem to make great deeds, or a least to make great life, possible. Such men, in our community, in our family circles, in our own little groups, whatever they are, any of us may be. We cannot make the wind to blow,—it bloweth where it listeth; but we can keep the windows open, so that when it blows the chambered life about us shall not fail to receive its freshness. III. GAMALIEL BELIEVED IN GOD. 1. To him, surrounding all that man does and working through it, there is God. And with God are the final issues and destinies of things. Work as man will, he cannot make a plan succeed which God disowns; work as man will, he cannot make a plan fail which God approves. That is a noble and distinct faith. These words of Gamaliel are the words of all progressive spirits. They were the words of Luther, who opened Europe and made the best of modern history a possibility. Fitly do they stand to-day carved upon the pedestal of his great statue at Wittenberg. 2. Nobody can doubt that Gamaliel went back from the Sanhedrin to teach with all his might that Christianity was wrong. He had his thoughts, and he upheld them. He said, "This is the truth"; only, as he said that, he must have said also to his scholars—young Saul of Tarsus sitting there among them—"There are men here in Jerusalem—earnest, brave, enthusiastic, wofully deluded, as I think—who are asserting that the Christ has come, and that His reign has begun. I think these men are wrong. I give you my reasons. By and by you will see their fanaticism wither and dry up because no life of God is in it. But now let them alone. Believe your truth, assert it, prove it, live it: so will you do your best to kill this folly." That was Gamaliel. That is the true spirit always. Men do not flee out of the furnace of bigotry only to freeze on the open and desolate plains of indifference. You believe, and yet you have no wish to persecute; and any reader of the history of faith—nay, any student of his own soul—knows how rarely these two conditions have met in perfect harmony. 3. Persecution sounds like a bygone word, and yet all persecution has not passed away. Social ostracism comes in to take the place of the more crude and violent punishments of other days, and persecution lingers still in a form yet more subtle—in the disposition to attach disastrous consequences in this world or the next to honest opinions which we hold to be mistaken; the desire to fasten upon intellectual convictions those stigmas of wickedness which can belong only to personal character. When that last form of terrorism shall have passed away, then persecution will have finally perished. Man will cease persecuting his brother man, partly because he will outgrow the wish to persecute, but partly also because he will see how useless it is to persecute. We shall come in the end to welcome all the honest and earnest thought of men, partly because we see the good of it, however it differs from our own, and partly because we cannot help ourselves. It is by the combined forces of these two causes that every great progress of human thought has taken place. 4. And when all persecution goes, there will come a chance and a demand for the two forms of human influence which will then have all the work to do. When you have thoroughly believed that it is both wrong and useless to try to frighten your fellow-man out of his faith into yours, then what remains? First, you may argue with him, tell him why you believe, show him how unreasonable his unbelief or his fanaticism is. And if you cannot argue, or if your friend is one to whose mind arguments bring no conviction, then you must live your faith. And then just trying to live out its own life, to turn its own assured belief into obedient action, gradually other people become aware that the true soul is bearing a witness to truth which must have power. In a live State the soldiers have their useful duty, but it is not the soldiers who make the State's true strength. Its faithful citizens, living their industrious lives within its institutions, which their lives are always filling with life, they are the true defenders of the State, making it strong, and making its strength impressively manifest to all the world. So the great faith needs learned reasoners; but it needs obedient servants and disciples more. 5. And that brings us back to Gamaliel. Was he, then, right? Could he then, can a man to-day, leave all to God and be quietly sure that He will vindicate the truth? A thousand fluctuations in the varying battle make us doubt. Many and many a time it seems as if between the error and the truth it were merely a question of which had the cleverest men upon its side. And yet you know that, if there be a

God at all, Gamaliel was right. There must be time, there must be patience; but the real final question of two trees is the question of their roots. That which is rooted in God must live. The final glory of Gamaliel lies there. He believed that God was the only life of this world, that all which did not live in Him must die. We do not know whether Gamaliel ever became a Christian. The legends say that he did. History seems to say that he did not. But at least we know that if we have rightly read his character and story, he made the Christian faith more possible for other men, and he must somewhere, if not here, then beyond, have come to the truth and to the Christ Himself. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *The speech of Gamaliel at the Sanhedrin*:—Note here—I. GOOD ORATORY NEUTRALISED BY A CORRUPT AUDIENCE. 1. The speaker. (1) His ability and position. Some suppose him to be the son of Simeon, who took the infant Jesus in his arms, and the grandson of Hillel, both famous Jewish doctors. The exalted title of *Rabban* was given him for his great wisdom. He had been president of the Sanhedrin, and was the tutor of St. Paul. He was popular too—"had in reputation among all the people." All this would give weight to his oratory, which would be wanting in a less distinguished man. (2) The course he recommended. Had he urged some abstract proposition, or a difficult or dangerous course of action, one need not have wondered at the ineffectiveness of his address; but the course he recommended was most reasonable and easy, "Refrain from these men," &c. (3) The argument he employed. (*a*) If the movement was undivine, opposition was unnecessary—it would come to nought of itself. In support of this, first, he gives facts referring to Theudas and Judas. Secondly, he states a principle—viz., that the human would perish and the Divine flourish. The argument is *ad hominem*, his hearers on their own principles were bound to take his advice. They professed to regard the new religion as an undivine thing and therefore need not take the trouble of opposing it. (*b*) If the movement was of God, opposition would be futile and impious. Attempts to crush the cause of God are as futile as attempts to roll back the tides of the ocean, or reverse the course of the planets—worse than futile, it is fighting against God. (4) The impression he produced—"To him they agreed." They could not but feel the force of his arguments. 2. So far, Gamaliel's speech seems powerful, and one might have thought that he would have gained his end. But no; they pursued their course of persecution (ver. 40). What rendered this oratory so ineffective? The character of the audience. Prejudice warped their judgment and malice inspired their hearts. The eloquence of a discourse depends upon the mind of the auditory. Hence what is felt to be eloquence in one audience would not be in another. He is the most eloquent man in his sphere who advocates the wishes of his hearers: otherwise, though he reasons with the logic of Aristotle, and declaims with the power of Demosthenes, his eloquence will not be felt. Paul was a babbler at Athens. Let, then, hearers who would benefit free their minds from prejudice and listen with candour; and let speakers be above pandering to low tastes and sectarian sympathies. II. CULPABLE INDIFFERENCE JUSTIFYING ITSELF BY PLAUSIBLE LOGIC. The non-intervention here recommended may in some aspects admit of justification. Statesmen, *e.g.*, have no right to interfere with the religious opinions and movements of the people, so long as there is no infringement of the rights of others. The conscience is sacred to God. Men may argue, but not coerce. Again, the advice may be justified on the ground of social philosophy, supposing Gamaliel believed Christianity to be an imposture. The way to give social power to error is to persecute it. But looking at it in a broad light the councillor displayed a reprehensible moral indifference. Because—1. As a man, he was bound to satisfy himself whether the apostles' cause was of man or of God by honest investigation. 2. He had abundant evidence to satisfy himself on the question. 3. If it was the work of God he was bound to go heart and soul into it. We cannot therefore but regard his argument as formularised to apologise for his indifference. In this respect he is a type of a large class whose policy is to allow things to take their course and settle themselves whether true or false. III. A TEST BY WHICH THE DIVINITY OF CHRISTIANITY IS ESTABLISHED. "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Christianity has not been overthrown, but has gone on conquering and to conquer. IV. AN EXAMPLE OF THE ALL-CONQUERING SPIRIT OF GENUINE RELIGION (vers. 40-42). Observe—1. Their exultation in ignominious suffering which can only be accounted for by—(1) A consciousness of rectitude. (2) A supreme affection for Christ. Love rejoices to suffer for its object. (3) A recollection that their Master suffered in the same way. (4) A fresh assurance of their genuine interest in Christ. He had told them that they should suffer (Matt. v. 11, 12; x. 17-22). 2.

Their invincibility in prohibited labour. No power could break down their holy purpose. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Gamaliel's counsel*:—I. A GOOD COUNSEL. 1. As a rule of judgment when we see the end of God's ways. Then at last it shall certainly hold good. "Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." 2. As a rule of conduct when carnal zeal will resort to carnal weapons in spiritual matters; and when no light has arisen as to whether a work be of God or man. In this sense Luther applied this counsel to the Elector of Treves as one undecided. II. A BAD COUNSEL. 1. As a rule of judgment when, in the midst of the imperfect course of the world, good and evil are judged according to their external and temporary success. 2. As a rule of conduct, when it is transformed into a pillow of laziness, to get rid of an inward and earnest decision, when God's Word speaks distinctly enough, and God's Spirit points clearly enough; and to avoid courageous acting and energetic witness-bearing, when we are really decided. (*K. Gerok.*) *Gamaliel's counsel*:—I. A GOOD COUNSEL. 1. Of humility before God, the Supreme Judge. 2. Of charitableness toward our neighbour who thinks differently, and perhaps erroneously. 3. Of watchfulness over our passions. II. A BAD COUNSEL. 1. Of a policy judging only according to outward success. 2. Of a toleration toward that which is evil. 3. Of an indifferentism undecided in itself. Conclusion: Better the deed of the apostles than the counsel of Gamaliel. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 36, 37. **Before these days rose up Theudas.**—*Theudas: an ancient personage with modern lessons*:—Who Theudas was I do not know, and have carefully refrained from inquiring. Biographical details are of small importance when we are in search of substantial principles. The point of this passage lies in the fact that Theudas was a wholly insignificant person, just like a thousand other men who have made a noise in their day, drawn the gaze of the world for a few hours and then passed into silence and oblivion. The apostles are summoned before the council which has already resolved on their death. Then stands up Gamaliel—the teacher of Paul, a man "had in reputation among all the people"—and reads the excited Sanhedrin a lesson out of their own national history. He says in substance: "This alarm, this hurrying to and fro, this calling for the scourge and the dungeon, this breathless haste, is all the result of narrow vision and small outlook. Our own time is not the first to witness startling movements. 'Before these days rose up Theudas,' and drew four hundred men after him. Yet that uprising which seemed so terrible has been almost forgotten. Wider horizon would make us calm. Learn the lesson of your past. God's great plan moves through the ages to its sure accomplishment. If this new teaching be not of Him, it will be like all the rest—a mere noise followed by a great silence. But if God is behind this teaching—beware lest haply ye be found to fight against God." These words may imply that Gamaliel was almost ready to embrace Christianity, or they may indicate only that he was a broad and tolerant Jew. In either case the application to our restless, eager, disputatious age is very clear. Old formulæ are recast, until many souls more timid than wise, loving quiet more than truth, cry, "Alas! what shall we do?" The true answer cannot be given either by intense partisanship or by cynical indifference. The true answer is to be found in the unfaltering faith which sees God behind the shifting panorama of human thought and action, and knows that whatever lights may cross our firmament—whether glowing planet, shooting meteor, or steady star—He calleth them all by name in the greatness of His power. I. GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH IS NOT A NOVELTY. The first thing for us to remember is that the kingdom of God on earth is not a novelty, Christianity is not an experiment, and that "before these days" ten thousand similar dangers have been triumphantly surmounted. The man who is not in league with the past cannot face the future. We need to see things in large perspective, to stand off from our little immediate task, as the painter stands away from his canvas, that he may return to it with surer touch. Even in the common responsibilities of daily life some knowledge of history is quite as important as acquaintance with the multiplication table. Let the man who despairs of our political leaders to-day read the story of the attacks made on Washington in the darkest days of the Revolution. Let the man who is bewildered by the sudden influx of new knowledge, and cannot adjust himself at once to the fresh truth poured into his mind, remember the great shock given to humanity—a shock which seemed to dislocate all systems of science and all hymns of the faith—when Copernicus proclaimed that this earth, instead of being the centre of the universe, for the sake of which sun and stars were created, around

which the ordered sky revolved, was but a mote floating in the boundless void, an insignificant star sending its tiny ray into the infinite darkness. The present generation is specially deficient in historical perspective. Our life has been so swift, so wholly modern, that we are intensely individual, delighting often in segregation from the past. Thus, having small background for present endeavour, we grow restless and are easily tossed by conflicting winds. History says, too, as Nature to Emerson: "Why so hot, my little man?" The history of the Christian Church is a splendid armoury for faith. The future of Christianity does not depend on what is won or lost this morning. The success of God's kingdom in the earth is not staked on the success of my little scheme any more than the coming of spring depends on the success of the pansy bed in my garden. That kingdom was before we came into being, it will endure when we are gone—it is the work of Him who was, and is, and is to be, the Almighty. Behind all the men that come and go, the theories that rise and fall, stands "God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own." II. A BACKGROUND OF TRIUMPHANT HISTORY. We are writing now, but never before, "1892" on all our letters, notes, deeds. These figures are vastly more than a conventional argument. They are eloquent with strong assurance. They are like a flag brought home from battle, smoke-begrimed, blood-stained, bullet-torn, but bright with its original splendid colour, and vocal with great inspiring speech. We have no right to live as did the Church of the first century, when much was tentative and experimental. We have a background of triumphant history. Steadily is the kingdom of Christ spreading from the river unto the ends of the earth. Witty and keen have been the attacks on the faith—sometimes they have purged it from excrescences, oftener they have glanced off and rebounded. The opponents of Christianity are remembered because of the grandeur of what they attacked. In this Christian land we do not accept Christian faith to see whether it is true; we accept it as we accept the earth beneath our hurrying feet and the untroubled sky that overarches all. Hence we see the place and purpose of the Old Testament, whose peculiar function is to show us that God is behind and within human history, and that all history culminates in the revelation of Jesus Christ. God's primary revelation is not through the speech, but through events. The Old Testament precedes the New to show us God behind and within the nation's life, and when we once see and believe that, a historical Saviour becomes not only credible but inevitable. III. USE OF THE HISTORICAL IN SCRIPTURE. A noble Christian man recently told me that in his private reading of the Psalms he always used an expurgated edition, from which all imprecatory and otherwise objectionable passages had been expunged. Surely this is the acme of religious prudery, and the fastidiousness of one who is totally devoid of the historical sense. If we expurgate the Songs of David, why not expurgate his life also? Surely his deeds of vengeance are worse than his revengeful prayers. Then having struck out from his life all that offends our purism, and having made him the man he ought to have been but was not, we shall be ready to remodel the entire history of Israel—very much as Cibber proposed to remodel Shakespeare, making King Lear to be at last rewarded for his suffering, and making the tragedy of Hamlet to end with the death of the king and queen and the happiness of Ophelia. When we have been through the Bible and struck out the great black record of human sin, we shall have banished the shining story of redemption also. The imprecatory Psalms are as truly the expression of a certain stage in Israel's life, and so part of the story of redemption, as the paintings of the early Byzantine school are part of the history of Christian art. What if the faces limned by those first Christian painters are hard and wooden? They are to us the priceless expression of a great endeavour which has made Raphael and Da Vinci possible. To lift the Psalter to the level of the Sermon on the Mount is to spoil them both. But the most practical thing is still unsaid. When a man has attained the historical point of view, when his Bible is no longer a flat surface like a Chinese picture, but a long vista of historical persons and events, and the great story of God's love for man is seen slowly unfolding through the millenniums, when a man keeps himself familiar with God's working "before these days," he will possess a spiritual poise and central peace which nothing can disturb. It is a great thing to believe in a God who watches over my life and cares for me. It is a grander thing to rest in a God whose purposes are larger and longer than any concerns of mine possibly can be. I could not admire the Hudson River if I thought its only purpose was to fill my drinking cup. I could not wonder greatly at the sun if I thought its only purpose was to shine in at my window. I need a God greater than my need. I want a Saviour far beyond my private per-

sonal lack. If I do not believe in a God who has some grander work to do than to make me happy, I shall soon cease to believe at all. I shall soon find that God does not always make me happy, and then I shall lose faith. Through all ages runs His purpose. From everlasting to everlasting His great thoughts realise themselves in the ceaseless unfolding of creation, and our highest glory is not to bend His purpose but to bend our lives into harmony with it. Has any man come here in a state of tumult and alarm, perplexed by the problems of the time, and confronted by movements he cannot fathom? I bid you think of the God who before these days has guided His Church and ever will guide. Is any man here saying: "God has forgotten me; my plan does not prosper"? Is your plan, then, the first thing in your desire, or God's plan? Is it the building of your nest or the achievement of the world's redemption? He is the Alpha and Omega—we are to fit in somewhere in His Divine alphabet and spell out His eternal thought. (*W. H. P. Faunce, D.D.*) *The false prophet and the true*:—I. THE FALSE. 1. Rises up of his own accord as Theudas and Judas. 2. Boasts himself to be somebody. 3. Draws away the people after him. 4. Falls from heaven as a wandering star. Theudas and Judas perished, and their followers were dispersed. II. THE TRUE. 1. Is raised up by God. 2. Does not boast of himself, but gives glory to God. 3. Leads souls to the Lord. 4. Will shine as stars for ever and ever. (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 38, 39. **And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone.**—*The witness of history to Christianity*:—1. Christianity was on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin. It had then no history. Now it has an history of more than eighteen hundred years. Wisely spake that wisest of Jewish Rabbis: Let us wait awhile and see. If it be of men, no blow is needed. If it be of God, no smiting will do it any harm. Leave it to history. Such was the appeal. We are ready now for the verdict. If Gamaliel were here I would be willing to leave it all to his candid judgment. Is Christianity a success or a failure? 2. This argument from history requires discrimination. Mere age makes out nothing decisive for a religion. Religions in general are apt to be long-lived; longer-lived than civil politics. (1) Those of Egypt, of Mesopotamia, of Phœnicia, of Greece and Rome, all lasted many centuries; and, while they lasted, might have made an argument of their longevity. But they are all dead now, and nobody names either of them as a rival of Christianity. (2) Brahmanism and Buddhism vary the problem for us. Here are very old religions. What is to be said of them? This; that they are like the old dead religions in having a limited domain. Not one of them has had much strength or currency outside of its own native land. They might as well be dead. They fight no battles, win no victories. (3) Mohammedanism makes the problem a still nicer one. Here is a religion, not merely of great age, but of great expansiveness and versatility. There is truth in it, these two great truths: that God is, and rules. In less than a hundred years from its origin men were praying towards Mecca over a wider territory than the Roman eagles had shadowed in nearly a thousand years. Why was it? Partly because they had been persuaded to do so. The argument for one God was better than the argument for many gods. And so idolaters were vanquished. Then the worship was simple, and the degenerate, sacerdotal, tawdry, idolatrous Christianity of the Orient went to the wall. But had no sword been drawn, Islamism must have stayed in Arabia, or have gone but little beyond it. For idolaters the alternative was Islam or the sword. For Jews and Christians Islam or tribute. And so the crescent shot along the sky. Christianity has had no such history. Its symbol has always been a wooden cross. Now and then it has drawn the sword, as Peter drew it in the garden; but only to be rebuked, as Peter was. Its beginning dates significantly from the gift of tongues. Not sword, but sermon was to hew its way for it. It must spill no blood but its own. Nor might cunning serve it. Wolves are fierce and cunning both. The disciples of the Man of Nazareth were sent forth like sheep and doves. Such was Christianity; the Christianity of Gamaliel's time. Let us see now what came of it. I. Its first conflict was with JUDAISM, with which it should have had no conflict at all. Judaism, then fifteen centuries old, was not human, but Divine. And Christianity had come out of it, as an apple comes out of its bud and blossom. But madness ruled the hour. They hanged their Prophet on a tree, hissing that awful prayer which God has been answering ever since: "His blood be on us and on our children." Many Jews, as we know, passed over into the Christian Church, in all, perhaps some ten or twelve thousand within the first six years. Then their most learned and ablest Rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, went over to the new religion. And his voice rang all along the northern

shore of the Mediterranean, from Damascus to Spain, in countless synagogues, entreating his countrymen to follow him. It was their golden opportunity. And they lost it. Judaism, they shouted, is final. Not Judaism, answered the pupil of Gamaliel, but Christianity. This was the point at issue. In their madness the people thought they could tear the Roman eagles from their battlements and re-establish the fallen throne of David. They tried, and failed. Judaism was shattered when, as foretold by Daniel, the oblation ceased. Since then no smoke of sacrifice has ascended from Mount Moriah. Since then the story of our Christian sacrifice has gone round the globe. And almost everywhere it finds the forsaken and scattered remnants of that ancient people, over whose city the Redeemer wept. II. The second conflict of Christianity was with the GRÆCO-ROMAN CIVILISATION. The whole theatre of ancient history, the whole garden of ancient letters, art, and social refinement, now acknowledged the supremacy of Rome. Christianity she greeted with contempt and scorn. 1. In this lay the safety of the new religion. It thus had chance to grow. All over the Roman Empire its roots went down into the soil unnoticed. After a hundred years its branches were in all the air. There were at least two or three millions of Christians. They were a people by themselves, sifted out of society, organised, drilled, and handled by their leaders, as no other religious body ever had been. They could no longer be ignored. And then the leaven had been working upwards, as well as downwards, among the people. The commercial middle class furnished many converts. By and by philosophers and scholars began to come over, who boldly proclaimed the new faith as the final philosophy. Christianity could no longer be despised. Books had been written in its defence, and these books must be replied to. Then there came out on the heathen side such champions as Fronto, Lucian, and Celsus, learned and witty men, attacking Christianity with every known weapon of argument, abuse, and raillery. By and by, persecution began in terrible earnest. It was, however, chiefly the work of mobs, stirred up and hounded on by men whose interests were imperilled. Of the emperors, only Nero and Domitian, and they for reasons of their own, had dipped their hands willingly in Christian blood. Now, soon after the middle of the second century, persecution began to be a part of the imperial policy. It was assumed that the old Roman religion was essential to the welfare of the Roman State. It was seen that Christianity was getting the better of that old Roman religion. Bad emperors, like Commodus and Heliogabalus, who cared nothing for the welfare of the State, let the new religion alone. Able, patriotic, high-toned emperors, like Marcus Aurelius, Decius, and Diocletian, could not let it alone. Those were times of awful agony when the powerful Roman Empire, shutting the gates of the ampitheatre, leaped into the arena face to face with the Christian Church. When those gates were opened, the victorious Church went forth, with the baptism of blood on her saintly brow, bearing a new Christian Empire in her fair, white arms. It only remained for heathen frenzy to contest this verdict of Providence, as Jewish frenzy had contested the verdict of Providence in Palestine. Philosophers had been for some time at work, elaborating what we call the New Platonism, a strange conglomerate, which taught one God in the lecture-room and many gods in the market-place; which discoursed loftily of union with God; and stooped to magical arts. This was the informing spirit of that notable reaction and revival of heathenism which found a fit champion in Julian, who, burning with zeal for the old religion, resolved to put the new religion down. Did he do it? In less than two years after mounting the throne of the Cæsars, he, pierced by a Persian arrow, confessed "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean." But Christianity, you tell me, did not save the life of the Roman Empire. No, it came too late for that. But Christianity prolonged that life; by a century or two in the Occident, by six or eight centuries in the Orient. III. The third conflict was with the TEUTONIC BARBARIANS. In German forests Christian captives were the first evangelists. They had to learn a new language which had then no alphabet. The men that spoke it had no culture. In a hundred years those rude barbarians were reading their Gothic Bibles. From tribe to tribe the sacred message ran till, in another hundred years, the barbarian conquest of Rome was essentially a Christian conquest. From generation to generation the missionary work went on, till at last the whole Teutonic race in Europe, now numbering well-nigh eighty millions, took on a Christian civilisation, higher, stronger, more radiant than that of Greece and Rome. The Kelts, now numbering about nine millions, were also evangelised; the Slaves, now numbering nearly eighty millions, came later; then the Scandinavians, one of the finest races in history, now numbering some eight millions, whose old mythology is richer and grander

than that of ancient Greece, and whom it took two centuries to conquer. And not one of the nobler historic peoples, once evangelised, has ever let go its hold of the gospel. The decayed churches of the Orient are only decayed, not dead, while the tide that went over them is evidently going out. IV. The fourth great conflict is with A LOWER TYPE OF HEATHENISM AT HOME AND ABROAD, and is now in progress. There is, indeed, a conflict with science which is sharp enough just now, and many good people are needlessly alarmed about it. There are tidal waves in all human affairs, and scepticism, like everything else, comes and goes on its endless round. But every time Christianity sails through it all like an ironclad. The great mass of Christians have never troubled themselves about it. Augustine made an end of Manicheism. The great schoolmen of the thirteenth century silenced the sceptics of the twelfth. And out of the scepticism of the fifteenth century came the reaction that culminated in the Protestant Reformation. Christianity, the mother of universities, the nurse and patron of all high study, has no fear of science. No. The real strain and conflict of our day are more practical. Christianity has conquered all the best races in history thus far. Now, can it conquer to the bottom as it has already conquered to the top? Can it bring the whole human family, its lowest peoples with its highest, into one common fold? Can it evangelise the Chinese, Japanese, Polynesians, Africans, North American Indians? Can it evangelise its own cities, going down into the cellars, up into the garrets of its own heathens here at home? Hard as the task may be, Christianity stands squarely committed to it. If Christianity fails in this its supreme endeavour, it is not of God. But it will not fail. What it *can* do may be known from what it *has* done. We have carried the gospel into the huts of the bushmen, we shall yet carry it into every cellar and every garret of every Christian city. Let us be of good courage. It is not long we shall have to wait. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) *Gamaliel and his advice; or the policy of caution and neutrality*:—Broadly speaking, men divide themselves into three classes in relation to Christianity. First, there are the open enemies, who never miss an opportunity of offering unto it the most energetic and violent opposition. Secondly, there are the earnest advocates and the zealous propagators of Christianity. Thirdly, but coming midway between these two classes, there is another, which we might term the cautious, timid, and perhaps temporising, neutral class. Speech after speech was delivered in favour of physical violence. At length Gamaliel arose. His speech was what we might call a moderate speech. It counselled caution, "refrain," "take heed." "Do not lay rash and violent hands on these men." "Do not endeavour to stamp out this new religion or irreligion by rash and violent methods." I. THE FAVOURABLE ASPECT OF THIS POLICY. Let us point out what there is that is commendable in this policy of awaiting the test of time. 1. Time certainly is a most searching and accurate test. It is very difficult to judge a movement that is in its infancy. By their fruits movements too are known. But then you must allow time for the fruit to appear and to mature. 2. Certainly this policy is opposed to that objectionable method of procedure which is characterised by "zeal without knowledge." There are those whose zeal in itself is really commendable; and they rush on rashly, never taking time to consider the bearing of present action on future events; they will run and risk their life to rescue a child in danger, but, perhaps, they will knock down half-a-dozen children on their way and do them serious harm. They will spend their best energies to advance a principle which they hold dear, but, perhaps, they will trample on many other principles which are equally true and Divine. "Zeal without knowledge." Their warm hearts are not under the direction of wise heads. Their action, while enthusiastic, is ill-directed. Well, Gamaliel and his friends are not guilty of this fault. They are never led into anything rash. If they err, they err on the safe side. They do not do much harm if they do no good. They will not hinder a good movement, though they may not help it. They will not further a bad cause, though they may do nothing to hinder it. Their policy is to refrain, to take heed, to take no action until time makes it quite clear whether the cause be human or Divine. 3. There is some amount of wise, cautious humility and devoutness also about this policy of Gamaliel and his friends. They greatly fear lest they should be found fighting against God, opposing His will and purpose. They knew that that would not only be fruitless, but sinful and blasphemous. It is a sad thing to find even a portion of one's life fruitless. Moral fruitlessness is a terrible calamity. To fight against God then is fruitless, for He must conquer in the end and our work come to nought. But it is also sinful, and even blasphemous. Blasphemy, properly so called, is speaking against God, but there is also a blasphemy which consists in acting against Him,

in using those faculties with which He Himself has endowed us, to frustrate His will and purpose, and to further the ends and intents of the devil. Well, Gamaliel and his friends strove to steer clear of this evil. They are cautiously humble and devout. They would not for the world be found fighting against God. Hence their policy is to "take heed," to "refrain," to wait until time proves whether God be in the movement or not. II. THE UNFAVOURABLE ASPECTS OF THIS POLICY. 1. It makes this mistake, it regards the external results of a movement as the unfailing test of its character. Or to put it in this way: It says, "this movement succeeds—it is Divine; this movement fails—it is human." Success or failure is taken as the test. But is it a true test? Some of the most successful movements have had the least of God in them, and some of the least successful have had the most of God in them. The followers of Buddha are more numerous than all other religionists. Is Buddhism more Divine because of that? It is evident then that external success is not an absolute test of the spirituality and Divinity of a religion, or of the character of a movement. Results! results! That is the great cry of the day. And it is almost thought that spiritual results can be got to order just like material results. You send your boy to the tailor for a suit of clothes; he gets it, you are satisfied. Do you send him in the same spirit to the master of the grammar school, saying, "I want a good education for my boy, so much time, so much money?" The master would reply, "Education is not to be had to order; there are other matters to be taken into consideration: has your son the ability, the application to learn? Without that I can do nothing with him." If it is so with intellectual results, how much more so with moral and spiritual results. We cannot get true conversions to order; we may get spurious ones. Nor is it possible to count true converts. Men can count heads; but it takes God Himself to count hearts. Therefore the test of external results is not an absolutely safe test. Are we, therefore, not to aim for success? By all means. All the success that we can get; as many hearers, as many converts, as many Christian workers as possible. Only do not rely on external results as furnishing an unfailing test of the character of any work. This the policy of Gamaliel is guilty of. 2. Moreover this policy is productive of culpable inactivity and moral cowardice. Now the most critical period of any movement, or of any new religion, is its infancy. Then does it bear the severest brunt of prejudice and hostility. The severest period in the history of Christianity was the apostolic age and the ages immediately following. We ought to thank God that there were men brave enough and strong enough to overcome the first opposition. After a while it makes itself felt in the world; it proves itself to be a power for good. Now Gamaliel and his friends will join it. "We are glad to see you even now, you Gamalielites; but you did not lend us a helping hand when the waves of opposition nearly swamped our ship; we and our cause would have perished for you; you looked out on us with timid, cautious, neutral eyes. But now that we have got to shore, and established our character and power, you seek to join our ranks. Come in; even at this hour we are glad to see you; only we must tell you that you have been guilty of culpable inactivity and of moral cowardice." Gamaliel and his friends will only join a successful cause, but a flagging interest they will refrain from touching. On the other hand, take a movement directly the reverse of that to which we have alluded, not only not Divine, but sinful and calculated to do a terrible amount of mischief. In its earlier years its destructive features are not written in large letters, still they are written in such letters as the keen observer can read. What do Gamaliel and his friends do? They refrain from taking any action. They allow the evil, the mischievous movement to grow, to establish itself. They might nip it in the bud, were they to take prompt, decisive action. "You cautiously timid, inactive Gamalielites, you are anxious not to be found fighting against God; wherefore are ye not equally desirous to fight for Him? You do not further His will when you allow evil to grow unchallenged and unopposed." There are many of whom it may be said, "They have done no evil." But what evil have they opposed, what good have they done? Nothing! Then is their poor, harmless inactivity culpable in the sight of God. 3. Then there is that further error in this policy of neutrality and delay, viz., that it presumes too much on Divine power and relies too little on human instrumentality. It says, "If that work or counsel be of God, He will make it successful; if it be sinful, then He will bring it to nought." Now, how does God promote His purposes? Through good men. How does He baffle and bring to nought evil doings? Through good men. The old excuse for inactivity is, "God will see to it." No! He will not, unless you place yourself humbly in His hand and say, "Send me, send me!" What was the

excuse of our ancestors who were opposed to modern missions: "If God means to convert the world He will see to that." But He would never convert the world unless the men came forward and severally said, "Send me, send me!" We can never rely too much on Divine power; we can never rely too much on human co-operation. Are we allowing Him to use us for that grand purpose? Or are we endeavouring to cover our culpable inactivity by the old excuse: "The work is His, and He will see to it." What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Every movement, social, political, religious, let us try to understand. Let us bring to bear upon it the faculties which God has given us, without prejudice and with prayer. Should it remain a mystery, let us wait, not listlessly, but with faces wistfully upturned towards heaven, solicitous to know the will of God. When light is given from heaven let us act accordingly, whether in favour or in opposition, act sincerely, with heart and soul. By doing the will of God, as far as it is revealed, we shall know more of the doctrine. (*Henry Harries, M.A.*) *Gamaliel:*—Gamaliel's feeling was this—"God is the supreme ruler, truth comes from Him, and He will take care of it. What is not true has in it the seeds of its own destruction, and will sooner or later come to nothing. Men are very poor judges of what is true or false. God is the judge, time the test." 1. This conviction is the foundation of all true tolerance, liberality of mind, and of charity and candour in judging. For want of it we are often falsely liberal, or foolishly bigoted. 2. I need hardly say how this principle and conviction bears upon our daily life, or point out how much calmness, wisdom, and peace it would, if recognised, pour upon the distractions which surround us. We live in the midst of new things. In our religious, social and political life new and startling opinions meet us. Like Gamaliel we see old faiths and old institutions in Church and State, and old habits, relations, and customs in society crumbling away or threatened. (1) In religion, men have arisen who call upon us to go back to the beliefs and practices of bygone centuries. We may safely leave them in God's hands, who will make them work out His purposes, and establish whatever is in accordance with His will, and wither up what is false and foolish in their teaching. (2) The same thing may be said with respect to another department of human thought in which great activity prevails. Men of inquiring mind will examine, speculate, and try to solve the riddle of human life. And what is called science in our day claims to have made very startling discoveries, which have shaken, and will enevitably destroy, many an old belief. And why not? God makes men of inquiring minds, and He gives them light to discover new facts and truths. The agitation of the so-called Christian world, its hostility to our men of science, and its senseless alarm at their discoveries, when viewed in the light of Gamaliel's calmness and candour, are simply a proof how little Christianity exists amongst us, and what low and miserable ideas we have of God and His truth. (3) So again in those sad disputes between class and class which distract and disturb us. It must needs be that these things come in the course of this world's progress, and much sorrow, sin, and suffering will follow in their wake; and to the eye of the faithless, the future may, for a time, look dark. But how much comfort, too, the thought affords, that in this respect also God rules—is working out here, too, His purpose and plan—and how much calmness and wisdom is the example of Gamaliel capable of imparting, whilst it warns us to refrain from anything like the spirit of violence or hasty judgment, and to wait patiently to see how much of the counsel and work we deplore is of God and cannot be overthrown, and how much is merely of men and therefore destined to perish; and to rest assured that God has not forsaken us, or let the reins of government fall from His hands. (4) When tried by misfortune or sorrow, when harassed by the tempers or injustice of others, when suffering in pain or sickness, amid the sundry and manifold cares and perplexities which entangle us all, what an untold gain it would be to us if we would refrain from a hasty or sinful judgment, and keep in our feelings, tongue, and temper from the conviction that God was overruling even in the midst of these seemingly evil things; that a truth and a purpose underlie them all, and would wait and watch how much in them there is which is from God, how much from our own perversity, and how much from that source of evil from which all comes that opposes and seeks to thwart His Divine intention, and abide in the faith that nothing but what is true and good for us will endure, while all that is false and foolish will soon be swept away. 3. And if it should seem that an example such as that of Gamaliel is too much insisted on, that the preacher who again and again enforces largeness of mind, charity in judging, patience and gentleness in thought and action, together with the rest

of the Christian graces and tempers, shows himself unmindful of his special work, and of his duty to teach the way of salvation for the souls of men; then I would submit that, in enforcing these things, we *are* setting forth man's salvation; for the soul which lives in the feeling and conviction that God our Father is constantly present, and overrules all things; that He will take care of the truth and of us when we stand upon it; the soul that tries to catch the Spirit of Christ, and to let it penetrate thought, temper, and action; the soul that waits to see what God will establish and what He will overthrow, that soul lives in the light of the truth; and he who lives in the truth, lives in the love of God; and where God's truth and love are, there is salvation, strength, and peace. (*John Congreve, M.A.*) *The success of Christianity an argument for its Divine origin*:—I. THE ARGUMENT FROM THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. It may be regarded, like all other evidences, as an argument from miracles. Here are certain undoubted facts. They cannot be accounted for without the immediate hand of God. Note, then, that this success has been—1. Wide and extensive. In the early ages this excited universal attention both among friends and foes. About thirty years after our Lord's death, Tacitus tells us that an "immense multitude" of Christians were either crucified or burned alive in Rome during the Neronian persecution, whence we may have some idea of the number of Christians in that capital. Forty years later, Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, states that in Bithynia the heathen temples had been deserted, and the victims used in sacrifice had ceased to be purchased. By the end of the second century Tertullian exclaimed, "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled up every place: towns, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, tribes, wards, palace, senate, forum; we have left you nothing but your temples." In little more than three centuries the Roman empire became professedly Christian under Constantine; and all the efforts of his successor Julian could not avert the total downfall of Paganism. The wide diffusion of the gospel, though in a corrupt form, did not cease. It was extended from Britain to China, and the foundation was laid of the present Christian nations of Europe, which have never since abjured the religion of the Cross. It has become the religion of the New World, and the efforts of missions have, in recent times, given it a footing in parts of the earth the most remote from one another, and renewed its early triumphs. The spread and hold of the gospel is thus a truly wonderful fact, when we consider its scanty beginnings and forlorn prospects. Even an unbeliever who looks calmly at this astonishing fact may well feel something of the misgiving of Gamaliel. 2. Inward and radical. All experience shows how hard a thing it is to make men converts even to the mere outward forms of a new religion; and the attempt to convert men from one sanctuary to another—from the synagogue, for example, to the Church, or from Popish to Protestant temples—is still more arduous. We can judge of this matter from the widest experience; for we see what frightful sufferings have been in all ages endured, what wars have been waged, what mutinies have been stirred up, from men's reluctance to change their religion. Had the gospel only brought heathen nations into the same state that Christian nations are in at this day, though not a single person had been regenerated, it would have been something not easy to explain without calling in the power of God. But the true miracle begins with making man a new creature in Christ Jesus, and when we see this done everywhere among the polished Greeks and the wandering Scythians, among masters and slaves, among Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles—we are constrained to exclaim, "This is the finger of God!" In this sense the age of miracles is not past, and never will be. What is the turning of water into wine to the turning of a sinner into a saint? Compare heathenism, even in its brightest scenes and noblest passages, with Christianity, the martyrdom of Socrates with that of Stephen, the life of Plato with that of Paul or John, the return of Regulus to die at Carthage in his country's cause with the advance of Luther to Worms to testify for Christ's truth. Where was there a Howard among the heathen? Where a Wilberforce? Where a Francis Xavier? Where anything corresponding to the honourable women who have laboured much in the Lord, and who, from the beginning, have been last at the Cross and first at the sepulchre? These are all facts to be accounted for, and with them the whole moral and spiritual influence of the gospel in life and in death; and so long as Christianity can produce them we feel that it is in a great measure independent of other signs and wonders. It bears upon its front the very seal of heaven. 3. Prolonged and renewed. When Gamaliel compared the gospel to the movements in the days of Theudas, or of Judas of Galilee, he was quite in order. Had the cause of Christ been no more Divine than theirs, it would, after

some noise and commotion, have as speedily died away. There is something very impressive in the vitality of genuine Christianity. Persecution drove it from Jerusalem; but it returned and dwelt there when its Jewish persecutors were scattered and overthrown. The Roman Cæsars arrayed against it the brute force of forty legions, but the empire with all its forces became subject to the Cross. There is a plant called the rose of Jericho, one of a class which, when withered by the scorching heats, rolls up its leaves into the form of a ball, and suffers itself to be drawn from the ground, and borne on the wings of the wind to a great distance, till, meeting with moisture, its roots again strike down, its leaves spread, and its rose-like colour returns in all its beauty. Thus did Christianity roll over the arid wastes of the Middle Ages, till, in the Reformation period, it reasserted its living power, and all but equalled its ancient glory: and since then the same sign has been repeated; for as it rolled harmlessly over the great desert of Popery, so has it, not less uninjured, crossed the dreary sands of infidelity which have spread out to intercept it, and expanded in our own days at home and abroad with all its primitive loveliness. Everywhere it puts forth the same flowers—zeal for God, love to Christ, pity for men. The self-renewing power of the gospel exceeds all fable. The converts of Polynesia, Ceylon, Burmah, Madagascar, speak all one tongue, and exalt one name which is above every name. Christianity has returned to the old seats of revelation, to Ur of the Chaldees, to Shechem, to Nazareth, to Bethlehem. It converts the house of Voltaire into a Bible depository, and the palace of Frederick the Great into a meeting-place of Christian union. II. SOME OBJECTIONS TO ITS FORCE, which, however, one and all, turn out in its favour, and strengthen its validity. It is objected—1. That false religions have had great success in the world. Not to mention the various systems of idolatry, there is the delusion of the Arabian prophet which spread over a very wide circle with great rapidity, and even expelled Christianity from its ancient territories. But we may use here the tests already employed. (1) The spread of Mohammedanism, though extensive, has been far more limited than that of Christianity. With the instinct of some oriental beast or plant, it keeps to its own habitat, without going into all the world. (2) It has had no inward or radical success. Let it be granted that it set up the unity of God, and maintained some excellent moral lessons, it had in its bosom no doctrine of regeneration, no strict and unworldly discipline, no heaven of purity and spiritual blessedness; and, therefore, its success is as little parallel to that of Christianity as the success of a man who could mould pieces of tough clay into different human shapes would be parallel to that of a man who could endow these shapes with true life. (3) Its success has not been prolonged and renewed. It did not take long to reach its limit; and since then it has never been revived. It lies at this day effete and helpless, not only unable to heal the "sickness" of the nations that embrace it, but itself their true disease, which they must shake off before they can have any promise either for the life that now is, or for that which is to come. (4) All this would have been true, and, I think, unanswerable, even had this false system, like the gospel of Christ, been introduced on its own merits, and supported by persuasion and argument. But, as we all know, it was propagated at the point of the sword. 2. That it has not been universal. Many are staggered by the slow progress of the gospel, and by the fact that it is not yet the religion of the majority of the human race. This difficulty admits of a complete answer. Consider how it limits the power of God. Upon this supposition He cannot reveal Himself to one or many without revealing Himself to all. Even one true conversion is a superhuman result, and much more a multitude of such conversions; and all that we are warranted to infer from the partial nature of the result is, that the Divine Author of the gospel has, for reasons known to Himself, not chosen everywhere to exert the same power. To hold that God must work at the full stretch of Omnipotence before we can know that it is God, is the same absurdity as to hold that a man must speak at the full pitch of his voice before he can be recognised. We must plainly know what God's intentions were before we find fault with the partial success of the gospel. (1) If He meant to punish the wilful rejection of His own gift this will sufficiently explain the non-conversion of the Jews. (2) If He meant to leave room for human co-operation, this will explain the slow progress of the gospel in professedly Christian nations. (3) If He judged it better to proceed by degrees, than at one sweeping stroke, this will obviate a host of difficulties connected with the gradual and interrupted march of Christianity. When are we to be satisfied? Suppose that the whole world was converted but one man, this objection would still hold good; nay, that solitary unbeliever could stand up and make the whole truth

of God of none effect! It is enough that we see a power at work which has converted many, and which is able to convert all. 3. That this success has been less with those who profess to be influenced by the gospel, than might have been expected from a Divine religion. What evils have been associated with the Christian name, what scandals, what inconsistencies! But we must first of all separate between nominal and genuine Christians. The distinction exists among Christians alone; for no other religion is spiritual enough to allow of this division. Is the true Church, then, to blame for its nominal adherents and their evils? Nay, is not the tribute to its own light and truth and goodness all the greater that men seek to cloak even their vices under its venerable sanction? It is among true Christians that the true effects of Christianity are to be seen, and here we fearlessly join issue with objectors. And is there not in Christian lands a general purpose, somewhere deep down in the heart of the worldling, to become himself a Christian? "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." III. SOME INFERENCES WHICH FOLLOW. The success of Christianity is—1. A tribute to the glory of the Saviour. Every onward movement is like a step in some solemn piece of martial music which sounds His praise. Every conversion is a trophy to His invincibility. Every land added to His sway is another crown placed upon His head. And the final conquest of the world will awake the final peal of the anthem to His glory. It is delightful to a Christian heart to identify the success of the gospel with the personal efforts and sympathies of the Redeemer. 2. A source of confidence to the Church. Christianity can never be in such danger again, as it has already triumphed over. Had it been of man, it had long ago come to nought. Its enemies have assailed it with every possible weapon, and searched every rivet of its armour. And therefore it moves a smile of pity when this hero or the other comes forth against the gospel, forgetful of the hosts that have sunk already in the attempt, like insects rushing against the flame, or birds of night glaring defiance at the sun. 3. A motive of conversion to the unbeliever. There is nothing so mournful as to be at once on the wrong, and on the losing side. To perish in a good cause surrounds the name with glory; but where is the wisdom, the magnanimity, the honour of dying a martyr to error, to folly, to sin and wickedness? This is not to be a hero, but a traitor; not to be a sacrifice, but a suicide! (*J. Cairns, D.D.*) *Moral truths inextinguishable:*—M'Kenzie, in his North American tour, speaking of the country bordering on the Slave Lake, says: "It is covered with large trees of spruce pine and white birch; when these are destroyed poplars succeed, though none were before to be seen." Evelyn notices a fact very similar to this, which is observed in England, in Nova Scotia, and in the United States of America, that where fires have destroyed the original wood the new saplings which spring up are generally different species of trees. All these phenomena indicate the inextinguishableness of vegetable vitality; and on this point they may be employed to typify the inextinguishableness of moral truths in our world. No fires of insurrection, no deluges of persecution, no changes in the forms of human society by kings, or priests, or mobs have ever had the effect of obliterating moral ideas. They are inextinguishable, and spring up unaccountably in perennial beauty despite all social conflagrations and convulsions. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *The fate of antagonists to Christianity:*—"Gibbon, Voltaire, Chesterfield, Hume, and Paine," said an unbeliever, "are the champions of infidelity. Their works completely overthrow Christianity." "What!" said a Christian; "overthrow Christianity! Are you aware of the way in which the Most High God has thwarted their designs and overruled their evil purposes? Let me tell you that in Gibbon's hotel at Lake Leman is a room where Bibles are sold. The printing-press from which Voltaire's infidel works were issued has been used to print the Word of God. Chesterfield's parlour, once an infidel club-room, is now a vestry, where Christians meet for prayer and praise. Hume predicted the death of Christianity in twenty years, but he has gone to his grave, and the first meeting of the Bible Society in Edinburgh was held in the room where the prince of sceptics died. Paine, on landing at New York, was foolish enough to prophesy that in five years not a Bible would be found in the United States. But it is a fact that there are more Bible Societies to-day in America than in any other country in the world." The unbeliever was silenced. (*J. L. Nye.*)

Ver. 41. **They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer.**—*Heroic for the truth:*—I. THE BITTER ANTAGONISM OF WICKED MEN TO THE TRUTH, AS SEEN IN THEIR DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO ARREST ITS PRO-

GRESS IN THE WORLD. The history of truth has ever been one of trial and conflict. He who was "The Truth" had to contend with the antagonism of men; and the noble army of martyrs shows how desperate and determined have been the attempts of cruel, wicked men to arrest the course of truth. Arrayed against the apostles was—1. Social status. The Founder of Christianity was of humble origin, the apostles were of the common people; and of course the high priest and the rulers could not consent to be taught by them. So for ages persons of social rank and great worldly wealth have not favoured Christianity, but rather hindered it. 2. Legal might. The judges and the lawyers, who ought to have defended them, sided against them; and for centuries history repeated itself in this particular, and the strong arm of the law, instead of being extended to defend the truth, has drawn the sword to persecute and destroy. 3. Mental power. At the council there was the *élite* of the intelligence of the Jewish nation. And from that time until now there have been men of brilliant powers arrayed against the truth—powers worthy of a nobler employment and end. Polished and poisoned have been the arrows that have been shot at the army of the Cross. 4. Sympathy of numbers. Many believed, but many did not believe. Truth has always been in the minority, so far as numbers are concerned. Error has usually gained the show of hands. Men with high and holy purposes must expect comparative loneliness. It was so with the Master, largely so with the apostles, and has been so more or less with all intellectual giants and true moral reformers. 5. Antiquity. They were Nonconformists, and the Jews would feel the utmost disdain for those who dared to dissent from their national establishment. Those who opposed the apostles venerated Abraham and Moses; but Christ they regarded as an innovator and a sower of sedition. Error has still pretext for pleading that antiquity is on its side; for sin is as old as Eden. All these things were arrayed against the truth, and yet it won its way. And if these things could not impede it when it was a streamlet, shall they succeed now that it is a mighty river? If alien and hardy hands could not uproot the truth when it was a newly-planted sapling, shall any hands be able to lift it now it is a deep-rooted mighty tree? God is on the side of truth, and its early victories are a pattern and pledge of its constant and complete triumph over all antagonistic forces. II. THE SUBLIME HEROISM OF HOLY MEN FOR THE TRUTH, AS SEEN IN THEIR DETERMINED LABOURS TO ACCELERATE ITS PROGRESS IN THE WORLD. Notice—1. Its nature. (1) They could endure pain. They were not Stoics, but sensitive, generous men; and yet they endured torture even joyfully. (2) They could endure shame. Christ had endured the Cross and shame for them, and for Him they could endure. (3) They could brave dangers. It was no use for the council to threaten them. They were prepared to lose their liberty, and even life, rather than deny the name which to them was above every name. 2. Its secret. They were not fanatics, but calm, cool, and common-sense men. (1) They were witnesses of the facts they attested to. They knew they had "not followed cunningly devised fables," they had "seen," and "heard" and "felt" the things they proclaimed; and the council might as well have tried to argue them out of their own existence as out of their belief in the Lord Jesus. (2) They were filled with the Holy Ghost. Natural courage, physical pluck, would not have been enough to lead them to endure and hold out as they did; they required supernatural courage, and they had it. They were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (3) They were inspired by a mighty name. Oh the power of a name! Poets, patriots, warriors, &c., have been stimulated and inspired by great and illustrious names; but here is "a name that is above every name," that has been more uplifting among men than any other lever name in the world. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Four classes in the school of suffering:*—I. Those OBLIGED to suffer. II. Those WILLING to suffer. III. Those ABLE to suffer. IV. Those PERMITTED to suffer. (*Hartman.*) *Rejoicing in tribulation:*—I. WHAT THE APOSTLES FELT. 1. Not mere resignation. It is reckoned a high Christian grace not to murmur at afflictive providences, but to submit—not trying to pierce the inscrutable, but saying, "Thy will, not mine be done." 2. Not mere acquiescence. This is a grace higher still, involving as it does the confession that God's will is good will, and God's way, however painful, the best way. Its language is, "All things work together for good," &c. 3. But joyfulness—perhaps the highest grace possible, being exultation that at whatever personal cost God's will is done. Certainly the most difficult grace to exercise, and one which goes clean contrary to all the tendencies of our nature. We naturally love ease, prosperity, honour; but when we are enabled to rejoice as the apostles did in pain, adversity, and ignominy we are more than con-

querors. II. How to account for it. 1. Not on the ground of the expectation of ulterior benefit. Many a man has rejoiced in the trouble and suffering which would certainly issue in wealth or honour. Witness the conduct of warriors and explorers. The apostles could gain nothing except further suffering. 2. Not on the ground of a hope of heaven. This has been the support of many a Christian martyr and sufferer, is quite legitimate, and was a source of comfort often to the apostles themselves, but it does not seem to have been taken into account here. 3. But on the ground that Christ counted them worthy to suffer for His name. It was suffering—(1) For Christ's sake. (2) By Christ's appointment. (3) With Christ's support. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Apostolic joy*:—The history of the Church, as given in the Acts of the Apostles, shows the enmity of the carnal mind towards God. But the persecution to which the apostles were subject has its bright, no less than its dark side. It shows us the integrity—the courage of these men of God. Many have hazarded life from love of worldly honour and glory; self, in some form or other, has been the prompting motive; and they have won the applause of man. But a higher and nobler feeling has induced the followers of Christ to go to the prison and stake. I. The situation of these men of God. The circumstances in which they were placed were harassing and painful. The whole weight of the civil power was brought to bear upon them. They were also put to shame. They were men of high moral sensibility, and keenly felt the degradation attached to a public whipping, as if they had been robbers, yet they rejoiced. But what fault had they committed? They were punished because they preached pardon to the guilty, and salvation through Christ to them that believe. II. The judgment they formed of the treatment they received. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of their Lord and Master. 1. May this not have arisen from the conviction that opposition would redound to the Saviour's glory? They knew that His cause would in the end prevail, however it might for a season be hindered. 2. Moreover, they might have formed their judgment on a principle that regarded themselves. They knew that their ascended Lord had foretold the certainty of persecution, and now in the fulfilment of the prediction, they saw an evidence of the truthfulness of their Great Master, and of their relation to Him. They therefore rejoiced in the grace of God. III. On what grounds and by what means may we rejoice if we should be called to suffer for the name of Christ? It is still true, that through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom of God. Children have been persecuted by their parents for the sake of their piety and religious zeal. Servants have been mocked and dismissed from their situations on account of their faith. Tenants have been turned out of their houses and farms because they have obeyed the voice of conscience. And not a few have suffered in their trade, because they have followed their convictions in the worshipping of God. 1. If we would be associated with the apostles in this case, we must reckon by faith—not by sight. A man may resign himself to the observance of the established usages of society, he may conform to the standard of the world's morality; but he will never submit to reproach for the name of Christ, unless he sees His Divine excellency, and loves Him in sincerity. 2. Again, if we would account it joy to be persecuted for the sake of Christ, our eye must be single in His cause. 3. In a word, finally, you must seek for a constant supply of the spirit of grace. These men of God were filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. (*American National Preacher.*) *Joy in Christian work, and peace amid tribulation*:—I. Many people can imagine Church workers feeling pleasure under certain conditions and experiences of their work—in its hours of success, and scenes of glad acceptance and sympathetic reception; but hardly any, without careful thought, could understand men professing themselves as happy after enduring such an ordeal as the apostles had just passed through. Yet let me point you to analogies. First take the case of the scholar, the man who loves and pursues knowledge for its own sake. Have we not heard of men who are content, nay, supremely happy in toiling on steadily and silently for years, wrapped up in and devoted to enlarging their ever-increasing stores of information? Such there have been and are, who deny themselves all other pleasures, even health, not to speak of worldly advantage or social advancement, who work on in silence and solitude, finding their one joy in their enthusiastic devotion to this their only object in life. Or take the case of the man of science. Not the man who studies literature or law or history, but the man who is engaged in wresting fresh secrets from nature; not in order to patent an invention and make a large fortune, but who loves nature and science for their own sake, whose one object seems to be making constant additions to the

number of known facts or verified laws and operations. Again, have we not read of travellers and explorers perfectly possessed by their life of adventure; ever seeking to scale heights which no one else has reached, to penetrate further into unknown regions, and who for this purpose have endured almost incredible hardship and toil; to whom labours well-nigh superhuman seemed as nothing, who would face with readiness situations where they verily went with their lives in their hands? I might go on to speak of the love of the soldier, the engineer, the artist, the musician, for their callings. For we shall find that the greatest men in every sphere of life have had, as it were, a perfect passion for their profession, and have followed it not for any outside reward or emolument it might bring, but for its own sake. Now, may I take Christianity as a profession, and give the widest interpretation to the true Christian work? Is it quite impossible for the Christian worker to find such an interest in the work itself, apart from any hope of reward, as a scholar, an artist, a soldier finds in his profession? The true artist has a pure and enthusiastic love for art; the scholar's one object in life is knowledge; what, then, is the Christian worker's means and object of rejoicing? Must it not be in the increase of goodness? Christ and Christianity have but one object—the righteousness of man, the placing of good in the stead of evil. Notice how different the conduct of the apostles now from what it was previous to the resurrection. Then, at the advent of a few armed men, they had fled in terror and deserted their Master. Now, they were joyfully prepared to suffer persecution and death on His behalf. What had produced the change? What but a revelation of the true nature of their Master? II. With joy is closely allied peace. Peace is the inward state of feeling of which holy joy is the manifestation. The Christian lives in two spheres—in the world and also in Christ. In the first sphere he must be in a state of conflict with much he finds around him. But he lives also in close communion with his Master; and so far as he tries to do his Master's service, to obey His will, to be led by His Spirit, he is at peace. We are all, in one way or another, seeking for happiness. Physical life depends on conformation to the laws of nature. Spiritual life depends on conformation to the Spirit of God. The object of the will of God is righteousness, goodness, truth. This, if we would have peace, must be the object of our wills also. Hence, in the pursuit of goodness, even in the midst of tribulation, shall we find joy. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*) *The effects of persecution*:—Unless a grain of mustard-seed be bruised, the extent of its virtue is never acknowledged. For without bruising it is insipid, but if it be bruised it becomes hot, and it gives out all those pungent properties that were concealed in it. Thus every good man, so long as he is not smitten, is regarded as insipid, and of slight account. But if the grinding of persecution crush him, instantly he gives forth all the warmth of his savour, and all that before appeared to be weak and contemptible is turned into godly fervour, and that which in peaceful times he had been glad to keep from view within his own bosom, he is driven by the force of tribulation to make known. (*St. Gregory.*) *The joy of suffering for Christ*:—Guy de Brez, a French minister, was prisoner in the Castle of Tournay, in Belgium. A lady who visited him said she wondered how he could eat, or drink, or sleep in quiet. "Madam," said he, "my chains neither terrify me nor break my sleep; on the contrary, I glory and take delight therein, esteeming them at a higher rate than chains and rings of gold, or jewels of any price whatever. The rattling of my chains is like the effect of an instrument of music in my ears—not that such an effect comes merely from my chains, but it is because I am bound therewith for maintaining the truth of the gospel."

Ver. 42. **And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**—*Daily apostolic labours*:—This is a suggestive picture of the life and work of the early Church. We like to trace enterprises to their beginnings, rivers to their springs. These were times of holy zeal and fervour which may be accounted for by four considerations. 1. The apostles felt the impulse of a new undertaking. 2. They held fresh in memory their intercourse with their Lord. 3. They had the inward energy of the Holy Spirit. 4. They were inspired by the truths they preached. The text is one of the best exhibitions of this energy, and suggests to us—I. OUR WORK. "Teaching and preaching Jesus Christ." That may seem to be the specific work of apostles and ministers, but in truth it is the work of every Christian. Moses wished that "all the Lord's people were prophets"; Jesus said, "Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." 1. The subject. (1) Jesus,

regarded as the object of love—in the infinite grace of His character, and in the persuasions of His self-sacrificing love. (2) Christ, as the object of faith—in His mission, death, resurrection. (3) Jesus Christ—sent of God to save from sin. 2. The mode. (1) Preaching, announcing, heralding, witnessing, proclaiming the Saviour present and almighty to save. (2) Teaching—careful and minute instruction in Christian facts, truths, duties. II. OUR SPHERES. "In the temple and in every house." Not only in appointed sanctuaries, but also in—1. Society, which we are to leaven and purify for Christ with wise teachings and preachings. 2. Our houses—homes where family bonds and sympathies make for it a preparatory atmosphere. Our first circle to win for Christ is the home circle. But these two circles cannot be properly occupied in any one way or by any one agency. We want—(1) A life voice, the testimony of a daily pure and helpful conduct. (2) A lip voice, the witness of wise, earnest, and loving words. (3) A works voice, the hallowing influence of good and gracious deeds. III. OUR TIMES. "Daily," *i.e.*, always. Not a day should pass without some witness for Christ. Christ wants service from us on week-days as well as Sundays. We may preach—1. Christ's spirit, which is charity. 2. Christ's will, which is holiness. 3. Christ's salvation. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*)

Ministerial fidelity and devotedness:—In this brief but emphatic record of the labours of the first apostles we may find a pattern after which to model ours, in the prosecution of that great work to which we have been set apart. I. Examine THE COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE DELINEATED—marking its adaptation to the end for which it was originally instituted. The recovery of the sinner—his restoration to the Divine image and favour, is the revealed purpose of God. We must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Herein we perceive what should constitute the staple of our preaching. It is Christ, in the glory of His person, in the all-sufficiency of His offices, in the riches of His grace. 1. To preach Jesus is to announce Him as a Peacemaker, who brought in, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, an atonement. It is to herald Him as the Saviour, to the exclusion of all other humanly-devised methods, wherein salvation is sought; a Saviour, suitable and sufficient—suitable as man, sufficient as God—His deity being the altar upon which His humanity was immolated; "the altar sanctifying the gift." 2. To preach Jesus is "to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins"; a righteousness resulting from His obedience, at once active and passive, exacted and rendered as the sinner's substitute, and imparted unto all who exercise faith in Him. 3. Further, the title of Christ is applied to the Saviour. Christ, the anointed Prophet, Priest, Advocate, and King. 4. It is further recorded of the apostles that they did not restrict their labours to the service of the temple, but that they instructed "from house to house." "We watch for souls," and should therefore have our people under constant inspection, and ever-wakeful supervision. By such a course we shall best prove that we are indeed alive to their highest interests; by this will the cause of religion and morality and public tranquillity be best advanced; by this, too, shall we be best prepared for meeting that solemn inquiry, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" 5. Another remark upon this part of our subject is suggested by the expression, "they taught Jesus Christ." It is in the power of conduct, as well as of words, to convey instruction. "Ye," said our Lord, "are the light of the world." Like a moral Pharos, enkindled from above, we are placed in a direct line with the haven of eternity, in order that, by the concentrated beams of purity of doctrine and of conduct, we may guide the endangered sinner across these perilous waters, wherein many are engulphed and for ever lost. We are to be "ensamples unto our flock," giving strength and power to our public admonitions by the consistency of our private deportment. That which we have "heard and seen," tasted, and are enjoying, we declare unto our perishing fellow sinners; and this invests our addresses with a charm and power which nothing short of it could possibly impart. Ours it is to utter testimony confirmed by experience; and who can fail to admit its force, in its peculiar fitness for the end designed? II. THE CONSTANCY AND FULNESS OF DEDICATION TO THEIR WORK EXHIBITED BY THE APOSTLES, furnishing for our imitation a just and impressive pattern. It was a noble declaration of the twelve, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." They appear to have been influenced by an "inconceivable severity of conviction, that they had one thing to do." Upon this one object the whole force of their mind was expended. For its furtherance they were content to suffer the loss of all things, deeming reproach an honour, suffering a privilege, a martyr's death a gain. The necessity for this self-sacrificing devotedness still exists, in order to our reach-

ing the highest style of ministerial excellence. 1. The ministry of the gospel, in its widest acceptation, is emphatically the work we have to do. Well may we, engaged in such an undertaking, affirm in the language of Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work." The magnitude of that work will be further seen in the diversity of the employment connected with its due discharge. To the Christian pastor belongs the study of human character in its every different aspect. He will have to adapt his resources to the peculiarities of every rank and age in the Church and in the world. 2. The disproportion between our powers and the undertaking upon which they are to be expended is another consideration calculated to prove the necessity for the accumulated force of all our powers in its performance. 3. Moreover, we may observe that the amount of our success will bear some proportion to our efforts. The seed will reproduce itself, and the greater the quantity sown in prayer and watered by that gracious influence which faithful sustained supplication calls down, the more abundant will be the crop. The manifestation of this success may be for a while denied; we may be permitted to toil on, witnessing but little fruit of our labour; nevertheless, the result is certain. (*Henry Abney, B.A.*) *A model Christian ministry*:—I. ITS SUBJECT. Not things about Jesus Christ, but Himself. Creeds may satisfy the reason, but the heart craves a Person. The heart grows, but creeds are stationary. Christ and His fulness ever transcend our utmost need. A ministry of which Christ is not the grand theme is a misnomer—worthless and injurious. II. ITS METHOD. "Preaching," *i.e.*, evangelising; "teaching," *i.e.*, instructing those who have received the evangel. Notice—1. The great importance of these two things. 2. The difficulty of doing both well. 3. The difficulty of obtaining appreciation for both in one congregation. Yet the Church must have and exercise both. III. ITS SPHERES. 1. Public. 2. Domestic (chap. ii. 46). IV. ITS FREQUENCY. "Daily." Here is a message for those who never enter the sanctuary except on the Lord's day. (*W. Jones.*) *Apostolic ministration*:—I. ITS SUBJECT. "Jesus Christ." This was not one subject of many; it was the only one. Note that this is a subject of—1. Infinite importance. "Neither is there salvation in any other." You may be interested in many subjects; you may love music, history, &c.; but you may die to-morrow; and without an interest in Christ you are lost: and therefore to know how you are to be saved must be matter of infinite importance. 2. Unequalled suitableness. It is adapted to the moral necessities of all mankind. 3. Endless variety. The mind of man is so constituted that it never can be happy without variety; and that variety is furnished us in the heavens and on the earth. But in Christ all God's various wonders meet; He is the great Centre of both worlds, in whom the glories of both are concentrated. I can hardly look at an object in creation without being reminded of Him; and the Bible is intended that whichever way I look it should preach to me about Jesus Christ. 4. Peculiar sweetness. What is so sweet to a starving man as food, to a weary traveller as rest, to the criminal as pardon? 5. Singular efficacy. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God. And what subject has the efficacy which this possesses? Mahometanism has converted its millions; but how? By the sword and by the allowance of sensual indulgence. Idolatry has its millions; but they curse their senseless and blood-thirsty deities for the slavery which they impose upon them. But without any carnal weapons, or human authority, the simple preaching of Christ, which first conquered the Roman world, brought England into the state into which it now is, and will, by its blessed conquests, finally convert and subdue the whole world. If you are alarmed at the vice and misery of London, see the trophies of the simple preaching of Jesus Christ. Saul, the persecuting bigot; Mary Magdalene, the habitation of foul demons; the thief on the cross, &c. 6. Eternal duration. Many subjects which are excellent in their nature, and adapted to the present wants of man, involve only the interests of time. But this one subject promises present peace and eternal felicity. I would be a Christian if its influence extended no further than the waters of Jordan. But although there is great blessedness now, it is but a taste of what is to come. II. ITS METHOD. 1. Public preaching. This was according to the charge of our Saviour, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and according to the plan of Divine wisdom. By the foolishness of preaching "it pleased God to save them that believe." And this is a mode adapted to the wants, habits, and the constitution of the human mind. People are fond of a crowd, and God has so ordained it, that by the preaching of the gospel multitudes should be gathered to listen to it. They could not spare the time nor the money that books would require, to derive the same instruction; therefore they are congregated to save both. The

same attention employed in reading would not produce the same effects that are produced by preaching; there is a certain charm, enthusiasm in the human voice, the piercing look, the animated manner of the speaker, which no books in the world can supply. There is also something in the place; there is something charming to the mind in a place consecrated to the service of God. If ever the world is converted, preachers must be multiplied, and multiplied to an extent of which, at present, we have very little knowledge: we must not wait till new churches are built. We must convert school-rooms into preaching-places, and barns into chapels, and every house we can enter for a spot in which multitudes can be assembled to hearken to the words of life. This was the apostolical plan. John Mark's was the house where the people met together to pray for Peter's deliverance. The Church assembled in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. The Church assembled in the house of Onesiphorus. And if these cannot be obtained, then we must have open-air preaching, with the sky for a sounding-board and the multitudes around for a congregation. Every spot is consecrated. If you go on board a ship, Christ was there before, and preached there. If you go to the hills, the apostles preached there before you. If you go to the prisons, the apostles preached there before you. 2. Private teaching. They were not satisfied with public preaching, but they went to every house. This is the communication of the truth to individuals, as the other was the communication of the truth to multitudes. David had often heard Nathan speak in public; but he heard him in private to purpose when he came and related his parable, and then said, "Thou art the man." I doubt not that a part of this private tuition consisted in the application of the consolation of the gospel to individuals who have been pricked in their hearts, and their minds somewhat illuminated by the truth: they had to strengthen them that were weak, and to bring back those who had fallen away. But the chief end of this private tuition was, to seek out that which was lost. Now ministers are not only to teach and preach to them who will come, but they are to go to those who will not come. They are not only to invite people to come to the temple, but they are to go to their houses. III. ITS CONSTANCY. "Daily . . . they ceased not." The influence of the Spirit of God produced three blessed states of mind. 1. Burning zeal for their Master's glory. They went into "every house"; not only those into which they were invited; of the rich as well as of the poor; of the learned as well as the illiterate. And what though it was said, "You have no business here; keep your religion to yourself!" Their Master's honour was what they attempted to sustain: and if men dishonoured them they bound the scorn to their brow, and gloried in their shame. 2. Ardent love for the souls of men. 3. Indefatigable perseverance in their work. (*J. Sherman.*) *Teaching and preaching*:—As preachers, the apostles proclaimed the gospel to men; and as teachers they expounded its doctrines and enforced its duties. In this they obeyed the command of their Lord, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Go and disciple all nations, . . . teaching them." During His own personal ministry He exemplified what He thus enjoined. "He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." I. THIS COMMAND WAS LAID NOT UPON THE APOSTLES ALONE, BUT UPON THE MINISTRY WHICH THEY HAD SO VIGOROUSLY INAUGURATED. 1. In the age which succeeded that of the apostles preaching and teaching were sedulously maintained by the Christians. From every congregation men seem to have gone forth as evangelists to make known the message of salvation; and in the assemblies of the believers, besides the reading of the Scriptures, a discourse delivered in the audience of the people formed a regular part of the service. Justin Martyr, in the former half of the second century, gives an account of how service was conducted in the assembly of the Christians on the Lord's day; and he says that after the reading of the Scriptures the president delivered a discourse of a hortatory character in which he admonished his hearers to reduce to practice what they had heard read. These discourses were homely, unartificial addresses, partaking rather of the nature of conversational utterances than regularly constructed orations or discourses. In the Eastern churches, where they chiefly were in use in the earliest age, the name *homily* was given to them, a word which signifies intercourse, converse, and secondarily, instruction. For a long time these homilies continued to be mere expositions of Scripture with practical applications and exhortations, often of the simplest character, but sometimes containing the results of careful investigation and profound thought, as in the case of Origen, whose homilies are still valued by scholars for their suggestiveness and the light they sometimes throw on the meaning of

Scripture. 2. As Christianity advanced, and the Christian assemblies became more numerous and cultured, the addresses of the pastors came to be of a more ambitious character, and to be formed more on the model of the oratory of the senate or the forum. The slightly elevated platform which at first was common to the reader and to the preacher, was by the latter exchanged for, first, a loftier pulpit, and afterwards for a throne, from which the bishop delivered his oration. Gradually the ancient wholesome usage of expounding the prophetic and evangelic writings was relinquished, and discourses in praise of martyrs, or funeral orations, highly ornate harangues, and pieces of artificial rhetoric were in their stead offered to the people, who, captivated by the gaudy show, followed the usage of the theatre, and at the close of each eloquent burst, expressed their approbation by acclamation and clapping of hands. 3. During the Middle Ages, and on to the time of the Reformation, preaching and teaching had well-nigh ceased. It is true, sermons continued to be written, and were probably delivered, but as they were in a tongue which only the learned understood, they were confined in their use to the clergy; and it is true also that enlightened rulers like Charlemagne and Alfred the Great saw the importance of the people being instructed in religion, and took measures to enforce on the clergy the duty of preaching to the people in the vulgar tongue; but how little prepared were the clergy may be gathered from the fact that the Emperor found it necessary to enjoin that "bishops and presbyters are themselves to understand the Lord's Prayer, and preach it to all that each may know what he asks of God." Now and then a man fired by holy zeal—a Tauler, a Wicliffe, a Huss, a Gerson, a Savonarola—preached the gospel to the people and taught them the truths and duties of Christianity, and doubtless there were faithful but unknown men labouring in retired districts. But for the most part, all through these dreary centuries, the pulpit was virtually a nonentity in Christendom, and the people perished for lack of knowledge. Things were at the worst when the dawn of a better day arrived, and, as Milton expresses it, "then was the Sacred Bible sought out of the dusty corners where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it, the schools opened, Divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues, the princes and cities trooping apace to the new-erected banner of salvation." 4. All the leading reformers were assiduous and eminent preachers, and by this more than any other means they made good their position and effected a real and lasting revival of religious life among the nations. Since then, in all the Protestant Churches, preaching and teaching have been recognised as a chief duty of the Christian pastor; and even in the Romish and Greek churches the value of these is to a greater or less extent practically acknowledged. II. A TENDENCY HAS SHOWN ITSELF OF LATE TO DEPRECIATE PREACHING AS COMPARED WITH THE DEVOTIONAL PARTS OF OUR PUBLIC SERVICES. A cry has been heard for less preaching and more of prayer and praise. But after much consideration and observation I am brought to the conclusion, that not for instruction alone, but for devotion and spiritual quickening as well, it is needful that the preaching of God's Word should keep that place in the service of the sanctuary which the wisdom and the piety of our ancestors led them to assign to it. Consider well the following things. 1. The testimony of experience is strongly in favour of the value of preaching as a means of sustaining spiritual life in the Church. Turn over the volumes of Church history and it will be found that the free and earnest preaching of God's Word has ever gone hand in hand with a lively state of religious feeling and an earnest and elevated devotion among the people; whilst, on the other hand, when the Church has relied principally on prayer and praise for the sustenance of her spiritual vigour, coldness, indifference, and formality have become characteristic of her members, and the pure fire of devotion on her altar has given place to a lurid and unwholesome flame. 2. Devotion being the utterance of feeling has no self-sustaining power. No emotion, high or low, holy or common, sustains itself; unless it be fed from without it becomes feeble and dies: But how is devotional emotion to be fed except by the Word of God? But it is by preaching and teaching in the sanctuary that the Word of God is chiefly and most effectually to be ministered to the people. 3. Whatever help devotional exercises may lend to the sanctification of the soul, they can never minister so directly to this as does the preaching of God's Word. If devotion fans the flame, it is preaching that must supply the fuel, and it is by it that the fire is to be kindled. Pure affections spring from holy thoughts, and holy thoughts are the offspring of Divine knowledge. 4. The proper hearing of God's Word is in itself an act of worship and devotion. If indeed it is merely to be pleased by an interesting preacher that people come to church; or if they come merely to sit in judgment on him or to enjoy an intellec-

tual pastime or a sensational display—then truly they are as far from worship as if they were engaged in any secular pursuit or worldly amusement. But if they come to hear God's Word, bowing their minds and hearts to the utterance of the Divine mind and seeking the blessing which lies in the reception of the truth, then do they in that very act rise to a true devotion, and offer a worship which is acceptable to God. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *Preaching Christ*:—I. The SUBJECT. To preach Jesus Christ aright we must preach Him in—1. His infinite and indisputable Godhead. Take away the Divinity of Christ from the gospel, and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest. If Christ were not God He was the basest of impostors. 2. His true humanity. We must never make Him to be less manlike because He was perfectly Divine. We must have a human Christ, not of shadows or fancies, one to whom we can talk, with whom we can walk, "who in His measure feels afresh what every member bears." 3. His personality. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ, or an experimental Christ. I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We want a personal Christ. This has been a power to the Romish Church—a power which they have used for ill, but always a power. Whatever we fail to preach we must preach Him. If we are wrong in many points, if we be but right here, this will save our ministry from the flames; but if we be wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest. 4. His solitary mediatorship. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of living saints for sinners, yet must we have it that the only Mediator in the heavens, and the only direct Intercessor with God, is the Man Christ Jesus. Nay, we must not be content with making Him the only Mediator; we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by Him. We must not only have Him for the Priest, but we must have Him for the Altar, the Victim, and the Offerer too. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of His righteousness to be stained by the patch-work of our filthy rags. 5. His authority as the only Lawgiver and Rabbi of the Church. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the Church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ of His proper position. Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the decree of the Church, or the vote of a synod apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which He occupies in the Christian Church. 6. His dignity as the sole King of the Church. The Church is queen above all queens, and Christ her only King. If any of our acts violate the civil laws we are citizens, and we acknowledge the right of a state to govern us as individuals. But we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian Church can never be reversed by the civil power, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged. 7. His supremacy as the King of kings. He has an absolute right to the entire dominion of this world. II. THE SURPASSING EXCELLENCIES OF THE SUBJECT. 1. Blessed variety. There are many strings to the harp of the gospel. There are some brethren who are so charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them, that they never meddle with any of the others; the cobwebs hang on the rest while these five are pretty well worn out. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. He is all manner of precious perfume, myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. He is all sorts of music, He is everything that is sweet to the ear; He is all manner of fruits; there is not one dainty in Him, but many. He is all manner of raiment; He is golden raiment for beauty, He is the warm raiment for comfort, He is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ, and he that hath Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where are no two rocks alike, and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner, and no two trees grow in precisely the same form. 2. It suits all sorts of people. Are there rebels? Preach Christ; it will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners? What is better to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus? Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ? Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears. Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Stand in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilised men, stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France, the Cross is adapted to all. III. THE POWER OF THIS SUBJECT. 1. To promote the union of the people of God. There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. "I do not like him," says one. There is another

man, a Presbyterian; he cannot bear Independency. "Well, I like him a little better; but I do not suppose we shall get on very well." There is another man, a very strong Calvinist. "I shall not admire him." Stop, stop! That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert; but what a Christian! What a lover of Jesus! You know that hymn of his, "How sweetly doth my Master's sound!" That second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert, was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit! Well, now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together, and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin; and I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in heaven, and are sitting side by side. That high Calvinist was Dr. Hawker. Now, I am sure, George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker, and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert, and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. But what a sweet spirit! He cannot take up his pen, but dips it in Christ and begins to write about his Lord at once. "Precious Immanuel —precious Jesus." Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again. Let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed. 2. Upon the heart of sinners. There is a person, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn—"Jesus, lover of my soul." "Ah," says he, "does Jesus love my soul? Then how vile I have been to neglect Him!" There are scores whose conversion is distinct and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the preaching of Christ. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it oftener happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls. We ought to thunder out the threatenings of God, but they must never be the main topic. Judge not any man's ministry. The world has too often condemned the man whom God intended to honour. Say not of such an one "He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude." Say not of another that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high. Every man in his own order. If that man preach Christ, whether he be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, God will bless the Christ he preaches, and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Preaching Christ:—Little beginnings have large endings. A man drops a small seed upon the earth, and it starts up and expands into a tree of a thousand arms. The slender rill that leaps from a rock presently increases to a stream, and the stream swells into a river, and the river, gathering as it rolls, becomes the arm of the sea; and then there is a mingling, a sweeping, and a spreading of the waters through the circuit of the broad ocean. And so of the rise and progress of the religion of Jesus. At first there was the utterance of a single voice in the solitudes of the wilderness, and next was the testimony of the Son of God to Himself in the village and in the city; forthwith was the gathering of the twelve, and a declaration from these of the gospel to the surrounding nations. Then arose from the apostles the great company of preachers multiplying and widening their circles of influence abroad the earth unto this present, and looking forward we anticipate the time when the whole world, now lying in darkness, shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the channels of the sea. Yes, whatever is or shall be, the aspect of the globe in the light and beauty of holiness cometh under God of preaching. This is the great lever, which by little and little is lifting the wide universe out of the bondage of ignorance and superstition. It was this which overturned the Mosaical economy, which struck to their centre and shivered the idols of the heathen, which enkindled a light, that the power of the most numerous and mighty of adversaries could not put out, which snatched from the grasp of Satan, which drew as brands from the burning, thousands of souls now ministering before the throne of the Lamb.

I. OUR OBLIGATIONS TO PREACH JESUS CHRIST. It is the solemn object of our ordination, and we should be recreants from our vows, apostate from the articles of our faith, and traitors to the cause we professedly espouse, were we to gainsay the appeal that presses. To teach and preach Jesus is the great business of our days; whatever be the varieties of our talents, if the lines converge not to this centre our talents are abused; whatever be the plenitude of our strength, if it be not consecrated to this, our strength is worse than unprofitable. Our lamp must burn at the altar, our sinews must bear the cross. Our obligations to preach Jesus Christ rest upon the conviction—1. That sinners have need of Him. In their natural estate they are—(1) Blind. (*a*) In their ignorance of the true God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath

sent. (*b*) To the interests of their souls, preferring the evil and rejecting the good, and turning their back to the only light which shines from to lead their steps to heaven. (2) Poor. (*a*) As despoiled of the privileges and honours of a happier estate. (*b*) As defrauded by an enemy of the birthright of the sons of God. (*c*) As cast from the affluence of the garden into the necessities of the wilderness. (*d*) As the heirs of bodily sorrows, and as the victims of an inwardly consuming anguish because of guilt and the judgment. (*e*) As the slaves of sin and the subjects to death, temporally and eternally. (3) Naked. (*a*) As possessing no garment in their own righteousness, nor in that of others, wherewith they might stand clothed in the sight of God. (*b*) As wanting that white raiment which alone Christ can put on. 2. That in all the multifarious wants of man, Christ is the One, the near, the all-sufficient, the ever-living, the inexhaustible supply. The poor wandering and fainting flock lacks a shepherd to guide and cherish—Christ is the true Shepherd. The plague-stricken lack the hand of the physician to bind up and heal—Christ is the wise Physician. The deceived, the forsaken, and the abandoned lack the faithful adviser, the able defender, the counsellor for good—Christ is the unchangeable Friend, and the mighty Advocate, and the Prince of Peace. 3. That without Him everything is nothing, whilst with Him and in Him there is abundantly more than we can either ask or think to satisfy and enrich here, and to bless everlastingly. II. WHAT IT IS TO PREACH JESUS CHRIST. 1. In substance. Let us analyse the title—(1) Jesus—a name synonymous with Joshua, and meaning a deliverer—a deliverer from the bondage of sin; from the tyranny of Satan; from sin as a ruling principle and as a destroying violence; from the fears of the valley of the shadow of death and from the terrors of the deeper darkness beyond! A deliverer from these evils, and by what means? At what cost? By the offering up of Himself, the just for the unjust, by the shedding of His blood as the Lamb of atonement for the sins of the world. (2) Christ, *i.e.*, the anointed. The anointed, the consecrated, through the Spirit. Do you acknowledge Christ in the separate glories of His offices as having in each the seal and testimony of the Spirit? 2. The manner should be characterised with a spirit of simplicity, decision, faithfulness, affection, and the devotion of a holy zeal. The man should be forgotten in his message, the wise, after the rudiments of this world, should be hidden to himself and others in the office of the minister of Christ. III. THE POSTURE IN WHICH YOU SHOULD HEAR CHRIST PREACHED. 1. As fully sensible of the value of the privilege of hearing. What gem had not David plucked from his royal crown for one of the opportunities with which you are blessed? How lavish had priests been of their distinctions and prophets of their gifts in exchange for one hour of your sabbaths. And oh, the treasures expended and the blood shed for your present liberty. 2. As men personally concerned and addressed in every appeal and invitation and reproof, in every promise and curse. You should bring the application home, not fancying how well the preacher's word affixes to some one else. 3. With humility, keeping self in subjection, schooling down your natural arrogancy into the dependence and simple credence of the little child. 4. With watchfulness against the sins and temptations that are most prevailing; and with prayer to the Holy Spirit of God that He may impress, and sanctify, and guide you into all truth. 5. With faith receiving the mysteries of Christ as mysteries—as those deeper things of God, whose reception is for an exercise of faith here, and whose solution and discovery shall be amongst the felicities of eternity. (*T. J. Judkin.*) *The right kind of preaching*:—A sermon devoted to metaphysics is a stack of dry corn-stalks, after the corn has been ripped out with the husking-peg. A sermon given up to sentimental and flowery speech is as a nosegay flung to a drowning sailor. A sermon devoted to moral essay is a basket of chips to help on the great burning. What the world wants now is to be told in the most flat-footed way of Jesus Christ who comes to save men from eternal damnation.

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1–7. **And in those days . . . there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.**—*Trouble the lot of the Church*:—The Church on earth has always trouble; if it is not persecuted from without, disorders arise from within which is still more dangerous. (*Starke.*) *The poor the treasures of the Church*:—

1. They stir up its spiritual gifts. 2. They exercise its brotherly love. 3. They are its ornament before the world. 4. They bear interest to it in eternity. When Laurentius the martyr was commanded by the Roman governor to bring out the treasures of the Church, he led forth the poor of the congregation. (*K. Gerok.*) *The ancient bond between poverty and Christianity a blessing to both*:—I. To POVERTY. Only in Christianity, in the kingdom of Him who became poor that we might become rich—1. Is the Divine right of the poor recognised. 2. Has the Holy Ghost awakened a genuine care of the poor. II. To CHRISTIANITY. In the care of the poor. 1. It has from the beginning developed its most Divine powers—love, compassion, patience, self-denial, contempt of death, and trust in God. 2. It has proved before the world its right of existence in the world. (*Ibid.*) *Dissatisfaction in the primitive Church*:—There never has been a perfect Church, and never will be this side the Lord's coming. There is much here which has been reproduced in modern times. Consider—I. THE OCCASION AND CHARACTER OF THIS DISSENSION. The local association of believers was composed of men separated by various nationalities and degrees of culture. There was much freedom and simplicity, for under the influence of a first creative enthusiasm the need of order and discipline had hardly become apparent. Whenever that declined, dissension was inevitable. Christianised human nature is long before it shakes itself free from petty ambitions and other ignoble sentiments. That the outbreak came soon need awaken no surprise. Men need to be trained for a life of free self-government. The causes were here ready to manifest themselves whenever the occasion presented itself. There were two chief parties—Jews, born in Palestine, of narrow views and restricted sympathies; and Jews or proselytes born in other lands, who had been affected by the refinement, art, poetry, and beauty of Greek culture, and who spoke the Greek language. These differences were sure to provoke collision. But the predominating influence was Jewish, and the Jewish officers were blamed by the Grecian portion of the community for neglecting Grecian widows in the daily administration. A small thing suffices for a great disturbance when latent differences already exist. Sectarianisms and divisions of Churches have often arisen from matters of the smallest importance. Watch the beginnings. Church dissensions are created by wrong feelings much more than by the maintenance of great principles and sacred interests. But few will bear looking at from the Saviour's Cross or in the light of the Saviour's throne. II. THE EXPEDIENT RESORTED TO. 1. This was a new stage in the development of a complete Church life. What was demonstrably lacking was supplied. The Lord did not furnish His Church with an apparatus of government already complete. But He gave His Holy Spirit by whom it was to be guided according to the emergencies and needs of the times. 2. Here is a plain manifestation of apostolic initiation and of Church co-operation. The apostles proposed a plan which the members freely accepted, a procedure natural, seemly, orderly, and most efficient. This may be regarded as the charter of Church rights. The apostles consulted the laity to ascertain their opinions and desires. At the same time there is nothing of lawlessness here. Power was not wholly in their hands. The apostles actually appointed and ordained the seven Hellenists whom the people selected. The principle is of the first importance, for it is exactly what we know as constitutional government. 3. Here is the principle of division of labour, as essential to Church efficiency. As those already engaged in the daily administration were not equal to all the work, others were associated with them. It was enough for apostles to do their proper work in founding churches, preaching the Word, praying, seeking the supply of the Spirit, exercising spiritual and miraculous gifts, leading the Church in the ways of the Lord. Other men could and must do what was merely secondary and secular. In free Christian society the specialty of each is needed and is to be employed. There is room for all who have a mind to work; but none for idlers. Division of labour in this case prevented schism. A Church active and consecrated will keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. 4. What a solemnity was attached to even the meanest work for the Lord in His Church! The deacons are presented to the apostles, who pray for them, and lay their hands on their heads, setting them apart to such duties. Prayer sanctifies all Christian endeavour. Work for Christ is never to be thought of in a mean spirit. It should be associated with what is best and highest in Christian life, and be done ever "as under the great Taskmaster's eye." (*W. H. Davison.*) *Hellenist and Hebrew*:—From the first the Church had held within its bosom two opposed tendencies. So long as its numbers were not too large, and its enthusiasm had not spent itself, this underlying division created no difficulty. A moment, however, was reached when the jealousy

of Hellenist and Hebrew began to give promise of that deep schism which ended only by the extinction of one of the divisions (the Hebrew) altogether. I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HELLENIST AND HEBREW. Its origin goes back to the captivity. Previously to this the Jews had dwelt as far as possible alone, but through that catastrophe they were scattered through all the huge empire which stretched from India to the Ægean. The numbers that returned under Zerubbabel, and again under Ezra, fell far short of the number of the dispersed; and it was impossible but that prolonged contact with pagan nations should greatly modify their customs and modes of thought. Especially was this the case during and after the wars of Alexander. A new spirit of commercial enterprise awoke within them as a new world opened to their wandering feet, and the ancestral faculty for acquiring wealth which their Palestine life had crushed, developed itself. While the home Jews recoiling from defiling contact with foreigners grew prouder and more narrow, their foreign brethren took on a strong tinge of Greek culture, and the spirit of secular gain broke down the feeling of separatism which had been the very kernel of ancient Judaism. All this tended to modify their religion, and for the better. Cut off from the temple ritual, they carried with them neither priest nor sacrifice; they carried only the Septuagint and the synagogue. What they retained was just what was portable, and what was most portable was most spiritual. When at last Christianity arose it found everywhere in the synagogues its first base of operations. It was from Hellenised Jews that Christianity obtained its first and best missionaries, and it is to them we owe it that the Church grew out of all risk of continuing a Judean sect and became the religion of civilised mankind. II. THE MURMURING OF THE HELLENISTS AGAINST THE HEBREWS. Being men of higher average intelligence and energy than the villagers of Judea or the small traders of the capital, the former were not likely to acquiesce silently in any neglect on the part of the other. There was always a tendency amongst the Palestine Jews to pride themselves on retaining the purest type of orthodoxy, and to suspect as well as dislike their countrymen who had taken on Greek manners. On the other hand, it came very naturally to the foreign Jew to look down on stay-at-home and old-fashioned Hebrews as bigoted and ignorant. A grave danger threatened the young Church if her members imported into her communion such mutual jealousies as these; and the slight "murmuring" about the widows' rations meant nothing less. III. How THE MURMURING WAS ALLAYED. The apostles took alarm, for the murmurs reflected on them. The work had evidently grown beyond their power of personal supervision, and now that one side of the Church grumbled about an unfairness some new arrangement was clearly called for. Even the apostles were no autocrats; the Church was an oligarchy which rested on a democratic basis. The supreme legislative power was felt to reside in the "crowd of disciples." What the apostles did at first was to initiate measures, and at the last to confirm appointments. But the adoption of the measure and the election of the officers were the work of "the whole multitude." This act—1. Established certain principles—the right of the Church to transact under Christ its own business; the ministerial, not lordly character of even its highest offices; the subordination of all material interests to its spiritual work; and the ultimate seat of Church authority in the whole body of believers. Any Church system whose arrangements flatly contravene these principles must be held to have departed from primitive order. 2. Began the severance between the spiritual and temporal work of the Church. It became impossible to combine the serving of tables with the ministry of the Word. A division of labour was called for, and the apostles could not hesitate which side of their double office they should abandon. To bear witness to the saving work of Christ is not a secondary function of the Church, but its one task for which all other things must minister. The Church, however, declined to treat even its secular work as wholly unspiritual, and lifted it out of the atmosphere of mere business into that of worship. The candidates are to be full of the Holy Ghost as well as wisdom, and are set apart with solemn services. The only two among them of whom we know anything are known for the zeal and success with which they preached Christ. Stephen and Philip were a good deal more than almoners. IV. WITH THE ORDINATION OF THESE SEVEN MEN A NEW PAGE OF CHURCH HISTORY OPENED. 1. It marked a stage in the Church's progress towards separate existence. 2. It was the first step towards permanence. The apostles cannot live for ever; but if the new society has the power, under Christ, of founding new orders of office bearers, then it carries within itself the conditions of self-preservation and self-adaptation to changed times and perpetual progress. 3. It brought a new element to the front. The seven bear

Greek names, which affords a presumption that they belonged to that section of the Church whose complaints had led to the election. The result, therefore, was this, that, through the murmurs of a few widows, those members of the Church were lifted into office who represented its most free, spiritual, un-Hebrew, and catholic elements. One man especially was thrust forward who was destined to rouse the narrow and ultra-national party of the Pharisees to persecution, as Peter had already roused the Sadducees, and whose death was to be a signal for the scattering of the Church. It was even to lead to the conversion of another man who should one day become an apostle himself and vindicate as an inheritance for Christendom that larger and more spiritual view of Christianity of which Stephen was the first exponent. V. THE STORY REBUKES OUR SHORT-SIGHTED ALARMS AT THE SMALL DISSENSIONS AND APPARENT DISASTERS OF THE HOUR. We see the divided congregation; we hear its murmuring voices, but we forget to see the hand which guides the Church's destinies, and causes all things to work together for its good. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *The first disunion in the Church*:—I. ITS OCCASION. II. ITS ADJUSTMENT. III. ITS BLESSING. (*Langbein.*) *A picture of early Church life*:—I. THE MURMURING IN THE CHURCH. 1. When it arose. With multiplying numbers, new dangers arose. It was more difficult to keep the unity for which the believers had been distinguished. Many a Church that has withstood adversity has been wrecked by prosperity. 2. How it arose. By the jealousy of the Grecians. If that was not stopped, there was a great disaster before the Church. How it came about that the Grecian widows were neglected, the record does not say. It may have been unintentional oversight, or the result of a feeling against the Greeks as being foreigners. It is worthy of note that the first two dangers to the early Church, hypocrisy and schism, arose from the distribution of its charities. II. THE HARMONY OF THE CHURCH. How was it restored? By the prompt, wise, and magnanimous action of the apostles. They did not wait for the "murmuring" to become a pronounced disaffection. They did not rebuke the murmurers, nor try to justify themselves. They simply asked that the work might be put in the hands of others who could properly attend to it. 1. They made a protest against doing the work at all. They were chosen of Christ to be His witnesses—not to dole out alms. The lower work was encroaching upon the higher. They were liable to be so much engaged in caring for the bodies that they could do nothing for the souls of men. 2. They showed to whom the work should be committed. They directed the disciples to look out seven men among them. (1) "Of good report"—so that, to begin with, they would receive the approval of every one. The apostles went upon the principle of never putting a doubtful man into an important office. (2) "Full of the Spirit"—so that their godliness might be apparent. Men full of the Spirit would not be likely to do injustice through partiality—or become defaulters. (3) "And of wisdom"—so that the funds would be wisely disbursed. The Church that has a charity fund has to look out that pauperism is not encouraged, that dead-beats are not supported, and that the really needy are generously cared for. 3. They declared what their own work should be. The world was famishing for the gospel more than the disciples for bread. Others could give the bread, but the apostles were chosen especially to give the gospel. First they would get from God, and then they would give to men. There is no giving without first getting. No water can be poured from an unfilled pitcher. III. THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH. 1. The choice of the seven. The seven were chosen in accordance with the recommendation of the apostles. Their Greek names show how generously the Church acted in giving "the daily ministration" largely into the hands of the element from which the murmurs had arisen. That made it impossible for Grecian Jews any longer to complain. The suggestion of the apostles "pleased the whole multitude"; for they saw that it not only would do away with dissensions, but would result in the greater efficiency of the apostles. The seven finally were inducted into office with as much solemnity as though they were to preach the Word instead of to serve tables! In those days no work for Christ, it would seem, was unworthy of a consecration. 2. The increase of the disciples. That, naturally, was the result of the increase of power resulting from the new state of things. The Church was a greater power, because in it there no longer was any division. The apostles were a greater power; for now there was no obstacle to giving their whole strength to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Notable among the accessions was the great company of priests that became "obedient to the faith." The new faith demanded of them so much that in their case obedience meant a great deal more than with others. IV. THE WITNESS FOR THE CHURCH. Among the chosen seven there was one especially prominent from the first, Stephen. Observe

that he was a witness for the Church—1. In his endowments. He was "full of faith and the Holy Spirit"—"full of grace and power." The mere fact that a man is so endowed is a great testimony for the Church. 2. In the exhibitions of his power. He "wrought great wonders and signs among the people." He showed apostolic power, though he was not an apostle. The layman may be as full of the Holy Spirit and of the power of the Spirit as the minister. 3. In his encounters with adversaries. "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." They were cunning, but he was wise. They were learned, but he was inspired. 4. In his appearance before the council. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *On deacons:*—I. THE ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE. 1. We are introduced to a class of people here called Grecians, who were proselytes to the Jewish worship, and Jews born and bred in foreign countries, whose language was Greek. In Acts ii. a long catalogue is given us of the countries from which they came. The home Jews, or Hebrews, looked down upon their foreign brethren as having contracted contamination by their long contact with the heathen. As a natural result, considerable jealousy sprang up between them. The Church did not create the division; on the contrary, its direct influence was to merge the two factions into one—they were all of "one accord." But in process of time the old spirit of rivalry manifested itself. The world often taunts the Church with having within its fold contentious and hypocritical people. But where have they come from? The Church has black sheep; but they were black when they first came in from the world, and remain black in spite of the cleansing influences around them. 2. The Grecians murmured. There was no open hostility, or any unseemly ebullition of temper. You place a shell by your ear, and hear the subdued murmur of the air as it winds its way through the intricate convolutions. That is the comparison of St. Luke—there was a low, half-articulate mutter. This disposition to grumble formed the gravest danger the Church had yet had to encounter. The earth is exposed to two perils—from storms without, and volcanic fires within. Of the two, the last is the most dangerous. Let the winds beat as they will, the earth continues firm. But when the internal fires burst forth, the earth quakes to its foundations. In like manner the Church is exposed to persecution in the world. This has attacked the Church repeatedly; but it did not fall, because it was founded upon a rock. But the gravest danger arises from within—the spirit of discontent in the members. 3. The Grecians "murmured because their widows were neglected." It appears that only the "widows" received charitable relief, and of course those who were disabled by age or decrepitude. Men able to earn a living doubtless had to go and work. Who were the almoners? The text seems to hint that the apostles had partly delegated their power to certain members of the Hebrew party. The "widows" were overlooked probably by accident, arising from defective organisation. But the Grecians insisted that there was a set purpose in it, and inquired for sinister motives, and, as is always the case, found them! Jealousy always distorts facts to suit its own morbid fancies. 4. The murmurings of the Grecians induced the apostles to "call the multitude of the disciples unto them," in order to confer together. The Jewish Church was constituted on mechanical principles. God Himself elected His own officers, and the nation was expected loyally to submit. But the Christian Church is a living organism; its functionaries are therefore dependent on the vote of the members. Governments are of two kinds—the parental and representative. The government of the Jewish Church was on the parental principle, the members being, in the language of the apostle, under age. But the government of the Christian Church is representative; it is self-government—its members having attained their majority. And in calling "the multitude of the disciples unto them," the apostles acknowledged the principle of manhood suffrage. But we must not forget the promise that the "Spirit of Truth" should guide the Church into all the truth of government not less than the truth of doctrine. This promise holds good for us as for the age of the apostles. No doubt precedent has its value, and no conscientious Christian will speak lightly of the past history of the Church. But if webs be woven of it to tie the hands and bind the feet of the Church now living, we make of it a bad and unjustifiable use. The Church of to-day is as free as the Church of the first century, and is in as close communion with its Head as ever it was. But there is a distinction between the scripturalness of a doctrine or usage and the ecclesiasticalness thereof. What is taught by the apostles is not subject to alteration or capable of improvement. What St. Paul taught the Corinthian Church I accept without cavil or objection; but what the Corinthian Church practised I feel at liberty to adopt or

reject. 5. Having summoned the "multitude of the disciples together," the apostles proposed "they should choose from among themselves seven men of honest report" to supervise the distribution, which instantly quelled the discontent. In ver. 1 they murmur; in ver. 5 they are pleased. Were many in the place of the apostles they would have stood upon their dignity, and ignored the complaint; and the low "murmuring" of ver. 1 would have grown into loud and fierce denunciation in ver. 5. But kindness, straightforwardness, and discretion at once surmounted the difficulty. Evil had always better be grappled with in its incipient stage. A small injustice is more easily remedied than a great one, and the facility makes the duty more imperative. Thus we are taught that the Church is a growth. It was not launched upon society with all its organisation perfected. Herein again it contrasts strikingly with Judaism. Moses was commanded "to do everything according to the pattern shown him in the mount"—by Divine revelation. The people had to originate nothing—they had to receive everything. But the Christian Church is a living organism—it gradually unfolds from within. It began on the day of Pentecost without any regulations or offices except the apostolate. It was simply a germ, but a germ which had within it the "power of endless life." By degrees the germ grew and threw out new offices, just as the tree shoots out new branches. Its functions are the healthy outgrowth of its life. The diaconate is instituted when the temporal requirements of the Church urgently demand it, and not a day before. It is, therefore, idle to endeavour to give the Church a rigid, cast-iron shape for all countries and ages. The exigencies of time and place are to determine its outward form. II. THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE. 1. The "seven men" were elected to "serve." The noun "deacon" is not used, but the corresponding verb is—"they diaconised." Is there not a quiet hint to their successors to be more covetous of discharging the duties than of wearing the name? In the Acts we find only the verb; in the Epistles we find the noun. Here we perceive the fundamental law of language and of life; for language and life are at bottom one—first get the thing, next get the name. The probability is that these men were not officially styled "deacons"—they were simply known as the "seven." Gradually, however, the Church felt a need for an official title, and from the verb it developed the noun. Living in an age noted for its appearances, we go about in the first place to invent names, and care but little about things. All our goods are electro-plate. But the primitive Church was living face to face with stern realities. If it could procure the thing, it let the name take care of itself. A deacon is one who ministers or serves. The same words are used to describe the work of deacons as that of apostles, the object only being different. In each case it was "serving," "ministering." A deacon etymologically means one who waits at table, who runs to do service. The very word signifies that diaconal work should be characterised by docility and alacrity. People of imperious temperament are scarcely fit to act as servers of the Church; instead of running themselves, their disposition is to bid others run. 2. They were elected to "serve tables," to attend to the temporalities of the Church. It was not, however, absolutely necessary that they should confine themselves to this; hard and fast lines are not known in the kingdom of God. Their chief duty is to manage the finances of the kingdom; but, that done, they may extend the sphere of their usefulness. The public mind is confused upon this subject. Preachers are supposed to have no right to meddle with the service of tables; the right they indisputably have, but the expediency may be questioned, except in very rare cases. On the other hand, deacons are supposed to be guilty of presumption when they preach. But they are guilty of nothing of the kind; for Stephen and Philip "preach the Word" with irresistible power and success. Everywhere in the Apostolic Church are traceable the liberty and elasticity of life. "The tools to him who can use them." 3. The deacons are to "serve the tables" of the ministers. We may rest assured that, whilst waiting on the tables of others, they did not leave the apostles' table empty. One important object was to relieve the preachers of anxiety and distraction in their own peculiar work. 4. They are to "serve the tables" of the poor. This was about the most impoverished period in Jewish history. Mendicants everywhere flocked the highways. "The poor ye have always with you." Many of them joined the Church, and the exceptional poverty called forth exceptional liberality. Many, "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." At their feet. Money should always be kept at people's feet. Many keep it in their safes, and, alas! many in their hearts. In this institution we discover the first germ of the philanthropic efforts of modern civilisation. Judaism doubtless stood alone among ancient

religions for the humane feeling pervading it. Nevertheless, its highest result was negative—not to oppress or defraud. Being the first stage of religious culture, Judaism consisted in not doing evil rather than in doing good. The Old Testament dealt in prohibitions rather than in positive injunctions. But the gospel bids you do something. Christ went about doing good. In the text a committee of seven is organised to supervise the distribution of the doles. Occasional outbursts of benevolent impulses were witnessed in previous ages and other countries; now for the first time was a deliberate effort made to reduce impulse into system, and benevolence into an organisation. The "seven men of honest report" constituted, I believe, the first "board of guardians" in the world. Modern civilisation is replete with "boards"—Poor Law Boards, School Boards, Boards of Guardians, and Boards of Health. But they are all natural developments of the board or "table" of which the text speaks, to "serve tables" being precisely the same as to serve boards. In the Gospels we witness the conception, in the Acts the birth of philanthropy. III. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE. 1. Integrity. "Honest report" —men of uprightness and straightforwardness. The funds being entrusted to their care, it is of prime importance that they be men above suspicion. Judas once "kept the bag"; but he was a thief. It is therefore of great consequence that men of strict integrity be put into this office. 2. Piety. "Full of the Holy Ghost." The judicious management of money requires the special aid of God's Spirit. Pecuniary interests occupy the middle ground, and are peculiarly liable to corruption. It is popularly imagined that, if a man is "full of the Holy Ghost," he cannot attend to temporal duties; that he is only fit to sing and pray. But it strikes me you do not want a very great deal of the Spirit to do that; but you want a great deal of Him to give and collect money. Show me a Church's collection books, and I can estimate pretty nearly how much of the Holy Ghost that Church has. A Church of one hundred members giving fifty pounds a year towards the support of the gospel at home and its propagation in foreign parts, has not much of the Spirit. Wolff elaborated a system to reduce all truths of philosophy into truths of mathematics; and, if I had the leisure, I could invent a system to reduce the truths of theology into truths of arithmetic. A man says, "I have faith." "Show me thy works," urges James; the works are the measure of the faith. You say, "We have had a powerful revival." I answer, "Show me your collection-books." A small collection means baptism by sprinkling; a large collection—well, baptism by immersion. 3. Wisdom. That a man is honest and pious is not enough. Without wisdom his administration will do incalculably more harm than good. Wisdom is a right application of knowledge (*gnosis*). But this implies two things. First, that he possess the knowledge to be applied. A deacon should be "mighty in the Scriptures." Ignorance should never hold office in the Church. God does not need our knowledge to carry on His kingdom; but He can do without our ignorance. Second, that he possess tact to apply his knowledge in the pursuit of his official duties. Men require to be managed with great delicacy and discernment. They are very sensitive instruments to play upon; a rude touch may snap the strings, and in vain you afterwards endeavour to get them to "discourse sweet melody." You have heard of Phæton, the son of Sol; he was desirous of driving the chariot of the sky. Many persuaded him against the attempt, as he had not the necessary practice to guide with a steady hand its fiery steeds. But he insisted on driving; and he broke his own neck and sent horses and chariot spinning through infinite space. His intentions were good, but his skill was defective. And we have known men taking into their hands the reins of Church government—upright, pious men enough, no doubt; but for lack of tact they drew upon themselves no end of personal discomfort, drove the Church over the precipice, and plunged it into inextricable confusion. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The election of deacons*:—There is nothing concealed in the action of the New Testament Church. The case of Judas is not covered up nor made the least of. Ananias and Sapphira are not names withdrawn because of the lies they told. And the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews is not passed over without reference. The Church is not a secret institution, and was never meant to be a concealed force in society. Christianity abhors all official secrecy. It is a religion which lives in the daylight. Its registers are not hidden away in iron safes; its writing is written as with a pencil of the sun. Who would publish an expurgated edition of the Bible! We undertake to adapt our poets to modern tastes and readers. It is refreshing to belong to a Church that is so open and fearless. I. How WAS THIS DIFFICULTY OF THE EARLY CHURCH ADJUSTED? 1. To-day it would surely terminate

in many instances with a secession; but the spirit that guided the Church aright was the spirit of love. There can be no permanent difficulties where this is supreme. If a Church is only a religious debating society, then we shall determine many issues merely by numbers. 2. The apostles argue the question out, from the standpoint of a clear conception of apostolic work. Your first conception will generally determine the whole course of your argument. Starting with a noble conception, a man will naturally fall into a noble course, and reach a useful conclusion. The apostles magnified their office. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." And the apostles could pray! Just lately, in this very story, we heard them pray, and the place where they were assembled was shaken! And the apostles could also preach. They divided their hearers into two classes—friends and enemies. The mere critic could not play his little game at pedantry under the apostolic sermon. It was one of two things—repentance, surrender, crying to Heaven for pardon, or gnashing of teeth, and malignant hatred, the very fire of hell! 3. The apostles, conceiving their work to be of this high and supreme kind, were rather anxious than otherwise to escape the daily ministration of the tables, and gladly seized the opportunity of leaving this necessary routine to others who were ready to undertake it. This supreme conception of apostolic service was itself ennobled by the trust which the apostles reposed in the people. Christianity is the people's religion pre-eminently. There are those in the ministry of Christ who can testify that they owe all their comfort, prosperity, and influence to their trust in the people. The apostles did not select certain notables; but having to deal with a people's question, they consulted the people's instinct, and therein they have set an example to all Christian associations. 4. Whilst this was the case at the outset, it was impossible that the whole Church could constitute a committee of action, therefore the apostles said, "Look ye out seven men," who shall really be yourselves condensed. Such men as shall themselves be equal to the whole multitude. Large-minded, generous men, who can see every aspect of a case, and deal with noble wisdom with the practical difficulties of life. The qualifications of the seven are plainly stated. They were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." There are no merely secular duties in the Church. Church matters are not merely matters of political system. There is nothing done in Christ's Church—whether the opening of a door, the lighting of a lamp, or the preaching of the everlasting gospel—that is not to be done under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. A door may be so opened as to affront the Spirit of God; a visitor may be so shown to a seat as to manifest a truly Christian spirit on the part of the indicator. There is no part of our work in any section that is not holy unto the Lord. The ministry is one. I have no doubt that the men chosen in this text were better able to serve tables than the apostles. We have not all the same gifts. We must rid ourselves of the mischievous sophism which teaches us that some kinds of service are menial. There is no menial service in the Church, unless you make it menial by an unworthy spirit. 5. Looked at as a piece of Church statesmanship, can you suggest a single amendment to this policy? Do not the apostles vindicate their apostleship by their noble wisdom and practical sagacity? It is not every man in the apostleship who could have settled a case so. The ancient proverb tells us that "every fool will be meddling." The reason why some ministers are uncomfortable and unsettled is that they will meddle with things that they really cannot arrange. Impose a duty upon a friend, and show by your manner of doing it that you mean him to reveal his best quality. When this spirit seizes us, all distribution of labour will not be a division of front, but will rather show that the front is more united because the labour is wisely divided. Jealousy kills us all to-day. II. WHAT WAS THE EFFECT? 1. The Word of God increased (ver. 7). A united Church means a world impressed by the noble scene. The Church of Christ is not united to-day. The noble purpose of Christ is marred by certain geographical distinctions and ecclesiastical arrangements, in the making of which Providence had neither part nor lot. The Church must be united before the world will be redeemed. Hence Christ's great prayer, "May they all be one, that the world may believe." We want the apostle now who can bring men together, who can magnify points of union, who can show that the Church, though divided on many minor points, ought to realise its vital union, magnify and display it, and thus Christ's soul would be satisfied. 2. Stephen was brought out (ver. 8). They made him a minister of tables, and he became the first martyr. Stephen was developed by circumstances. Being put into this office, he developed his true quality of mind and heart. There are those

who cannot be kept in obscurity, and who cannot be limited to merely technical publicity. What if this man had been unintentionally neglected? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The first election of deacons:*—I. THE REASON OF THEIR ELECTION. 1. The temporal necessities of the poor members of the Church. "Widows" are especially mentioned, in all communities the most deserving of aid. The Bible, therefore, particularly commends them to the compassion of the benevolent. "Pure religion and undefiled," &c. It is the duty of the Church to attend to the temporal as well as the spiritual necessities of its members. In this Christ has left us an example. The gospel is more a record of His beneficent acts than of His doctrinal ideas. 2. The absorbing work of the gospel ministry. This the twelve referred to as a reason. The deacons were elected not to rule, as some arrogant modern deacons fancy, but to relieve the preachers; so that, undistracted, they might give themselves wholly to their proper work. II. THE METHOD OF THEIR ELECTION. 1. The Church had its part—to look out the seven most suitable men, a work requiring inquiry, good judgment, and responsibility. 2. The apostles had their part. (1) They originated the election. The suggestion for new officers came from them, not from the members; and they, not the members, called the Church together for the purpose. (2) They directed the election, describing the character of the men to be elected. (3) They confirmed the election. The men the Church elected were set before the apostles for ordination. Had they not, however, been up to the standard, the apostles had assuredly the right of rejection. III. THE QUALIFICATION FOR THEIR ELECTION. 1. Unblemished reputation. 2. Eminent godliness. 3. Practical sagacity. IV. THE RESULT OF THE ELECTION (ver. 7). The election operated—1. By quelling the spirit of contention, which would obstruct the advancement of the Church. 2. By the augmented agency of the Church. Seven noble men set to work. 3. By enabling the apostles to give themselves entirely to the preaching of the gospel. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The first deacons chosen:*—In the beginning of the preceding chapter, we had a sad account of an act of fraud and falsehood on the part of some that contributed to this common fund among the disciples in Jerusalem; and now we have an account of the murmuring of some of those who received it. The first was the offspring of great depravity; this is the result of human imperfections. The one was met by a very strong measure; this is met by conference, by advice, by calling into exercise the principles of common sense and the feelings of their common Christianity. I. THE NARRATIVE. Notice—1. The increase of the disciples. In spite of the persecution which the Church was continually meeting with, we have continual statements of its prosperity and increase. I have no doubt that by this time the number of Christians in Jerusalem was ten thousand. 2. When you think about these ten thousand people, you see at once that this common fund cannot mean that all these people had given up all their property, and that there was a distribution made to every one of this whole multitude. What! had they given up their trades? had they left their workshops, their farms, and merchandise? No; they were going on, I suppose, fulfilling their daily duties. Then did they bring all their wages and profits, throwing all this into a common fund, and taking back every day what was required, more or less according to their circumstances? You cannot suppose any such thing. Why, if they were to call the whole ten thousand together every morning, and give them only a shilling each, there would be five hundred pounds wanted every day. We must look at this fund as just a provision for those who were in necessitous circumstances. 3. Now things went on for some time, till at last "there arose a murmuring," a dissatisfaction. Some began to feel that there was not proper attention paid them, and it reached the ears of the apostles, who proceed to make the arrangement here mentioned. You will see at a glance that previous to this somebody must have done this work. The thing had been done before. In chap. ii. 44, 45, it is said, "All that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need"—*i.e.*, each one at first distributed his own benevolence. The advance upon that you have at the end of the fourth chapter. The first rude idea was for every man to act for himself, and come with his hands full and his heart full, and just dispense according to the impulse of his feeling; and the first modification of that was, for all to bring what they had to give, and lay it down at the apostles' feet, and so there would be something like regularity in the distribution, and investigation, and examination of the particular case and circumstances; whereas in the other way it could not be done, and one might be receiving from many. And that goes on, the apostles (I suppose) trying to do it. But not,

I apprehend, without assistance from the hundred and twenty, who would probably all be Hebrews. But here were the Grecians; and there might be a feeling rising up, with no foundation, that there was a neglect of their widows in the daily ministration. So difficult it is, you see, even under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and with the first love and strong affection of the early Christians, to get rid of all those party prejudices and suspicions which rise up in society and array class against class. But the murmuring comes to the ears of the apostles, and something must be done to meet it. 4. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them." Does that mean the whole ten thousand? Supposing there were not ten thousand? Could five thousand men transact business? Any of you that know anything about business, know how difficult it is to get anything done even in a large committee. In order to get through business, you must have a few heads, with strong hearts and hands connected with them, that will really do something. I cannot, therefore, feel myself warranted in stating that this is really to be taken positively and literally. I do not know where they would meet in Jerusalem—so many of them. I know that, afterwards, when Peter was in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church," meeting in a private house—in the house of the mother of John Mark; and I dare say there were little knots of such all over the city. I think, in this case, the principal part of those they would call together would be Grecians—the principal persons of that party—and it would be a full meeting, and open for any to attend who felt interested in the matter; but we cannot suppose that there was the whole, or anything like the whole, of the mass of Christians in Jerusalem. When they were come together, the apostles said, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables," which may mean, "The thing does not work well, does not give universal satisfaction; we are doing the best we can, but it is not reasonable that we should be exclusively devoted to this thing; we have had our heads and our hearts full of anxiety about this matter, and we find it is not reasonable that we should 'serve tables,' for we feel that in doing so we must 'leave the Word of God,' and we must not do that; and therefore, as we have already made one departure from the first rude idea to a better, we must try now to get a best, and we propose now that seven men be looked out for this duty." 5. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen," &c. It is remarkable that all these names are Greek; and this was probably done to satisfy the Grecians. Or if, in "the multitude of the disciples," there were included some of the principal persons among the Hebrews, then this marks also the kindly and liberal feeling among them, arranging that from that party and that class that complains, every individual of the seven was chosen. "Whom they set before the apostles." We do not know how they chose them. There was some meeting of the brethren—the more distinguished and influential, I think; and these individuals were fixed upon, and they were presented to the apostles. 6. "And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." I think this was just the solemn and public representation before the eyes of the people that they parted with so much of that power which they had hitherto exercised in relation to this business, and that henceforth these men were to be held responsible for the exercise of it. 7. There was peace restored to the Church; no longer divisions, or heart-burnings, or jealousies; and then, as the result, one might think, we immediately read again that "the number of the disciples multiplied greatly." Just as you find in the beginning of the fifth chapter, that when purity was restored, then as the result there was a great increase of the Church, so now peace and purity are favourable to all those affections and feelings and activities by which an increase of the body may be expected. The Word of God increased and prevailed in two ways. (1) With respect to the number of the disciples. (2) With respect to a particular class of persons; so that some of the most unlikely men, "a great company of the priests, were obedient to the faith." Some people can hardly believe this; but "why should it be thought a thing incredible with us," that in those days of miracle and the pouring down of the Divine Spirit, there should be manifested the power of the faith and grace of Christ upon these men?

II. THE LESSONS. Now see—1. How difficult it is, even when men's hearts are in the right place and in a good state, to prevent jealousies and misunderstandings among a large body of people. 2. How a liberal, open, manly, common-sense policy, under the blessing of God, may meet and allay this sort of thing; when men will calmly look at it, and observe that something must be done, and endeavour in an open and honest spirit to do it. 3. What an admirable opportunity this would have been to mention something about priesthood! There are some men that are

very fond of getting priests into the Christian Church; but here was a great number of real priests actually brought into the Church, and we hear nothing about them. They stand as simple disciples. Standing there upon the common floor of the Christian temple, they had a greater, purer, more elevated priesthood than that which they had sustained as the offspring of Aaron. 4. Have we the origin of the office of deacons here? They are not called deacons. The word, indeed, from which "deacons" comes, is used in the account two or three times. It is used with respect to the apostles' "giving themselves to the deaconship of the Word"; and then these men to "the deaconship of tables." The word "deacon" is a very general term, signifying ministry or service, occurring a great many times in the New Testament. It is applied to the apostles, to Timothy, to Jesus Christ. But yet it did come to a technical and an official sense, and to signify a particular officer in the Christian Church, as the Church began to grow. And I think that this was the origin of the office of the deacon; though, perhaps, that office, in the course of time, took some degree of modification, as distinct from the one thing for which these men were appointed; for they were chosen with a very limited duty with respect to this particular thing. (*T. Binney.*) *Dissensions and precautions:*—I. THE INNER LIFE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. 1. The election sprang out of the multiplying, and the multiplying begat a murmuring. Increase of numbers does not always mean increase of happiness and true spiritual life. God has made all things double one against another; and when He bestows such notable increase, He adds some counterbalancing disadvantage to keep His people humble. 2. The distribution of alms is always attended by jealousies and disputes, rendering the work one of the most unpleasant tasks which can be undertaken. Fretting and worry, weary days and sleepless nights, are often the only reward a Christian philanthropist receives. But here comes in the Acts of the Apostles to cheer. The apostles themselves did not escape the accusation of favouritism, and we may well content to suffer what they were compelled to endure. 3. The primitive Church was no ideal communion, but a society with failings and weaknesses and discontentent, exactly like those which exist in the Church of our own times. The apostolic Church did not disdain a mere economic question. II. WHAT LAY AT THE BASIS OF THIS MURMURING, AND OF THE JEALOUSIES THEREBY INDICATED? If we wish to understand the course of events in the Acts, we must refer to the books of Maccabees, where is told the romantic story of the struggle of the Jews against the Greek kings of Syria, who tried to force them into conformity with the religion of Greece, which then was counted the religion of civilisation and culture. The result was that the intensely national party became bitterly hostile to everything pertaining to Greece and its civilisation. "Cursed be he who teacheth his son the learning of the Greeks," was a saying among the Hebrews; while again, we hear of Rabban Simeon, the son of Gamaliel, who used to embody his hatred of the Grecians in the following story: "There were a thousand boys in my father's school, of whom five hundred learned the law, and five hundred the wisdom of the Greeks; and there is not one of the latter now alive, excepting myself here and my uncle's son in Asia." Heaven itself was supposed by the Hebrews to have plainly declared its hostility against their Grecian opponents. Hence, naturally, arose the same divisions at Jerusalem. The bitter dissensions which racial and linguistic differences have made in the Church of every age are here depicted in miniature. The quarrels between East and West, Greeks and Latins, whites and negroes, European Christians and Hindoo converts, all turn upon the same points and embody the same principles, and may best find solution upon the lines laid down by the apostles. There are diversities of function and of work in the Church—a ministry of the Word, and a serving of tables. One class should not absorb every function. III. THE PEOPLE NOMINATED, WHILE THE APOSTLES APPOINTED. They took the most effective plan to quiet the trouble which had arisen when they took the people into their confidence. The Church has been often described as the motber of modern freedom. The councils of old time were the models and forerunners of modern parliaments. How many a quarrel in life would be avoided, how many a rough place would be made smooth, were the apostolic example always followed. Men naturally resist a law imposed from without, without any appearance of consultation with them or of sanction on their part; but mcn willingly yield obedience to laws, even though they may dislike them, which have been passed with their assent and appeal to their reason. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *The division of work:*—Some kinds of work are easier to learn than others. Some callings and professions require a long and special training, others are more easily acquired. All cannot

teach, all are not called to the higher offices of the Church. The work of the Church may be compared to that of some extensive manufactory. Do not we seek from the raw, or at any rate from the unrefined material, to produce the perfect fabric? The material upon which we work is in every stage of refinement; it is of every class of texture. All have not to pass through the same process; what may refine some would surely damage others. We do not place the message in the same words before the uneducated and the highly cultured. And just as there are degrees of knowledge in the learners, so there may be in the teachers. Because we are not fitted to explain Christian truth to those who have learnt much, we have no right to conclude that there is no sphere in which we may teach. In a manufactory there are workers of every degree of skill and capacity, from the hewers of wood and drawers of water, to those by whose brain power, knowledge, thought, and foresight the working of the great concern is directed. The opportunities of the Church worker to-day are manifold indeed; and they vary according to the local conditions. Think how musical gifts and abilities may be devoted to the service of God, by making more beautiful, more devotional, the services of the Church, the mission room, the Sunday school, the cottage lecture! Think how financial and business capabilities may be employed in the careful management of various philanthropic agencies! How a knowledge of elementary science and the laws of life may be directed towards improving the conditions under which the ignorant and careless live! I might go on to speak of the work on behalf of temperance, purity, thrift. Then, again, a band of earnest district visitors is among the clergyman's very greatest helps. The abilities necessary for the successful performance of this work are within the reach of many. The first requisite is sympathy, the next a knowledge of human character. (*W. E. Chadwick, M.A.*)

Vers. 3–6. **Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men.**—*The work of the Spirit in the deaconship of the Christian Church*:—I. THE REASONS ASSIGNED. 1. That the apostles might be relieved of secular duties. This did not arise out of any idea of superiority. They were the servants of all, ready to be, do, or suffer anything that might be for the glory of God and the good of men. Nor did it arise from any low estimate of the temporal interests of the Church. They were no ascetics. Temporalities were important in themselves, and in their influence on spiritual concerns. It arose out of their higher office and its absorbing claims. With these nothing must be allowed to interfere. However valuable the bodies of men, their souls were more so. What reproof is here administered to modern ministers and laymen! How many ministers are serving tables! And the offence is aggravated when this is the result of lay neglect. Both are sufferers—the minister whose mind is secularised, and the people who are less effectually instructed. 2. That the apostles might give themselves wholly to their proper duties. This is "reason." The duty of a minister is to aim at the conversion of sinners, and to employ all means to secure that. And the danger is lest his mind should be brought under any influence that would disincline or disqualify it. These ends are only to be gained by an entire devotion to the sacred calling. Paul says to Timothy, "Give thyself wholly to them." The philosophy is as sound as the sentiment is heavenly. The physician who would be successful in his profession must be devoted to it. So must the merchant and the labourer. The apostles were to give themselves to prayer in secret, and the Word in public. Without prayer there will be no heart for the Word—no success in it. Without the Word prayer will be a pretence and a mockery. Together they are omnipotent through grace. Let all the arrangements of the Church be such as to cherish and encourage their union. Let its temporalities be so managed by the members that the ministry may be relieved. II. THE MANNER. Church officers in the apostolic age were chosen by Church members. Matthias was so chosen. The voice of the Church is essential to the validity of the ministry. Members have an interest in the minister they have chosen which they can never have in one placed over them without their approval. At the same time guards are necessary. 1. The purity of the Church. Its membership must not be a promiscuous community. Men of the world are incompetent to elect a Christian minister. 2. The sanction of the existing ministry. As these deacons were elected by the people, they were appointed by the apostles. Both had their rights and their duties. Either might refuse consent. And thus the one was a wholesome restraint on the other. What a consummate knowledge of human nature was manifested in the organisation of the Church! Its Author truly "knew what was in man." III. THE QUALIFICATIONS (vers. 3, 8).

Note that these are the qualifications required for the management of temporal concerns. It must not be supposed, then, that mere business men can manage such. They have a sacred bearing; they must be conducted on holy principles, and be directed to holy ends. The meanest duties may be elevated by high motives. The deacons were to be—1. Men of honest report. Their conduct must be such as to command respect. The public seldom err in their judgment of men. They may dislike their piety and persecute them, but secretly they will honour them, especially if they are, as they ought to be, useful and amiable as well. 2. Full of the Holy Ghost. Not only should they be men of piety, but eminently so. 3. Men of wisdom. Piety, although the first requisite, is not the only one. There are men of whose godliness we may be persuaded, but in whose ability for the direction of affairs we have not confidence. 4. Full of faith. 5. As a result of all this there will be power—mighty influence for good. IV. THE APPOINTMENT. 1. The disciples set the elected deacons before the apostles. 2. The apostles prayed over them. Without God it was felt that the whole procedure was vain. We must do nothing in the Church on which we may not ask His blessing. 3. Then they laid their hands upon them. The Spirit was sought for men who already had the Spirit, and this was to be a token of the increase of His gifts and graces for their new duties. V. THE EFFECTS. 1. Many evils were prevented of which no mention is made. (1) The discontent was silenced, for the cause was removed. (2) The apostles were not hindered or distracted by misunderstandings in the Church. 2. Better than this, much good was done. (1) The Word of God increased. It was preached more generally and powerfully, and a greater blessing rested on the preachers. (2) The most prejudiced, "the priests," were persuaded. The bitterest enemies were won to friendship, and so far the greatest barrier to the gospel was thrown down. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." Conclusion: Note the connection between a right ecclesiastical polity and a successful ministration of the Word. Of course God can bless His Word under any polity; but there is a polity that hinders and a polity that promotes the truth. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Suitable men to be sought out by the Church*:—A radical mistake has been committed in supposing it is necessary in all cases for the desire after the sacred office to rise up first of all and spontaneously in the breast of the aspirant. In consequence of this, many have thrust themselves forward who were altogether unfit for the work; while many, as eminently qualified for it, have been kept back by modesty. Does it not seem to be the work of the pastors and the churches to call out from among themselves the most gifted and pious of their members for this object? Should this matter be left to the inflations of self-conceit, the promptings of vanity, or the impulses, it may be of a sincere, but at the same time of an unenlightened zeal? Nothing can be more erroneous than that this call of the Church would be an officious intermeddling with the work of the Spirit in calling the ministry—for it may surely be conceived to be quite as rational a notion to suppose that the Spirit calls a person through the medium of the Church and its pastor, as to imagine that the commission from above comes direct to the heart of an individual—especially as the Church and the pastor, or at any rate the latter, is usually applied to, as a judge of the candidate's fitness for the work; and thus, after all, the power and the right of pronouncing a judgment upon the alleged call of this Divine agent are vested with the pastor and the Church. To affirm that an individual cannot be supposed to have a very great fitness for the office, unless his love of souls has been strong enough to prompt him to desire the work of the ministry, and that he is not likely to be very earnest in it, if he be thus sent, instead of his going of his own accord, is assuming too much; for on the plan here recommended, it is supposed that the individual who attracts the attention of the pastor is one who, in addition to true piety and competent abilities, has manifested an active zeal in the way of doing good. It is only on such an one that his eye would light, or to whom he would venture to make the suggestion. In all the official appointments recorded in the New Testament, from an apostle down to a deacon, the people were requested to look out for suitable men, and not to wait till they presented themselves. (*J. A. James.*) *Why seven deacons?*—Some have asserted that it was so determined because seven was a sacred number, others because there were now seven congregations in Jerusalem, or seven thousand converts. Perhaps, however, the true reason was simply that seven is a very convenient practical number. In case of a difference of opinion a majority can always be secured on one side or other, and all blocks avoided. The number seven was long maintained in connection with the order of deacons, in

imitation of the apostolic institution. A council at Neo-Cæsarea, A.D. 314, ordained that the number of seven deacons should never be exceeded in any city, while in the Church of Rome the same limitation prevailed from the second to the twelfth century, so that the Roman cardinals, who were the parochial clergy of Rome, numbered among them merely seven deacons down to that late period. The seven chosen by the primitive Church were to be men of good report because they were to be public functionaries, whose decisions were to allay commotions and murmurings; and therefore they must be men of weight, in whom the public had confidence. But, further, they must be men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Piety was not the only qualification; they must be wise, prudent, sound in judgment as well. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) **We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.**—*Prayer and preaching*, alternate or simultaneous, are the right and left side of a living ministry. The preaching work may be laboriously and conscientiously performed without comfort or success if the other side be from any cause paralysed. I watched once the operations of a brick-maker in a field of clay. There was great agility in his movements. He wrought by piece, and the more he turned out the higher was his pay. His body moved like a machine. His task for a time was simply to raise a quantity of clay from a lower to a higher level by means of a spade. He threw up one spadeful, and then he dipped his tool in a pail of water that stood by. After every spadeful of clay there was a dip in the water. The operation of dipping occupied as much time as raising. My first thought was, if he should dispense with these apparently useless baptisms, he might perform almost double the amount of work. My second thought was wiser: on reflection, I saw that if he should continue to work without these alternate washings, the clay would have stuck to the spade, and progress would have been altogether arrested. I said to myself, Go thou and do likewise. Prayer is the baptism which makes progress quick. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Ministers should give themselves to prayer*:—"I was lately in company of one of our older ministers," said a young minister the other day; "one who has laboured long and with much success in some of the most difficult fields of the Church. The object of my interview was to learn from him the secret of success with which it had pleased God to crown his ministry in positions and places where others had failed. Instead, however, of directly giving me the information I desired, he told me with great sorrow the reason why he had accomplished so little, and said with unaffected sadness, 'My young friend, the mistake of my life has been that I have not prayed more. I fell into the error of most ministers—I studied and preached. I worked and worried too much, and I prayed too little. Could I live my life over again, I would be more with God and less with men. I see it all now—what wasted years of unrest I have passed, how much of my life was my own doing, and how little of God has been in my active ministry! I can now, in the evening of my days, only ask God to forgive my shortcomings, and to aid me in spending my few remaining years differently from the imperfect way in which I have served my Master." *Prayer and power*:—A friend who knew Mr. Spurgeon many years ago, and who heard him preach on many occasions, says that he once heard him preach in one of our large towns in the afternoon and evening on a certain day; and that at the close of the afternoon service Mr. Spurgeon spoke of the consciousness that the service had not been what it should have been. His friend (then a student) admitted that he thought the preacher had not been himself in the preaching. Mr. Spurgeon, with a remark to the effect that it would never do to repeat the failure in the evening, went out into the woods to pray. Indeed, he spent the whole interval between the afternoon and evening services in prayer. The latter meeting was one of great power, and different in all respects from that of the afternoon. Many preachers of to-day might imitate Mr. Spurgeon's example with great advantage to themselves and their congregations. *Prayer and ministerial success*:—A minister observing a poor man by the roadside breaking stones with a hammer, and kneeling to get at his work the better, said to him, "Ah, John, I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones!" The man replied, "Perhaps, master, you don't work on your knees?" **They laid their hands on them.**—*Imposition of hands*:—This action was of frequent use among the ancient Jews. The apostles must have remembered that it was employed in the designation of Joshua as leader of Israel in place of Moses (Num. xxvii. 18–23; *cf.* Deut. xxxiv. 9), that it was used even in the synagogue in the appointment of Jewish rabbis, and had been sanctioned by our Lord's practice. They naturally, therefore, used this symbol upon the solemn appointment of the

first deacons, and the same ceremonial was repeated upon similar occasions (see chap. xiii. 3; 2 Tim. i. 6; Heb. vi. 2). This ceremony was also employed by the apostles as the rite which filled up and perfected the baptism which had been administered by others (chap. viii. 17). The ceremony of imposition of hands was so essential and distinguishing a point, that Simon Magus selects it as the one he desires above all others effectually to purchase, so that the outward symbol might be followed by the inward grace (chap. viii. 19). Again in chap. xix. we find St. Paul using the same visible ceremony in the case of St. John's disciples, who were first baptized with Christian baptism, and then endued by St. Paul with the gift of the Spirit. Imposition of hands in the case of ordination is a natural symbol, indicative of the transmission of function and authority. It fitly indicates and notifies to the whole Church the persons who have been ordained, and therefore has ever been regarded as a necessary part of ordination. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*)

A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.—*Stephen's faith and its source:*—I. STEPHEN'S FAITH. From the speech he made in defence we may gather some of the leading features of his faith. 1. Stephen believed that God's hand was discernible in history. He gives a rapid survey of the Scripture story from the call of Abraham to the death of Jesus, and shows how all had been overruled by God. The common notion is that kings and statesmen make history. Stephen believed that God made it. To him the value of history was not merely that it told succeeding generations the things that had happened to their fathers, and the deeds their fathers had done, but that it revealed God, made known His character, principles, and relationship to man. The life and soul of history is God. It is noticeable that Stephen's speech is far from exact in its statements. Dean Stanley points out no less than twelve differences from the Mosaic history. But mere precision of record was not his aim. He desired to show the purposes of God. There may be the most minute exactitude of delineation, and yet no life. The true artist will sacrifice the rectitude of a line that he may express the soul of his subject. 2. Stephen believed that the most noticeable way-mark of the universal march had just been passed. It was the Cross of Jesus. So far the race had been journeying on and on to Calvary. 3. Stephen believed that Jesus, after His Cross and passion, had risen from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. 4. Stephen believed that the exalted Jesus still cared for, and could help His servants in all their labour and suffering upon earth. He beheld Jesus "standing on the right hand of God," as if ready to assist him, and he prayed to Jesus. II. STEPHEN'S POSSESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 1. It was this that gave life to his faith. It is not the correctness of the creed that makes a man a Christian, in the highest sense, but the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. 2. If we would be useful as servants of God among men we must be baptized in the Holy Ghost. 3. Nay, we cannot live aright without this. 4. The most important question we can be asked is, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" (*J. Kirk Pike.*) *The character of Stephen:*—I. THE SPIRITUAL ENDOWMENTS BY WHICH HE WAS DISTINGUISHED. "Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." 1. The high and honourable office to which he was elected would demand the continual exercise of a simple affiance in the power, the faithfulness, the love of Jesus Christ—in the stability of that religion to which he was self-devoted—in the fulfilment of that promise (Matt. xxviii. 20). 2. Stephen was also full of the Holy Ghost. As the Shekinah, the bright emblem of the Divine presence, descended from heaven and filled the holy of holies, so did a sacred influence from above fill the heart of Stephen, and make his body the temple of the Holy Ghost. II. THE EARNESTNESS OF HIS LABOUR IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. He who is full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, proves the power of religion as a practical principle by abounding in every good word and work. His obligations to the Fountain of Mercy are so great, his deliverance so gracious, his hope so animating, his responsibilities so awful, that one master-feeling will occupy his mind—a desire to walk worthy of God, who hath called him to His kingdom and glory. III. To these qualifications of St. Stephen must be added HIS BOLDNESS IN CONFESSING CHRIST. A Christian should indeed charge it upon his conscience to abstain, as much as in him lieth, from religious controversy. Unnecessary disputes, and oppositions of theological science, are most unfriendly to the love and power of Divine truth in his heart. But when his faith is assailed; when the foundation of every hope on which the soul rests is attacked by the daring impiety of the blasphemer, or the more covert insinuation of the secret infidel, let him remember that silence and indifference are treason against the Saviour who bought him with His blood. IV. Considering the closing events of St. Stephen's life in the order of the sacred narrative, we next remark HIS SUPPORT

IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL. He had such a view of his risen Redeemer's power and glory as strengthened him to abide unshrinkingly the fate before him; and such a foretaste of the bliss which awaited him as made him desirous to depart, and to be with Christ. V. THE CHARITY WITH WHICH ST. STEPHEN PRAYED FOR HIS MURDERERS: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In this spirit of charity we must live and die if we hope for heaven. Never let us address God with a prayer for our own pardon, if we cannot unfeignedly pardon others their wrongs against us. VI. THE CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH ST. STEPHEN RESIGNED HIS SOUL INTO THE HAND OF CHRIST. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *The Christian full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*:—Here is an example. How simply is the character sketched! and how distinctly is it stated whence it was that this man was what he was! Happy is that Church which has many such among its laity, "men full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom." How shall we know such? What is it that we are to seek when we wish to be such? I. WHO AND WHAT IS THAT MAN WHO IS FULL OF FAITH AND OF THE HOLY GHOST? Faith which believes the promise respecting the gift of the Holy Ghost, which relies upon His presence and help, which looks to Him continually, leans on His assistance confidently, is necessary to an individual's being full of the Holy Ghost: "full of faith" and "full of the Holy Ghost" are inseparably united: they twine together, they grow up each into their fulness together. The Holy Ghost is the author of faith: it is by His gift and operation that the faith of believers "groweth exceedingly." He reveals the truth "from faith to faith." And faith opens wider and wider the door of the heart for His reception; and faith, acting upon the promises, draws a larger and a larger indwelling of that blessed visitant. It is almost needless to say that the expression "being full of the Holy Ghost" must mean being under the influence of the Holy Ghost—His influence exerted over the whole man, in all his powers, under all circumstances, at all times. It is by the Holy Ghost that he is guided. He is continually under the Spirit's teaching. That blessed Spirit is acting, with all his trials, by them to sanctify him. The influence of the Holy Ghost is upon the man in all that he thinks or does: this is the "being full of the Holy Ghost." Hence Christians are said to walk in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, to live in the Spirit. We go on now to the effects produced—those which others see visible in our disposition and conduct. The indwelling of the Spirit must be manifest to ourselves. In true Christians—for it is of them that we are now especially speaking—one of the chief and most evident of the operations of the Holy Ghost, where His influence is richly imparted, is the shedding abroad a love to God and a love to all real Christians. In close connection with love is hope, a confiding trust in God. "And, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). With these, and perhaps springing out of these in a measure, love and hope, are conjoined joy and peace, the work of the Holy Ghost. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. v. 22), says the apostle: "joy of the Holy Ghost" (2 Thess. i. 6), he says again. There are also exhibitions of Christian excellence—these come from the Spirit: there are works done by Christians—these are originated by the Spirit. Scripture is very clear and definite in its language. We must observe it where it is so marked and positive in its expression: it does not speak of goodness, charity, temperance, &c., as our own virtues, which we are to follow; but it calls them "fruits of the Spirit." "But the fruit of the Spirit," says St. Paul, "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These, if really Christian graces, come from the Spirit's operation. He commences them; He nurtures them; He gives them their growth; He will bring them out to their full completion in another world. I would observe, too, that all these fruits of the Spirit must be sought by the Christian. Our Saviour denounces the breaking one of His least commandments. These graces of the Holy Ghost differ, in many respects, from those excellencies which the unchanged heart of man can exhibit. We may notice one of these graces in St. Stephen, that man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." Christian graces have their opposites, but both appear. Where the Spirit of God works it will be so. See in St. Stephen the lion and the lamb united: he is the lion in courage, as he meets his persecutors, as he stands up valiant for the truth: he is the lamb in meekness, as he kneels down and prays for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." II. OUR SINFULNESS IN COMING SHORT OF THIS, OR IT MAY BE EVEN, SOLEMN AND PAINFUL AS IS THE THOUGHT, IN SOME INSTANCES, THE NOT POSSESSING IT AT ALL. Think how often His good influences have been quenched, His work upon the soul interfered with, and more or less marred! Be

humbled on account of these things. Endeavour to see them rightly. Confess them. This is the only way to obtain blessing from God. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO OUR SEEKING THIS CHARACTER, AND, IN DEPENDENCE UPON GOD, MAKING IT OUR OBJECT TO BE MEN FULL OF FAITH AND OF THE HOLY GHOST. (*J. E. Dalton, B.D.*)

Ver. 7. **And the Word of God increased.**—*Good earnests of great success*:—I. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED. Nothing can avail without—1. The operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. 2. The plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck with the downrightness of the testimony of the Reformers. It was so with Farren, Luther, Calvin, &c. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And if we are to see the Church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. Sunday-school teachers, you must teach this same gospel. 3. Much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands, good servants, kind masters?" And if the report of our character be bad it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not live the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands. The early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back and said, "They seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." This was what made the gospel victorious in those days. 4. Individual, personal exertion. No Church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active. It was thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps pull it to pieces. Let me give you a parable. A certain band had been victorious in all their conflicts. But on a sudden they said in the council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home?" Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, and did great exploits. But still no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armour once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. And if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. 5. Much earnest prayer. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. According to your faith shall it be done unto you. 6. More intense glowing spiritual life. II. THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY. 1. Souls are saved. John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for a twelvemonth, in order to win one soul, it would be good wages. Richard Knill once said, that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do. 2. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. 3. The Church is edified. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighbourhood are thereby favouring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. III. THE ALTERNATIVE. Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because

vital godliness has been drained out of the system. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Missionary hindrances and encouragements*:—I. THE HINDRANCES. 1. The apostles had to preach to them as sinners, who, because of their ungodliness and pride, necessarily hated the gospel, which opposes itself to these evils. 2. Besides these elements of opposition, which they possessed in common with their fellow-creatures throughout the world, there were national hindrances, formalism, self-righteousness, and exclusiveness. 3. The class that was most especially opposed to the gospel from their position in society were the priests. These were first pledged to their own system, as its teachers. Their pride as teachers would rise up against the idea of renouncing this system, to which they had been so long and so warmly attached. And then their interests, as priests, were likely to be altogether subverted by the substitution of the gospel for Judaism. Their power and their wealth were both at stake. II. ENCOURAGEMENTS. The apostles were aided—1. By having to address to those whom they endeavoured to convert, the testimony respecting undeniable and signal facts. The Jews might oppose their various theoretical objections to the gospel, and doubtless did; but to all these the apostles could adduce in answer, plain great facts which they did not adduce from hearsay, but of which they were themselves the witnesses. 2. By the moral force of the doctrine which they had to convey. 3. By their personal character. 4. By the Divine assistance which was guaranteed. Conclusion: Our hindrances are just those which prevailed at the first preaching of the gospel, which were overborne and mastered by the first disciples of Jesus Christ, and therefore may be by His disciples now, for the very means which they possessed for wrestling with these difficulties are possessed by ourselves. (*Baptist Noel.*) *Prosperous times*:—I. THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED. 1. The number of its preachers increased. Stephen and Philip certainly, and the other deacons probably, were added to the company of preachers. Times of revival are always times for recruiting the ranks of the ministry. 2. The preachers declared it with augmented industry and power, encouraged by signs of Divine approval, and by the favour of the people. 3. The people received it in constantly increasing numbers, and passed it on. II. THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED. 1. Converts were made. There is no surer sign of spiritual adversity than few or no conversions. For this architecture, music, wealth, &c., are no compensation. But a Church worshipping in some upper room where money is scarce, and ecclesiastical æsthetics non-existent, but where disciples are multiplied, is in a prosperous state. 2. They were made in the least likely place. In Jerusalem, the stronghold of Jewish bigotry, where that spirit was in the ascendant which had crucified the Master. Had this been in Galilee, where the prejudice was not so intense, it would not have called for so much remark. So it is a blessed thing when those predisposed in favour of the gospel—the children of pious parents, &c., are brought to Christ; but it is still more glorious when the Word of God is received by heathen, either abroad or at home. 3. They were made in great numbers. Not in ones and twos, but in multitudes. It is sad when a Church has to congratulate itself that it holds its own, and that the additions fill the gaps made by removals or deaths. No Church is prosperous which does not keep pace with the growth of the population. The same power which converted multitudes in Jerusalem can do the same in London. III. A GREAT COMPANY OF PRIESTS WERE OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH. 1. They had everything to lose and nothing to gain, and so their conversion and adhesion to the Church was a great argument in favour of the truth of the gospel. And so it is in any age when notorious opponents are converted. 2. All their learning and prestige were now consecrated to the cause of Christ. Frequently the conversion of one man or woman in an influential position or of great ability is of more value than the conversion of scores of others, because of the higher vantage ground they occupy. 3. These, too, were converted in great numbers. There is nothing unreasonable in this. The power that can convert one can convert multitudes. 4. Their conversion was thorough, "obedient unto the faith." (*J. W. Burn.*) **A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**—*The conversion of the priests an evidence of the truth of the Christian religion*:—The Jewish priesthood was of great dignity and influence. The office was hereditary, and its members constituted a national aristocracy. Every priest could trace back his pedigree to Aaron, and no matter to what straits of poverty he might be brought, his social position was unchanged. He was exempt from taxation and military service. The number of priests during the period of our Lord's life, Josephus estimated at twenty thousand. For reasons plainly to be seen, the Jewish authorities arrayed themselves in bitter hostility against the Prophet of Nazareth, and the most blood-thirsty of His enemies were God's anointed priests. The political condition

of Palestine was then strange and anomalous. David's throne was occupied by a creature of the Emperor of Rome, and foreign soldiers kept the Jewish people in subjection. The Church outrivalled the state in degeneracy. Her priesthood, greedy, dissolute, and infidel, demanded unlawful fees for every temple service, disgraced the religion they professed, by the inhumanity and profligacy of their lives. With such a condition of things, no wonder that the Son of God met with the cruelty that He did: no wonder that even the chief priests were loudest in their clamours that He should die. When the Saviour rose from the dead, His scattered followers forthwith flocked about His standard, and began their great work of the conversion of the world. The first martyr, Stephen, laid down his life for the truth. On the very eve of his ordination to the office of deacon we are told that "the Word of God increased, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." It is no longer merely a company of ignorant fishermen and soft-hearted women who are found to take sides with the crucified Jesus, but the very class of men who could have been least expected to make such a sacrifice. Surely, among all the evidences afforded of the truth of the Christian religion, this is one of wonderful force and significance. Had one or two priests yielded to the overwhelming proofs vouchsafed, that Jesus was the Messiah, it would have been a testimony of no little value; but how the weight of testimony is increased when we read that a great company of those who occupied this high social position abandoned everything, and exposed themselves to opposition, ridicule, contempt, persecution, and death, that they might carry out their convictions of duty, and prove, as no men have ever done more clearly, that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of all acceptation. Once, the contemptuous question had been asked: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (John vii. 48). And yet, even then, many "among the chief rulers" already believed in Jesus, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John xii. 42, and xix. 38). The day was at hand when "a great company of the priests" would acknowledge Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. Faith is here put for the Christian religion, and we are assured in this brief statement that they not only embraced the truths of the gospel as an act of the understanding, but that they pledged themselves to obey its requirements. Surely, then, they who, in our own day, claim to be unbelievers, ought to have very substantial ground to go upon before they rush to the conclusion that the multitudes who have embraced the Christian faith, and who have passed into another world, cheered and comforted by its promises, have all believed a lie! (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*)

Vers. 8–15. **And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.**—*The last first*:—I. THE POINTS IN WHICH STEPHEN WAS LAST. 1. His position was entirely subordinate. The deacons were appointed to help the apostles in the lower part of their functions, and even this they did not presume to do without delegation from the apostles. We may imagine, then, the apostles retiring after the ordination to give themselves without distraction to their spiritual exercises. But it was with them as with Moses of old. God took of the Spirit which was upon them and put it on those who were to bear the burden of the people with them. Stephen, &c., became the Eldad and Medad of the New Testament. Nay, Stephen was an Elisha, upon whom a double portion of their spirit rested. 2. Stephen had probably never seen our Lord, but was in all likelihood a pentecostal convert. Otherwise how could such a man have missed nomination to the vacant apostleship? But it pleased the Lord to illustrate in him that the knowledge of Christ after the Spirit is the one requirement for sanctity. "Whom having not seen, ye love." 3. The apostles had forsaken all to follow Christ, but it nowhere appears that Stephen had gone through similar hardships. His fiery trials blazed out upon him all at once, and the language of our Lord concerning the late-called labourers adapts itself with nicety in his case. He could not be said to have borne the burden and heat of the day. So we learn that God has varieties of trial, and applies them to the different characters of His servants. For Peter there is a long, wearing warfare; for John a wearisome, desolate waiting; for Stephen the letting loose upon him at the opening of his career all the hounds of hell in one fell pack. Us, perhaps, He subjects only to those little crosses which form the burden of daily life. But we must consider that in crosses, as well as comforts, God chooses what is best for us. It is possible to reach a great height of sanctity by submitting quietly and lovingly to ordinary trials. II. THE POINTS IN WHICH HE BECAME FIRST. 1. He seems to have outstripped the apostles in spiritual

intelligence, in appreciation of the breadth, comprehensiveness, and spirituality of the Divine plans. He was the morning star who ushered in the dawn of St. Paul's ministry. It is evident that the theology of the one was that of the other. St. Peter clung long to Jewish prejudices, and we have no reason to suppose that the other apostles were further advanced. 2. In zeal for his Master's honour, and devotion to his Master's cause, Stephen appears to have outstripped his contemporaries. Peter had denied his Lord, and long after, at Antioch, showed that he was not entirely emancipated from moral cowardice. But Stephen from first to last was as bold as a lion. 3. According to the omen conveyed in his name (a crown), he was the first to wear the crown of martyrdom. For most of the apostles it was also in reserve, but when they reached paradise they found Stephen already crowned. The labourer called at the eleventh hour had received his wages before those called in the morning. 4. In the brilliancy and number of his miracles Stephen rivalled if he did not outstrip the apostles (ver. 8). Lessons: 1. We should see contentedly and thankfully many alterations made in the old platform of religious thought. These are days of progress, and old-fashioned and high-principled people are made very sore by novelties. In this adherence to old ways and thoughts there is danger, while at the same time there is a safeguard. Still it is very necessary that sound conservatism does not degenerate into bigotry. Not every new idea and practice turned up by the spade of modern inquiry is bad. And as for keeping the platform of popular theology what it was half a century ago, it is impossible. So we can imagine our early Christians jealous for Christ's apostles, saying, "I do not like this Stephen: he carries matters too far; his teaching about the temple is audacious." Yet to Stephen's view the apostles came round in time. 2. It may be a stimulus to our will in the pursuit of holiness to remember that our last shall be first. Hitherto, maybe, we have made little, if any, proficiency in religion. But if now we are willing to redeem the time, we may advance. The blood and grace of Christ are forces as fresh as ever. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Stephen's miracles and controversies:*—It is observable that no express mention is made of his performance of deacon's functions. He shot ahead of his position, and is only known as the brave champion and first martyr of the cause of Christ. Not that we must infer that he was neglectful of the duties of his calling. His routine of daily duty needed not recording. I. HIS MIRACLES. Observe how carefully we are guarded against the supposition that he was a mere wonder worker. The historian does not merely record the miracles, but tells us of the secret of them, "Stephen, full of faith," &c. The man who acts in faith, whether he works a miracle or only achieves some great enterprise for Christ, simply lays hold of the power of God. So in the triumphs of grace. If I win a victory over a besetting sin, or am brought out unharmed from temptation, it is not in my own strength. The Bible knows nothing of inherent strength. The first element of all power is self-distrust. The vine branch has no sap, and consequently no power of fructification of its own; the sap must be sent up from the stem. A little child is quite incompetent to a long walk; but if in confessed impotence it throws itself into his father's arms, he will carry it through. Sanctification, in its source and efficient cause, is no more inherent than justification. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." II. HIS CONTROVERSIES. It was said that in Jerusalem there were 480 synagogues. Among these several would be appropriated to Hellenistic Jews of whom Stephen was probably one, and thus his early associations as well as his office would bring him in contact with the members of these synagogues. It is worth noting that among his opponents were representatives of each of the three continents then known. First that of the Libertines or freedmen, *i.e.*, Jews whose ancestors had been carried captive to Rome by Pompey and others, and had there, in process of time, been emancipated. Many of them would migrate to Jerusalem, and found this synagogue representing the Italian Jews. Cyrene and Alexandria were cities of North Africa. In the former the Jews were a fourth of the population. It was a Cyrenian Jew who bore our Lord's cross, and another joined in laying hands on Paul. In Alexandria two out of its five districts were inhabited by Jews. These African Hebrews would have their representatives in the holy city, who would build their own church and have their own congregation. The Asiatic opponents of Stephen would be furnished by the representatives of the Jews in Cilicia and Asia. The mention of the former is significant. For St. Paul was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, and according to tradition he appeared as a disputant against Stephen. But the result of the controversy was humiliating to Stephen's antagonists. "They were not able to resist," &c. (ver. 10). No wonder Christ had stricken controversialists

dumb by "the mouth and wisdom" He promised to His disciples. As soon as Stephen's opponents felt his irresistibility his impeachment was arranged. Lessons: 1. The conditions of successful controversy. The controversy which carries the inner convictions does not necessarily extort open confession. This may be withheld from pride or prejudice as here. How very few controversies are more than a skirmish of words in which both parties are exasperated! Yet truth ought to be able to win its way by its own force. The three qualifications for controversy are, "a mouth," or power of expression, "wisdom," or power of argument, and lying deeper and giving effect to both, "a spirit—the Spirit of your Father." In some modern controversies, nothing but "the mouth" is exhibited, occasionally "wisdom," but it was "the Spirit" as well as "the wisdom" by which Stephen spoke which his adversaries were unable to resist. The naked logic of the intellect will not by itself convince, but the logic that is seconded by unction carries with it wonderful weight. 2. We may learn from the fact that Stephen's miracles formed but an introduction to his controversies, breaking open a passage for his arguments to reach the minds and consciences of men. Tell me not of an ecclesiastical authority whose dictates are to be received on its own *ipse dixit*. Stephen did not say after cleansing a few lepers, &c., "These miracles prove that we are sent from God: now listen to us at the peril of your souls." He and his colleagues came down into the lowly valley of disputation; they made a public appeal to the Holy Scriptures, and showed that Jesus was the Christ from documents admitted by their opponents. When men who could produce miracles in favour of their teaching entered the arena of controversy, how can any modern communion which has not the attestation of miracles make a claim to be believed on its own unsupported testimony? (*Ibid.*) *The first Christian martyr*:—The Book of Acts is composed upon a definite principle, to wit, what Jesus continued to do and teach after His ascension through the instrumentality of His followers. In the first five chapters this principle is illustrated in the doings and sayings of Peter. But when another steps on the arena in whom this truth is shown in a stronger light Peter is at once dropped; in the sixth and seventh chapters Stephen it is that occupies the forefront, then Philip, then Paul. The avowed object of the writer is not to show us Peter, but the "hand of the Lord"; and His hand is here more distinctly seen in Stephen than in Peter. Let us look at Stephen as—I. A MAN (ver. 3). 1. He was an honest man, and had a reputation for honesty. Some people are honest, but they push bargains so hard that their honesty is suspected. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Not only be upright, but convince others of your uprightness. "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." "Good understanding": on the margin, "good success." An unsullied reputation for integrity helps a man forward even in business—it wins the confidence of the public. 2. Underlying his honesty was his goodness—he was spoken well of by all who knew him. Paul afterwards said that a deacon "must have a good report of them which are without," *i.e.*, he should not only stand well in the family and in the Church, but in the world. We should first be light; we should then "shine as lights in the world." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify"—yourselves? No; but "your Father which is in heaven." I can look at the wall, but not through the wall; but I can look at and through the window. And a good character should be clear as glass, transparent as light—a character men can not only look at, but look through and see God beyond. II. A CHRISTIAN (ver. 5). 1. He was "full of faith"—a strong, healthy believer. Some of his fellow members were exceedingly weak in the faith, shy, timid, vacillating; but Stephen's spiritual life was deep and vigorous. He put unbounded confidence in the new religion; he "held fast his profession." "By faith the elders obtained a good report." Not a great report, perhaps, but a good one. Other factors, such as learning and riches, are necessary to obtain a great report. But faith alone, if strong, will secure you a good report, which is better than a great one. By this Stephen "still speaketh," and is still spoken of. 2. He was "full of the Holy Ghost"; and to be "full of the Holy Ghost" is better than to be "full of faith." Faith at best is only the human aspiring after the Divine; but to be "full of the Holy Ghost" is for the human to possess the Divine. To trust God is good, to have God is better. One may be "full of faith" and yet not "full of the Holy Ghost." Many of the Old Testament saints were "full of faith," but none of them were "full of the Holy Ghost"—this is the sole prerogative of saints under the New Testament. The faith of Abraham has never been excelled, but he fell into sins which could not be tolerated in the Christian Church. The apostles before the

Pentecost were "full of faith," but on the Pentecost were they "filled with the Spirit"; and as a natural consequence a process of refinement was then commenced unknown to the religious experience of the Jewish Church. Under the Old Testament the Holy Ghost was "upon" men, but under the New He is "in" men—a sweetening, hallowing influence, refining the very fibre of our being. The iron cold has the same properties as the iron heated, but the one is black and dull; the other is white and vivid—the fire imparts to it its own qualities. Thus Stephen was pervaded by the refining fire of God. His whole being was transfused with celestial brightness, and therefore his character grew in fineness of texture. III. A DEACON (ver. 8). 1. The fifth verse says he was "full of faith," the eighth (according to the best MSS.) that he was "full of grace." "Grace" means favour. In its theological sense it signifies the Divine favour shown to sinners. But as used in the context it signifies the favour shown by Stephen to those with whom he came in contact. "Grace" some suppose to have the same etymology as "grease." Be that as it may; but the body when well "greased" is lithe and nimble, easy in its carriage, graceful in its movements. Now, what grease does to the body, grace does to the soul. Stephen was elected to distribute the charity of the Church. How did he do it? Did he haughtily impress the humble recipients of his bounty with their inferiority? Certainly not. He did it with grace—beautiful ease and comfortable homeliness. Modern Christians may here learn a valuable lesson—not to insult the objects of their beneficence in the very act of succouring them. "Draw out thy soul to the hungry." Thy money? Not only that, but thy soul. Give alms by all means, but give it with grace. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." 2. Being thus "full of grace," he was of necessity "full of power." The man devoid of grace cannot in the nature of things wield much influence. But the man habitually kind, polite, and obliging acquires an influence subtle but irresistible in the sphere in which he moves. Judging by the outward show, men are apt to mistake vehemence for power. Lightning is the strong thing in the popular imagination because of the flash and thunder accompanying it. But gravitation, whose voice is never heard, is the central force holding countless worlds in its grip. In like manner the man of wealth, learning, eloquence—the man who can flash and roar—is usually considered the powerful factor. But scan society more narrowly, and you will perceive that none of those things wield so much true power as grace. 3. "He did great wonders and miracles among the people." The same laws govern society now as then—get the grace and you will infallibly obtain the power. The great need of the present age is not physical but moral wonders. Think of our trains, steam packets, electric telegraphs, and telephones: what physical miracles can outshine these? It is within the reach of all to do wonders and to be wonders in goodness. IV. A DISPUTANT (ver. 10). 1. They were "not able to resist the wisdom with which he spake." He proved victorious in the debate, for two reasons. First, he was evidently a practised logician. His Greek culture and Hebrew studies made him a man of great resource in argument. His speech shows him to be a man of keen philosophic insight. The second and chief reason was that he had truth on his side. The synagogue of the Cilician Jews is mentioned—the very synagogue of which young Saul of Tarsus was a member. This fact, coupled with the profound interest he took in the trial of Stephen, demonstrates conclusively that he was present. Young Saul would unquestionably be quite a match to Stephen in a bare trial of dialectic skill. But Stephen, backed by the truth, was too strong even for Saul. A weak mind, supported by a great truth, can bring about the total discomfiture of the stoutest adversary. The paramount duty of every public teacher is to seek "to be filled with wisdom," that is, with good, sound, solid information. No amount of eloquence will make up for lack of matter. God can "create out of nothing"; and doubtless He has blessed sermons with little or nothing in them. In Genesis we read but once that He "created out of nothing"; but we read repeatedly that He "created out of something"—the author being very shy of using the stronger word. That is the usual method of the Divine operation still. "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words," but "the preacher" also "was wise and taught the people knowledge." The late Rev. Henry Rees, the great Welsh preacher, being asked which kind of sermon he thought most likely the Holy Ghost would bless to the salvation of the hearers, answered, "The sermon most likely to effect their salvation without Him." 2. His "spirit" was as noteworthy as his wisdom. In a written sermon style is of great consequence. Now, what style is to a written, the spirit is to a spoken sermon. Stephen spoke with a marvellous spirit—he imparted warmth, beauty, life, force to

his arguments. 3. "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit." The wisdom alone they could. Dry argument skims only the surface of our nature, it does not stir the depths. "Intellectual preaching" seldom moves people. Moreover, they could resist the "spirit" alone; and in this day of sensationalism it is of some moment that we remember it. Mere "hwyl," however delightful at the time, leaves our hearers securely immured in sin. But the wisdom and the spirit joined will prove irresistible. Alas! to the cavilling Jews it was the savour of death. If they could not resist his preaching, they could and did resist his person. "They suborned men—they stirred up the people—they caught him and brought him to the council." V. A PRISONER (ver. 11, &c.). 1. The speech he made serves to show—(1) That he was profoundly versed in the Hebrew literature. It must be remembered that it was delivered at the spur of the moment under circumstances the most embarrassing. I am told that there are twelve discrepancies in it. How to account for them? Simply that Stephen was obliged to address his judges from memory without the chance of correcting himself by reference to the sacred Scriptures. Is it a cause of wonder that, in a review so minute and so searching, the valiant deacon should commit a few trivial mistakes? (2) His Greek culture and sympathy. It would be almost a matter of sheer impossibility for a man born and bred in Palestine to deliver it. Native Jews like Peter and John dogmatise; Hellenistic Jews like Stephen and Paul philosophise. (*a*) Stephen presents the council with a lucid and succinct philosophy of the national history. The same principle he proves to be running through Jewish history from the call of Abraham to the building of the temple. What is that principle? That true religion is independent of any fixed rite or particular locality, and that religious progress has always meant religious change, every change, however, involving progress on the part of God, but stern resistance on the part of man. What if God hath purposed to make another great change in the establishment of Christianity, and what if the Jews like their forefathers were making a resolute stand against it! (*b*) The critics are much exercised to know how his speech can be viewed as a refutation of the charge of blasphemy. But they overlook the fact that he does not defend himself except incidentally. His supreme desire is to vindicate not himself, but the truth. Herein Stephen, the martyr of Christianity, contrasts favourably with Socrates, the martyr of philosophy—both alike indicted for blasphemy. Socrates, to his honour be it said, scorned to stoop to any base or unworthy artifice to save his life; his thoughts nevertheless continually reverted to himself. The first personal pronoun bristles through his famous apology. But Stephen has neither "I" nor "me" on his lips so much as once—he wholly forgets himself in his intense eagerness to expound to the council the formative principles and historical career of the kingdom of God. 2. But if his speech was remarkable, his bodily appearance was more remarkable still (ver. 15). (1) Solomon says, "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed." Notice the young man before his admission to college—his countenance is marked by a certain degree of heaviness and opacity, is devoid of expression for the simple reason that there is behind but little to be expressed. Observe him again at the termination of his course—his features are illuminated, his eyes flash pure intelligence. Put light within a marble vase and it grows translucent. And "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord"—light the candle within and the face without will shine. (2) Now if wisdom is thus able to radiate through the veil of flesh, how much more goodness, and especially goodness and wisdom together? You can tell a good man by his very face. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." That wickedness stamps itself on the features is an universally acknowledged fact. On the other hand, goodness restores grace to the faded features. Many men and women, though plain enough from an artistic standpoint, possess indescribable charm. Believe me, young people, nothing will so improve your looks as deep piety. It is significant that the word translated "good" in the New Testament may be also rendered "beautiful." Stephen was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and therefore "they beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel." (3) But is this all? I believe not. When Moses returned from Sinai, "the skin of his face shone so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold it." And the angelic lustre on Stephen's face was doubtless miraculous. But here as in other instances, the miraculous, so far from obscuring the natural, serves to illustrate it. It brings out into clearer prominence a law which, were it not for the transfiguration of Stephen, of Moses, and of Christ, would escape our attention—that genuine goodness is a Divine light within, whose inevitable tendency it is to make luminous

both soul and body. In regeneration this Divine spark is struck, and sanctification is only the theological name for transfiguration. "Be ye transformed in the spirit of your mind": literally, transfigured—the very same word that is used to describe the transfiguration of Christ. The Divine brightness first makes luminous the dark, dull, obtuse soul, and then the dark, dull, obtuse body. But more especially is this spiritual luminousness to be witnessed upon deathbeds. Friends beautiful in life are still more beautiful in death. Their faces seem to catch the pure beams of eternity like mountain tops the first light of day. VI. A MARTYR. 1. Look at the mad fury of his hearers. "They were cut to the heart," "sawn asunder." The prophets of old had been "sawn asunder" by their stiffnecked forefathers; now they are "sawn asunder" by the powerful ministry of Stephen. They further "gnashed on him with their teeth." Only in one other connection is this strong phrase used—"there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." It seems as though the uncontrollable fury of the damned seized the motley crowd. Hell seemed broken loose on the streets of Jerusalem. 2. But if the rabble were wild with rage, Stephen himself was calm and collected. (1) He first offered a prayer on his own behalf. He next prayed on behalf of his murderers. So deeply had he drunk of the spirit of the Saviour, that he unconsciously quotes His very words. Nowhere outside the religion of the New Testament do we behold such majesty and meekness in the grim presence of death. Pagans may die heroically—Christians only die forgivingly. (2) No wonder that such a man should see "into heaven." His body was in a state of incipient transfiguration; his eye, therefore, supernaturally strengthened, pierced beyond the azure, and swept the vast places of eternity. Men in the present day will receive only the testimony of the senses, and because they see not heaven and hell they will not believe. But are they sure the supposed weakness of the proof lies not in the weakness of their vision? Stephen looking stedfastly into heaven, "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." And if credit is to be given—and why not?—to the dying testimony of saints, his is not a solitary case. (3) But not only he saw into heaven, but heaven itself was "opened." There was an elevation of the human—there was also a condescension of the Divine. Under the Old Dispensation "the way into the Holiest of All was not made manifest"; but now heaven is "opened." "After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven"—standing open. Since Christ entered, the doors have been standing open—to offer shelter and home to the weary and persecuted pilgrims. "I see . . . the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This is the only instance except twice in the Apocalypse that Jesus after His ascension is called Son of Man. Why called so here? Because He was an object clearly discerned by the bodily eyes of Stephen. To the eyes of faith He is Jesus or Christ or Lord; to the eyes of the body He will for ever be the Son of Man. When St. John thinks or writes of Him, He is always the Son of God; but when St. John is rapt up in vision He is the Son of Man. When He first ascended He "sat" to show His indisputable right to be there; but having established His right, He sits or stands as occasion requires. Stephen sees Him standing—eagerly watching this momentous crisis in the history of the Church. And with this magnificent panorama floating before his view, the intrepid martyr "fell asleep"—"to sleep, aye, perchance to dream." This sleep of Stephen has given to our burial grounds the Christian name of "cemeteries"—they are places where our friends sleep; and "if they sleep, they will do well." (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) "*Grace and power*" (R.V.):—These two words, "grace and power," are closely connected. Their union here is significant. It was not the intellect, or the eloquence, or the activity of St. Stephen which made him powerful among the people, and crowned his labours with such success. It was his abundant grace. Eloquence, and learning, active days and laborious nights, are good and necessary things. God uses them and demands them from His people. He chooses to use human agencies, and therefore demands that the human agents shall give Him of their best, and not offer to Him the blind and lame of their flock. But these things will be utterly useless and ineffective apart from Christ and the power of His grace. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) **Then there arose certain of the synagogue . . . of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.**—*Stephen disputing in the synagogues*:—I. THE SPHERE. Amongst the four hundred and eighty synagogues which existed in Jerusalem at this time some were frequented exclusively by the Jews of the Dispersion. Families which had removed from the same region of heathenism to settle for devotion or trade in the holy city clustered together for daily prayer in the same congregation; exactly as to this

day in Jerusalem Spanish Jews (called Sephardim), who have dwelt there since 1497, are only to be found in their four synagogues, and German and Polish Jews (called Ashkenazim) in others. Here they fall naturally into three divisions. 1. The Libertines (*Libertini*), or Freed-men from Rome. Some ninety years had now passed since Pompey carried off a multitude of Jewish captives; and their descendants, most of them manumitted by their masters, had either settled in the Trastavere, on the right bank of the Tiber, or been banished from Italy. It is possible that many of the four thousand whom Tiberius deported to Jardinia (A.D. 19) had found their way to their own land. 2. The Jews from North Africa, from Alexandria, and Cyrene, the capital of Libya, and where Tripoli now stands, both of which swarmed with Hebrews. 3. Asiatic Jews, from the province known in official language as "Asia," and always called so in the New Testament, from Cilicia, whose capital gave birth to Saul. II. WITH THESE VARIOUS REPRESENTATIVES OF HELLENISED JUDAISM THE CHURCH NOW CAME FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CONTACT. The elevation of Stephen had this for its result, that his spiritual and intellectual gifts found a wider and more public sphere. His duties brought him in contact with the poor brethren of his own section of the Church, and through them with their unbelieving neighbours. These opportunities he used for the preaching of the gospel. Stephen was much more than an almoner. He was a deep student of the Old Testament, a theologian of unusual insight, a powerful reasoner, and an advanced Christian. In him we first find those gifts of healing which Jesus had given the apostles exercised by a man who was no apostle. In him, too, we find the promise fulfilled which had hitherto been fulfilled to Peter (Luke xxi. 15). His manner of speech, however, was unlike that of Peter. Peter was a witness, and preached by witness-bearing. Stephen was a student, and preached by exposition and controversy. These synagogues, to which no doubt he belonged, were homes of learning and bigotry. Intense enough and terribly sincere were the disputants whom Stephen encountered, but proud, narrow, self-righteous, and bitter; just the men to argue themselves into a bad temper, and, when beaten in logic, to fall to abuse. III. WE ARE LEFT TO GATHER THE SUBJECT OF DISPUTE FROM THE RESULT. From the charge brought against Stephen, from the evidence of the witnesses, and from his own defence, we gather that that great question was the bearing of the new faith on the old system. 1. In his earliest sermons Peter had hinted that the advent of Jesus, His passion and resurrection, formed the consummation towards which Mosaism pointed, the accomplishment of the great hope which all the prophets had foretold, and for which Israel waited. This constructive teaching was not unpopular, and orthodox Jews did not cease to be so upon baptism. Up to this time the question had not been raised, What if the Jewish hierarchy and commonwealth reject it? Now, however, it was getting to be not unlikely that the Sanhedrin might excommunicate the Church. Suppose it did, was that to be conclusive against the Church? Must the new economy be fettered by the limitations of the old? Nay, did not the very coming of Him to whom the whole symbolic ritual pointed require its abolition, and initiate of necessity a new worship? 2. How far Stephen went in this direction it is impossible to tell, but on it his face was set. He was the first man who dared to think that the gospel was a Divine step forward, which existing institutions might refuse to accept, and in that case have to be dispensed with. He probably went a good way in depreciation of the Mosaic system. To be sure the false witnesses misrepresented him as his Master was misrepresented. Still Stephen must have said something like it, nor is it hard to guess in what sense he said it. The whole of Mosaic worship on its external national side was anchored on the rock on which the temple stood. There was nowhere else any altar, priesthood, &c. Moreover, the current faith of the people believed in all this external system, and in little else. So long as that stood, God was propitious and Israel blest; no matter how full the temple was of cheating or Jerusalem of uncleanness. This was the system which threatened to reject the gospel. As it had slain Christ, it seemed about to cut off from its fellowship Christ's Church. What did recent events prognosticate? The downfall of Christ's cause over the temple system? Stephen had read the history of his nation with other eyes than those of the rabbis. Underneath all the changes of Hebrew story he had learned to trace a Divine progress towards some spiritual end. He had not found in this latest phase of national religious life such a finality as his countrymen dreamed of. The most material, local, and unspiritual of all forms of Hebrew worship did not seem the form likely to be everlasting. But one thing he had found to mark the whole of his ancestral history. As often as God had led Israel forward through a moment of change into

a fresh spiritual epoch of blessing, so often had His purpose been rejected by the bulk of Israel. This they were doing now, by idolising a material temple and rejecting a spiritual Christ. Here is the key to Stephen's long defence, which maintained—1. That a mode of worship limited to a single spot and a fixed ritual was by no means essential to God's service, but had been late in its origin and temporary in its purpose—being only one most recent stage in a very long and gradual process of Divine manifestation. 2. That at every critical turning in Israel's history Israel had mistaken the leadings of God, and resisted those who were sent to save it. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) **And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.**—*The source of ministerial power:*—It is impossible to listen to the ministrations of others or to watch carefully our own without perceiving great inequalities in respect of power. You will observe many devoted men who are amiable in their characters, zealous in their ministry, whose sermons are carefully prepared, who preach the truth faithfully, while, on the other hand, there is but little in their ministry of "the demonstration of the Spirit and power." On the other hand, you often see men of less intellectual calibre who produce an impression which even the unconverted cannot fail to feel. And this inequality is scarcely less observable in regard to one individual. You may frequently hear a sermon full of power in the morning, and one decidedly feeble, from the same minister, in the evening; and if you could ascertain the preacher's own opinion, you would find, in all probability, that he was best satisfied with the one which the people found the feeblest. Now, it is clear that this gift of power is pre-eminently the want of the Church of God, both at home and abroad. Note—I. STEPHEN'S POWER. It was—1. The power of persuasion (ver. 7). 2. It was a power in controversial defence of truth (ver. 9). 3. It was the power of searching and probing the heart to the very quick (chap. vii. 54). 4. But there is one thing to remark, and it is this—when we look for power, we must not look for an easy, smooth, pleasant, triumphant victory. Stephen had all the power of which we speak, but it called forth the angry passions of the wicked, so that they rose up against him, and he fell the first martyr to the truth. Stephen's power, however, is just the very thing we want. We want persuasive power to bring in men, we want controversial power to maintain the truth, and we want heart-searching power to awaken sinners, even if it provoke them. This is the power to be sought and prayed for by the whole Church of God. II. ITS SOURCES. 1. Wisdom. There was the same connection between wisdom and power in Micah, "Now then, I am full of power, of the Spirit of the Lord, of wisdom, and of might." There is the same connection in the prophecies of our blessed Saviour (Isa. xi.)—"the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might," was given to him. Light words, conceits, affectations, and outward display overthrow all thoughts of power. The man of God wants wisdom. He has to unfold the deep things of God, and he must not go lightly to the work. He is a steward in the Lord's household; he has to deal with a multitude of different dispositions, under different circumstances. Stephen's wisdom was pre-eminently Scriptural. There is only one of his discourses preserved, and that one is full of Scripture. He was not one of those who thought his own reason was anything when compared with the wisdom of God. He was not ashamed to draw all his conclusions from the Bible, and to base the whole fabric of his reasonings simply upon Scripture. The clearest evidence of the most consummate folly is the venturing forth in the strength of your own understandings. There may be wisdom in the simplest cottager, or the youngest child, far exceeding the loftiest flights of merely intellectual philosophy. Nor does it require anything extraordinary either in intellect or eloquence to produce such wisdom, for the Psalmist says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I know more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." 2. Faith. The connection between faith and power is a union frequently recurring. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Abraham "was strong in faith," but that may refer to one simple single act; "full of faith" implies that the whole mind and character were completely imbued with it. It was like St. Paul, when he said, "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." But how is this faith displayed? (1) In dependence. It is the office of faith to lean. Self-satisfied men are confident in their own powers and do not care to lean. Timid, doubting souls are so perplexed by their misgivings that they are almost afraid to lean, but the sinner who knows his nothingness leans his whole weight on Christ. So it is in our own personal experience. Men are very apt to lean with one hand on Christ, and one hand on resolutions, or on the

Church, or on the sacraments; "but we must learn to lean with both hands on Christ," and to lean the whole weight; and when you so begin to lean you will first taste the joy of peace and power. Men may go forth to preach leaning upon the excellences of a previous education, or on the advantages of his early youth. But what are these for the great work we have to do? (2) In expectation, for "faith is the substance of things asked for." If we pray for pardon without expectation of receiving it, or for the Holy Spirit without opening the heart in the full hope of his sacred entrance, or if we send men in the Lord's name, or go forth ourselves, to preach the gospel without expectations, where can be our faith? And is not this one reason why there is no more power in the Church of God? Do we not meet Sunday after Sunday with very little practical belief that souls will be born again through the preached Word? Perhaps a man begins with sanguine expectation, but after some months or years of hard toil he is ready to say with Peter, "We have toiled all night and taken nothing." Stephen was full of power; but he was first full of faith. He could grasp a fast hold of the Saviour, and so they were "not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." 3. All his wisdom, faith, and power were to be traced to a yet higher source—he was first full of the Holy Ghost. This has always been so. Micah was full of power, and he says, "Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord." The great mountain shall melt before Zerubbabel; but "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Paul went to Corinth, not "with excellency of speech, or man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power." In Thessalonica his "ministry came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance." Even Stephen and Peter and all the rest were powerless until the Spirit of God came, and then they were full of power, and soon thousands were added to the Church. It is clear, therefore, that if we desire power in our ministry, we must seek first for the gift promised by our blessed Lord and Saviour in John xiv. 17. In Stephen's case the two promises were fulfilled. The Spirit was with him, so that opposing powers were overcome under the influence of the Spirit. He was in him, so that when the stones were dashed at him there was a calm spirit of well-supported prayer. Conclusion: There is a mighty conflict raging—every day the conflict thickens. Depend upon it that these are not days for an easy, tranquil, indulgent Christianity. I might ask for money; I might ask for men—and we want them even more than money—but the great want is power to strengthen the whole Church of God. What is the use of men if God does not make them men of power? We do not want mere ecclesiastical machines, because we do not believe in mere ecclesiastical machinery. We want men filled with wisdom, faith, and the Holy Ghost. (*E. Hoare, M.A.*)

Vers. 11–15. **Then they suborned men.**—*The accusation of Stephen:*—I. ITS AUTHORS (ver. 9). Observe here—1. That moral perversity is common to men of every race. All these men, "Libertines," &c., differing widely in many respects, agreed in their antagonism to the true and Divine. 2. That theological controversy often irritates rather than convinces. II. ITS SPIRIT (ver. 10)—hostility to a truth which they felt an utter incapacity to deny. An unpalatable truth was forced upon them, despite of all their learning and logic, by the overwhelming arguments of one man. 1. This mortified their pride. Nothing makes the soul so furious as to wound its pride. 2. This struck at their most cherished prejudices. III. ITS SUBJECT (vers. 11, 13, 14). The charge here preferred would be considered by the Sanhedrin as the most heinous of crimes, sufficient to wake the vengeance of the nation. Blasphemous words against Moses, God, the holy place, and the law, a threat to destroy Jerusalem and change the customs of the Jewish nation! IV. ITS WEAKNESS. 1. The mode of procuring witnesses (ver. 11). Also that there should be men who prefer self to principle. Facts require no such support. 2. The appearance of the accused (ver. 15). (1) The face is the mirror of the soul. (2) Christianity makes the soul angelic. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The arraignment and transfiguration of St. Stephen:*—It is necessary that the Bible should be brief. A book so important must be made portable by the hand and the memory. Accordingly, out of a vast mass of materials the sacred writers have been directed to the choice of a very few. The thirty-three miracles of our Lord are specimens; why should others yielding no fresh lessons be detailed? Tautology only weakens effect. St. Stephen supplied the inspired specimen of martyrdom, although there were many others. Conformity to Christ's sufferings according to that Word, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup," &c. You have it here. Brave protest for Christ in the face of those who

have power to kill the body—it is here. Joy in the hope set before the martyr—it radiates from Stephen's face. Love to persecutors mingled with stern faithfulness—it exhales like a precious perfume from Stephen's prayer. Studied imitation of Christ in the act of dying—nowhere is this more remarkably exhibited than in the death of Stephen. This providential conformity to the image of Christ, however (as distinct from the studied imitation of Him), is the first thing which strikes us. What befell the disciple is what befell the Master over again. I. THE CONDUCT OF STEPHEN'S OPPONENTS. Infuriated by defeat in argument, they resorted to calumny and violence. Agents were employed to set about a story of blasphemy. With precipitate violence—the word used is the one applied to the seizure of the demoniac by the legion of devils, and to the seizure of St. Paul's vessel by the fury of the wind—they laid hands on him and hurried him away to the Sanhedrin. The paid agents of the Hellenist synagogues pronounced the formal accusation, "This man ceases not to speak," &c. Now the actual deposition is to be made, and the witnesses feel that their words may be called in question, we hear no more of the big terms of ver. 11. God is exchanged for "the holy place," and Moses for "the law." Full well they knew that Stephen had said nothing derogatory of Moses, much less of God. No doubt he had said much to this effect. Christ had predicted that not one stone of the temple should be left upon another, and Stephen echoed the prediction. Stephen too had probably seen further into the mystery of the admission of the Gentiles, and very possibly may have preached that Jewish rites were non-essential to salvation. But if Stephen had foretold all this, why are the witnesses stigmatised as false? Because they took his words out of the context which interpreted them, and gave them a totally different colour. Doubtless, like his Master, Stephen had the profoundest veneration for the temple and the law. But he had an intelligent apprehension of the place which each held in the system of true religion. He saw that both were elements of a preparatory discipline, and that now "faith is come" the "schoolmaster" was unnecessary. A man who says that a school book may be parted with when education is finished, by no means implies that school books are unnecessary while education is in progress. And if the words "School books are valueless" were separated from his explanation of the circumstances, the witness would be false. By telling half the truth we may convey quite as wrong an impression as by a contradiction of the truth. Nothing is easier and commoner than to make sweeping charges against those who maintain suspected propositions, while wilfully ignoring their explanation of what they hold. I have no right to say that a man denies inspiration because he denies verbal inspiration; nor that he impugns the atonement because he dissents from certain popular views of it. II. STEPHEN'S DEMEANOUR. 1. He heard the calumnious charge. It is not hard to see what course natural feeling would take. In the first place there would be indignation; and then would come perplexity as soon as it became apparent that the charge was so worded that it could not be met with simple flat denial. With these feelings fear would mingle, and altogether painful discomposure and hesitation of mind would be produced which would communicate itself to the feelings of the accused. But in that exciting moment Stephen retained the most perfect serenity of spirit. When the accusation was advanced, every member of the court turned to see how the servant of Christ thus brought to bay would look. Greatly were they surprised, and for the moment disconcerted. This was no wan and haggard culprit; those features spoke of nothing but communion with the invisible God, of the love, joy, and peace which are the result of such communion (ver. 15)—a lower grade of transfiguration. The Sanhedrin are momentarily cowed, as the devil's agents are so often by the majesty of holy innocence. Possibly the radiance of Stephen's countenance reminded them of the similar radiance on Moses' face, the result of similar communion with God. 2. Could there have been any nearer approach than this to our Lord's circumstances? He, too, had been apprehended with sudden violence; in His case false witnesses were suborned; His words, too, were twisted from their meaning, and finally His demeanour made His enemies quail. It may have been that this conformity to his Master's image was the secret of the supernatural joy that radiated from Stephen's countenance. Application: 1. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you": do not consider it foreign to Christian experience. If the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, let not His soldiers claim exemption. Therefore, when the cross is placed upon us, let us rejoice in the resemblance between us and our Master, and in the prospect of perfect conformity which that resemblance guarantees. 2. Let the supernatural radiance of Stephen's features,

caught from the contemplation of his Master, remind us of the spiritual transfiguration which should be daily proceeding in ourselves. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed," &c., and the secret of this is disclosed in "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed," &c. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Stephen before his accusers*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF STEPHEN (ver. 8). 1. He was "full of grace and power." That was his spiritual condition. Not all power, so as to be stern, tyrannous, overwhelming, but power characterised by love, geniality, sympathy, gentleness. Not all grace, lest he should be mistaken as a mere sentimentalist, who contented himself with exquisite expressions, without seeking their realisation in the sterner qualities of character. Stephen was by so much a complete man. 2. He "did great wonders and miracles among the people." That was his outer life. Mark the beautiful correspondence between the spiritual and the active. The one accounts for the other. With less of a spiritual quality there would have been less of social demonstration and influence. The "wonder" was not a trick of the hand; it was an expression of the deep spiritual history of the soul's life. The "miracle" was not painted on a board; it flamed forth from an inner and sacred fire. This description of Stephen should be the description of the Christian man and the Christian Church. Not a line can be added to this picture. We do no wonders and miracles. Why? Because we have so little grace and power. We have looked at the wrong end of this business. We have been wanting more "wonders" and more "miracles" instead of looking into the inner condition of the heart. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. II. HIS ACCUSERS. 1. They were controversial, they "disputed" with Stephen. Controversy is not Christianity. It is most difficult for any man to be both a debater and a Christian. So long as the Church was in the era of suffering, she had no time for debate. Her controversies were then fights for life. The Christian life is always a controversy; but "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities," &c. Let us all beware of the spirit of controversy, which delights in the rearrangement of words and forgets that Christianity is a sacrifice, a life of obedience. 2. Being controversial, they were as necessarily unjust. They "suborned" men to tell lies. The aim of debate is not to secure truth, but to secure some petty triumph, or to carry out to its melancholy end some rooted prejudice, or some discreditable antipathy. This is my fear of some collateral institutions which are formed in Christian churches. There are limits within which debate may be conducted to high intellectual advantage; but whoever enters upon a course of debate merely as such, without having as a supreme view to knowing, loving, accepting, and obeying the truth, puts his spiritual life to a severe strain. You will always find behind intellectual hostility to Christianity an explanatory moral condition. A man who does not love the light will use any excuse for getting out of it. Learn from this narrative—1. The danger which often accrues to truth from its supposed friends. "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." This is one of the earliest instances of heresy-hunting. Once for all, let us lay it down as an impossibility that bad men are judges of truth and falsehood. Men who had accepted a bribe came up to defend orthodoxy! No blind man is appointed as a judge of pictures, and no deaf man of music. But a bad man goes to church, and ventures upon an opinion as to the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the preacher, and says, with intolerable impertinence, that he himself may not be what he ought to be, but he knows the truth when he hears it! What is your life? What is your spirit? What are your wonders and miracles? And what is the interior condition of heart which explains them? These are the questions that ought to be answered. Search into narrow, envenomed, and ignoble criticism in every age, and you will find that the men who speak most against blasphemy in doctrine are often the men who could not live otherwise than by telling lies. 2. The manner in which slander should be met. What was Stephen's condition at the time? Hearing these lies, he will surely spring from his seat and indignantly deny the impeachment! Some men say they "cannot sit still and hear false statements about themselves." If they were greater men they would learn the art of patience. Great bodies are calm. Stephen sat still, but his face gleamed like an angel. Could you have seen the other faces—with the significant leer, the harsh mouths—you would have known, without hearing the defence, who was right and who was wrong. Would that we could look more and say less! 3. The transfiguring power of Christianity. The face of Stephen shone like the face of an angel. This is typical of character. Whenever character is under the influence of Christian inspiration it shines. "Ye are the light of the world." It is typical also of the resurrection, the last grand miracle

that shall be performed upon these common bodies. The face once dull shall be lighted up with an inward light that shall transfigure it into nobility and gracious expressiveness. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'" Christianity never takes hold of any man without making him a new creature, and without investing him with new beauty, nobility, and occasionally even splendour of expression. But whether this can take place in the body or not, it always takes place in the character, and the character determines the man. 4. We can all be full of faith or grace, and we can all do miracles and wonders. We have been too content to sit down under the impression that miracles have ceased. But what a wonder it would be, for example, if some of us ever helped a fellow-creature under any circumstances whatsoever! That wonder is possible to you. What a wonder it would be for some of us could we ever be met in a good humour! Wonders, miracles, signs! Why, the difficulty is to escape them! What a wonder it would be if some of us could be patient under suffering! You thought the age of "wonders" was passed, because the merely introductory signs have disappeared! The blossom is gone that the fruit may come. And we of these latter times are called to exhibit the wonder of a disciplined character, the marvel of a sanctified temper, the glittering phenomenon of a truly obedient sonship. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **We have heard him speak blasphemous words.**—*A false accusation with a semblance of truth:*—We get in these words, in this false accusation, even through its falsehood, a glimpse into the character of St. Stephen's preaching. A false accusation need not be necessarily altogether false. In order to be effective for mischief, a twisted, distorted charge, with some basis of truth, is the best for the accuser's purpose, and the most difficult for the defendant to answer. St. Stephen was ripening for heaven more rapidly than the apostles themselves. He was learning more rapidly than St. Peter himself the true spiritual meaning of the Christian scheme. He had taught, in no ambiguous language, the universal character of the gospel and the Catholic mission of the Church. And the narrow-minded Grecian Jews, anxious to vindicate their orthodoxy, which was doubted by their Hebrew brethren, distorted Stephen's wider and grander conception into a charge of blasphemy against the holy man. What a picture of the future of Christ's best and truest witnesses, especially when insisting on some nobler and wider or forgotten aspect of truth. Their teaching has been ever suspected, distorted, accused as blasphemous; and so it must ever be. And yet God's servants, when they find themselves thus misrepresented, can realise to themselves that they are but following the course which the saints of every age have run, that they are being made like unto the image of Stephen, the first martyr, and of Jesus Christ Himself, the King of Saints, who suffered under a similar accusation. St. Paul's teaching was accused of tending to licentiousness; the earliest Christians were accused of vilest practices; St. Athanasius, in his struggles for truth, was accused of rebellion and murder; the Reformers were accused of lawlessness; John Wesley of Romanism and disloyalty; William Wilberforce of being an enemy to British trade; John Howard of being an encourager of crime and immorality. Let us be content, then, if our lot be with the saints, and our portion be that of the servants of the Most High. Again, we learn from this place how religious zeal can overthrow religion and work out the purposes of evil. Men cannot, indeed, now suborn men and bring fatal charges against them in matters of religion, and yet they can fall into exactly the same crime. Party religion and party zeal lead men into precisely the same causes as they did in the days of St. Stephen. Partisanship causes them to violate all the laws of honour, of honesty, of Christian charity, imagining that they are thereby advancing the cause of Christ, forgetting that they are acting on the rule which the Scriptures repudiate, doing evil that good may come, and striving to further Christ's kingdom by a violation of His fundamental precepts. Oh, for more of the spirit of true charity, which will lead men to support their own views in a spirit of Christian love! Oh, for more of that true grasp of Christianity which will teach that a breach of Christian charity is far worse than any amount of speculative error! (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.**—*The martyr of Jesus:*—I. STEPHEN'S CIRCUMSTANCES AND TRANSFIGURATION. 1. It was A.D. 37 that he died. The circumstances of that year in the government of the Jewish people were altogether exceptional. Pilate had left the country, and Judæa was, for the time, without any representation of the Imperial Government, and thus the power over life and property remained

absolutely in the hands of the Jewish council. 2. Stephen, young, full of vigour, and as bold as he was intellectually strong, had stung into activity the furious hatred of the fiercest fanaticism. Foiled in argument, exposed to the jeers or contempt of those who watched the contest, they determined to have their revenge. 3. There were probably three component elements in the gathering of that fatal day. (1) The mob of spectators no way uninterested in the trial. The question at issue was one which seemed to touch the quick of national exclusiveness—the tenderest point in a Jewish mind. (2) The bench of judges, which included the rank and learning of the Jewish hierarchy. Some had grown old in the lore of Judaism; some were young in years but versed in the study of the law; all were the possessors of the sacred Scriptures, whose meaning was shrouded from them in the dismal fog of darkened minds; all were the slaves of an iron tradition and the victims of a distorting prejudice. (3) Last in that strange assembly was one young man, with the hopes of life still fresh before him. With the joy, felt by all men who in any sense deserve it, of conscious strength and rectitude, he had committed an unpardonable crime; he had loved truth better than custom, faithfulness to conviction better than popularity; he had hated the stagnation of an unworthy tradition, and risen above the temper of the habitual respectability of his time. 4. The trial began. The witnesses were examined and performed their expected duty of falsehood. Then as the president's interrogation came, the eyes of the assembly were turned on Stephen. Certainly Jesus was with him, and His promise, that the true words would be "given" in the hour of need, supported his spirit. Certainly heavenly powers were upon him, and the light of God's glory was streaming through his soul. Every eye was riveted on the face of Stephen, and the vision of that inner splendour flashed upon them with an unearthly loveliness. "His face was like the face of an angel." A face is the dial-plate of the soul. It takes the lights and shadows of varying feelings, hopes, and fears, and by expression records for others the inner variation of the movements of the soul. Hence the effect upon us frequently of a face in a crowd. Our eyes, resting for the moment upon the features of one happening then to be in rapturous joy or overwhelming sorrow, have rested—and we feel it—on the revelation of a human life. So some faces come to us, remembered indistinctly, and yet haunting our very dreams, moving us—by their slight and delicate tracery of pathos and suffering—moving us to the deepest, keenest sympathy. Now, what was the power of this face on which was riveted the gaze of the council? What? why, the angels are God's messengers; they see the face of the Father; they catch some expression of the uncreated beauty. Once on earth that had been seen in its real loveliness. Once it had awed the multitudes, subdued the intrusive band in the garden, flashed on Peter and melted him to penitence, gazed on the Magdalene and wakened her to heavenly love; now the likeness of its loveliness was seen on the face of the martyr, because in his soul was Jesus the crucified. II. HIS DEFENCE. The vision of the martyr was a mighty message; but his lips threw that message into words. There, at least, is outlined his message; there for us is traced his character. Note—1. That earnest desire for truth which is the first real requisite to its attainment. To kindle curiosity, to keep alive an honourable ambition in the young, not merely for reward, but for the acquisition of knowledge, is the duty of every good teacher. To know and apply the best that has been done and thought by those before us is the duty of all of us. And this desire for knowledge, when sanctified and ennobled by a reverent spirit and eager thoughts of God—how beautiful, how good it is! Alas! the fashionable spirit of doubt and unbelief, so often a mere cover for the laziness of an utterly worldly temper, is turning the noble-hearted young men of England into mere childish triflers. St. Stephen had evidently desired truth, and searched and studied the Scriptures, and that eager and loving spirit had had its reward. One reward was the vigorous intellectual grasp of the subject which he had to handle with readiness and under the appalling pressure of a trial for life. 2. Turn to the speech itself. (1) It indicates the noblest eloquence. True eloquence is one of God's choicest gifts. To abuse it is always terrible; because the possession of no weapon can involve a greater responsibility than of that one by which a single mind can sway a multitude. But eloquence has its degrees; the truest is primarily and intrinsically the eloquence of thought. If clear and powerful thought—alive with the *vis vivida* of genuine pathos or fiery feeling, and expressed in shapely words—be presented to the ear and mind of man, he has the rarest and the best. And in such cases even all we possess is the written record; even then the words have something of a power of life to penetrate through the thickest wrappings of the human soul. This has been

felt in Demosthenes, Cicero, Chrysostom, Bossuet, Massillon, and Lacordaire. From the few recorded words of St. Stephen we feel the same. (2) Before the mind of the martyr was the vision of a world-wide religion, and this was in sharp contrast with the narrow and passing character of Judaism. Before his mind, also, was the true, the necessary, issue of the Mosaic teaching—viz., Christ and the wide reach and sacred sovereignty of the Catholic Church. The dignity of the speech was, of course, enhanced by the danger of the speaker; but in it, on the points of the argument, every syllable told. The subjects he handled needed all his vigour, as centuries have conclusively proved. They are just those subjects of the deepest importance which concern and interest us still—the character, office, and claim of the Church of our Master. (3) Stephen's elucidation of the meaning of Jewish history and worship was the fulfilling in word of the duty performed so nobly in his life, and so heroically in his death. In this he is to the humblest of us a splendid and real example. The beginning, middle, and end of that duty now as then, is—Jesus Christ. To be faithful to Him, in each of us, is to make sense of fact and of history. He gave a reasonable explanation to accepted facts. An everlasting Judaism, with all the rest of men excluded, would have been a senseless solution of the history of the Jewish Church. That Church was like a broken clue unless it eventuated in Catholic Christianity; Moses and his teaching would have been an insoluble problem unless worked out in Jesus Christ. The power of this first argumentative statement of these important truths was in the fact that it made Jewish history hang together; its astonishing dignity lay in this, that it was the first. III. THE FORCE BEHIND HIM AND ITS EFFECT. 1. No mental vigour on such a desperate crisis would have availed to any purpose unless it had been seconded by intrepidity of spirit. And this courage of St. Stephen was no physical excitement nor vulgar audacity. He was essaying the rugged and difficult track of Christian martyrdom on which many indeed have travelled after him, but none had passed before. And here be it not forgotten that we are scarcely conscious how strongly we are swayed by the voiceless testimony of those who have gone before. If public opinion is a mighty power in life, stronger at times is the public opinion of the dead. To feel behind him a long array of public witnesses, of the achievements of brave generals and successful politicians, is for a soldier or a statesman to be confident in the inspiring genius of a great people. Noble ancestors help to noble deeds. And even in daily life, for some one else to have first succeeded, is to ourselves at least half the powerful element in our own success. Stephen, however, knew no merely human example; struggling for a cause, new, untried, and deemed altogether contemptible, he "possessed his soul" with a heroic patience, and bore his part with literally unexampled courage. Christian, do you flinch from the duty placed upon you? Think—around you is a "cloud of witnesses"; behind you the long array of the greatness and the suffering of the Christian Church. I pause in passing to remind you that as it is easy to follow a multitude to do evil, so it is not altogether difficult to go on the side of goodness if it chance to acquire the patronage of the majority. But the real test of principle, the real exhibition of Christian courage is, when standing alone, perhaps the object of scoffs and taunts, you sternly take the path of duty and witness to Jesus Christ. 2. "Sternly," did I say?—that brings me to another feature in the martyr's character: its extraordinary wealth of tenderness. Tenderness in a Christian comes first—we cannot doubt it—from his sense of human weakness and human need. The scene at the death of St. Stephen reminds us of that at the death of Christ. And both are the outcome of the deepest tenderness; no mere softness of a natural kindliness, or a natural shrinking from others' pain, but the true tenderness of a soul awakened to the depth of man's sorrows, and the greatness of his destiny. 3. Do you ask the secret of such a combination of tenderness and courage in any tempted man? There is one answer: An unshaken, a deep, a supernatural union with Jesus Christ. He first, in the fullest sense, obeyed the precept, or realised the prediction—"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." 4. Thus came the end. There are times when, from the spiritual blindness or the profound prejudice of an audience, the possibility of persuasion is gone. In such cases one duty remains to an honest man, the duty at all hazards of a faithful testimony. Such was the case with Stephen. All else tried in vain, this at last was left. It was the inspiration of such a duty that prompted his daring peroration. Obstinate resistance to Divine remonstrances had been their national, their historic danger; if persisted in, it was sure to be their ruin. At least they should be warned. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," &c. Hell was opened upon the souls of the judges, but heaven was, not merely on the face, but in the heart and on the lips of the criminal.

Not to bow before Divine revelation is to join the ranks of the rebel angels. The judges had chosen sides; so had the martyr! IV. THE ISSUES OF HIS MARTYRDOM. A great life, even though it seems to end in failure, must have great consequences. Stephen was a pioneer in suffering and in the spread of truth. The immediate consequence was "an open door" to a wider world than the Church could act upon in Jerusalem, because there the door seemed closed. Stephen was the first to clear men's minds, in some measure, of the mistaken dream that Christianity must pass through Judaism. And further, the impression made by his courage and his constancy could not have failed to be deep and lasting on many minds. On one we know it was. Saul had heard words that lodged in his mind and rankled in his memory; had seen a vision that he could not forget, a first faint outline, surely, of that face which afterwards he saw in completed dignity amid the noonday glory of the Damascus road. We know that, to the end of his days, in deep penitence, in touching humility, in most loving sorrow, the intense and tender nature of the great apostle was penetrated by the sad memory of the death of Stephen. The revelation of the richer details of results is reserved for "that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed." V. LESSONS. 1. The soul must be true to itself. There may be a disloyalty to self, which is rather a spiritual suicide than a spiritual treason. Every soul seeking God faithfully is led by Him who is the Guide to truth. To be faithless to the voice that warns and teaches is so far forth to mar in us the image of the Eternal, and to paralyse spiritual power. 2. In the world of revealed faith all power of witness depends upon conviction. To act upon conviction is to work your lever from a fulcrum which affords scope to move a world. Conviction is the fruit of a temperate, a true, a prayerful life. Doubt is no basis of action. Do not trifle with your faith; hold prayerfully what you know; and pray, when there is any dimness, for the clearer light which is never withheld from those who earnestly seek it. 3. Act with courage upon conviction, and act with charity. The Christian needs unflinching firmness, with unflagging love. Whence come such powers so needed and so majestic? The answer is, from Christ. 4. Begin at once; begin now. None are too young to witness to Jesus. The young creature whose soul was battered out of the shattered body on that morning of martyrdom, might have pleaded youth as a reason for reserve. He did not. How noble, how beautiful, is a young life given to Christ! 5. When all possible struggle is over we may witness to Jesus by the calmness of a loving resignation. (*Canon Knox-Little.*) *Moses and Stephen: the Old Testament and the New* (text, and Exod. xxxiv. 30):—In reading this account one is led to think of a similar scene in the life of Moses. 1. To be servants of the same God, they could scarcely be more unlike in their history, and they show in what divers ways the Divine workman may use his spiritual instruments. The life of Moses is probably the most complete of any man's. But not a single ray of light falls upon his death. Of the life of Stephen we know almost as little as of the death of Moses. But his last hours stand before us distinct and bright. 2. So unlike in other things, they have this in common, that each of them, on a great occasion, had a transfiguration—the reflection of the vision of God when He comes very near. 3. In setting these transfigurations over against one another, we have no thought of comparing the two men. Stephen fills a small range in the Book of God beside Moses. We shall compare them, then, in the periods to which they belong in God's revelation. We may compare—I. THAT VIEW OF GOD WHICH IS REFLECTED FROM THE FACE OF EACH OF THEM. 1. In the case of Moses it was "God's glory" (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 22)—an appearance like that which was seen by him in the bush, and which hovered over the mercy-seat without any definite form, for one fixed aim of that dispensation was to check the tendency to shut up God in figures made with hands. It was a great and significant vision, raising the Mosaic system above all religions, and proclaiming that there is one God, who is light, and who yet can visit man in love. For corresponding to this vision came the voice with it (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). There was much that was reassuring, but much also that was doubtful. It revealed the purity of God, but the image had no distinct features; and it promised mercy, but the way of pardon was not made plain. 2. Stephen "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The glory which Moses beheld has now opened its bosom, and, issuing from it, there is seen "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." The purity which in the day of Moses had no distinct features has formed itself into the countenance of the Son of God, and the mysterious mercy descends from God's throne by a new and living way in the person of the God-man Mediator, a Saviour risen from the Cross and grave.

3. These, then, were the views of God presented to Moses and Stephen. That the first was in the same line with the second cannot be doubted if we believe in the unity of the Bible and in the plan of God running through all the ages. It would be impossible to invert these views, for there was a fitness in their order. II. THE EFFECT OF THE VIEW ON THE IMMEDIATE WITNESSES. 1. In the case of Moses the effect was mainly, if not entirely, an external brightness—"the skin of his face shone." Its beauty had something of terror with it. Those who were near could not bear its open look, and required to have it veiled. Moses was the representative of a system which was not characterised by profound spirituality, as is proved by the sad stains and inconsistencies which mark the history of some of its best members, and the readiness of the great mass of its adherents to cast aside its profession in the hour of trial. In some few it was a strong reality, but in the majority their religion was an illumination cast on them from without—a separable and perishable surface thing. 2. The illumination on the face of Stephen came from the action of the soul itself. It is said, "the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh Moses," but "all that sat in the council looked steadfastly at Stephen." It did not turn them from their purpose, their passion was too fierce, but it brought them to a pause, imprinted itself upon them, and, may we not suppose, came back in waking thoughts and nightly dreams, and deserted some of them never till they saw it again before the throne of God? For there is this difference further between mere brightness of face and the beauty of the soul which beams through it, that the one is seen entire at first and grows no more. It tends constantly to fade, and must fade. But the soul's expression grows evermore as we gaze into it, and it is in reminiscence above all that it rises to its perfect ideal. It was this angelic beauty which shone in the face of Stephen, and it was there because of the object he looked upon. "His eyes were beautiful," because you saw that they saw Christ. 3. Now these two forms of transfiguration belong each to its own period. The one is bright but formless, the shadow of the Shechinah on him who sees it, and inspiring even its friends with awe till they can look no longer. The other is the beauty of the soul that has beheld Christ, distinct and expressive, reflecting His Divine purity and tenderness, so mild that even those who hate it cannot choose but look and wonder, and, when they would thrust it from the world, must stop their ears upon the voice of Stephen, and summon blind passion to do its work. III. THE CRISIS OF LIFE IN WHICH EACH OF THESE TRANSFIGURATIONS OCCURRED. 1. In the history of Moses it was in the fulness of his power and success as a Divine messenger. Great through his whole history, he had never been so great to the eye of man as at this moment. He had scattered, as God's vicegerent, disaster upon all opposition, and had led through the Red Sea an oppressed and terror-stricken nation to breathe into them a new life. He had been admitted amid scenes that, for outward grandeur, still stand unparalleled, into the closest intercourse with God, and the glory is there like God's mark on his forehead to tell where he has been and with whom. This hour is also in the very height of his natural and intellectual life. Many men gain their heart's desire as God's servants, only to die. Before Moses there lay stretched out years of usefulness and honour, which took their character and bore their results from this crowning period. 2. Stephen, on the contrary, is placed as a criminal before those who sat in Moses' seat, and is charged with breaking in pieces the law which Moses gave. He has done nothing to shake the earth with wonder. He professes only to be a humble follower of One who died on a Cross. A cruel and ignominious death looks him full in the face. But the transfiguration of Stephen is far grander than that of Moses. The one is impressed with the temporal and external magnificence of the Old Testament, the other full of the spiritual glory of the New, which begins with a death as the salvation of the world, and shows us the shame of the Cross on its way to become the brightest crown in the universe. It is more honouring to the power of God to see it not merely sustaining a man in such terrible extremity but glorifying him. It is, indeed, most significant, that while, in the Old Testament, the approving light of God falls upon His servant in the midst of life, in the New it descends in the presence of death. It crowns him conqueror after a course of labour very ardent but very brief. Among God's servants, those who fail in the outward life may rise to the highest rank in the spiritual, and the fore-glancing tokens of it can be granted here. IV. THE EFFECTS ON THE SURROUNDING SPECTATORS. 1. The impression made on the Israelites by the view of Moses was at first very great. A growth of obedient homage took place that was rarely equalled in their history. But it had not much depth, and soon withered away.

They had seen many more wonders in Egypt, and had equally forgotten them. They went on to murmur against God and against Moses. 2. In the case of Stephen it may seem as if the impression were still less. Those who saw his face as it had been that of an angel, did not spare his life. But we know how a look lives years after the face is hidden in the grave. We can scarcely doubt it was so here. Can we question that the look of Stephen burned its impression into the heart of Paul, and that from the martyr's death the living preacher rose with an angel's power and zeal? 3. Here again these results are entirely characteristic of the two systems. The Old Testament began with outward demonstrations of the most striking kind, and they were needful in their time and place. But their effects were transitory. They served a purpose only as they helped the introduction of spiritual principles, in some such way as thunder accompanies spring showers, where the power lies not in the peal or the tremor, but in influences more gentle and less marked. Even in that ancient dispensation a practised ear can hear the words all through—"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." And, in the New Testament, this mode of working becomes fully apparent. It begins with the death of Christ as the grand means by which men are to be drawn to God. It manifests its real strength in the meekness and patience of its humblest followers—in their calmness in trial, their fortitude in danger, their forgiving spirit to their enemies, their unquenched hope in the presence of death. Outward demonstrations have their use, but they are only the band of clay round the young graft to keep it safe till the current of inner life has established itself. V. THE PERMANENCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATIONS IN THE SUBJECTS OF THEM. 1. The brightness in the face of Moses faded away into the light of ordinary life as he receded from the great vision. It partook in this of the transitory character of the dispensation to which he belonged, and had its brightest light turned to our world. 2. In Stephen it was no passing glimmer of a setting sun, but that lustre in the morning clouds which shows him before he is above the horizon, and which is lost only in perfect day. In the death of Stephen it is intended we should see how thin the veil is between the two worlds—how the Lord stands on the very confine, sending across His look and arm and voice, so that ere His servant left the earth he saw his heavenly Master, heard His words, and returned His smile. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *The angelic glory on Stephen's countenance*:—I. A RESPLENDENCE OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, who says to His own "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer," &c. II. A RADIATION OF THE INNER CONFIDENCE OF FAITH, which knows that "if God be for us who can be against us?" III. A REFLECTION OF THE FUTURE GLORY, with which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared. (*K. Gerok.*) *Man or angel?*—I. WHAT WAS IT MEN SAW ON THE FACE OF STEPHEN? 1. Not a supernatural aureola such as the painters love to depict. But—2. The transformation of the human by the Divine, according to the natural law which connects spiritual states with corresponding bodily manifestations. The most transient emotions and impulses will betray their presence thus; how much more, therefore, the more constant elements of character and disposition? The changes of expression upon the face are, next to speech, the surest index to that inward world of thought and feeling and will which affects so powerfully our entire outward life. 3. The transmission of the Divine through the human. (1) In that upward gaze Pharisee and Sadducee were confronted with the reality of a spiritual world. (2) It served to hold them spellbound until the grand remonstrance had been uttered—as when Bishop Stanley, of Norwich, faced the tumultuous mob at his cathedral door, or Marshman was borne from his sick bed to quell the Birmingham rioters by his gentle presence. II. THAT OF WHICH THIS TRANSFIGURED FACE WAS THE PROPHECY AND TOKEN. What if it were intended to present the chief end of man to be a minister and interpreter of the Divine? Who more adapted than he, standing as he does between two worlds, and enjoying if he wills the suffrages of both. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *The angel-face on man*:—1. The Jews were familiar with angels, and knew that some of the greatest things in their national history had been accomplished by their agency. It was easy, therefore, for them to see any resemblance between a human creature and an angel of God. 2. Here is a man who had the look of an angel, and yet was still a man. Nay, in this trying yet favoured moment, he towered as it were to the height of his manhood, and put on all its bloom. It was Stephen's beauty that shone in the face. It was the real qualities of Stephen's character that made that beauty. It would seem, then, that a perfect man and an angel are brothers. Or say an imperfect man, in a mood of perfectness, or when he is wholly Christian, a child of God

when he is looking homewards. And if this be the way of it, then surely there is many an angel-face on earth, and much beholding of the same from the higher spheres. 3. Of course we do not associate the angel-look with any particular style of face. We know nothing about the personal appearance of Stephen: only this seems plain, that such as he was in type and by Divine intention, that he now became with great clearness, and in becoming that, of necessity put on the likeness of the angel. Yet, I think we may say that there are certain things common to the angel-face on man amid all the endless variety of type and form. I. BRIGHTNESS. We cannot be wrong in supposing that there was something luminous on the face of Stephen. We always associate brightness with the angels. If they come like common men (as they did to Abraham on the plain), the veiled brightness soon begins to shine through. If they come in their own nature, and proper state, then "the countenance is like lightning, and the raiment white as snow." If Stephen's countenance had been dull or sad on that day, this in the text had never been recorded of him. Why should any man wear darkness or heaviness on his face? There is something in the world which we may learn, there is something from God which we may have, that will change all to brightness. The true philosophy of life is to get the light within ourselves; and then to get the habit of looking for and seeing the light everywhere, according to that profound and beautiful Scripture, "In Thy light shall we see light." II. CALMNESS. Stephen was preternaturally calm in a scene of the utmost excitement. The test of a man's soul-state is often thus made very practical. He is tried by the pressure of the hour, by the hurry of the happening events. And it is not enough to have a general cheerfulness as the result of a survey of life and the world on the whole. There must be superiority to particular disquietudes, and a keeping of the heart in the stillness of grace, in the great and deep peace of God. It need not be disguised that this is sometimes a matter of supreme difficulty. But no one can hope to get the angel-face who furrows and flushes his own with daily excitements. The peace of God is to keep the heart and mind as a garrison is kept. Surely "the helmet of salvation" should keep the head cool and quiet. The very feet should be "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." III. BENIGNITY. This is the family likeness. For "God is love," and told us so in the visible form of His Son. And he that loveth not is not of God, and cannot wear an angel-face. The devil wears a kind of shattered splendour on his face. He is intellectual, he is calm; but there is no flush of benignity on his face; and by a long course of rebellion he has forgotten how to love. But those who, like Stephen, learn the lesson at the feet of Christ, and practise it among those who return good for evil, and seek the salvation of souls, they put on the image of the heavenly, and look like what they are—the children of the King! IV. FEARLESSNESS. In Stephen's case consequences were what we call "fatal." But in the nomenclature of heaven fatal sometimes means vital. Courage in the highest sense always means safety. If an angel were here, to live for a while the life of a man, you would see what it is to be brave. You would see him pass through sorrows smiling, his heart borne up already with foretaste of the after-joy. Conclusion: 1. He who would have the angel-face must look high and far. He must learn to look not so much at things, as through them, to see what is in them, and what is beyond. In a little while Stephen "looked steadfastly up into heaven." There is a look for a mortal man to give! A look which in his case was well rewarded, for "He saw the glory of God," &c. And that look gave him final victory. Men were gnashing their teeth, &c., beside him; they did not know that to him the pains of death were over. He had "looked" himself into heaven. He had trodden the streets of gold. But this was not the first time he had looked into heaven. Ever since he became a believer he had been looking that way. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth." You find them everywhere—in daily duties, in commonest things—but it needs the angel-eye to see them. Be an angel, or be a child in this; for the little child is not unlike the angel in its looking. Did you never see it on the little face—that calm, dreamy, distant look, that pierces quite through your world, and transcends all your ideas of prudence, and care, and duty, with a sublime indifference which is none the less grand that it is so simple? 2. Of course it is quite vain to attempt to put it on—the angel-face—directly, and by mental intention, as a soldier puts on his armour, or a king his royal robe. Could anything more absurd be conceived than this, that a man should say, "Now I am going to look like an angel!" If you try to put any particular emotion into the features, it will not be suprising if the very opposite emotion should come instead.

Try to look grand, and you may make yourself little. Try to look innocent, and (although you may not remember a single sin) the general consciousness of guilt may seize you and put its colour into your face. Have the angel within, and leave all else to come, as it will. Or, as in the case of Stephen, be "full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost," *i.e.*, be a Christian man, through and through, and the Lord your God will put His "beauty" on you, in one or other of its many forms, and in some supreme moments of life, in suffering, in trial, in death, may give your friends beholding you the privilege and joy of looking as it were upon the face of an angel. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Character seen in the face*:—There is a natural effect of the states of the spirit upon the countenance, which gradually progresses, and which amounts in a lifetime to a transfiguration. The infant has no expression in its face of good or evil, because it feels no good or evil. As it grows into childhood, there is little to be read there, save sometimes an inherited grossness of feature moulded by ancestral brutishness, or some lines of spiritual or intellectual expression that come down from the father and the father's father. Otherwise all is blank—the unspotted sheet on which many characters of exquisite beauty or unseemly blots may be thereafter marked. But as life progresses every deed seems to be written on the face. See how it is—I. IN A LIFE OF VICE. 1. Evil passions and deeds trace the handwriting of sin; and every crime deepens the lines, and every bad thought extends them further. Beastliness of habit makes a beastly face. Hatred and revenge ossify the features to their own hardness. Drunkenness puffs up the drunkard's bloated face. The young have not written these characters on themselves so plainly as yet—they are hardly legible;—but age has imprinted them as indelibly as if they were carved in the rock. And this is the transfiguration of vice. 2. It is so perfect that there need be no other book of record for men than that which they write themselves upon themselves. Did Cain bear a mark on his forehead? It was the type or prediction of the thousands of marked brows which at the judgment shall require no testimony, and no sentence of the Judge, but shall, to all beholders, proclaim the sinfulness and the punishment. 3. Do we often enough think of this, that it requires not great crimes to debase the features of the form Divine, but that what we call little sins are just as surely day by day leaving their imprint? We suffer anger to possess us, and think that when it has passed we shall be the same. We cherish impure thoughts, supposing that they will in no way permanently affect us. We deceive our fellows without a thought that "hypocrite" will be written in our faces. How often are these said to be little things which will be like stains upon the hands, easily washed away! But there is truth in the thought that blood of murder will not wash from the palm, and an equal truth that our so-called little faults, too, do daily stain or mould our countenances. Take care, then, of the inward impurity, that it may not come to it; that not only God, who reads the heart, but men also who read the face, may see the wrong of a wrong life by its marks. II. IN THE LIFE OF VIRTUE. 1. This also is a change which may progress from the earliest age at which moral character can exist. And we have often seen the good man's goodness written upon his outward appearance, and his purity of heart, like a subtle ether, penetrating through until it has surrounded him with a kind of atmosphere, and sat upon his head like a halo. Have you not seen it?—gentleness on the brow; calmness and purpose in the eye; purity of heart on the lips; temperance stamped on the features; the love of man in every gesture; and love and faith toward God in the air and expression. It is seen more in the aged, for it is a change which grows through long years. It grows sooner in such as have borne pain and sorrow, since they are the native soil of virtue. But it is, more or less, in all who live good lives. It is the mark by which God marks His beloved. It is the transfiguration of virtue. 2. This, too, is an evident preparation for the judgment or life to come. For it is written by ourselves—our own handwriting on the white page in which we come to this world clothed; our own signature which we shall carry when we go hence. And shall we fail to write this lovely record as we live here?—by faith marking on ourselves the graceful letters of faith; by brotherly kindness writing it on our face; by excellent and passionless emotions smoothing our brows; by holy love illuminating the beauteous margin of the whole manuscript; by patience and pain providing the border of glory which shall appear in the white hairs which are, in the good, a crown of glory. Ah! it is ours to rise at the last day with God's seal of baptism made a visible stamp on every feature by our daily fulfilment of baptismal vows. Conclusion: How does all this impress on us the folly of the thought that we can safely put off a holy life

until near the end of life. Surely, if vice and virtue do thus stamp themselves upon the features, a man cannot for long years let avarice pinch his features and passions deform them, and then in a short time expect God's Spirit to paint upon them the beauty of goodness. The evil spirits against which we strive are slowly to be killed and drawn forth; and the good that shall be unto life will be slowly planted and nourished. Begin early. For it were better for the saint even to die young and have the glow of heaven on his face, and see his Lord on the right hand of God, and say in rapture, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," than a long life would have been, even crowned with all worldly prosperity. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *The glory on the countenances of dying Christians*:—1. As the glorious setting of an earthly life, ended in the peace of God. 2. As the glorious rising of an approaching eternity with its heavenly light. (*K. Gerok.*) *The outward expression of the inward*:—It is said that Raphael, the great master of the beautiful, in sketching any figure or group of figures, gave his first attention to the drawing and modelling of the limbs, adding the draperies only after he had satisfied himself as to these. By this method he succeeded in imparting to them an air of inimitable ease and truthfulness. In like manner, grace, the character-creating principle, begins from within, gradually but surely harmonising the outward man with the laws of the new nature, and so producing that "beauty of holiness" which is so indescribable yet so familiar to us all. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Heaven in the face*:—A little boy going home one day, exulting in the fact that he had met Mr. Pennefather, was asked by his mother, "What did he say to you?" "He said nothing," was the child's reply, "but he beamed upon me." His singularly attractive power, however, was not confined to children. An importunate beggar, who was one day telling his tale of want to a party of travellers, suddenly caught sight of Mr. Pennefather, and prefaced his appeal with the exclamation, "You, sir, with heaven in your face!" *A face shining for the Lord*:—I cannot tell you the privilege it is to go forth as Christ's messenger. I have lately returned from a visit to China, and it has been, not an occasional thing, but quite the usual thing, to find the missionaries full of blessing and boiling over. One who reached China about a year ago was not there very long before the natives gave him a name—"Mr. Glory-face"—because his face was always shining for the Lord. He left a large business in which over two thousand hands were employed. He left a very precious work for God, in which he had been happy and much blessed. But what was his testimony? "The Lord promised me," he said, "a hundredfold more than all I left for Him. He has given me a very large hundredfold. It has been the best investment I have ever made." (*T. Hudson Taylor.*) *Judged by the grace*:—An American minister quaintly said, "Many Christians are like chestnuts: very pleasant nuts, but enclosed in very prickly burs, which require various dealings of nature and her grip of frost before the kernel is disclosed." This reminds me of an incident in my experience. Some years ago, when walking with a dear friend in the West-end of London, we happened to meet a lady truly eminent for her good works, but, alas! possessing a stern, sombre expression of countenance. I remarked to my friend, "That lady is a very earnest Christian." She replied, "I would not like to make her acquaintance, judging from her face." Here was one of Christ's servants repelling instead of attracting to Himself. Truly it has been said, "Gloominess, irritability, discontent, and touchiness are four things more catching than cholera."

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 1–53. **Then said the high priest, Are these things so?**—*The high priest and his question*:—This functionary was probably Theophilus, son-in-law of Caiaphas. The ex-officio president of the council called for the defence against the charge of blasphemy (chap. vi. 13, 14). The question, equivalent to guilty or not guilty, appears to have been put with great mildness, possibly under the influence of the angel-like aspect. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) **And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken.**—*Stephen's defence*:—In order to understand this wonderful and somewhat difficult speech, it will be well to bear in mind that a threefold element runs through it. I. He shows APOLOGETICALLY that so far from dishonouring

Moses or God, he believes and holds in mind God's dealings with Abraham and Moses, and grounds upon them his preaching; that so far from dishonouring *the temple*, he bears in mind its history and the sayings of the prophets respecting it; and he is proceeding, when interrupted by their murmurs or inattention, he bursts forth into a holy vehemence of invective against their rejection of God. II. But simultaneously and parallel with this he also proceeds DIDACTICALLY, showing them that a future prophet was pointed out by Moses as the final lawgiver of God's people—that the Most High had revealed His spiritual and heavenly nature by the prophets, and did not dwell in temples made with hands. III. Even more remarkably does the POLEMIC element run through the speech. "It is not I, but you, who from the first times till now have rejected and spoken against God." And this element just appearing (ver. 9), and again more plainly (vers. 25–28), and again more pointedly still in ver. 35, becomes dominant in vers. 39–44, and finally prevails to the exclusion of the others in vers. 51–53. (*Dean Alford.*) *Stephen's defence:*—I. THE SOURCE OF HIS ARGUMENT. The sacred history of the Jews which accusers and accused alike revered. In doing this he secured their attention by giving them to understand—1. That his faith in that history was as strong as theirs. 2. That he was thoroughly conversant with that history. II. ITS POINT—that all God's dealings with His people pointed to those very changes which he was accused of advocating. This position he makes good by showing—1. That the external condition of the Church had undergone repeated changes. There was a change under (1) Abraham (vers. 2–8). (2) Joseph (vers. 9–16). (3) Moses (vers. 17–44). (4) David (vers. 45, 46). 2. That the present external state of the Church had no existence before Solomon; and that even this was intended from the beginning to be temporary (vers. 47–50). III. ITS APPLICATION (vers. 51–53). Mark—1. The vile character he gives them. (1) "Stiffnecked"—contumacious, rebellious. (2) "Uncircumcised"—unsacred, impure. 2. The crimes he charges upon them—(1) Resistance to the Holy Ghost. (2) An hereditary persecuting spirit. (3) The betrayal and murder of the Son of God. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The defence of Stephen:*—1. How does this speech happen to be here? It would be easy for the memory to carry a sentence or two; but who could record so long and highly-informed a speech? There was a young man listening with no friendly ear. His name was Saul. It is supposed that he related it to Luke. It is not a correct report. No man can report chain lightning. You may catch a little here and there, but the elements that lifted it up into historic importance, it was not in the power of memory to carry. You must not therefore hold Stephen responsible for this speech; they did not give him an opportunity of revising it. There is no statement here made that is not spiritually true, and yet there are a few sentences that may be challenged on some technical ground. Some persons imagine that they are inspired when they are only technical. They forget that you may not have a single text in support of what you are stating, and yet may have the whole Bible in defence of it. The Bible is not a text, it is a tone; it is not a piece of technical evidence, it is an inspiration. 2. The man who reported this speech to Luke made it the basis and the model of his own immortal apologies. Truly we sometimes borrow from unacknowledged sources, and are sometimes indebted to unknown influences for some of our best inspirations. That a man appointed with six others to serve tables should have become the first Christian martyr apologist, and should have given the model for the greatest speeches ever delivered by man, is surely a very miracle of Providence! How little Stephen knew what he was doing. Who really knows the issue and full effect of any action or speech? Life is not marked off in so many inches and done with; it may be the beginning of endless other acts nobler than itself. I. IT IS FAIR CRITICISM TO INFER THE MAN FROM THE SPEECH. What kind of man was Stephen, judged by his speech? He was—1. A man well versed in the Scriptures. From beginning to end his speech is scriptural; quotation follows quotation like shocks of thunder. Stephen was a man who had read his Bible; therein he separates himself from the most of modern people. I cannot call to mind one who ever read the Bible and disbelieved it. We all know many who abuse the Bible who have never read it. Not that such persons have not read parts of the Bible, which being perused without understanding are misquoted. Who really knows the Bible by heart? Some of us boast that we can recite five plays of Shakespeare. Who can recite the Book of Psalms? You call upon your little children to recite nonsense verses, which is well enough now and then; but which of your children can recite a chapter of St. John? Suppose some of us were called upon at a moment's notice to recite six verses of Romans? Only

the men who know the Bible should quote it. Only those who are steeped in the Scriptures should undertake to express any opinion about it. This is the law in all other criticism, and in common justice it ought to be the law in relation to the inspired revelation of God. 2. A man who took a broad and practical view of history. It is as difficult to find a man who has read history as to find a man who has read the Bible. A man does not know history because he can repeat all the kings of England from the Conquest. You do not learn history from the books. From the books you learn the facts; but having ascertained the facts, you must make history. The novelist is a better historian than the mere annalist, because history is an atmosphere. It is not only a panorama of passing incidents; it is a spirit in which such men as Stephen lived. He was a member of a great and noble household, a link in a far-stretching chain, an element in a great composition. Why should we live the shallow life of men who have no history behind them? We are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses. We have no right to disennoble ourselves and commit an act of dismembership which separates us from the agony, the responsibility, and the destiny of the race. In Christ we have all to be one. 3. A man who was forced into action by his deep convictions. That is a word which has somehow slipped out of our vocabulary, because it has slipped out of our life. Who now has any convictions? Life is now a game, a series of expedients, a succession of experiments. It is not an embodied and sacrificial conviction. In those days men spoke because they believed. They had no necessity to get up a speech, to arrange it in words that would offend and be recollected by nobody. Without faith we cannot have eloquence. It is not enough to have information. If you believe Christianity, you will not need an exhortation to speak it. Speech about Christianity, where it is known and loved, is the best necessity of this life. The fire burns, the heart muses, and the tongue speaks; hence in the fifty-first verse you find that Stephen was a man whose information burned into religious earnestness. Having made his quotation he turned round as preachers dare not turn round now. It was an offensive speech, and it would be unpardonable now. Why? Because it was truth made pointed, and that no man will ever endure. The man who would listen all day with delight to an eloquent malediction upon the depravity of the whole world would leave the church if you told him he was a drunkard or a thief. We live in generalities. So preaching is now dying, or it is becoming a trick in eloquence, or it is offering a grand opportunity for saying nothing about nothing. It used to turn the world upside down. II. LET US TURN FROM THE MAN TO THE SPEECH. 1. Its literary form. We need no book of rhetoric beyond this great apology. Called upon, he addresses his auditors with courtesy as "Men, brethren, and fathers." He begins calmly, with the serenity of conscious power. He quotes from undisputed authority. Every step he takes is a step in advance. There is not in all his narration one circular movement. Having accumulated his facts and put them in the most vivid manner, he suddenly, like the out-bursting of a volcano, applies the subject, saying, "Ye stiff-necked," &c. This is the law of argumentative progress. Begin courteously, and beg the confidence and respectful attention of your hearers; but your speech will be their responsibility. They will not be the same at the end of the speech a they were at the beginning. A preacher may begin as courteously as he pleases, but having shown what God is and has done, and wants to be done, his conclusion should be a judgment as well as a gospel. 2. Its probable source. How did Stephen know all about the case? Suppose that Stephen was the second disciple who, on the road to Emmaus, heard Christ expound in all Scripture the things concerning himself. What if Saul reported Stephen, and Stephen reported Christ, and so the great gospel goes on from man to man, from tongue to tongue, till the last man hears it, and his heart burns within him! 3. Its main purpose—to disclose the method of Divine revelation and providence. Let us see whether what is related here agrees with our own observation and experience. (1) God has from the beginning made Himself known to individuals. Stephen relates the great names of history. Some names are as mountains on the landscape. We start our journeys from them, we reckon our distances by them, we measure our progress according to their height. God does not reveal Himself to crowds. It is not only in theology, but in science, politics, commerce, literature, family life, that God speaks to the individual and entrusts him with some great gospel or spiritual mystery. Why talk about election as if it were exclusively a religious word? How is it that one man in the family has all the sense? How is it that one man is a poet and another a mathematician? How is it that one boy can never be got to stay at home and his own brother can never be

got to leave home? How is it that one man speaks out the word that expresses the inarticulate thought of a generation, though all other men would have been wise enough to discover it? (2) God has constantly come along the line of surprise. Revelation has never been a commonplace. Wherever God has revealed Himself He has surprised the person on whom the light has fallen. The power of surprise is one of the greatest powers at the disposal of any teacher. How to put the old as if it were the new! How to set fire to common sense so that it shall burn up into genius! How to reveal to a man his bigger and better self! How has God proceeded according to the historical narration of Stephen? To Abram he said, "Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred." We cannot conceive the shock of surprise with which these words would be received. Travelling then was not what travelling is now. No man could receive a call of that kind as a mere commonplace! Called to give up a reality in the hope of realising a dream! Joseph's life was a surprise—a greater surprise to himself than to anybody. How was it that he always had the key of the gate? Why did men turn to him? How was it that he only could tell the meaning of the king's dream? Then pass on to Moses. A bush flamed at the mountain base, and a voice said to the wanderer, Stop! Nothing but fire can stop some men! There are those to whom the dew is a gospel, there are others who require the very fire that lights the eternal throne to stop them and rouse their full attention. God knows what kind of ministry you need, so He has set in His Church a thousand ministries. It is not for us to compare the one with the other, but to see in such a distribution of power God's purpose to touch every creature in the whole world. (3) God has all the time been over-ruling improbabilities and disasters. We should say that when God has called a man to service the road would be wide, clear of all obstructions, filled with sunshine, lined with flowers, that the man leaning on God's arm will be accompanied by the singing of birds and of angels. Nothing of the kind is true to fact. Stephen recognises this in very distinct terms. God said that Abram's seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and evil entreat them four hundred years! In the face of such an arrangement can there be an Almighty providence? Yes. And Joseph was sold into Egypt. "God-forsaken" we should say, looking at the outside only. And there were those who evilly entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children to the end they might not live. Moses himself was "cast out." Stephen does not cover these things up or make less of them. Nay, he masses them into great black groups, and says—Still the great thought went on and on! There is the majesty of the Divine Providence. Its movement is not lost in pits, and caves, and wildernesses, and rivers, and seas. The disasters are many, the sufferings are severe, the disappointments are innumerable and unendurable; still the thought goes on. Judge nothing before the time. So it is with our own life. Conclusion: Mark how exactly this whole history of Stephen's corresponds with Christ's method of revelation and providence. 1. Did not Christ reveal Himself to individuals? Did He not say to the Abram of His time, "Follow Me"? 2. Did He not also use the power of surprise? When was He ever received into any town as an ordinary visitor? Who did not wait for Him to speak and look, and act? Who was not impatient with all the multitude lest they should interrupt any sentence of this marvellous eloquence? 3. Did He not also take His Church through improbabilities, disasters, and dark places? Has not His Church been evil entreated? Have not our Christian fathers been cast out? Have we not also our heroes, and sufferers, and martyrs, and crowned ones? Was not Christ always master of the occasion? Without a place whereon to lay His head, He was still the Lord. We remember our disasters; but the Church is the Lamb's Bride, and He will marry her at the altar of the universe! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

St. Stephen's defence:—How was Stephen's speech preserved? The notaries, shorthand writers, and clerks attendant upon a Roman court were accessible to the gifts of the richer Christians when they wished to obtain a correct narrative of a martyr's last trial. Secret Christians among the officials also effected something, and there were numerous other methods by which the Roman judicial records became the property of the Church. Probably St. Paul gave his disciple, St. Luke, a report of what Stephen said on this occasion. I. THE DEFENCE OF ST. STEPHEN WAS A SPEECH DELIVERED BY A JEW, AND ADDRESSED TO A JEWISH AUDIENCE. Orientals argued then, and argue still, not according to the rules of logic taught by Aristotle, nor by the methods of eloquence derived from the traditions of Cicero and Quinctilian, but by methods and rules essentially different. What would satisfy Westerns would seem to them utterly worthless, just as an argument which

now seems pointless appeared to them absolutely conclusive. Parallels, analogies, parables, mystical interpretations were then favourite methods of argument. St. Stephen was accused of irreverence towards Moses, and hostility towards the temple, and towards all the Jewish institutions. He begins his address to the Sanhedrin at the earliest period of their national history, and shows how the chosen people had passed through many changes and developments without interfering with their essential identity. There was a chosen people before the customs introduced by Moses. There may therefore be a chosen people still when these customs cease, having fulfilled their purpose. He was accused also of speaking blasphemous words against the national sanctuary. His argument now takes a different turn, and runs thus: This building is now the centre of Jewish thoughts and affections. But it is a mere modern thing as compared with the original choice and promise of God. Even when it was built, and in all its original glory, its temporal character was clearly recognised by Isaiah (lxvi. i. 2). The same truth had been anticipated by Solomon (1 Kiugs viii. 27). Then there occurs a break in St. Stephen's address. Possibly the Sadducean portion of his audience had got quite enough. Their countenances and gestures bespoke their horror of his doctrines. Isaiah's opinion carried no weight with them as contrasted with the institutions of Moses; and so, borne along by the force of his oratory, Stephen finished with that vigorous denunciation which led to his death (vers. 51–53). II. WHAT A LESSON STEPHEN'S SPEECH HAS FOR THE CHURCH OF EVERY AGE! His forecast swept away at once all the privileges and profits connected with the religious position of Jerusalem, and thus destroyed the political prospects of the Jewish people. Men never listen patiently when their pockets are being touched, their dearest hopes annihilated. Take the political world alone. We now look back and view with horror the deeds wrought in the name of authority, and in opposition to the principles of change and innovation. We read the stories of Alva, and the massacres in the Netherlands, the bloody deeds of the seventeenth century in England and all over Europe, the miseries and bloodshed of the American War of Independence, the fierce opposition with which the spirit of liberty has been resisted throughout this century; and our sympathies are altogether ranged on the side of the sufferers—the losers and defeated, it may have been, for the time, but the triumphant in the long run. The true student, however, of history, or of human nature, will not content himself with any one-sided view, and he will have some sympathy to spare for those who adopted the stern measures. He will not judge them too harshly. They reverenced the past as the Jews of Jerusalem did, and reverence is a feeling that is right and blessed. The opponents of political change are sometimes denounced in the fiercest language, as if they were morally wicked. The late Dr. Arnold seems a grievous offender in this respect. No one can read his charming biography by Dean Stanley without recognising how intolerant he was towards his political opponents; how blind he was to those good motives which inspire the timorous, the ignorant, and the aged, when brought face to face with changes which appear to them thickly charged with the most dangerous results. Charity towards opponents is sadly needed in the political as well as in the religious world. And as it has been in politics, so has it been in religion. Men reverence the past, and that reverence easily glides into an idolatry, blind to its defects and hostile to any improvement. It is in religion too as in politics; a thousand other interests—money, office, expectations, memories of the loved and lost—are bound up with religious forms, and then when the prophet arises with his Divine message, as Stephen arose before the Sanhedrin, the ancient proverb is fulfilled, the corruption of the best becomes the worst, the good motives mingle with the evil, and are used by the poor human heart to justify the hardest, most unchristian, deeds done in defence of what men believe to be the cause of truth and righteousness. III. THE MISTAKES AND VARIATIONS WHICH OCCUR IN STEPHEN'S SPEECH. They are mistakes such as a speaker, filled with his subject and speaking to an excited and hostile audience, might naturally make; mistakes such as truthful speakers every day make in their ordinary efforts. (*G. T. Sokes, D.D.*) *Stephen's testimony*:—1. "Mark the perfect man." That object is worthy of regard anywhere; but here it is in a position peculiarly fitted to display its grandeur. Everything about the faith of Christians is interesting; but "the trial of their faith is found unto praise," &c. (1 Pet. i. 7). The flame may live through the day, but it is by night that it is seen. "Mark the perfect man," but choose the time for marking him—towards the close: "the end of that man is peace." 2. Stephen stands before the Sanhedrin, not to be tried but to be condemned. When he distributed alms his face was pleasant; but when he stands before his murderers it is like the

face of an angel. The sun is most beautiful at its setting, and if dark clouds cluster round they serve to receive and reflect his light, and so to increase the loveliness of the departing moment. 2. The specific charge against Stephen was that he spoke blasphemous words, &c.; but the first portion of his speech must have gone far to refute it, for in the spirit of a devout believer he traces the course of Hebrew history. This is no reviler of the temple and the law, a renegade Jew who abjures Moses. His elegant apologetic essay by itself would have pleased his judges, as the story of the ewe lamb did the guilty king, and perhaps they may have begun to think "this man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." 4. Stephen, I suppose, had a well-defined plan. He wished to win their attention and soften their hearts. When at last he saw the gates open he made a sudden rush, in the hope of taking the city by assault, and leading its defenders captive to Christ. And the plan was in the first instance successful. The Word proved quick and powerful. The sword ran into their joints and marrow. The immediate object is gained: there is conviction—"they were cut to the heart." But for those who try to win souls, as for those who try to win fortunes, there is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip. Conversion does not always follow conviction. When such a home thrust takes effect a great fire of anger is kindled which will either turn inward and consume sin, or outward to persecute the preacher. In this case anger went the wrong way. 5. As the fury of the persecutors increased, so did the ecstasy of the martyr. The blast of their wrath against him, like the wind against a kite, carried him higher toward heaven. He saw "the glory of God and Jesus." The two lie close together, to Stephen they blended in one. If the glory of God were to appear without Jesus the spirit would fail. "The Lamb is the light" of heaven. An uproar ensued. The peace and triumph of the martyrs has always had an effect upon the persecutors. The drums were beaten to drown the last words of the Scottish covenanters. "Argyle's sleep" on the night before his execution made his enemies' blood run cold. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **The God of Glory.**—*Stephen's answers to the charge of blasphemy against God*:—There was good reason for commencing his speech in the name of God. He thus in opposition to the current slander that he blasphemed God not only testifies his deep respect for God, and gives to Him the honour which is His due; but he has a positive reason for asserting the glory of God. Here, as in the subsequent part of his speech, he keeps in view the unlimited greatness, authority and sovereignty of God, according to which God is bound to nothing and no one, and can manifest Himself to whom, and how, and when He pleases. The expression in connection with "appeared" brings to their remembrance the sublime and elevating glory in which the self-manifestations of God were wont to take place. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) **Appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia.**—*The earliest appearance of God to Abraham*:—Of this particular appearance there is no account in Gen. xi. 31. But a Divine command, which had already been given at that time, is implied in Gen. xv. 7, and reference is made to this in Josh. xxiv. 2, 3; Neh. ix. 7; Judith v. 7–9. Philo and Josephus agree in representing the Patriarch as having been called twice, first from his kindred and country in Ur, secondly from his father's house in Haran, Terah having accompanied him in the former migration, and being dead before the second. This is one of several instances in which New Testament supplies facts supplementary to Old Testament—*e.g.*, the prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14); the names of the Egyptian magicians (2 Tim. iii. 8); the hope that sustained Abraham in offering Isaac (Heb. xi. 19); the acknowledgment of Moses (Heb. xii. 21); the motive which strengthened him to leave the court of Pharaoh (Heb. xi. 24), and Egypt (Heb. xi. 27); and the prayer of Elijah (James v. 17). (*Bp. Jacobson.*)

Vers. 4–8. **When his father was dead He removed him into this land.**—*The difficulty as to the date of Abraham's migration*:—Terah died at Haran at the age of two hundred and five (Gen. xi. 32). From Gen. xi. 26 it has been inferred that Terah was not more than seventy at the birth of Abraham; and as Abraham left Haran at seventy-five (Gen. xii. 4) it would follow that Terah outlived his departure sixty years. But it is nowhere stated that Abraham was Terah's eldest son, and the Rabbins reckoned him the youngest. Abraham's prominence in history as the father of the faithful and the friend of God accounts for his name being placed before that of Haran in Gen. xi. 26. In like manner the name of Shem, the youngest, stands first among the sons of Noah (Gen. ix. 18; x. 21); Isaac's name takes precedence of Ishmael's (1 Chron. i. 28); Judah is placed at the head of the list of the sons of Jacob (1 Chron. iv. 1; v. 1–2), and Moses is mentioned before his

elder brother Aaron. (*Ibid.*) **And He gave him none inheritance in it . . . yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession.**—*The faithfulness of God*:—Of this we have three illustrations in the verses before us, which are all the more impressive because of their unlikelihood. We have God's fidelity—I. To His PROMISES (ver. 5). Abraham, without a foot of land, and, being childless and nomadic, not likely to trouble himself about any, was promised that his seed should possess the entire country. We know that this came to pass, and through what a wonderful series of unlikely events it came to pass. This, therefore, is a good sample of all God's promises—*e.g.*, 1. Of temporal good. Who that has trusted God's word in this particular ever knew it to fail? There is no promise of affluence, but there are abundant promises of sufficiency. Some of the richest pages in Christian biography are records of the extraordinary way in which God works the deliverance of His people in poverty, affliction, danger, &c. 2. Of salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Who ever knew that to fail? It has been proved over and over again in the most hopeless cases. The infidel, men and women to whom abnormal vice has become a second nature, criminals on the verge of execution, have found it true, and in a manner in which the most sanguine could never have expected. 3. Of grace. The Christian is sometimes placed in circumstances of extraordinary trial. Extreme adversity and extreme prosperity, circumstances which have been gradually accumulating until they reach a climax, and circumstances which seem to gather like a thunderous cloud in a moment, expose the Christian to extreme peril. Satan seems to occupy an unshakeable vantage ground, and the good man seems to be helplessly entangled in his toils. Not so. Strangely is there opened "a way of escape," which would all along have been seen to be open but for temporary blindness of faith. 4. Of glory—the best illustration perhaps of the promise before us. Then there will be given to us what we most seem to want here, but which we have least ground to expect. The poor will have riches, the weary rest, the afflicted blessedness, and, most wonderful of all, the humble Christian worker the glad "well done" and the crown of life. II. To His PROPHECIES (ver. 6). That this prophecy would be fulfilled was most improbable, a general characteristic of most of the Divine predictions. Men make shrewd guesses based upon wide experience and a careful induction of facts, and men marvel when what, to the clear sighted, seemed almost inevitable takes place. Much more should they marvel when God's Word—based upon what to the most sagacious human reason would pronounce to be no ground at all—comes true; only the wonder should be mixed with adoration. Here, *e.g.*, is the prediction that a childless old man without a foot of territory should have a seed large enough to occupy the land; that a race that did not exist should pass through vicissitudes which are sufficiently specified for a given number of years. Of a like character are the prophecies concerning Christ and His Church. This being the case with regard to fulfilled prophecies, surely there is good room for faith in those which have not yet come to pass. Having regard to the past who can cease to have hope for the Church or for the world. The Church has not yet come fully into its inheritance—but it is better off than Abraham, who had not a foot of his. III. To His THREATENINGS (ver. 7). The power here threatened was now, and at the time of the fulfilment of the threatening, the mightiest in the world. Yet Egypt was judged. The great world powers afterwards threatened—Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, were in their turn colossal in their strength, yet where are they to-day? And why? Let modern potentates heed the lesson—because they opposed the cause of God; a course as likely to succeed as the effort to keep back the sea with a broom. Conclusion: 1. A sacramental guarantee was given for all this. God entered into solemn covenant with Abraham that promise, prediction, threatening—for all hung together—should be fulfilled, and sealed the covenant by the ordinance of circumcision. And what is a Christian's baptism but a seal of a covenant of promise involving everything else for this life and the life to come; and what is the Lord's supper but a memorial to all generations of the present support and ultimate triumph of the Church of Christ? 2. Lessons: (1) God takes time for the evolution of His purposes. Four hundred years was not too long for the working out of His purposes concerning Israel; four thousand years are not too long for Him to whom one thousand years is as one day. (2) Man must therefore wait. Patience is the grace supremely needed in this relation. Let us not, like faithless Israel, forget or despair. (*J. W. Burn.*) **And God spoke in this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land.**—*Sojourners in a strange land*:—I. THE SOJOURNERS—Abraham's seed the spiritual progenitors of believers. "They

that are of faith are the seed of Abraham." The Jews were—1. A chosen people; so Christians are a chosen generation. 2. A separated people. In whatever circumstances we find them they will not mix. They would not in Egypt; they will not to-day. So a distinguishing mark of Christians is separation from the world—"What concord hath Christ with Belial." 3. A people owned of God—"I will be their God; they shall be My people." His own inheritance, portion, "special treasure." Observe also, that this people owned their God. In their feasts, sacrifices, offerings, first-born. God was to be owned as their God in all. They were not to take a journey nor engage in battle without first asking God. Another and a double mark of Christian character. 4. A blessed people—"Blessed art thou in Israel," &c., and all who are of the faith are recipients of "the blessing of Abraham." The covenant treasures laid up in Christ Jesus, the righteousness which is by faith. II. THE SOJOURNING. We should never consider the world through which we are passing as any other than a strange land. Do not think of building your nests as if you were to be always at home here. Leave the worldling to his toys, and let us contemplate the fact that we are only strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were. 1. Abraham's seed are considered strange beings in this world—so strange, that they are held "an abomination," and positively offensive (Gen. xliii. 32). The case is not altered in the present day. "The world knoweth us not, because it knows Him not." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c. He who is "born after the flesh" is still as bent upon persecuting him who is "born after the Spirit" as in Paul's days. Nor can the servants of Satan, the soldiers of Sihon and Og, allow the Israel of God to pass through their territories unmolested. And yet I am anxious that all the seed of Abraham should be able so to live, that their very enemies may come to the same conclusion that the enemies of Daniel did (Dan. vi. 5). 2. They are annoyed with strange things as they pass through this strange land with its—(1) Principles. (2) Practices. (3) Persons. 3. Though grievously annoyed, yet they advance continually in the face of every obstacle and foe. Nothing stops them; on they must go. But how was it that no powers could arrest, no floods or plains intimidate, or armies vanquish Abraham's seed? Just because God went before them as their guide, a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. And is it not the same now? The Lord is a wall of fire round about them that fear Him. The real advancement of the seed of Abraham will always include these two things; an advancement in the knowledge of ourselves that shall lay us low; and in the knowledge of Jesus that shall elevate and cheer us. III. THE KINGDOM BEYOND. It was Jehovah's good pleasure to give His people Canaan, and they got it not with sword or bow. They did not deserve it, for they were a stiff-necked and perverse generation, but it was Jehovah's good pleasure to give it to them, just as "it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom." Many things might be said about this kingdom; but note these: We shall then be so situated as to be above all annoyances, in a kingdom where there is not an unwholesome law; where there is not a dissenting voice from the will of the Monarch; where there is no infirmity, and nothing but joy, and peace, and righteousness. (*J. Irons.*) **And that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.**—*The duration of the sojourning:*—Vers. 6 and 7 are quoted, not with verbal exactness, from Gen. xv. 13, 14 according to the LXX. A parenthesis marked after "land" and "evil" would make it clear that the four hundred years are the length of the entire time during which Abraham and his descendants were to be sojourners, *i.e.*, to have no country of their own. The Egyptian servitude did not begin till after the death of Joseph, and did not exceed two hundred and fifteen years. If the calculation is made from the weaning of Isaac, the interval is exactly four hundred years. In speaking, the round number was used instead of the precise total of four hundred and thirty years; which is given in the historical statement (Exod. xii. 40), quoted Gal. iii. 17, which the received chronology makes to be the interval between Abraham's going down into Egypt and the Exodus. The same variation is found in Josephus, who states in his history that the Israelites quitted Egypt in the four hundred and thirtieth year; but in a report of a speech of his own in the "Wars" he gives the duration four hundred years. (*Bp. Jacobson.*)

Vers. 9-15. **And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.**—*The patriarchs and their younger brother:*—This picture of patriarchal life is not a flattering one, and was "written for our learning." Jacob, by no means a model son, was not a model parent, and was blind to the evils of

parental favouritism so signally illustrated in his early history. There can be no doubt that his conspicuous preference for Joseph was the root, if not the immediate occasion, of the "envy" of the text. Joseph's brethren, however, stand in a worse light. No one, much less a brother, should suffer for the faults of others. Even supposing that parental affection was having an ill effect on their young relative, fraternal influence ought have done much to check it; and brotherly chivalry should have suggested a less drastic course than that which they pursued. Note—I. THEIR MOTIVE—"envy." 1. Its ultimate cause. Occasioned by Jacob's partiality, it grew to portentous proportions by Joseph's dreams. No doubt Joseph was very foolish to tell them his dreams, knowing, as he must have done, their attitude towards him, and, as he might have guessed, the motive which they would impute to him. Even Jacob protested against the dream which indicated that "sun and moon" as well as "the eleven stars" would have to bow down to the young dreamer. Hence Joseph has been credited with egregious vanity; but there is nothing in the narrative which is inconsistent with childish simplicity. 2. Its evil. Apart from its consequences, envy is the greatest curse with which a man can be afflicted. It is not hard to read between the lines and see the misery of the eleven patriarchs as they brooded over their brother's offence and plotted his ruin. We see the evil of it nowadays in the wretchedness of the men who nurse revenge, or who are covetous of their neighbours' talents, position, or wealth. II. THEIR ACT. There are no lengths to which envy will not go. 1. They plotted Joseph's murder, and how many men's reputation, fortune, or even life, have been murdered through envy! And they were guilty of it inasmuch as it was in their heart. 2. Reuben's timely interposition gave their rage time to cool, and Judah's cool calculation saw ultimately a personal advantage in sparing their brother's life. Envy at white heat studies only revenge regardless of consequences; envy with a dash of reason in it plots for one's own advantage at another's expense. Hence they argued, "What is the use of killing him when sparing him means money." So they sold him into Egypt. Not that their hard hearts were in the least softened, for they knew that in all human probability he was going into a life that was worse than death. III. THEIR FRUSTRATION. "But"—what a turn this little word gives for better or for worse! If we read something good about a man the conjunction prepares us for the inevitable detraction which follows. Naaman was a great man, "but he was a leper." The word, however, gives a bright turn sometimes to history, as in the text. 1. Joseph was delivered out of all his afflictions. 2. He was made governor over all Egypt. The opposite of all they intended came to pass. How often are the designs of envy thus frustrated, and the evil passion smothered by what it hoped to consume! IV. THEIR HUMILIATION. 1. They became dependents on their evil-intreated brother. Imagine the situation. They were now begging bread of the lad whom they thought to murder; the eleven stars were prostrate before the star they thought to eclipse. Many other envious men have been brought into the same situation. 2. Joseph overwhelmed them with his forgiveness and generosity; showing the other side of revenge, and the proper attribute of the Christian towards those who envy him. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," &c. Learn—1. How uncalculated forces in human life may operate to the dismay of the wicked and to the frustration of evil plans. The patriarchs, like all persecutors, left God out of their calculations. 2. How the very means employed to afflict the righteous may be the very instruments of their prosperity. Had Joseph not been sold to the Ishmaelites he had never been governor of Egypt. 3. How what is intended for the destruction of one may be the salvation of many! Had Joseph not been sold into Egypt, Egypt might not have had its bounteous harvest, and Joseph and his whole family might have perished. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Examples of envy:*—We shall find it in Cain, the proto-murderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of envy. We shall find it in the dark and gloomy and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the king of Israel, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yea, it was envy that perpetrated that most atrocious crime ever planned in hell or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which Nature gave signs of abhorrence by the rending of the rocks: I mean the crucifixion of Christ; for the Evangelist tells us that for envy the Jews delivered our Lord. (*J. A. James.*) *Envy: its grounds:*—As a shadow accompanies those that walk in the sun, so envy is a constant companion of those that excel others. As there is no shadow where there is no sun, so there is no envy where there is no prosperity. The infatuated Caligula slew his brother because he was a beautiful young man. 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 has happened to Mutius, or some great good to another." "Dionysius the tyrant," says Plutarch, "out of envy, punished Philoxenius the musician because he could sing, and Plato the philosopher because he could dispute better than himself." Cambyses killed his brother Smerdis because he could draw a stronger bow than himself or any of his party. *Envy: its evils:*—As the joys of the happy increase, the sorrows of the envious multiply. As a ship tossed with continual waves, so the envious is always in trouble of mind, repining at the success of others. (*Cawdray.*) *Envy personally hurtful:*—The adder and the toad have deadly poison in them, which hurt others, but not themselves; but envy is so deadly, that it killeth him that hath it, and others also. The envious man frets and pines away when others do well. He cannot eat or sleep quietly, unless some mischief falls on the person he envies. (*Ibid.*) *Envy self-destructive:*—I remember reading somewhere in a Grecian story of a man who killed himself through envy. His fellow citizens had reared a statue to one of their number who was a celebrated victor in the public games. So strong was the feeling of envy which this incited in the breast of one of the hero's rivals, that he went forth every night, in order, if possible, to destroy that monument. After repeated efforts he moved it from its pedestal, and it fell, and in its fall it crushed him. An unintentional symbolic act was this, showing the suicidal action of envy on the soul. It is ever an element of misery, a burning coal which "comes hissing hot from hell." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Envy: its good:*—Envy, like the worm, never runs but to the fairest fruit: like a cunning bloodhound, it singles out the fattest deer in the flock. Abraham's riches were the Philistines' envy; and Jacob's blessing bred Esau's hatred. (*J. Beaumont.*) *Envy: its universality:*—Envy is a weed that grows in all soils and climates, and is no less luxuriant in the country than in the court; is not confined to any rank of men or extent of fortune, but rages in the breasts of all degrees. Alexander was not prouder than Diogenes; and it may be, if we would endeavour to surprise it in its most gaudy dress and attire, and in the exercise of its full empire and tyranny, we should find it in schoolmasters and scholars, or in some country lady, or the knight her husband; all which ranks of people more despise their neighbours than all the degrees of honour in which courts abound; and it rages as much in a sordid, affected dress as in all the silks and embroideries which the excess of the age and the folly of youth delight to be adorned with. (*Lord Clarendon.*) *Envy: advantage of benevolence over:*—The benevolent have the advantage of the envious, even in this present life; for the envious is tormented not only by all the ill that befalls himself, but by all the good that happens to another: whereas the benevolent man is the better prepared to bear his own calamities unruffled, from the complacency and serenity he has secured from contemplating the prosperity of all around him. (*Colton.*) *Joseph's afflictions and advancement:*—I. HIS AFFLICTIONS. 1. Their causes. (1) The envy of the patriarchs. (2) The desires of Potiphar's wife. (3) The forgetfulness of the cupbearer. 2. In what they consisted. (1) Incivilities of his brethren. (2) Loss of liberty. (3) Exile from home. (4) False accusation and imprisonment. II. HIS ADVANCEMENT. 1. God was with him. 2. God delivered him out of all his afflictions. 3. God gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh. 4. Pharaoh made him governor, &c. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Joseph a type of Christ:*—I. IN THE AFFLICTIONS HE SUFFERED. 1. He was hated by his brethren. 2. He was sold as a slave. II. IN THE BEAUTY OF HIS CHARACTER. This is seen clearly in every recorded incident of his life, but especially—1. In the manner in which he resisted temptation. 2. In the spirit of forgiveness he manifested. III. IN THE COUNSEL HE IMPARTED. 1. His counsel was wise (Gen. xli. 33-40; xlv. 24). 2. Wise because God directed. Joseph, like Daniel, taught of God. So of Jesus we read, "Never man spake," &c. (John vii. 46). "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom" (Col. ii. 3). "I counsel thee buy of Me," &c. (Rev. iii. 18). IV. IN THE DELIVERANCE HE ACCOMPLISHED. 1. From famine and death. 2. For Jew and Gentile, for his brethren, also for Egyptians and all countries round Egypt (Gen. xli. 56, 57). V. IN THE EXALTATION HE OBTAINED. 1. It was obtained through humility and fidelity. 2. It was acknowledged even by his foes. So Christ is exalted (Phil. ii. 5-11). (*F. Joseph.*) *Joseph a type of Christ:*—I. IN HIS HUMILIATION. 1. His father's beloved son, but his brethren's derision and offence. 2. Conscious from childhood of future greatness, only attained by suffering. 3. He was hated by his own; sold into the hands of

sinners; falsely accused, and unjustly condemned. II. IN HIS EXALTATION. 1. Crowned with honour after trial, shame, and suffering 2. Placed for a blessing over a famishing people. 3. Recognised with trembling by those who once denied and persecuted him. 4. Rewarding with favour and kindness those who did him evil. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) **Pharaoh . . . made him governor.**—*Joseph's exaltation*:—He exchanges a captive's chain for ornaments of gold; the prison garb for courtly vesture; the narrow walls of a jail for crowded streets, through which, amid acclaims that rend the skies, he is borne in a royal chariot. He was Potiphar's slave; he has become Potiphar's lord. He begged favours of a butler; the proudest princes of Egypt now live in his smiles, and tremble at his frown. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) **And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren.**—*The second time*:—There is a plain parallel between Joseph and Jesus, his brethren and ourselves. Certain classes of real seekers do not at once find peace: they go to Jesus after a fashion, and return from Him as they went. Our fear is that they may grow indifferent or despairing. Our hope is that they will go again, and before long discover the great secret, and find food for their souls. To this end we would follow the track of Joseph's story, and use it as an allegory for the benefit of the seeker. I. THERE IS A SOMETHING WHICH YOU DO NOT KNOW. The sons of Israel did not know Joseph. Like them—1. You have no idea of who and what Jesus is. Power and pity blend in Him. He is far more than He seems. 2. You view Him only as great, lordly, unapproachable; a great and stern governor and tax-master. 3. You do not know that He is your brother, one with you in nature, relationship, and love. 4. You cannot conceive how He loves; He yearns to make Himself known; His heart is swollen big with compassion. 5. You cannot guess what He will do for you: all that He is and has shall be at your disposal. Picture the Israelitish shepherds in the presence of the exalted Egyptian prince, as he stands veiled in mystery, girded with power, and surrounded with honour. Little could they imagine that this was Joseph their brother. II. THERE IS A REASON WHY AT YOUR FIRST GOING YOU HAVE NOT LEARNED THIS. Joseph was not made known to his brethren on their first journey, nor have you yet found out Jesus so as to know His love. 1. You have not looked for Him. The sons of Jacob went to Egypt for corn, not for a brother. You are looking for comfort, &c., not for the Saviour. 2. You have not yet felt your sin against Jesus, and He would bring you to repentence, even as Joseph brought his brethren to confess their great wrong. 3. You have not gone with your whole force. As the brothers left Benjamin at home, so have you left some faculty or capacity dormant, or chill, in your seeking for grace. 4. You have a larger blessing through the delay; and the Lord Jesus will in the most seasonable hour reveal Himself, as Joseph did. Till then He refrains. III. THERE IS GREAT HOPE IN YOUR GOING AGAIN TO HIM. Joseph's brethren made a great discovery the second time; you are in similar circumstances to them. Go a second time; for—1. You must go or perish. There was corn only in Egypt; and there is salvation only in Christ. 2. Others have gone and speeded. All nations went to Egypt, and none were refused. Has Jesus cast out one? 3. You have lingered too long already, even as did Israel's sons. 4. A welcome awaits you. Joseph longed to see his brethren, and Jesus longs to see you. IV. THERE ARE FORECASTS OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU GO. The story lends itself to prophecy. As the sons of Israel fared with Joseph, so shall you fare with Jesus. 1. You will tremble in His presence. 2. He will bid you draw near. 3. He will comfort you by revealing Himself to you. 4. He will bless and enrich you and send you home rejoicing, to fetch all your family to Him. 5. He will rule all the world for your sake, and you shall be with Him, and be nourished by Him. Conclusion: 1. Let us hasten to go to our Saviour the second time. 2. Surely this is the season, for the Holy Ghost saith "to-day." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **All his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.**—Seventy is given as the number, including Jacob, Joseph, and his two sons, in Gen. xlvi. 27; Exod. i. 5; Deut. x. 22. Here, however, Stephen had the authority of the LXX. of Gen. xlvi. 27, which gives the number at seventy-five and makes it up by inserting the son and grandson of Manasseh, two sons and a grandson of Ephraim. With them it was probably an editorial correction based upon Numb. xxvi. 27–27. Stephen, as an Hellenistic Jew, naturally accepted, without caring to investigate, the number which he found in the Greek version. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **But when the time of the promise drew nigh.**—*The fidelity of God to His promises*:—What a faithful God! He does not forget His promise, but

fulfils it even long after the death of the man. Mark this, thou disheartened teacher: thou mayest not see the use of this thy work, and thou mayest in the meantime with Abraham fall asleep; Yet God will fulfil His promise after thy death. (*Apostolic Pastor.*)

Vers. 20-43. **In which time Moses was born.**—*Moses, a man of God and a man of the people*:—I. FROM THE PEOPLE, according to flesh and blood. II. ABOVE THE PEOPLE, according to spirit and character. III. FOR THE PEOPLE, in word and in deed. IV. AGAINST THE PEOPLE, where the law of God was concerned. (*K. Gerok.*) *Moses, a pattern of God's chosen instruments*:—1. The metal from which He takes them. 2. The fire in which He forges them. 3. The tests by which He proves them. 4. The deeds which He performs by them. (*Ibid.*) *Moses, a true reformer*:—Every reformer needs—1. Profound knowledge and living experience of the heart. 2. Clear insight into the times. 3. Warm heart for the people. 4. Heroic courage in the face of the world. 5. Childlike humility before God and His Word. (*Ibid.*) *The training of Moses, an example how God prepares His chosen instruments*:—1. By great dangers and mighty deliverances (ver. 21). 2. By human instruction (ver. 22), and Divine illumination (ver. 30). 3. By the experience of the world (vers. 22-24), and quiet intercourse with our own heart (ver. 29). 4. By deep humiliations (vers. 27, 28), and high proofs of favours (vers. 32-34). Observe similar experiences in Joseph, David, Elijah, Paul, Luther, &c. (*Ibid.*) *Moses and Christ*:—I. WHEREIN MOSES RESEMBLES CHRIST. 1. Both accredited by God—(1) By a wonderful deliverance in infancy (Pharaoh and Herod). (2) By their silent ripening for their great mission (Moses at court and in the wilderness; Christ in the cottage and the wilderness). (3) By their solemn call to office (Moses at Horeb, Christ at Jordan). (4) By the rich manifestation of the Spirit and of power (Moses "mighty in words and deeds," Jesus "mighty in deeds and words"). (5) By the deliverances wrought out by them. (6) By the judgments inflicted on an ungrateful and disobedient people. 2. Both rejected by their nation. (1) Their Divine mission was apprehended (ver. 27). (2) Their pure intention calumniated (ver. 28). (3) The freedom offered to the despised (ver. 39). (4) Their memory blotted out by an ungrateful generation (ver. 40). II. WHEREIN CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES. 1. Moses redeems from bodily, Christ from spiritual bondage. 2. Moses redeems Israel, Christ mankind. 3. Moses effects a temporal, Christ an eternal salvation. 4. Moses acts as servant, Christ as Lord. (*Ibid.*) **And was exceeding fair.**—*Moses' beauty*:—God gave him that tallness when he was three years old, as was wonderful; and as for his beauty, there was nobody so unpolite, as when they saw Moses, they were not greatly surprised. Nay, it happened frequently, that those who met him as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again on seeing the child; that they left what they were about, and stood still a great while to look on him. (*Josephus.*) *Beauty a Divine talent*:—Beauty, if given to God, is indeed a talent not to be despised. It adds grace to our actions, a lustre to our virtues, and eloquence to our words. But if it be not dedicated to the service of God, it becomes a deadly poison, both to ourselves and others. (*Dr. Wogan.*) *Beauty, its criterion*:—If true, it increases on examination; if false, it lessens. (*Lord Greville.*) *Virtue necessary to beauty*:—Beauty unaccompanied by virtue is a flower without perfume. **And when he was cast out Pharaoh's daughter took him up.**—*Providence*:—What God wills to live no tyrant can destroy. Pharaoh, who had given a cruel order for Moses' death, must bring him up in his own court. The Lord knows how to protect His chosen, and makes their enemies their servants. (*K. Gerok.*) **And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.**—*Moses' education*:—I. THE EDUCATION OF MOSES. 1. He was instructed by strangers. Pharaoh's daughter had him taught Egyptian learning at her own expense, as children have to be taught in schools by strangers. Instruction by parents not always possible, because of their ignorance, labour, &c. (1) God appointed a princess, as if to honour the teacher's office. People say any one will do; but if your watch-spring is broken, do you take it to a blacksmith? Can a common mind guide that delicate, ethereal thing, a child's soul? We want first-rate men. Miserable economy in parents! Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. You weigh your child's mind against copper. (2) Consider the influence of teachers. Three thousand five hundred years an Egyptian princess took a poor man's child and taught him. The result of that education is not over yet. Compare her influence with Pharaoh's. To rule in a single heart is greater than the proudest sway. The teacher is greater

than the king. Here is a man perched on high, dressed in a little brief authority, with fingers pointing: That is he! And here is Christ with little children round Him. 2. He was under home influences. By a merciful arrangement Moses' early years were entirely superintended by Pharaoh's daughter. His mother nursed him. The princess gave him instruction, his mother education. People think education reading, writing, &c.; loading the memory with information and making preparation for a profession; but that is only the wisdom of Egypt. We must distinguish between education and instruction. The former is to unfold nature; to strengthen good and conquer evil; to give self-help; to make a man. The teacher cannot give this. You want influence bearing on the heart. Now influence is given at home. God gives the father to impart strength of will, and the mother tenderness of affection. Moses owed his lawgiving, politics, &c., to the princess; his religion to Jochebed. Jochebed that woman of poverty and toil, her hands black with brick-making; Jochebed that woman of faith, ennobled to defy the might of Egypt. Mothers, know your work! God has given you the destinies of the world. Our schools fail for the want of mothers and home influences. 3. He was disciplined by circumstances. Pharaoh's daughter had done something, and Moses' mother something, but there were other things needed beyond man's control. (1) He belonged to an oppressed nation: hence his patriotism—that deep, long devotion to one vast cause which only can be felt in such circumstances. (2) He was a banished man: hence his sympathy with the crushed. (3) He was a solitary man: hence his depth and solemnity of character. (4) He was a traveller: hence his knowledge of the world and man, and his enlarged views. 4. But he needed some sudden impulse. It came in the burning bush, and from thence the man of learning became the man of public action. Observe from all this—(1) That education goes on through life. After he left Egypt and home his development continued. The lot of many is poverty: hence their fondness of character. It is often the lot of the orphan: hence may spring self-help; or, if the disposition be weak, bad habits. Riches may obstruct the child's moral growth, and produce, in spite of expensive education, only indolence of character. Again, we are disciplined by public circumstances. We live in time of war or peace, during a revolution, or in an age of trade, science, and philosophy—all this disciplines character. We talk of "finished education." Education only ends when a man is in his winding-sheet. Observe—education is useful to call forth power to grapple with and modify circumstances. Trees on the sea-coast or in stony soil are thwarted, yet they may be pushed by agriculture. The best agriculture is in Scotland, which has but a poor soil. (2) Education is God's work, for circumstances come from God. Teaching cannot do all; we must look for fruit from God. We must wait for our best impulses, which come like a flash, unexpectedly. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. Look back on our lives: what governed our most remarkable moments and alteration in character? Not systematic education; but some impression like that of Moses in the wilderness, that looked like chance—an impression from some great soul, or an old truth forcibly put. II. ITS RESULTS. 1. On his own character. (1) Mentally, it gave him the habit of inquiry. He turns aside "to see *why* the bush is not burnt." Other men would have simply seen the bush on fire. The first thing in education is to encourage this habit. When your child asks, "What is the use of this?" &c., do not call it troublesome. But not in duty. "Why" in phenomena is the acknowledgment of ignorance, but in practical duties it is the boast of presumption. (2) Morally, it gave him boldness and tenderness. Many men are bold, yet tyrannical; many tender, yet weak. The perfect character joins both. Moses was ever the champion of the oppressed—his brethren, Jethro's daughters. (3) Religiously, it gave him—(*a*) Reverence. He takes off his shoes. (*b*) Obedience. God says, "Go before Pharaoh," and Moses braves the angry king. (*c*) Meekness. He was humble as a child. This is what is meant by education—mental power, moral worth, religious character. 2. On his nation the chief result was the elevation of the labouring classes. The Egyptian policy was to keep Israel down, to refuse them educational and political advantages, to prevent their increase. The task of Moses was their emancipation. So is that of every Christian. To elevate the labouring classes, however, is not to exempt them from toil. Labour is a blessing; it brings out strength of character. Nor is it to break down classes, but by Christianity and education to level up. Thank God the time has passed when the English policy was the policy of Egypt. The insane cry once was, "The people must not be educated, because it will unfit them for their station." Now the mighty chasm between rich and poor is filling up. (*F. W.*

Robertson, M.A.) *Human learning recommended from the example of Moses*:—I. INQUIRE INTO THE EDUCATION AND ATTAINMENTS OF MOSES, WHO IS HERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN LEARNED IN ALL THE WISDOM OF THE EGYPTIANS. II. DEDUCE THE LAWFULNESS AND EXPLAIN THE ADVANTAGES OF HUMAN LEARNING, in opposition to those weak sophisms which some conceited novelists have imagined to the contrary. But there is little need of authority to recommend that which does so amply recommend itself. Such is the excellency of human learning, that it is impossible to conceive how anything so entertaining in the theory, so useful in the application, and withal so ornamental in the figure it makes, should be unlawful to be acquired, or should not, indeed, rather be highly worthy of the most laborious pursuits. The mind of man is capable of great improvements, not to be attained but by much pains and study; from whence we see every day the mighty difference between a liberal and sordid education. In the one, human nature seems only to resemble the rude lines of an unfinished piece, which may, indeed, discover the bulk that is designed, but without that beauty, order, and proportion which should recommend it. In the other it is, as it were, finished by the artist's hand, and seems to want nothing that should make it lovely and agreeable. I forbear to expatiate farther on the transporting pleasures which arise from learning; in regard its excellency is such that it serves not only to please, but profit, to improve the mind with useful lessons and instructions, as well as entertain it with delightful speculations. The necessity of virtue is more clearly discerned, and the measures of our duty are more easily prescribed, when men are able to perceive the consequences of their actions, and infer fit rules of life from their observation of the nature of things. They are likewise better able to gain advantage to themselves, and go the readiest way to work in any enterprise, when they know the connection between causes and effects, and have all the experience of former ages which learning can afford. Nor is its influence confined at home, but, diffusive of itself, extends to all that stand in any way related to us, The philosopher studies not only for himself, but for the common benefit of human kind; and, by his useful discoveries, unfolds those secrets for the public good, which had been otherwise locked up in the profoundest silence. The power of medicine to heal diseases might have remained a secret, and mankind have been for ever destitute of wholesome remedies, were it not for such cultivation and improvement of the mind as human learning gives. I need not observe to you how the several arts of arithmetic, geometry, navigation, and the rest, conduce to the good order and government of the world, to the adjusting men's various rights and interests, to the symmetry, and thereby to the duration, of buildings, to the conjunction of countries far distant in situation, and thereby to the better carrying on of trade and commerce. Nor can you want to be reminded that an inquiry into the nature of moral good and evil must likewise be of general use, beneficial to the public as well as to the student, qualifying some for the information and tuition of others, to furnish them that have less leisure and abilities with true principles, and instruct them fully in the nature of their duty. And from the whole it will be obvious to collect what ought not to be omitted upon this occasion, that those first rudiments of literature we learn at school must needs be highly beneficial as laying the foundation for all the rest, and being, indeed, the proper groundwork upon which any part of human learning should be built. The enthusiast, in the first place, objects against it as deceitful or vexatious, or at best but useless. The deceitfulness of human learning he would build upon St. Paul's authority, who calls it philosophy and vain deceit, and warns his Colossians beware lest any man should spoil them by it. But they who make this objection would do well to distinguish between the different ends and uses to which learning is applied. The right end of it is to serve for the better illustration and discovery of truth; and when it is subservient to this purpose, the Holy Scripture is so far from condemning it, that it recommends it rather as highly beneficial. It is not then, you see, the thing itself, but the abuse or vain pretence of it the apostle blames. Nor are they less deceived in the argument they draw from the vexatiousness and uncertainty of human learning, which the wisest of men reckoned to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit," because that "in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." For here again there is a pertinent distinction to be made between the study of human learning, looked upon as being itself our supreme good and happiness, and as a means only which may be subservient and conducive to it. It was Solomon's business, in his book of Ecclesiastes, to show that nothing but religion or the fear of God can make us truly happy. To that end, he observes the

vanity of all other schemes of happiness, and among them, how even learning itself, though it bids fairer than the rest, is yet very defective, and will leave the man far short of happiness who has no higher aims, especially if he be (as without religion men are too apt to be) over-curious to search deeper than human reason can fathom, and unwilling to resolve everything at last into unsearchable wisdom and omnipotence. But this is no real disparagement to that wisdom and knowledge which, being kept subordinate and made subservient to religious purposes, does humbly admire what it cannot comprehend, and therefore can be no just objection against that right use of human learning which I am at present desirous to recommend. I have but one objection more to examine, and that is the free-thinker's, who reckons every man ought to judge in all matters for himself, and not suffer himself to be influenced by the skill and learning of another; but especially that it is most unreasonable, by arts of rhetoric and moving eloquence, to work on the affections of vulgar minds, and so prevail with them to do that to which they would otherwise be most averse. Let it be returned that no man's liberty of judging is taken from him by having reasons offered to direct his judgment; but he ever judges with the greatest freedom who judges most consistently with the appearance of reason and truth. If the matter be such as he is capable of examining himself, he ought seriously to weigh whatever is thus offered, and either to reject or admit it, as shall appear most reasonable upon mature deliberation. But if the matter be above his reach, it will be but equitable to believe the learned in their own profession, since he can have no other way of discovering the truth. He is not to follow them where he finds they are in error, any more than he would wittingly take a cup of poison if it were recommended to him by a skilful physician. But then neither may he neglect their direction, where his own judgment fails or wavers, any more than he would refuse the medicine prescribed by his physician, for no other reason but because he is not thoroughly acquainted with the quality and power of those ingredients of which it is compounded—always remembering to apply himself to God for His special blessing and favourable assistance. And then, as to the other part of the objection, although I shall allow the moving of men's passions, where there are no reasons, either directly offered, or at least presupposed, for the conviction of their judgment, to be an absurd and unjust way of proceeding, yet so many are the instances where people act against their judgment, and are backward to do that which they cannot but confess fittest to be done, that it deserves to be esteemed, not a lawful only, but a necessary art, to stir up the affections, even where the understanding is sufficiently informed before. III. INFERENCES FROM ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID. 1. Such being the manifold and great advantages of human learning, let us be thankful to Almighty God, who has made our nature capable of such improvements. It is sure a very easy return for the blessings we receive, to acknowledge the bounty of Him who gave them; and he must be most unworthy of the benefit bestowed who will not own it to be one. 2. Let those who are set apart to such studies be careful to improve the talents committed to their trust. 3. Let those who reap benefit from their labours of this kind value in return and esteem them for their works' sake. The advantages, we see, are great which redound to the public from the studies of the learned; and therefore gratitude requires that the public should make suitable acknowledgments to those persons by whose means such advantages are derived to them. 4. Let us all, therefore, in our several stations and capacities encourage the study and increase of useful learning, by our exhortation, our contribution, or our own industry. (*W. Berriman, D.D.*)

Vers. 23–30. **And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren.**—*The patriotism of Moses:*—I. LONG NURSED—"forty years." 1. Inspired by his mother. The precious time during which he was entrusted by the princess to the care of his nurse, Jochebed, would, we may be sure, be well employed, and subsequent opportunities would be utilised for reminding him of who he was, and of his possible destiny as the leader of his race. No throne in the universe is so potent as the mother's knee for good or evil. 2. Cherished among smothering influences. (1) Gratitude to his deliverer. (2) Egyptian learning and court training. (3) Prospects of advancement, even to the throne of Egypt. It must have required a very deep-seated patriotic instinct to have resisted all this. II. PREMATURELY EXHIBITED. 1. Without a Divine call. Moses acted on the spasmodic impulse of the moment. Here was a palpable opportunity—the first which presented itself—of showing his long-nursed patriotism, and the ill-usage of

his brethren acted like a spark on a train of gunpowder. Many men call themselves to rectify certain evils, and mistake a seeming opportunity for the voice of God. Passion, however noble, is not inspiration. This is seen in its effects. That which leads to murder, however great the provocation, as in the case of Moses and the French Revolution, is manifestly not from heaven. When the hour comes the man will be inspired; let the man, then, wait for the hour. 2. Without the least chance of success. What was one man, even suppose that he was sure of the loyalty of the unorganised slaves, against the disciplined might of Egypt? This has been the mistake of well-meaning but impulsive patriots all through history, and the results have ever been fatal to the interests of those whom they would have served. III. EVENTUALLY RECTIFIED. Moses soon saw that force was no remedy, and that his people were hardly fit for immediate emancipation. What chance of liberation for a people divided amongst themselves? Union is strength; and Moses began to educate the people in the two great unifying principles—1. Fraternity. "Sirs, ye are brethren." Moses saw that the only hope for Israel was the cultivation of brotherly feeling. Other ties without this are ropes of sand. 2. Justice. "Why do ye wrong?" The fetters of internal wrong-doing are far stronger than those imposed from without. Tyrants are safe when their subjects are depraved. If a community would successfully resist the iniquities of the powers that be, they must be law-abiding themselves. Agitators are at length recognising this principle, and passionately appeal to their followers not to break the law. IV. UNGRATEFULLY REPUDIATED. When Moses smote the Egyptian no protest was raised; but on attempting to sow the seeds of self-deliverance he met with the fate of many reformers. Most people are willing to be helped; but when urged to help themselves, the whole situation is often changed. They had no objection to Moses being a ruler and a judge when he assailed the oppressor; but when he advised the oppressed to follow a more successful but prosaic and unromantic course, the worst feelings of jealousy were aroused. The public sentiment towards Cromwell was very different when he was driving out the Stuarts from that which was expressed when reducing the chaotic national elements to order. V. SUDDENLY ABANDONED. "Then fled Moses." 1. Not, we may well believe, through sheer cowardice. Fear of Pharaoh had something to do with it, no doubt; but this was the fear of a man who felt that he would have to encounter the monarch alone. The cause was hopeless; he would have no following; it was useless to throw his life away. 2. Disgust, we may believe, had something to do with it. Why should he sacrifice himself for a people who would not even treat him with common gratitude. "Those who would be free must themselves strike the blow." Moses adopted the right course. He accepted the inevitable. The time was not ripe, nor was he—a lesson for all would-be patriots and reformers. VI. DIVINELY REVIVED. That his patriotism died out in Midian is obvious from his reluctance to embark on the mission when the time had come. By minding other people's business he had lost everything; henceforth he would mind his own. And he did so for forty years. But all this time he was being Divinely qualified. His character matured, his old impulsiveness was gone. Cool reason took the place of spasmodic passion. He became familiar with habits and scenes which stood him in good stead for the next forty years. The time came, and when it came the fire of the bush laid hold of his soul, and the Divinely-inspired leader went to beard Pharaoh and to lead his brethren out of the house of bondage. (*J. W. Burn.*) *A true leader of the people*:—These words were spoken by the Christian martyr, Stephen, when he was standing before the Jewish council. He was accused of seeking to overthrow the institutions of Moses, and his mind not unnaturally reverted to the time when Moses himself was an innovator, and repelled by the ancestors of the very men who now taxed Stephen with seeking to change the customs which he had delivered to them. The passage in the life of Moses which Stephen relates gives us an example of—I. THE TRUE LEADER'S INSTINCT. He went to see his brethren, and to look on their burdens. This is the instinct of a true leader. He does it from policy; for how can the general regulate the marches unless he knows how much the soldier has to carry? Or how can he prescribe methods of lightening burdens unless he knows of what they consist? But not only from policy; from piety and humanity. The true leader's nature comprises the true shepherd's nature—not the robber's or the mere hireling's. II. THE TRUE LEADER'S MISTAKE. He supposed the people would understand. A superiorly-gifted mind often finds a peculiar difficulty in judging of average human nature, and its calculations may prove to be ill-founded. III. THE TRUE LEADER'S AIM. It is to cause unity to be recognised; for what but unity can

give the power which it is his nature and his function to wield? Here there was no absence of natural grounds of union. They had two of the strongest—oneness of race and a common oppressor. IV. THE TRUE LEADER'S DISAPPOINTMENT. That his efforts to promote union were in vain. But in the case of the Israelites, blindness was combined with jealousy. They saw in Moses only a man of their own order. "His own received him not." Stephen might well recall these circumstances when he was standing before that tribunal of his countrymen, which was perpetrating a still greater refusal. The repulse was a personal one; but the disappointment was far from being merely personal. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 30–34. **And when the forty years were expired there appeared to him an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.**—*The burning bush:*—A sign and a type—I. OF ISRAEL. As in Egypt, it resembled a degenerate and wild thorn hedge, burning, but not consumed, in the glow of the brick-kiln, and in the heat of trial. II. OF THE MESSIAH. According to His human lowliness—a thorn bush, and Divine glory—the flame in the bush, inseparable in one person—the bush not consumed. III. OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, in its insignificant cross form, constant trial, and indistructible powers of life. This bush has now burned for nearly two thousand years, and yet we have never seen its ashes. (*K. Gerok.*) **Moses trembled.**—*The fear of Moses:*—I. ITS NATURE. 1. It was not slavish fear. 2. But pious humility. How good is it for a teacher, who must so often stand upon holy ground, to experience this trembling, not only at the commencement, but during the continuance of his ministry. II. ITS EFFECTS. This filial fear and reverence will be—1. A barrier by which useless words, vain gestures, and other sinful things will be prevented. 2. An incentive to speak and act as before God, in God, and from God. (*Apostolic Pastor.*) **Put off thy shoes.**—An exhortation to put off earthly stains and conceited pride in the presence of God. 1. For ministers, in the study and in the pulpit. 2. For hearers in their church-going and at worship. (*K. Gerok.*) **I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people.**—*The greater our need the nearer God:*—1. He sees the sufferings of His people. 2. He hears the sighs of believers. 3. He comes down at the proper time. 4. He sends out His servants. (*Ibid.*) *The people of God:*—I. GOD HAS A PEOPLE. "My people." 1. Chosen by Him. 2. In covenant with Him. II. WHERE THEY LIVE. "In Egypt." 1. A house of bondage. 2. A transient residence. 3. Among a strange people. III. WHAT THEY SUFFER. "Affliction." In some shape or form this is the Christian's earthly lot. 1. Inflicted by man. 2. Permitted by God. 3. Working out spiritual ends. IV. THE DIVINE NOTICE OF THEIR CASE. 1. God sees their affliction. 2. God hears their groaning. 3. God works out their deliverance. (*J. W. Burn.*) **This Moses . . . brought them out after that he had showed wonders and signs.**—*The miracles of Moses and Christ:*—The Divine authority of the Jewish lawgiver was chiefly seen and heard in thunderings and lightnings, great plagues and fearful judgments—in the darkened air, the flashing firmament, the corrupted waters, the divided sea, the rending earth, lamenting families, armies overwhelmed and terror-stricken nations: so that most emphatically does the sacred historian, in summing up the character of Moses as a worker of miracles, declare that none ever equalled him "in all that mighty hand, and in all that great terror which he showed in the land of Egypt." The glory of our Saviour's miracles is of a different kind, and better suited to the genius of His dispensation. He gave indeed abundant testimony that it was not for want of power He did not signalise His mission like Moses—when, *e.g.*, over His Cross the sky was shrouded with a pall of funereal darkness, while fierce earthquakes tore the flinty rocks, and the temple vail was rent asunder by an unseen hand, and the buried dead arose. But the characteristic tone of the Redeemer's marvellous works was of another and a benignant kind. The Mighty Man of Wonders, by whom come grace and truth "went about doing good." Consolation and joy and bright-eyed health attended all His steps. Mercy went before His face; and at His heavenly smile diseases vanished, pain expired, fear ceased to quiver, sorrow dried her tearful countenance, the broken heart was made whole. (*A. S. Patterson, M.A.*)

Ver. 37. **This is that Moses which said . . . a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me.**—*Moses, a type of Christ:*—How emphatic is the expression! "This is that Moses!" You have a similar expression where the object was to set a special mark on a guilty individual. "This is that king Ahaz." In our text the object is to fix attention on the fact that the

Moses who had brought Israel out of Egypt, was the very same who had predicted the coming of a greater prophet. Even this Moses for whom, in their blind attachment, they were about to reject the Messiah, had told them of the Christ. In the whole line of prophets there was not one who could be regarded as closely resembling Moses. In tracing the correspondence here alleged let us consider Moses—I. AS A LEADER AND LAWGIVER. 1. The condition of the Jews in Egypt depicted that of the whole human race given up for their sins to be the captives of Satan. And it could hardly fail to follow that, if our natural condition were thus imaged, some resemblance might be traced between the deliverers. Both Moses and Christ proved their commission by miracles. They both came to an enslaved race, and claimed authority to set free prisoners; and, when proof of their authority was demanded, they both wrought wonders which were beyond human power. There was much the same kind of opposition ranged against the one and the other—the magicians contending with Moses, and evil spirits with Christ. And the deliverance effected by the two was singularly alike. Moses broke off the yoke from the neck of a captive people, and Christ from the neck of the whole human race. But when Moses had made a passage for Israel out of Egypt the former tyrant pursued the freed tribes and sought to regain the ascendancy he had lost. And though Christ has redeemed us from the power of Satan, who knows not that evil spirits, eager to regain their former dominion, pursue those that follow the Captain of salvation? When Moses led Israel out of Egypt he did indeed tell them of a goodly land, but he did not at once put them into possession; but conducted them into a dreary wilderness, where they were exposed to continued trials. And we also hear of a beautiful Canaan, reserved for the followers of the Redeemer, but there is no immediate entrance; a wild desert has to be traversed, set thick with snares and peopled with enemies, and it is only through much tribulation that we can take possession of our heritage. 2. As a lawgiver Moses bore striking resemblance to Christ. It was a main part of his office to restore amongst the Jews the decayed knowledge of Jehovah, to re-institute a pure worship, and to establish laws which might mark them off as a peculiar people. But was not the condition of our race similar to that of Israel? There scarce remained any trace of truth in the popular theology; the whole Gentile race was given up to idolatry, and Christ had to instruct this world in the very first elements of spiritual truth. Moses led the children of Israel through the waters of the Red Sea, and then formed them into a church, with means and ordinances for producing and preserving acquaintance with God, obedience to His will, and hope in His promises. And Christ now conducts men through the waters of baptism into fellowship with His mystical body, that they may be taught in duty and trained for immortality. Moses restores the altars of God, delivers laws, institutes sacrifices; and Christ erects a visible Church, with ordinances and sacraments, that those who are in error may be taught, and those who know the truth may be confirmed. II. MOSES AS A MEDIATOR. The Israelites were assembled round Sinai to receive the commandments and the law of their God. There was nothing of the sublime and the terrible which did not attend the publication of the law. Appalled by what they saw and heard, the rulers of Israel said to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee"; and as soon as this petition was offered, God said to Moses, "They have well said all that they have spoken"; thus signifying His approval of the consciousness that fallen creatures cannot approach Him except through an intercessor, and in Deut. xviii. the prediction of the text is there made to follow immediately on these words of approval. As much as to say, "They have asked a mediator, and a Mediator will I give them, in the fulness of time, who shall resemble thee in standing, as thou now dost, between God and man." And is it not a resemblance most accurate?—for is it not the law by whose terrors we, as well as the Israelites, are affrighted? and was it not to shield us from the law—condemning every human being to everlasting death—that Christ Jesus arose, a Mediator between God and ourselves? In cases of conversion, there is ordinarily enacted much of that scene which is described as occurring when the Israelites stood around Sinai. The Spirit when He handles the moral law makes a man perceive that there has been no moment of his life in which he has not infringed its commands, and that there is no infraction so slight but it entails punishment. Then, for the first time in his life, a man knows rightly the awfulness of God; and then will he exclaim, with the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, "This great fire will consume me: if I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, then shall I die."

Such a man will at once feel that he cannot stand in his own strength and his own merit face to face with his Maker. Therefore he has no alternative but that of leaving himself to be crushed beneath the weight of indignation, unless, indeed, he can find some being mighty enough and pure enough to rise up as an intercessor, and plead his cause with the Eternal One. Who will deny, then, that in respect of the mediatorial office, the prophecy quoted by Stephen had its fulfilment in Christ? III. IN THE PARTICULARS OF HIS LIFE. Moses was wonderfully preserved when the male children of the Hebrews were destroyed; and thus also was Christ preserved when Herod slew all the children in Bethlehem. Moses fled from his country, and then there came a message, "Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life"; Christ fled, in like manner, and then there came a message in almost the same words. Moses contended with the magicians, and forced them to acknowledge his power—Christ contended with evil spirits, and obtained from them a similar confession. Immediately before emancipating Israel, Moses instituted the passover—immediately before redeeming mankind, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper. When Moses had to appoint elders, he appointed seventy—when Christ chose disciples, He chose seventy. Into the land that was to be conquered Moses sent twelve men as spies—when the world was to be subdued, Christ sent twelve men as apostles. How did Moses overcome Amalek? By extending both arms, and keeping them stretched out. How did Christ subdue all our enemies? By suffering that His hands should be nailed to the cross. As a prophet, it was specially of the desolations which should overtake the disobedient Jews that Moses made mention; and, as a prophet, it was of the destruction of Jerusalem that Christ chiefly spoke. Moses had to deal with a perverse generation, who were not to be won over to the obeying God, and who, consequently, with the exception of two, all perished in the wilderness. And was not Christ sent to an obdurate people, and who, therefore, within about the same space of forty years, were almost all consumed by the anger of the Lord? Moses had to endure injurious treament from his own family—his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam rebelled against him; and we are told of Christ, "Neither did His brethren believe on Him." Moses fed the people miraculously in the wilderness; Christ fed thousands miraculously in the desert. And in lifting up the brazen serpent, did not Moses typify Christ? In making a covenant by blood between God and his people, did he not again represent the Saviour, who, by His own blood hath "brought nigh those who were sometime afar off"? It was not until Moses was dead that the people could enter the Promised Land; it was only by the death of Christ that the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers. It was, in one sense, for the iniquities of the people, that Moses died. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." In the fulness of his strength, when "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated," did Moses go up to die; and when Christ was yet in the flower of His age did not He go up to the summit of Calvary? Before he went up to die Moses comforted the disconsolate tribes with an assurance that God would raise them up another Prophet; before Christ went up to die He said to His desponding disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." Moses was buried, but no one knew where his body lay; Christ was buried, and yet was His body in vain sought for by the Jews. Surely, if ever there was a wonderful resemblance, it is that which we thus trace in minute particulars, between Moses and Christ. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 38. **This is he . . . who received the lively oracles to give unto us.**—*Living oracles*:—Whatever sense "lively" (A.V.) may once have had, it can only now mislead: it is limited to certain special characteristics of life; "living" (R.V.) implies life in itself, life as a principle, life with all its manifold issues. The one is particular, the other is comprehensive. What more striking illustration could we have of this life, this vitality, than the great Bible Society, comprising members of many countries and churches, dispensing an income of more than £200,000 a year, dependent on gratuitous support, and bringing no gain to its members, concentrating all its energies and absorbing all its resources on the reproduction and the dissemination of one single Book—a Book, too, of which the latest page is some eighteen centuries old; claiming to have distributed already between ninety and a hundred million copies, and at this moment distributing year by year close upon three million of its volumes, whole or in part, in well-nigh every spoken language of the globe; however you may look at it this is a fact,

to which the long roll of history presents not the faintest parallel. And yet this society does not stand alone. It is the handmaid of almost all the missionary associations throughout the world, to whatever church or whatever country they belong. I. LIFE INVOLVES GROWTH; growth is at once a characteristic and an evidence of life. We speak of life in a plant or tree, because it puts forth leaves and flowers and throws out fresh branches. We do not speak of a crystal as living. A crystal may be a very beautiful thing, but one thing it wants—life. This figure fitly describes the Bible as contrasted with other sacred books. It did not come into being all at once; it was not the product of one mind or age; it is not a book, but a library; it is legislation, chronicles, poetry, philosophy, epistolography, allegory, romance, apocalyptic. It spreads over some thousands of years; it traverses the history of the race from the earliest dawn to the full noon-day of an elaborate civilisation. It was not written in any one place; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, all contribute. Now we find ourselves wandering with nomadic tribes over lonely pastures beneath the starry sky; now we are dazzled by all the splendid surroundings of an Oriental despot's court; now we are lodged in some humble peasant household, and now we stand face to face with the majesty and the insignia of the imperial law. Sea and land, mountain, field and forest, crowded city and trackless desert, each in its turn furnishes a theme for this ever-shifting drama. All the vicissitudes of human life, poverty, and wealth, mourning and joy, the marriage and the funeral, the secret communings of the individual soul, and the tumultuous activity of public life—all contribute their quota to its incidents. II. LIFE INVOLVES UNITY—a unity underlying the various development. There must be some principle of life from which all the growth is evolved, which stamps its character on all the parts, which secures the harmony and coherence of the whole. We speak of the germ in the plant, of the soul in the man. So it is with the Bible. Amidst all these marvellous diversities of time, place, condition, form, subject-matter, there is a principle of unity which is also the principle of life. This unity is quite as real in the different parts of the Bible as in the different parts of a plant, or in the different ages of man. The first chapter of Genesis finds its natural and appropriate climax in the last chapter of Revelation, while all the intermediate parts have their proper place in the sequence written though they were long centuries apart and gathered together we hardly know when and we cannot say how; the New Testament latent in the Old, the Old Testament patent in the New. Its fame can never grow old or out of date. And this principle of life, this animated soul—what is it but the Eternal Word speaking through lawgiver and captain and priest and prophet and king, speaking in the continuous history of a nation and in the chequered but unbroken light of the Church until at length He became incarnate in the man Christ Jesus. The many modes and the many parts of the Divine revelation were harmonised, explained, completed when in the last days God spoke through His Son. Contrast this infinite variety, these world-wide interests and associations with the monotony of other great books. The Koran is Arabian, the Vedas are Indian, the Zendavesta is Persian, the Bible alone is cosmopolitan. Other books for the most part have a oneness of treatment, of subject-matter, even of style. They are like the statue fused in a mould; it may have a beauty of its own, but it is rigid; it has no movement and no life, and the purpose served by all this is that life speaks to life. As a living thing the Bible appeals to the mind, affections, historical instincts, domestic sympathies, political aspirations. It arrests first that it may instruct afterwards. And here in this intimate union of intensely human sympathies and interests with intensely Divine teaching, this close alliance of heaven and earth, the Bible ever is a type, a reflection, a counterpart of the Incarnation itself. In the Bible God stoops to man, in the Incarnation God becomes man. Thus the Incarnation is the ultimate satisfaction of all religious craving and the final goal of all religious history, beyond which no other step is possible or conceivable. III. LIFE INVOLVES STRUGGLE. The Scriptures have proved themselves as living oracles by the controversies which they excite and the antipathies which they provoke. Is it not an eloquent fact that in the early persecutions, pre-eminently in the last and fiercest of all, the main object of attack was the sacred writings; that the foes of the gospel were ready enough to spare the lives of men if only they might take the life of the Book; that those were branded by their fellow-Christians with the name of traitor, not who had surrendered a human being, whether leader or confederate or friend, but who had betrayed the Book into the hands of the destroyer? Aye, these heathen persecutors were wise in their generation; they felt instinctively that

these Scriptures were living things; that they were active and aggressive; that, as Luther said of St. Paul's Epistles, "They have hands and feet—hands to grasp and feet to march; therefore they must be killed; they must be hurried out of sight." Was Milton so far wrong after all when he said that one who killed a good book is worse than a homicide; for, striking at the very breath of reason, he slays an immortality rather than a life? And as it was with the Greek Bible in the days of Diocletian, so was it also with the English Bible in the days of Henry. What a testimony to its living power is the record of its early days when that great man, who has won for himself an undying name, not only in English Christianity, but in English literature also, an outlaw and a wanderer in a foregin land, fled from city to city, carrying with him the half-translated texts, the half-printed sheets of his new version, the parent of our English Bible of to-day! Can we reflect without the deepest thanksgiving on this magnificent irony of the Divine goodness that within a stone's-throw of the place where the gentle, tender-hearted, reasonable Tunstall committed to the flames the first issue of Tyndale's New Testament as a thing to be abhorred and detested by all faithful Christian people, his latest successor in the see of Durham is able this day to congratulate a large, powerful, and wealthy society on its distributing within a single year no less than one million and a half copies of the English Bible, whole or in parts? (*Bp. Lightfoot.*) *The law of God, a living word*:—I. IN ITSELF it is living—an efflux of the living God; and was thus for man, in a state of innocence, a lawgiving life, not killing and oppressing, but regulating and forming. II. IN A STATE OF SIN it indeed at first proves itself as killing; it reveals spiritual death and threatens eternal; but even then it is not dead, but living, otherwise it could not as a fire burn in the hearts of sinners, and as a sword pierce them; and also it there operates to life, awakening the conscience and pointing to Him whose Word gives life. III. IN A STATE OF GRACE it is not dead and abolished, but objectively in Christ, the Revealer and Fulfiller of the law, it has become living and embodied; and subjectively by the Holy Ghost it is employed as a motive of life, and as a power of sanctification in the heart and life of the believer. (*K. Gerok.*) *The Bible—its living freshness*:—I heard a gentleman say yesterday that he could walk any number of miles when the scenery was good; but, he added, "When it is flat and uninteresting, how one tires!" What scenery it is through which the Christian man walks—the towering mountains of predestination, the great sea of providence, the mighty cliffs of Divine promise, the green fields of Divine grace, the river that makes glad the city of God—oh, what scenery surrounds the Christian, and what fresh discoveries he makes at every step! The Bible is always a new book. If you want a novel, read your Bible; it is always new; there is not a stale page in the Word of God; it is just as fresh as though the ink were not yet dry, but had flowed to-day from the pen of inspiration. There have been poets whose sayings startled all England when first their verses were thrown broadcast over the land, but nobody reads their writings now; yet the pages that were written by David and by Paul are glowing with the radiant glory which was upon them when long ago the Holy Spirit spake by them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Bible—its life organic*:—If the Bible were like a collection of stones, we might select some and put aside others, as less valuable and beautiful; and although in such selection we might make great mistakes, we should still be in possession of something more or less complete. But the Bible is like a plant, and all its parts are not mechanically or accidentally connected, but organically united, and hence a law of life rules here; and he who reveres life will neither add nor take away from the beautiful plant which the Father hath planted in and through Christ by the Spirit. . . . Nobody asserts that a man would be killed if you cut off his hair and his nails. But there is a vital union of all his members. If you cut off my little finger I shall survive it; but it is my little finger you cut off, and it is a loss, a disfigurement. So with the Bible. It is not like a piece of cloth that you can clip and cut. It is a body, animated by one Spirit. (*A. Saphir, D.D.*) *The excellence of the Scriptures*:—I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES. 1. They are lively oracles so called—(1) In contradistinction to heathen oracles which proceeded from the pretended responses of senseless idols or departed spirits under the artful management of impostors. The Bible is the voice of the living and true God. (2) Because they instruct men in the way of life. (3) The Scriptures of both Testaments are called by this name because they are the means by which God communicates the knowledge of His will and of the way of salvation. 2. If we consider the sacred volume merely as history it is the most complete, entertaining, and

instructive ever written. We have a view of the world from its creation to its final dissolution. 3. How grand, solemn, and interesting are its doctrines. 4. It exhibits the most correct view of human nature. 5. It prescribes the most excellent precepts and rules of life. (1) It proposes the purest motives to virtue. (2) It teaches the noblest virtues in the sublimest exercises. (3) It furnishes the best defence against temptation, and the sweetest consolation in affliction. (4) It has instituted the most excellent means of moral improvement in the order and discipline of the Church. 6. It gives us affecting illustrations of God's attributes and providence in His various dealings toward the children of men. II. WE ARE BOUND TO CONVEY THE SCRIPTURES TO SUCCEEDING generations (Deut. iv. 5, vi. 7; Psa. lxxviii. 1). 1. If the Scriptures are of such importance to ourselves they are equally so to our children. 2. Their excellence demonstrates our obligation to transmit them. 3. If we regard the temporal much more ought we to regard the eternal happiness of posterity. The former is promoted, the latter essential depends on the knowledge of the Scriptures. 4. That we may transmit them—(1) We must make a pious use of them ourselves: family worship. (2) Have them read in our schools. (3) Take care never to treat them with disrespect. (4) Never allow our children to read books which treat them with ridicule. (5) Maintain the preaching of the Word. (6) Show our belief in and reverence for the Bible by that holy and blameless life it requires. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

Vers. 39–45. **To whom our fathers would not obey.**—*The sin of Israel:*—I. ITS MANIFOLD NATURE. 1. Disobedience (ver. 39). There is hardly a phase of Jewish history in which this sin does not appear. It was manifested in the murmurings against Moses, in the wholesale transgression of the law, and in the rejection of the prophets. This is a crime which provokes universal reprobation as against parents; how sad that it should be so universally prevalent, and so loudly extenuated as against God. 2. Ingratitude. They were free, yet they hankered after the poor emoluments of their servitude. They preferred the succulent products of Egypt with slavery to the hard fare of the wilderness and liberty. Nay, even after their instalment in the land flowing with milk and honey, the fascinations of Egypt proved well nigh-irresistible. This was a poor return to God who, in response to their groanings (ver. 34), granted them the deliverance for which they cried. And are there no similar hankerings after, and even conformity to, the present evil world from which Christians have been redeemed? 3. Idolatry. This was the crowning sin and had its marked stages. They worshipped (1) "The works of their own hands" (ver. 41), an imitation of Apis, perhaps, a god of the land from which they came. (2) The works of God's hands (ver. 42), the gods of the surrounding nations, honouring the creature instead of the Creator. (3) Devils (ver. 43). When men renounce the living and true God there is no knowing whom they may be prepared to honour. There are the same stages in the idolatry of modern Christian lands. Men worship (*a*) Their own fabrications—wealth, social position, fashion, pleasure, &c. (*b*) God's creatures—natural beauty, others, themselves. (*c*) Devils. There is not a vice before which some men are not prostrate. II. ITS AGGRAVATIONS. Israel sinned in spite of—1. The presence and imperial influence of Moses, their mighty leader and God's appointed vicegerent. And so men sin to-day notwithstanding the presence and authority of Christ whom Moses typified (ver. 37), and the influence, strivings, and convictions of the Holy Spirit. 2. The theocracy, "the church in the wilderness" (ver. 38), and its visible centre and symbol "the tabernacle of witness" (ver. 44). They were, however faithless, the people with whom God had entered into solemn covenant, and their periodical services in the tent of meeting were a virtual acknowledgment of the fact that the covenant was still binding. So men sin to-day, notwithstanding the existence, great services, and wide-reaching influence of the Church of Christ, whose origin, nature, history, and destiny are a standing witness for God and against sin, and in spite of churches, visible symbols of the invisible Church. 3. The "lively oracles" which protested against iniquity in all its forms, and were meant to create, encourage, and guide in the life of righteousness. These oracles have since been multiplied and are now completed. They contain all that is needful to give and sustain life, and have the promise of both the life that now is and that which is to come. Yet men sin and doom themselves to death. 4. The most palpable manifestations of God's severity and goodness. Surely one would have thought that the plagues and the overthrow of Pharaoh were sufficient to deter from crime, and that their own precious deliverance and support would have encouraged obedience.

Those who so argue forget that all history teems with the same manifestations, and yet men sin. III. ITS PUNISHMENT. 1. Their sins. Their idolatry was at once their crime and their punishment (ver. 42), and as their crimes increased so they held them in the iron chain of sinful habit which grew in strength and intolerableness as the years passed by. "Be sure your sin will find you out," in the misery of a God-forsaken and degraded manhood. 2. The wilderness wandering. Those who murmur against God's dealings with them, and despise the grace which mitigates and blesses the rigour of those dealings, shall be condemned to endure them without alleviation. The Christian's way may be hard—but so is "the way of transgressors." The difference consists in God's presence with the one and His absence from the other. Surely this is enough to make the former a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. 3. The Babylonish Captivity (ver. 43). When the nation cast God off, God cast it off. Eventually Israel showed its preference for the great world powers to Himself, and He handed them over to one of them. A respite came which was unimproved, and the destruction of Jerusalem sealed the fate of Judaism. Of what sinner is that the type as indicated by our Lord? (Matt. xxiv.-xxv.). (*J. W. Burn.*) **And in their hearts turned back again into Egypt.**—*The fascination of Egypt*:—Throughout his speech Stephen treats the early history of Israel, as the French say, "allusively,"—he talks about the past while he is thinking of the present. Here he implies that the Jews who rejected our Saviour were turning away from the true meaning of God's revelation to Moses into a time of comparative darkness—a mental and a moral Egypt from which they had been in a fair way altogether to escape. Let us consider—I. THE FASCINATION OF EGYPT. 1. This appears even before the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. It was the fascination at once of terror and of admiration. As they passed out from the fertile lands into the desert, their thoughts reverted to the vast burial-ground above Memphis, along the ridge of the desert. "Is it," they cried, "because there were no graves in Egypt that thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness? . . . It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians." "It was well with us," they cried at Taberah, "in Egypt." "Would to God," they exclaimed at the report of the spies, "that we had died in the land of Egypt," &c. This fascination appears later on. It is seen in Solomon's marriage; in the welcome which Jeroboam seeks of the Egyptian court: in the tendency, rebuked by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, to "trust in the shadow of Egypt." Egypt became the home of a large colony of Greek-speaking Hebrews, and the descendants of the patriarchs counted for more in Alexandria of the Ptolemys than in Rameses of the Pharaohs. 2. This fascination is the more remarkable because the treatment which Israel experienced was frequently cruel, always unscrupulous. The patriarchs, indeed, had been welcomed by the usurping "Shepherd Kings," who welcomed all Asiatics as strengthening their position in a country which they ruled with difficulty. Of these, the Pharaoh Apepi, the friend of Joseph, was the last. He had scarcely passed away when the subject-rulers of Thebes, after a great struggle, expelled the Shepherd Kings. In the eyes of these new rulers the Israelites were not guests who had been invited to become subjects: they were the foreign dependents of a detested and expelled dynasty. Not one, but a long line of kings, "knew not Joseph." The eighteenth dynasty, including that greatest of Egyptian conquerors, Thothmes III., whose obelisk now stands on the Thames Embankment, reigned for two hundred years, and passed away, before the great heat of the oppression began with the third king of the nineteenth dynasty, Rameses II. And as Egypt endeavoured to crush the children of the patriarchs, so in a later day Egypt shattered the work of David and Solomon. It was at the Egyptian court that Jeroboam matured his schemes. It was the Egyptian Shishak who plundered Jerusalem and then engraved the story of his triumph on the walls of Karnak, where, in confirmation of the Bible narrative, it may be seen and read at this very day. Not to mention the invasion of Judah by Zerah, who was defeated by Asa, it may here suffice to recall the defeat and death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Necho. Certainly, for reasons of her own, which were apparent enough two generations later, Egypt was prepared to assist Hezekiah against Sennacherib; but, on the whole, her treatment of the chosen people was anything but friendly. Yet, for all that, again and again during the long course of their history, Israel's heart "turned back again into Egypt." II. THE CAUSES OF THIS FASCINATION. 1. The productiveness of Egypt due to the Nile, which washes down a rich soil from the highlands of Abyssinia. And this may illustrate the cry of the Israelites at Taberah (Numb. xi. 5, 6). True they were on their way to a land flowing with milk and honey; a land where every

man should sit "under his vine and fig tree," &c.; but for all that, the land of the Nile had, in their eyes, no rival. The flesh-pots of Egypt were, beyond all doubt, one cause of its attractiveness for the Hebrews. 2. The character of Egyptian civilisation. In Egypt human life was embellished with beauty and comfort such as would naturally impress a comparatively rude people like the Hebrews. When they became settled, and built cities and the Temple, everything was on a smaller and less splendid scale than they had left behind. Our grandest cathedrals are dwarfed by the Hall of Columns in the temple at Karnak, and we have never even attempted to rival such structures as the pyramids. Many centuries before the exodus, kings, like Amenemha III., of the twelfth dynasty, established a complete system of dykes, canals, lakes, and reservoirs by which the inundations of the Nile were regulated; or excavated vast artificial lakes like Mœris in Fayûm to receive the overflowing waters, and so to secure a supply during the dry season for a vast extent of adjacent country. Egypt, too, long before Israel's sojourn there, had its literature and seats of learning; and On, or Heliopolis, the great temple of the setting sun, before which, originally, our obelisk on the Embankment stood, and where the patriarch Joseph married his wife Asenath, was also an university where Moses learned, as in a later age Plato and Eudoxus learned, all the wisdom of the Egyptians. It is impossible to do more than touch the fringe of this vast subject. When an Indian chief was asked why he did not join in the mutiny, he said, "I have stood on London Bridge." And if an ancient Israelite could say, "I have stood on the ridge of the Libyan Desert, and have looked down on Memphis or on Thebes," it might explain the feeling with which the member of the less civilised race would have regarded that vast and elaborate civilisation. 3. Its antiquity. A veneration for antiquity is a natural and legitimate sentiment, and not to feel it is to lack some of the finer elements of a well-balanced mind. This veneration is felt not only by scholars, or poets, or historians, but by men of a very utilitarian turn of mind. Look at the Americans who come to visit us in increasing numbers every summer. What is it in England, or in Europe, that interests them most? Not our manufactures, shipping, or public works. In these they are always our rivals, and sometimes our superiors. That which attracts them is a possession which a people cannot buy with money, or compass by industry, since it is the gift of time. In their eyes, our older literature, our ancient towns, our castles, our parish churches, our cathedrals, have a charm which they sometimes lack in the eyes of Englishmen. It might almost seem that to know the value of an ancient past it were necessary to have no share in it. Israel, we may think, was sufficiently ancient, but as compared with Egypt, Israel was but of yesterday. Homer knew of no city in the world so great as the Egyptian Thebes with its hundred gates. Yet, when Homer wrote, Thebes had been declining for at least three centuries. And Thebes was modern when compared with Memphis, whose pyramids were ancient structures in the time of Abraham, and inasmuch as such work implies a long course of preceding labour and training, there arises a vista of a yet higher antiquity, the limits of which it is impossible to conjecture. 4. Its religion. This had in it, like all pagan systems, some element of truth, and a large element of falsehood. The worship to which St. Paul refers when writing to the Romans, of "birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," and which we still see in our museums, and on the walls of ruined temples, to us unintelligible and hideous, were but developments of a religious idea, which at first recognised the Deity everywhere in nature, and then identified Him with nature. In ancient Egypt a process went forward which may be observed in certain regions of modern thought: Theism sank to Pantheism, and Pantheism sank more and more nearly to the level of Fetichism. The Egyptians were always a naturally religious people. No people of the ancient world were so possessed with the idea of man's immortality. Their splendid tombs and pyramids were a perpetual profession of faith in a future after death. Israel felt the influence of this religion. We cannot mistake the influence of Egyptian models on the form of the temple, or the ark, or other details of the Levitical system. Here inspiration has selected what was good in heathendom, just as the first chapter of St. John's Gospel consecrates certain fragments of the language of the Platonic philosophy. Taken as a whole, the religion of Egypt was, with its many, and some of them debasing, errors, the religion of a great, serious people without a revelation; and as such it contributed one powerful element to the fascination which Egypt exerted over the mind of Israel. On two great occasions that

power was apparent with fatal effect. The first was when Aaron, in the absence of Moses on Mount Sinai, made a golden calf out of the earrings of the people. The second was when Jeroboam erected the two calves at Bethel and Dan, both doubtless suggested by the Egyptian worship of the sacred bulls, Apis and Mnevis. The influence of Egypt upon Israel might be traced in later ages, especially in Alexandria. Conclusion: Egypt as presented in Scripture is not mainly an historical study. When St. Stephen spoke, the Egypt of the Pharaohs had long forfeited independent existence. The Cæsars who ruled it had but subjected its earlier conquerors. But the Egypt of spiritual experience which attracts souls by its manifold seductions to return to some mental or moral bondage—this Egypt always remains. The Psalmist couples Rahab with Babylon, and John with Sodom, as the mystic name of the great city of the ungodly world-power, "where also," he adds, "our Lord was crucified." Egypt is a standing type of this world-power, ever hostile to God; and from which, in all ages, elect souls must make their escape towards a land of promise, only, it may be, to reach that land after long wanderings in some intellectual or moral desert. Often to such will the past which they have renounced seem to them to be transfigured and idealised by memory. Often will they have misgivings whether the "better part" of Mary was not, for them at least, a Quixotic enterprise. Often will they be tempted, like Israel of old, in their hearts if not more decidedly still, "to turn back into Egypt"; for the Egypt from which the Israel of God escapes is, like its prototype, undeniably attractive. Perhaps it satisfies man's lower appetites; perhaps it addresses itself to his sense of beauty and refinement; and it has been in possession, more or less, ever since human society has existed at all. It even has a religion of its own, cleverly lowered down and adapted to the varied instincts of human nature. Referring to some who, under his own eyes, yielded to its seductive power, St. Peter speaks with peculiar plainness (2 Pet. ii. 20–22). How are we to escape its subtle power save by loyal devotion to Him who spoke to Israel by Moses, and who died for us upon the Cross? Surely no baits to the senses can compete with the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. Surely the richest embellishments of man's outward life must pale before Him who is the uncreated Beauty. The most remote antiquity is but a second of time when it is measured against the High and the Eternal. The most reassuring religion will fail us if it will not stand the judgment of that day, when "the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence." Let us learn to guard the issues of our hearts, convinced that He only has a right to our affections who has said not less solemnly of the redeemed in our age than of the Redeemer in another, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." (*Canon Liddon.*) **And they made a calf in those days.**—*Making an idol*:—And who would ever have supposed it! when we remember how God had poured contempt on idols and idolaters; how they had been delivered, and how the visible symbol of the Divine presence was with them. I. THE PECULIARITIES OF THIS SIN. Men abuse everything, even the divinest things. Idolatry is the corruption of religion—the substitution of the material for the spiritual, of the lie for the truth. It had irresistible attractions for the multitude; it appealed to their senses and was a system of solemn and splendid licentiousness. The Hebrews had become tainted with it in Egypt, and manifested a proneness to it on many occasions. This golden calf was the Apis of the mythology of Egypt, who was a representative god, not worshipped on its own account, but as a symbol of the chief and supreme divinity. This throws light on the conduct of the Israelites. Moses was the mediator of that economy. He had gone up to commune with God; but forty days and nights had passed away. The people were becoming uneasy and unbelieving; they felt that they were alone in the wilderness. They wanted some symbol of God; they would not have wanted this if they had had Moses; but having lost him, they made a calf. They did not renounce God—they introduced the unhallowed ideas and practices of Egyptian idolatry into the worship of Jehovah. Thus "they changed their glory"—that is, the invisible God—"into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." The result was most debasing—"They sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." They practised their lascivious rites at the very base of Sinai. The idolater will be like his god, he can never rise beyond his standard of perfection, and when men become worshippers of an animal, they become animal themselves. Idolatry is the substitution of the human for the Divine—the symbol for the reality. There may be no image, and yet idolatry. In after times men trusted in the temple, and not in God. Men now may trust in churches; in the forms of religion, and not in God or the gospel. Men may put

baptism in the place of regeneration, and the Lord's Supper in the place of salvation by Christ, and thus overlook all the great verities and realities of a spiritual religion. II. THE PALLIATIVES OF SIN. Aaron professed simply to have cast the gold into the fire, and the unexpected result was this calf. Men have always excuses or subterfuges. They charge their sins on the devil, or hereditary taint, or constitutional peculiarity, or the force of circumstances. We admit all this; but you can defy all in God's name and strength. There had been preparation and design, and great care in fashioning the mould for the idol. So it is, by a long, painful process, we form habits; but these determine character. Your character has been fashioned and graven by a sharp instrument, and all your feelings, thoughts, and deeds, like fused metal, are poured into this mould, and come out bearing its form. Many a worldly man has said, "I never thought I should be what I am." III. THE PARTNERSHIP IN SIN. It was Aaron's making, but their instigation. They made the calf that Aaron made. When legislators, to gratify the people, enact laws that are opposed to the will of God—when a teacher of truth comes down from his high position and panders to the tastes and prejudices of his hearers—when fathers and mothers listen to the caprice and self-will of their children—in all these instances there is partnership. It is a fearful thing this. You may have moulded some character. Other men's sins may be yours. You originated them—helped them to the birth. When they were born, they grew into fearful forms without you. They are yours, however, you are partakers of other men's sins. IV. THE REPRODUCTIVENESS OF SIN. Ages have rolled by. The people have entered the goodly land. There has been the reign of David, the golden age of Solomon. Once more the cry of the wilderness is heard, the echoes of which have slept for centuries—"These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." There had been the division of the kingdom, and it was a master-stroke of policy on the part of Jeroboam to prevent the ten tribes going up to Jerusalem to worship. He felt that unity of worship would lead to unity of feeling. The people, however, must have a religion, and so he falls back on the calf worship. The people are taught that that worship cannot be wrong which had been devised and framed by the high priest in the wilderness. And so the sin lives again, and is reproduced. Sin is like some fearful taint which has been latent for generations, but suddenly manifests itself with new power. Conclusion: We are leaving far behind the forms of an old idolatry; getting beyond the worship of the laws and powers of nature, but the creature worship lives, and comes between Christianity and the world. 1. Men may make an idol of self. There is no form of idolatry more debasing and deadly. 2. Men may make an idol of their physical nature. How much time do many of you spend in dressing up life as if it were a god. And there are others who say, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink," as well as "wherewithal shall we be clothed." All their attention is concentrated on the physical. I have read of vines in Italy that cling to some strong tree and clasp it for support, but they suppress all its manifestations of life by the growth of their own. So the very strength and wondrous energy of our spiritual natures may give intense power to physical sins. 3. What is the idol men worship in this country? Is it not a golden one? "Keep yourselves from idols." (*H. J. Bevis.*) *The folly of idolatry*:—"My father," said a convert to a missionary in India, "was an officiating priest of a heathen temple, and was considered in those days a superior English scholar, and, by teaching the English language to wealthy natives, realised a large fortune. At a very early period, when a mere boy, I was employed by my father to light the lamps in the pagoda, and attend to the various things connected with the idols. I hardly remember the time when my mind was not exercised on the folly of idolatry. These things, I thought, were made by the hand of man, can move only by man, and, whether treated well or ill, are unconscious of either. Why all this cleaning, anointing, illuminating, &c.? One evening these considerations so powerfully wrought on my youthful mind that, instead of placing the idols according to custom, I threw them from their pedestals and left them with their faces in the dust. My father, on witnessing what I had done, chastised me so severely as to leave me almost dead. I reasoned with him that, if they could not get up out of the dust, they were not able to do what I could, and that, instead of being worshipped as gods, they deserved to lie in the dust where I had thrown them. He was implacable, and vowed to disinherit me, and, as the first step to it, sent me away from his house. He repented on his death-bed, and left me all his wealth." **Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch.**—*Moloch*, the king of gods, from *Malek*, king, or from

"Melkarth" at Tyre, "the god of the city," and Saturn, or the Sun, are the same as Baal, or Baal Samen, "the Lord of heaven," in Phœnicia. In Kings xi. 5-7, the name occurs under the forms of Moloch and Milcom, and is there spoken of as the abomination of the Ammorites. The worship of the deity was, as the names by which the idol was known in various countries will show, widely diffused. It was, in its origin at least, a kind of Sabæan worship, and hence the seven cavities in the image, and the seven chapels of its temple, in reference to the seven planets of the ancient cosmogony. That Baal and Moloch are one is evident not only from the characteristics of the god and his worship, but from Jer. xix. 5; xxxii. 35. He was a god of terror and destruction: the god of consuming fire, the burning sun, the god who smites the land with unfruitfulness and pestilence, dries up the springs, and begets poisonous winds. See with reference to these characteristics 1 Kings xviii.; where even his prophets are representing as in vain invoking him when the land was suffering from drought, and note the answer of Jehovah to Elijah in vers. 44, 45. The most acceptable sacrifice to this god was little children. The idol had a bull's head, and his arms were outstretched. On these arms when glowing hot the victims were laid by their parents, and when, writhing from the heat of the metal, they rolled off, they fell into the flames below. Drums drown the cries of the children, and hence the place of sacrifice was called Zophet—a drum. Besides children animals were offered, sheep, lambs, bulls, and even horses. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) **Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness.**—*The tabernacle of witness*:—It was so called—1. Because of the ark which contained the tables of the law which were a perpetual witness between God and the people. A witness against them if they disobeyed, a witness for them if they obeyed—a standing evidence that they were entitled to its promises. 2. Because when Moses, or the high priest afterwards, would know the will of God, and went into the tabernacle, they there obtained an answer in their perplexity, and thus received perpetual witness of His truth who revealed Himself in the tabernacle: a witness that all who desired an answer to prayer should seek God in His house, and a pledge that there they should receive His guidance. 3. The tabernacle was in itself, as it stood before the eyes of the people, a witness to all His mercies whose tabernacle it was, a witness that He had delivered His people, and commanded them to serve Him. (*Ibid.*) *The witness in the wilderness*:—I. OUR FATHERS HAD THE TABERNACLE. They had it moving as well as resting. I know not what ancient story or wondrous myth can approach in majesty the record of that long, tedious, and sacred march, imagination quite fails in the attempt adequately to realise either the moving or the resting. There are those who believe that those mystic inscriptions on the red rocks of Sinai date from that very time. Who will dare to say that it is not so—the whole story heaves with miracle. There was the mysterious shrine; it was, as the word literally translated means, a house of skins; but within were the palpitations of ineffable splendour, heraldries which accumulated in wealth as the pilgrims advanced on their journey. The tabernacle rested, surrounded by the tents of the tribes, and the pillar of cloud rested over the shrine. Probably many of the journeyings were accomplished during the night. Then, in the advance of the tabernacle, moved first the tents of Ephraim and Manasseh, with the sacred sarcophagus, enshrining the bones of the great Patriarch Joseph, strange and weird monument of his faith in the ultimate destiny of the exiled nation; and then as the strange caravan began to move, would rise the cry, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth," and the pillar of the white cloud became a fixed red flame, a fire shooting forth a guiding light. So onward they passed until the Jordan was passed, then the tabernacle of testimony rested on the heights of Shiloh. II. BUT IT WAS ALL A PARABLE—a Divine shadow of that great invisible and spiritual society, the yet more mysterious Ecclesia, "the Church throughout all ages," on its mighty march through Time, with all its attendant omens and prodigies—for such is the Church everywhere a witness in the wilderness; such are all its varieties of ordinance. "Ye are My witnesses, saith God, that I am the Lord." It is the perpetual remonstrance against the sufficiency of the seen and temporal; it is a perpetual witness for the unseen and the eternal; it is a perpetual testimony for the existence of a spiritual perpetuity and continuity; it is a mysterious procession; infinite aspirations are infused into the soul of man. A transcendent idea; it is embodied and takes its shape in what is called the Church. The tabernacle of testimony is the story of the Church and the soul—a witness for faith. The invincible assurance that all contradictions have interpretations, and that in all disappointments there lies latent a Divine

satisfaction waiting to be born. Thus it is that we do not make our faith—our faith makes us, not we it. "By their fruits you know them." A world with no tabernacle of Divine testimony has a philosophy which only sees the worst, which goes on declaring its dreary monologue that this is the worst of all possible worlds, that sleep is better than waking; and death is better than sleep; a creed full of negatives, whose disciples carry a perpetual note of interrogation on their features, and who write and read books to propose the question, "Is life worth living?"—in the presence of such thoughts, the sky shuts down upon us, there is no motive in life—as Emerson well says, "this low and hopeless spirit puts out the eyes, and such scepticism is slow suicide." (*E. Paxton Hood.*)

Vers. 47–50. **But Solomon built Him an house.**—*The temples of God:*—Scripture divides the Divine dispensations into the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian. We read of three creations, or three classes of heaven and earth. The first is physical creation: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The second is Judaism. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Evidently the heaven and earth there alluded to are the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the Jews. The third creation is Christianity: "Behold I create a new heaven and a new earth; and the former one will not be remembered nor come into mind." I shall examine these three creations, with a view principally of pointing out the successive dwelling-places of God. I. THE FIRST CREATION OR NATURE. "Heaven is My throne; and earth is My footstool. Hath not My hand made these things?" Abraham reared altars and offered sacrifices in the open fields. He had the earth for a floor and the sky for a canopy. The universe is a temple. Many people, I am aware, convert it into a warehouse, or a den of thieves. Alas! where are the worshippers? Nature is exceedingly beautiful; but go where you will, the buyers and sellers and the exchangers of money are there before you. God is present in Nature. The ancients saw Him in everything and law in nothing. We moderns have swung to the other extreme. But the true Christian view is to perceive God in law and through law and above law. God still works in Nature, not capriciously but methodically. The roses of this year are the embodiment of His freshest ideas. The rose is not a part of God, but God is in it as the source of its vitality and the principle of its beauty; and as long as it is a living rose, God will be its God, "for God is not the God of the dead but of the living." "For God so clothes the grass of the field." The great heart of eternity may also be felt throbbing in the wild flowers along the hedgerows. This spring God is creating a new heaven and a new earth. The earth looks as new to-day as if she were born only yesterday. The curtain of heaven looks as blue and clean to day as if it came from the factory only this week. But however magnificent the ancient temple of nature, God expresses His dissatisfaction with it. "Where is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made these things?" The first creation does not afford rest to the Almighty—it is only a preparation for a better creation to follow. Nature hides more glory than it reveals, and God's noblest glory it cannot reveal at all. A second creation was needful. II. THE SECOND CREATION OR JUDAISM. 1. The first creation divides itself into two parts—matter and laws, substance and truths. But in the second creation God created only laws. He did not add to the matter, but He did add to the laws of the universe. The laws of Judaism again divide themselves into laws which are necessary and therefore eternal, and laws which are contingent and therefore temporary. The Lord delivered the Ten Commandments, those commandments are in a certain sense necessary and eternal. God did not make them—He only spoke them. But as for laws touching civil and ecclesiastical government, God made them. The splendid fabric of ritual with its tabernacle and sacrifice and priesthood was the creation of God—not of His arm like matter, but of His mind. 2. The second creation is therefore of an order superior to the first. Inasmuch as spirit is nobler than matter. It is more difficult to preserve a spirit than a planet in its right orbit. It is harder to keep the peace in the commonwealth of men than in the commonwealth of stars. In the first creation God was legislating for dead, inert matter; in Judaism He was legislating for free, living spirits. In every soul there is a heaven and an earth; aye, and if we do not mind there will be a hell there too. But originally there is a heaven—formed of love, imagination, and pure reason. There is an earth there also—the propensities which qualify man for social intercourse and worldly avocations. And to make laws for the heaven and earth of the spirit such as you find in the religious and in the civil code demanded more care and

wisdom than to establish the earth and garnish the heavens. 3. As Judaism is thus an advance upon the system of nature, so God became more visibly and palpably present in the former than in the latter. He was pleased to concentrate the symbol of His presence in one special locality. Stephen speaks of God as the "God of glory," referring probably to the Shekinah. God under the Old Testament was manifesting His presence in a cloud of dazzling light. The name therefore by which He was known was the Brilliant or Shining One. It was long supposed that God etymologically meant good. But further investigation seems to point out that the English God, the Latin *Deus*, the Greek *Theos*, the Welsh *Duw*—all come from an old Aryan root signifying to shine. Men thought of God, and to what could they compare Him? To nothing else than the shining splendour of the light. "God is light." A kind of natural correspondence, therefore, subsisted between the Shekinah and God—the shining cloud and the shining One. During the Patriarchal dispensation the glory-cloud wandered up and down without a fixed habitation. But on the establishment of Judaism it found a convenient abode in "Tabernacle of witness." But this tabernacle was small in size and mean in appearance; therefore David desired to build a temple, and what David conceived, Solomon was privileged to execute. So far progress marks the history of religion among the Jews. The Shekinah thenceforth dwelt in the Holy of Holies—a visible symbol of the invisible God. 4. In what then did the fault of the Jews consist? In supposing that the Divine presence was restricted to the temple, and that there could be no Divine worship unless connected with the Jewish ritual. The local and temporary character of Judaism they entirely overlooked, which character Stephen in his oration forcibly urges on their attention. As God was worshipped acceptably before the building of the temple, so will He be worshipped acceptably after its demolition. The temple, however spacious and costly, could not afford God a permanent and congenial rest. "The hour cometh when ye shall worship the Father neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem." God is a Spirit, and what satisfaction can He find in mountains of dust, and what rest can He find in bricks and mortar however skilfully put together? Not that we would disparage a material temple—the House of God demands our profoundest reverence. "Keep thy foot when thou goes to the House of God." So long as God is pleased to dwell in it, it deserves our reverence; we drift, however, into error the moment we exalt the temple and its ritual above God Himself. Stephen therefore was not guilty of blasphemy. The temple on Moriah was only a stage in the onward march of the Divine economies. III. THE THIRD CREATION OR CHRISTIANITY. Evidently Stephen's argument does not properly conclude with ver. 49—he is only paving his way to make a transition to Christianity. Neither do the prophet's words end there—he points to a temple nobler and more spiritual and more pleasing unto God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." In these creations a certain gradation is observable, and corresponding with them, we read of three creative words. The first is the word "Be" in Genesis, corresponding with the material creation. The second is "I am" in Exodus, corresponding with the Jewish creation. The third is "Immanuel," corresponding with the Christian creation. In the physical universe is seen the Word of His might; in the Jewish the Word of His oath; in the Christian the Word of His essence. "Therefore, even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." Truths are of two kinds as we have seen necessary and eternal, contingent and temporary. That one is the first figure in numeration is necessary—God could not create a figure less than one. But that the earth revolves round the sun in twelve months is not necessary, it might be fourteen months quite as well. Christianity is a system of new truths, of truths which have been made. The Incarnation was not a truth always; it was not a truth in the days of Adam, of Abraham, or of Moses. But it is a truth to-day, a truth however which has been made. And the truths God has made are in a sense more wonderful than the truths He has not made. But what is it that principally differentiates the new creation of Christianity from the two preceding? The words of the text answer—"God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; hath not My hands made these things?" We have here come upon a very important phrase—"made with hands," which suggests to us its opposite—"not made with hands." They are the Scripture synonyms for the terms, "natural" and "supernatural" in modern theology. The first heaven and earth, and Solomon's temple were made with hands; and therefore God declined to acknowledge them as the place of His rest. Christianity is described as a "stone cut out

of the mountain without hands," and is thereby elevated to the realm of the supernatural. 1. The body or rather the human nature of Jesus Christ was not made with hands (Heb. ix. 11). The human nature of Adam was, and so was the human nature of his posterity. But the human nature of the Saviour was radically different. It was not as the apostle explains—"of this building," "of this creation." Christ is in it, but not of it. He was not produced by the intervention of the established laws of the world; He was the supernatural effect of the supernatural operation of God. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," &c. That is, therefore, the reason why He is in a pre-eminent sense the temple of God. "All the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him bodily." "It pleased the Father that in Him shall all fulness dwell." In Jesus Christ He finds a temple "not made with hands," a temple therefore more akin to His own eternal nature, and in Him He deigns to dwell for ever. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." 2. The regenerate heart is not made with hands (Col. ii. 11). That to regenerate a man does not belong to the old system of things. No forces in the first universe, whether of mind or matter, can effect the spiritual renewal of our nature. And therefore is the second birth designated "a new creation." The spiritual circumcision of the heart belongs emphatically to the realm of the supernatural. No amount of intellectual light or moral influence can effect it. The natural man is said not to understand the spiritual; and no wonder—they do not belong to the same universe. They may be living in the same house, attending the same church; but, after all, they are separated by the width of a whole creation. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God," &c. "Will God of a truth dwell with man on the earth?" Yea, answers St. Paul, He will not only dwell with man, He will also dwell in man on the earth. It has now been made clear to us that God's proper temple is holy humanity, and under the Christian dispensation He has found the temple He so earnestly coveted. In the first creation we see the works of Nature; but God declares He cannot rest therein. In the temple of Solomon we see the works of art; but God again declares He cannot find in it the place of His rest. However magnificent, therefore, is the temple of Nature, God is not satisfied with it, for it is the work of His own hands. However splendid the temple of art, God is not satisfied with it, for it is the work of man's hands. But in Christianity—in Christ first, and in the Christian afterwards, He has a temple reared by His grace, a temple not made with hands, a temple in which He vouchsafes to dwell for ever. The temple of nature, the temple of art, the temple of grace, these three; but the greatest of these is the temple of grace. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, DD.*) *The true temple of God*:—1. The visible not to be despised (vers. 46, 47). 2. The invisible not to be forgotten (vers. 48-50). (*K. Gerok.*) *Composition of the Church*:—God's Church is not built of—I. GOLD AND SILVER, *i.e.*, worldly might and splendour. II. WOOD AND STONE, *i.e.*, external customs and dead works. III. PARCHMENT OR PAPER, *i.e.*, confessions of faith and forms of government. IV. But of LIVING HEARTS. 1. Founded on Christ by faith. 2. United to one another in love. 3. Growing up to heavenly perfection in hope. (*Ibid.*) **Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will ye build Me?**—*The universal nature of Christian worship*:—These words of Stephen have sometimes been quoted as if they sounded the death-knell of special places dedicated to the honour and glory of God, such as churches are. It is evident, however, that they have no such application. They sounded the death-knell of the exclusive privilege of one place, the temple, but they proclaimed the freedom which the Church has ever since claimed; and the Jewish Church of the dispersion, by the institution of synagogues, had led the way in claiming—teaching that whatever true hearts and true worshippers are found, there God reveals Himself. But we must bear in mind a distinction. Stephen and the apostles rejected the exclusive right of the temple as the one place of worship for the world. They asserted the right to establish special places of worship throughout the world. They rejected the exclusive claims of Jerusalem. But they did not reject the right, and the duty of God's people, to assemble themselves as a collective body for public worship, and to realise Christ's covenanted presence. This is an important limitation of St. Stephen's statement. The great end of public worship is worship, not hearing, not edification even, though edification follows as a necessary result of such public worship when sincerely offered. The teaching of St. Stephen did not then apply to the erection of churches and buildings set apart for God's service, or to the claim made for public worship as an exercise with a peculiar Divine promise annexed. It simply protests against any attempt to localise the Divine presence to one special

spot on earth, making it, and it alone, the centre of all religious interest. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *A transcendent existence:*—I. An OMNIPRESENT existence. One whose throne is heaven, whose footstool is earth, and to whom all places are alike. One who fills heaven and earth not merely with His influence, nor indeed, as the Pantheists teach, with His substance; but One who is everywhere as a Personality, free, conscious, active. All created existences are limited by the laws of space, and those that occupy the largest space are mere specks in immensity. Concerning the stupendous fact of God's Omnipresence observe that it is—1. Agreeable to reason, although incomprehensible. The denial of it would be a contradiction. A limited God would be no God. 2. Essential to worship. (1) To its spirit. Worship implies mystery. Take away God's incomprehensibility and you take away the power to evoke in the soul all the awe and wonder which enter into the very essence of worship. (2) To its constancy. True worship is not an occasional service confined to times and places, but an abiding attitude of the soul. "God is a Spirit," &c. 3. Promotive of holiness. Let men realise the constant presence of God, and how strongly will they feel restraint from sin and stimulus to virtue. 4. Assurative of retribution. Who can hide himself from the Lord? No sin escapes His notice. There is no escaping therefore from punishment. "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" 5. Illustrative of heaven. There is nothing local or formal in heaven's worship. "I saw no temple therein." Then He is felt to be everywhere, and is worshipped everywhere. II. A CREATIVE existence. "Hath not My hand made," &c. Because He made all, He owns all. Creatorship implies sovereignty, almightiness, and proprietorship. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **What is the place of My rest.**—*The place of God's rest:*—I. GOD REVEALING HIMSELF. By the aid of figures God discloses His spiritual character. Everywhere we see pictures, suggestions of the Divine. The boundary sky, with its serene height of blue; the midnight sky with its myriad worlds; mountains piercing the clouds or hanging in frowning precipice; great floods of water rolling in their ceaseless tides; all compel us to say, "How marvellous are Thy works," &c. 1. Heaven is God's throne. A star in the far depths attracted the attention of an observer. It seemed to be but a single star, but a powerful telescope resolved into two which were really distant from each other five hundred times the distant between our earth and the sun. Who can conceive of such sublime spaces. What must He be whose throne rises higher than these stars, whose canopy is gemmed by myriad suns. 2. Earth is God's footstool. Here the microscope comes to our assistance. This great earth, with its millionfold objects seen and unseen, is but a resting-place for God's foot. II. GOD APPEALING TO MAN TO FIND HIM REST. We should never have dared to represent God as seeking rest. The marvel of His condescension is that He is independent of His creatures, and yet seeks rest in them. If God were only wisdom or power then His rest might be found in the works of His hands. But every being seeks rest according to his character. The infinitely pure One can only find rest in holiness; the infinitely loving in love; the eternal Father in His children. III. MAN VAINLY OFFERING GOD REST IN THINGS. The first shrine for human worship was the open firmament of heaven. It was the only worthy one. The only befitting walls were the distant horizon and the everlasting hills; the only suitable roof was the illimitable sky. Yet from the first, through sin, this temple proved too vast and glorious for man to use. So he planted groves to circle God to a space; and consecrated mountain peaks to fix God to a point; and built temples and churches to narrow the infinite to human grasp. Too often man has offered his temples as a sacrifice in the vain hope that, satisfied with them, God would cease to ask for holier things. And even now men think to offer God rest in the beauty of our churches and the charm of our services, and give Him things instead of persons. And yet even we men cannot be satisfied with things; how, then, can we expect God to be. Our hearts cannot rest in the artistic fittings of our dwellings, the creations of genius, or the associations of culture. We want love; we must have persons. We are "the figures of the true." He, too, puts aside the *things* we offer Him, be they temple, or gold, or work, and pleads with us, "My son give Me thy heart." If we respond then He will accept our things, and things alive with holy love may find for Him the rest He seeks. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*)

Vers. 51–53. **Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.**—*Stephen's change of tone:*—I. JUSTIFIED. 1. This was not the first Christian sermon that the

Jews or the Sanhedrin had heard. Otherwise, possibly, such vehement and unsparing denunciations had been out of place. They had already heard of Christ twice from His inspired messengers, and he did not speak till the ecclesiastical rulers had shown a determined animus to put their foot on the gospel. It was to a council who had, and still were, resisting grace that Stephen spoke. 2. Stephen was addressing the authorities, and the tone of Peter towards them had been very different from his tone with the people (chap. iii. 17; *cf.* iv. 11; vi. 30). There was deep reason and equity in this difference. It was the Sanhedrin which had all along fomented the hostility of the people to Christ. The common people heard Christ gladly, and shouted Hosannah; and in the closing scene it was only at the persuasion of the chief priests and elders that they were induced to "ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus." They had, no doubt, their full share of guilt, and Peter charges them with being accomplices; but, as at the Fall, God recognises a difference in degree of guilt between man and the serpent, so those who are of the same mind with God draw a distinction between those who sin through weakness, and those who sin of malice prepense. It is against the latter that Stephen hurls his indignant invective. II. ACCOUNTED FOR. 1. There was the natural friction which his own argument produced in his mind. As he traced the history of his nation, view after view opened upon him of the perversity, bigotry, and wilful opposition to truth which had characterised them at every period. They had only been too consistent in rejecting Divine messengers, and now by their rejection of the love and Spirit of God they had put the finishing stroke upon their sin. This repeated defiance of God galls Him, and kindles His holy indignation. 2. In all probability his quotation from Isaiah, so palpably adverse to their view of the temple, and so impossible to be answered stung them to the quick. This is indicated in the narrative, "They while in the act of listening were cut to the heart and kept gnashing upon him with their teeth." It is not difficult to picture the scene. Audible murmurs are heard as Stephen says, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples," &c. They make menacing gestures as wild beasts would spring upon their prey. There two scribes, reaching across to one another, have got a scroll between them, in which they are pointing to passages which they think confute him. One finger is on the words, "I have hallowed this house," &c.; the fist of the other contracts and is raised towards the prisoner. The young man from the Cicilian synagogue glances to and fro from the accused to Gamaliel. The great doctor had in a previous council made a diversion in favour of the apostles. But on that occasion it appears that the high priest had been under the influence of the Sadducees. Stephen's speech brought out into full prominence the anti-Pharisaic element of the gospel. And as he did so the eyes of Saul are turned wistfully to his great authority mutely asking, "Will you plead for these Galileans now?" And Gamaliel's contracted brow answers "No." Then catching the symptoms of the storm long brewing, with that quick apprehension which always characterises an earnest speaker, and seeing in a moment "the wicked husbandmen" before him, he bursts forth in the words of the text. In the early part of his speech he is cautious, and avoids giving offence; "He keeps his mouth, as it were, with a bridle, while the ungodly is in sight." But at last his heart grows hot within him, and while he is musing upon the circumstances he has recited, the fire kindles; and at the last he throws away his caution and speaks in accents of burning indignation. Conclusion: What has been said may read us a needful lesson on the subject of spurious charity. Charity is not uniform suavity under all circumstances; it has in it a stern element of moral indignation which is the salt that keeps it from corruption. Charity never flatters a man in wilful sin, but tells him plainly that continuance means death; just as a surgeon, who desires nothing but the health of his patient, does not hesitate to perform a painful operation. And because heresy is mischievous to souls charity pays it no compliments. If some safeguards are required with perfect righteousness of indignation—1. Rid the mind of personal resentment. 2. Be sure that it is vital error, and do not confound it with your view of it. (*Dean Goulburn.*) **Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.**—*Resisting the Holy Ghost*:—I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF IMPENITENT AND UNGODLY MEN. 1. Their leading feature is obduracy, which the Scriptures call hardness of heart. There may be a variety of dispositions, yet all merging in this spirit. (1) Stiff-necked means nearly the same as stout-hearted; one who is unyielding and obstinate; who sets at nought the councils of God and follows his own. (2) Uncircumcised in heart and ears. Circumcision was a rite intended to point out the nature and necessity of spiritual renovation (Deut. x. 16-18). 2. The obduracy of an ungodly man may be

resolved into—(1) Sensuality (Deut. xxi. 18–20). (2) Pride and prejudice (Jer. vi. 10–13). (3) Habitual negligence and the spirit of slumber (Isa. lxvi. 3, 4; xxix. 9–13). II. How UNGODLY MEN RESIST THE HOLY GHOST. That a creature should rise in rebellion against the great Creator might seem incredible, had we not demonstration of the fact. Gamaliel said, "If this council, or this work, be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest ye haply be found even to fight against God." There are many ways in which men do fight against God; but the most awful is in resisting the Holy Ghost. The Sovereign of the universe maintains a communication with our fallen world by the agency of His Spirit. Now this Divine Spirit is called—1. The Spirit of Truth. He revealed the will of God to us. When any one opposes Divine truth, he resists the Holy Ghost. The grand doctrines of the gospel are confessedly clear and plain in the Word. How then is it that they are not received? (Isa. xxx. 8–13; John iii. 19.) To those who prefer agreeable things, which flatter the roving imagination, and the unrenewed heart, a full exhibition of Divine truth, will ever be unwelcome. Herein consists the guilt of obstinate unbelief and impenitence. Hence, too, arises the sophistry which contrives a thousand subtle devices to nullify the Word of God. 2. The spirit of purity. He is the sole source and efficient author of sanctity. He has given a hallowed and peculiar stamp to the various precepts, ordinances, and institutions of true religion. Now, the man who labours to stain this stamp of purity resists the Holy Ghost. 3. The Spirit of GRACE. God engaged to pour out the spirit of grace and of supplication. The favour of Jehovah is eminently manifested through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Yet, alas! great numbers resist this Divine Agent of mercy, stifling those convictions which are produced by His power. The truth is heard, but not heeded and applied. III. THE TREMENDOUS CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTING THE HOLY GHOST. 1. Those persons who have long and obstinately opposed truth, are usually given over to a reprobate mind. The light which they have laboured so hard to exclude is withdrawn, and they are enveloped in the thick darkness they love. Compunction of conscience gradually abates till they are past feeling. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," &c. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlighted," &c. 2. The future punishment of those who have resisted the Holy Ghost will be beyond expression dreadful. Though for a time they may be hardened, so as to have little or no fear, the justice of God is preparing their doom. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, &c. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Resisting the Holy Ghost:*—I. THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 1. Convincing. 2. Entreating. 3. Admonishing. 4. Threatening. II. THE MEANS HE USES. 1. The Word. 2. Examples. 3. Conscience. 4. Providential dealings. III. THE MODES OF RESISTING HIM. 1. Inattention. 2. Procrastination. 3. Contradiction. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *On resisting the Holy Spirit:*—To resist the Holy Ghost is a sin of the deepest guilt. It is the basest ingratitude against God; for it is resisting the very means which God of His infinite mercy freely offers for recovering our souls from sin, and bringing us to Christ, our only Saviour. Does it not seem strange that against one so good, so merciful, so willing to help, and comfort us, we should ever be led to commit wilful sin? 1. Christians of the present day approach towards this "sin" several ways; and first whenever they despise or ridicule things belonging unto God. Should they persevere in these sinful habits, they may in the end lose all reverence for holy things; and then, if, with a soul indifferent to things spiritual, they die, have they a hope that their sin can be forgiven? Like the Pharisees of old, they seemed to have refused the very means by which they might have been brought to Christ. 2. There is another way by which Christians "resist the Holy Ghost"; and this, in the language of Scripture, is called grieving, or quenching, the Holy Spirit. In one sense every sin wilfully committed against God, every known Christian duty wilfully omitted, is grieving the Holy Spirit. But in a more especial manner Christians grieve the Holy Ghost when they refuse to receive those doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ which He hath Himself revealed; when the plain teachings of the Scriptures seem unto them "foolishness." 3. God's Holy Spirit is resisted also by every one who, in direct opposition to conscience, refusing the holy aid which alone could have preserved him, wilfully commits sin, knowingly violates the moral law of God. Such are some of the very awful considerations arising from the subject before us. Warned of the danger, let us watch and pray against it. Let us not resist the Holy Ghost

in this our accepted time, and He will fit us for the full enjoyment of the salvation purchased by the blood and secured by the intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*H. Marriott, M.A.*) **Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted.** — *Devotion to the conventional:* — I. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST WAS THE NATIONAL SIN OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. It was the act of the whole nation, the result of the full development of the then Jewish mode of looking at the world—the spirit of the age. 1. The term, a national sin, wants a clear definition. It is used at present recklessly. Every party declares its opponents guilty of a national sin. But a national sin is not an evil done by any one party to the nation, but an evil done by the nation itself. I might mention courses of political action in which England has persisted for years, through all changes of party, which are of the character of national sins, but I will content myself with saying that one of the worst of national sins is the rejection or neglect of the great men whom God has sent to save or to teach the nation. It is a proof of the perfect culture of a people, when it recognises its great men, puts them forward at once and obeys them. 2. The man of noble genius, the prophet, or whatever else you call him, is the test of the nation. Those are lost who reject him—the whole nation is lost if the whole nation rejects him—for it is not he so much whom it rejects as the saving ideas of which he is the vehicle. The question whether Christ shall be accepted or rejected has again and again been placed before the nations. It was placed most completely before the Jews at the appearance of the perfect Man—is placed before each of us—since He was the representation of that which is noblest in humanity. This passive work was recognised by Simeon when he said, "This child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel." It was recognised by Christ Himself when He said, "For judgment," *i.e.* for division, for sifting of the chaff from the wheat, "am I come into the world." And so it was, wherever He went He was the touchstone of men. Those who were pure and true-hearted saw Him, and loved Him; those who were conscious of their need and sin believed in Him, drank deep of His Spirit, and found redemption and repose. Those who were base or false of heart naturally recoiled from Him, and, to get rid of Him, hanged Him on a tree. In doing so—and this was the deed of the mass of the people—they destroyed their nationality which was hidden in their reception of Christ. In a coincidence with this, the priesthood rejected Christ in words which repudiated their distinct existence as a nation—"We have no king but Cæsar." He did nothing overt to produce this. He simply lived His life, and it acted on the Jewish world as an electric current upon the water; it separated its elements. II. THE CAUSE OF THIS REJECTION WAS PRIMARILY DEVOTION TO THE CONVENTIONAL, which is practically identical with want of individuality, one of the most painful deficiencies in our present society. 1. Now the rectification of that evil lies at the root of Christianity. Christ came to ensure the distinct life, the originality of each man, to rescue men from being mingled up, indistinguishable atoms, with the mass of man. 2. The spirit of the world is in exact opposition to this. Its tendency is to reduce all men and women to one pattern. There must be nothing original in the world's language, eccentric, erratic. Custom is to be despot. We must all dress in the same way, read the same books, talk of the same things. We do not object to progress, but everybody must be levelled, and then collectively advance; no one must leave the ranks or step to the front. 3. This is the spirit which either cannot see, or, seeing, hates men of genius. They are in conflict with the known and the accredited modes of action. So it comes to pass that they are depreciated and neglected; or, if they are too great and persist, persecuted and killed. And, indeed, it is not difficult to get rid of them, for men of genius cannot breathe in this atmosphere, it kills them. The pitiable thing in English society now is, that it is in danger of becoming of so dreadful a uniformity that no original man can be developed in it at all. This, if anything, will become the ruin of England's greatness. 4. There is, it is true, a kind of re-action going on at present against this tyranny. Young men and women, weary of monotonous pleasures, are in rebellion, but the whole social condition has been so degraded that they rush into still more artificial and unnatural pleasures and excitements; in endeavouring to become free, they enslave themselves the more. 5. Those who might do much, do little. It is one of the advantages of wealth and high position that those who possess them may initiate the uncustomary without a cry being raised against them. But even with every opportunity, how little imagination do they ever display, how little invention, how little they do to relieve the melancholy uniformity of our pleasures, or the intense joylessness of our work! 6. Now this

was precisely the spirit of the Jewish religious world at the time of Christ. Men were bound down to a multitude of fixed rules and maxims; they were hedged in on all sides. It was the most finished conventionalism of religion, in spite of the different sects, which the world has ever seen. Then came Christ, entirely original, proclaiming new ideas, or, old truths in a new form, overthrowing worn-out ceremonies, denouncing things gray with the dust of ages, letting in the light of truth into the chambers where the priests and lawyers spun their webs of theology to ensnare the free souls of men, trampling down relentlessly the darling customs of the old conservatism, shocking and bewildering the religious society. He did not keep, they said, the Sabbath day. He ate and drank—abominable iniquity!—with publicans and sinners. He allowed a fallen woman to touch Him. Worse still, He did not wash His hands before He ate bread. He did not teach as the scribes did. He did not live the time-honoured and ascetic life of a prophet. He dared to speak against the priesthood and the aristocracy. He came from Nazareth, that was enough; no good could come from Nazareth. He was a carpenter's son, and illiterate, and no prophet was made, or could be made, out of such materials. And this man! He dares to disturb us, to contest our maxims, to set at nought our customs, to array Himself against our despotism. "Come, let us kill Him;" and so they crucified Him. They did not see, the wretched men, that in murdering Him they murdered their nation also. III. TAKE THE QUESTION NOW OUT OF THE REALM OF THOUGHT AND HISTORY, AND APPLY IT PRACTICALLY. Ask yourselves two questions:—1. What would be the fate of Christ if He were suddenly to appear as a teacher in the middle of London? How would our orthodox religious society and our conventional social world receive Him? Desiring to speak with all reverence, He would horrify the one by His heterodox opinions, the other by His absolute scorn of many of the very palladia of society. Supposing He were to denounce—as He would in no measured terms—our system of caste; attack our most cherished maxims about property and rights; live in opposition to certain social rules, contemn with scorn our accredited hypocrisies; live among us His free, bold, unconventional, outspoken life; how should we receive Him? It is a question which it is worth while that society should ask itself. I trust more would hail His advent than we think. I believe the time is come when men are sick of the tyranny of custom of living in unreality; that they are longing for a new life and a new order of things, for some fresh ideas to come and stir, like the angel, the stagnant pool. I believe there are thousands who would join themselves to Him, thousands of true men from all religious bodies, and from those who are now plentifully sprinkled with the epithets of rationalists, infidels, heretics, and atheists; but there are thousands who call themselves by His name who would neglect or persecute Him, for He would come among our old conservatisms of religion, our doctrinal systems, superstitions, priesthoods, and ritualisms, as He came of old. If we could accept the revolution He would make, our nation and religion would be saved, if not it would be enervated by the blow and die. Realising these things, realising Christ speaking to us as He would speak now, we ought to feel our falseness. We may save our nation if we resolve, each one here for himself, to free ourselves from cant, and formalism, and superstition, to step into the clear air of freedom, individuality, truth, and holiness. 2. How far is the spirit of the world preventing you personally from receiving Christ? (1) Is your sole aim the endeavour to please your party, forfeiting your individuality? Then you cannot receive Christ, for He demands that you should be true to your own soul. (2) Are you permitting yourself to chime in with the low morality of the day, to accept the common standard, repudiating the desire to be better than your neighbours, and so coming at last to join in the light laugh with which the world treats immoralities of society or trade, or the more flagrant shame, dishonesty, and folly which adorn the turf—letting evils take their course, till gradually the evils appear to you at first endurable, and then even beautiful, being protected by the deities of custom and fashion, which we enthrone instead of God? Are you drifting into such a state of heart? If so, you cannot expect to be able to receive Christ, for He demands that life should be Godlike; not the prudence of silence about evil, but the imprudence of bold separation from evil. 3. And to come home to the inner spiritual life, is your religion only the creature of custom, not of conviction? Have you received and adopted current opinions because they are current, orthodox because it is the fashion to be orthodox, or heterodox because it is the fashion to be heterodox? How can you receive Christ?—for where He comes He claims reality. Ye must be born again; born out of a dead, Pharisaic,

conventional form of religion into a living individual union with the life of God. Two things, then, are laid before you this day—conventional religion, a whited sepulchre; personal religion, a fair temple, whose sure foundations are bound together by the twisted strength of the innermost fibres of the soul. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*)

Ver. 54. **When they heard these things they were cut to the heart.**—*The procedure against Stephen:*—I. THE NARRATIVE. Full of faith and power, he did great wonders and miracles among the people. He is, therefore, singled out for special attack, not in relation to the reality of his miraculous pretensions, but on what, no doubt, his assailants felt with such a man would be their higher vantage ground, the open field of theological controversy. And herein they were foiled. Chosen as the disputants were most probably for their superior learning and abilities, they would doubtless look upon Stephen with much the same scorn as the armed warrior of Gath regarded the stripling of Bethlehem. But on coming to close hand strife, they found that human learning was a poor match against Divine gifts, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. This signal defeat compelled a change in their mode of attack. Satan has more than one arrow in his quiver, and whenever he has set upon a man to destroy him, will never be wanting. If reasoning fail, the adversary will try invective; invective silenced, he has recourse to falsehood; falsehood confuted, there are well laid engines of subtlety and fraud and brute force. All these means were successively employed against Stephen. The refuted argument was followed by the charge of blasphemy. The groundless charge of blasphemy had to be propped up by bribed witnesses, as these could only obtain a judicial hearing by the violent dragging of the case before the council; and in the very act of making his defence before this body, Stephen is seized, cast out of the city, and put to death. II. ITS LESSON. In reading narratives like this, we are prompted to look for some principles on which to account for the bitterness and violence which usually characterises religious persecution. Men, we know, will get angry sometimes if people differ from them in politics, and will even forget their charities when contending on the most ordinary topics of dispute; but the fury, the gnashing with the teeth, and the showers of stones, are only met with when that which is to be put down is the pure truth of God; when the object of popular hatred can have no end of his own to compass. The fact is a standing, undeniable testimony to the doctrine, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. If the feeling of the natural heart, which supervened upon the fall, had been only the negation of a former love towards God, leaving man to settle down into a Gallio unconcernedness, we should never have heard anything of the blood of martyrs. Men would no more have risen up against an apostle than against a philosopher. But the case we know to be far otherwise. Press upon the consciences of men in any age the obligations of spiritual religion; carry the lamp of God's condemning truth into the heart's chambers of imagery; disturb that untempered mortar with which men daub over the walls of their refuge of lies, and in an instant you wake up the old feud of our nature; the embers begin to glow again of an ancient but long-slumbering fire; you have touched the man in the very quick of his cherished delusion, and at once he stands up in stout and rebellious front against God. Neither has advancing civilisation done more than restrain the outward expression of this feeling. It may have taught men, when convinced of the utter futility of their own religious principles, that they cannot now have recourse to the rude retributions of a rude age—but it has not dispossessed them of their malignity, or altered the original antagonism of the natural mind to the reception of Bible truth, or the practice of Bible requirements. If I tell a Socinian, that in the sight of God his moralities are no more than so many disguised and garnished sins; if I tell a man of right creed and pious activities, that if he has not something besides this, the publicans and harlots shall go into heaven before him; if I say to the proud, the worldly, the over-reaching, the slander-dealer, the uncharitable, the blasphemer, and the Sabbath-breaker, "Ye have not the Spirit of Christ, and therefore can be none of His"—yea, if I can so bring home these evidences of an unchanged heart to the individual conscience as that a man shall feel as if I were saying to him, Thou art the man whom, in your present state, the blood of Christ cannot reach; for whom the mansions of heaven can make no room; whose peace is a delusion, and whose hope is but a spider's web—spared though I may be from the gnashing teeth of unbridled rage, yet, while determined to stand out against conviction, the

spirit of the persecutor is in that sinner's heart, and only to the age, and other accidents of social life, is it owing that men are not found to rush upon a faithful messenger with one accord, and to cast him out of the city, and to stone him. By nature men hate truth as the midnight robber hates the light. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The first Christian martyr*:—I. THE MAN. The form of his name would indicate that he was a Hellenist; that is, a Jew born among the Gentiles, speaking the Greek language. His name also signifies a crown. 1. He was versed in the Scriptures. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart." Cranmer and Ridley learned the New Testament by heart. They also saw its truths in relation to present duties of life. This was the case of the first Christian martyr. He exposed the false view of the Jews toward the temple and the law. "They were cut to the heart," or, literally, they were sawn asunder in their hearts. It was not one staggering blow which did the work. The truth, laden with rebukes, was gradually making its way through their hearts. The personal application completed the work. 2. Stephen was spiritually enlightened. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven." We may not all have the privilege of Stephen to look into heaven in this life, but the Holy Spirit furnishes enlightening power. Spiritual breadth of vision follows. That creates confidence. Moses endured, seeing Him who is invisible; and the angel of God revealed himself unto Paul, saying, "Fear not." Here was the basis of Stephen's confidence. Facts of the visible world were newly impressed upon him. We see things here from a short range. Hence mystery and perplexity arise. He is sustained by a higher power, and looks with joy to the end. 3. He possessed a forgiving spirit. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This prayer is without a parallel outside of Biblical history and its influence. Confucius, Isocrates, Seneca, and other Gentile writers hinted at the golden rule in a partial or negative form. But praying for one's enemies has thus far been discovered only in the Bible and in the line of its influence. The Cross first brings it to view. II. STEPHEN WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH. 1. He witnessed that God's presence and favour were not limited to any set place. Stephen taught that God's presence was not limited to a favoured few. This was one link in the chain which drew away Christians from Jewish rites. The disciples loved the temple. Who could blame them? Here Jesus gave some of His choicest revelations. But lingering amid the incense and smoking sacrifices too long they may bind these practices, only belonging to the past, on the new society, and fetter its future course. They were providentially thrust out into new fields, as we may be, by apparent disasters, to secure in the end the best results. 2. Stephen bore witness that Christ had been elevated to glory and power. "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Stephen was the first to bear witness to the fact of seeing Christ after His ascension. Paul and John were granted such visions later (chap. ix. 3, 4; 1 Cor. ix. 1; Rev. i. 12–17). Perhaps such witnessing was needed to encourage the early Church. It made visible things appear as a positive reality. It also confirmed Stephen's teaching. Christ had taught that spiritual worship anywhere was pleasing to the Father. It would follow that a peculiar privilege had been granted to Stephen. Any rabbi might have coveted it. The glory of God had appeared to him as well as to Abraham and to Moses. If his face had shone like that of an angel, his words now had a heavenly support. 3. Stephen bore witness that Jesus receives His people after death. He did not formally affirm this fact, but prayed to Jesus to receive his spirit; or, in bold literalness, "Take my spirit by the hand." (*J. H. Allen.*) *The first Christian martyr*:—We have foregleams of the next life. Witnesses have had glimpses to which they have given testimony. I. STEPHEN WAS A MAN OF AFFAIRS. He was no dreaming enthusiast, however intense his spiritual life. He was equal to the demands of new enterprises where originality in planning and fertility of resource were requisite. II. HE, ONLY A DEACON, A LAYMAN, WAS FULL OF FAITH AND POWER. III. THIS TESTIMONY HE GIVES WHEN HE MUST SEAL HIS SINCERITY WITH HIS LIFE. He knew what extremes Jewish hate could reach. IV. HE HAD GIVEN ABUNDANT PROOF OF MENTAL SOUNDNESS AND GRASP IN HIS RÉSUMÉ OF JEWISH HISTORY AND GOD'S DEALINGS. V. HIS SPIRITUAL ELEVATION AND FELLOWSHIP APPEAR, BEAUTIFULLY AND GLORIOUSLY, IN HIS AGREEMENT IN WORDS AND DISPOSITION WITH HIS DYING MASTER. Such a witness we can trust, however momentous the questions upon which he speaks. Points of Stephen's testimony—1. Heaven's glory gladly and easily appreciable by redeemed souls. Infinite the necessary remove of heaven's life from earth's, but God's redeemed ones can enter it with delight. However stupendous the transition, it is easy and quick; no narrowed

and doubtful reception; the finite easily joins the infinite; the imperfect is neither shamed nor crippled by the perfect; the lowliest estate does not shrink or tremble as the highest glory suddenly bursts upon it. Stephen looked steadfastly. 2. Heaven is heaven because filled with God's personal presence. God's glory apart from His presence is inconceivable. The soul is made for God, and reposes only in Him. There its satisfactions are supreme and complete. Is God's conscious presence welcome here now? If not, how can we meet Him face to face when this life shall open upon the next and His flooding glory appear on every side? 3. Jesus, in His glorified humanity, has the highest place in heaven's honour, and welcomes His disciples as they follow Him. We are strongly impressed with Jesus' manifold offices for His disciple hand when with them in visible leadership. The story is dramatic in vividness and suggestive in teaching. But His personal relations now, His invisible leadership, mean much more every way. The glorified Jesus is the firstfruits of our redeemed humanity—in the fulness of time He will gather to Himself, to a full sharing of His glory, all who are washed in His blood and trained by His grace. 4. Dying saints are strengthened by foregleams, sometimes brilliant sight of heaven's inhabitants' bliss. 5. The spirit survives the body, its powers expanded and quickened. We reason about continued life, the body laid aside; but hear the proof in the experience of one qualified to speak. Stephen saw Jesus, and to Him committed his soul. We shudder at the thought of going into utter oblivion, life annihilated. From this fear the dying Stephen brings sure release. 6. The saved soul, redeemed by the blood of Christ and quickened by Divine grace, can thoroughly forgive. No test of Christian character is more trustworthy than this. No personal resentments embittered His dying hour. Will our pillow be free from such thorns? They are sharp and fatal to dying peace or eternal safety. 7. Divine Providence utilises all events to the forwarding of its world-embracing plans. A great apostle was needed for the Gentile world. Here that coming apostle had his first special training. As Augustine has said, "But for Stephen's prayers the Church would not have had its apostle Paul." 8. A significant fact that this detailed account of Stephen's martyrdom stands alone. We needed it, that we might have this one vivid illustration of dying grace in a crisis so remarkable. 9. A typical instance of an apparent triumph of hostility to Jesus in His followers turning into overwhelming defeat. We tremble before assaults upon the Word of God, the organised Church and all related institutions; but such assaults, however successful in appearance, are but for the moment. Converts to Christ are, in most cases, born through the travail of some one. 10. Lighter trials may avail themselves of the same supports as came to the dying martyr. (*S. Lewis B. Speare.*)

Vers. 55, 56. **He being full of the Holy Ghost.**—*The work of the Spirit in the proto-martyr:*—Note how explicitly the character, attainments, and triumph of Stephen are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In the first notice of him he is called "a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost." So here in his death. Bearing this in mind, observe—I. HE LOOKED UP STEADFASTLY INTO HEAVEN, where his heart and treasure had long been. Where else could he look? Everything urged him to look away from earth and invited him to look up to heaven. He had no sympathy below, but there was all sympathy above. There were the redeemed who had gone before him, the angels, Jesus, his heavenly Father, all waiting to welcome him. So good is brought out of evil, and man's violence made to hasten the saint's blessedness. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." When earth casts us out, heaven waits to receive us. II. As he looked HE SAW THE GLORY OF GOD. 1. In Isaiah vi. we may see the meaning of this glory, especially as interpreted by John. "These things, said Esaias, when he saw Christ's glory." The seraphim saw in Christ the glory of God—His mercy and His holiness, how He could be just and yet forgiving. So Stephen saw the Divine honour secured by that redemption for which he was called upon to die. 2. He saw Jesus standing, and the glory of God softened in the Person of his Saviour. He saw Jesus—(1) Glorious after His humiliation. (2) Accepted by the Father, and in that the proof that His work was accomplished. (3) "Standing," to import that He was interceding, giving the Spirit, and that human nature was indeed exalted in His Person. III. In full harmony with these views he said, "LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT." 1. He had a clear apprehension of the soul's independence of the body. 2. He knew that as soon as his enemies had despatched him his soul would be admitted into glory. 3. He realised the sufficiency of Christ for his salvation. IV. How was he exercised

towards his enemies? He prayed, LORD, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE. 1. What just views of Christ these prayers discover. 2. What a view does his conduct give of the power of Christianity. V. It was while he expressed such a spirit that HE FELL ASLEEP. Learn from the example of Stephen—1. How to die in peace. 2. That the Spirit has brought great glory to Christ from the death of His people. 3. What shall be the glory of the martyr in heaven? (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The true conception of worship*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. Negatively. It does not consist in—(1) Mere external ceremony. (2) The mere utterance of any prescribed forms of prayer. (3) Any special attitudes of devotion. (4) Mere devotional feeling. 2. Positively. The true conception of worship is realised only in the vision of Jesus. This view—1. Respects His Divine-human character. 2. Is centred in Jesus as Mediator. 3. Is directed to Christ in His position of official dignity. III. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. Stephen—1. "Looked." This was—(1) Personal. (2) Present. (3) Anxious. (4) Intelligent. (5) Glorious. 2. "Steadfastly." The soul was in the act. It was no mere "vacant stare"; no idle, curious glance. 3. "Into heaven." He entered within the veil and worshipped with the spirits before the throne. He was not content to look merely at its burnished gates. 4. "Saw the glory of God." The instrument of vision was the eye of the soul. He saw by faith not the outer, but the inner, glory, of the temple of God. IV. ITS MORAL CONDITION. He was "full of the Holy Ghost." It is the power of the Holy Ghost that purifies the heart, spiritualises the conceptions, and develops the true worshipping faculty in man. Worship is a dead letter without such power. (*John Tesseyman.*) **Looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing.** *The rapture of Stephen*:—Let us regard this as—I. A RAVISHING GLIMPSE INTO HEAVENLY REALITIES. Divine manifestations usually fasten on something in the fortunes or thoughts of those who receive them. To Joshua, about to besiege Jericho, the angel of the Lord appears as a captain; to the wise men, whose study was astronomy, the revelation of Christ's birth was made by a star; to St. Peter and his fellow-fishermen, a sign of Christ's power is given in a miraculous draught of fishes. Stephen was now in the temple, and was familiar with the history of the shekinah of its holy place. He was before the high priest, with whose function on the day of atonement he was also familiar. With, then, this imagery in his mind he sees the shekinah of the heavenly sanctuary, and the great High Priest standing before God to intercede for the human race. II. A CONFESSION OF CHRIST BEFORE THOSE WHO HAD CRUCIFIED HIM. Stephen's mind was full of his Master's words when placed in similar circumstances, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power," and his declaration is tantamount to "Lo, His words are fulfilled. I see your late Victim crowned with glory at the right hand of God." III. A CONSOLATION AND SUPPORT TO HIMSELF. Our Lord had warned the Jews that they would see Him "sitting"; Stephen sees Him "standing." The difference is significant. To the Jews He will sit as Judge; to Stephen He stands—1. As ready to assist him. A person who sits while contemplating the sufferings of another gives an impression of indifference. One who rises and advances towards us shows that he hears our cry and is willing to help. 2. As ready to plead for him. The earthly high priest sat before him as judge, fury on his countenance, and condemned him. The heavenly High Priest stands as his Advocate with the Father. 3. As ready to receive him in fulfilment of His own gracious words (John xiv. 2, 3). IV. CONFORMING THE MARTYR TO THE IMAGE OF HIS LORD. At Christ's baptism "the heavens were opened," and in Gethsemane "there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." Thus was He prepared for the two great conflicts of the temptation and the passion. Now that the disciples might be made like Him it pleased God, in the first martyrdom, to vouchsafe the support of a heavenly vision. It was otherwise with James. He had no vision, but what had passed in Stephen's case must have given him support. "He who welcomed Stephen will welcome me." These different circumstances of the two martyrdoms open up the general plan of God's administration of His Church. "We walk by faith, not by sight." If every believer had such a vision there would be no longer any trial of character in faith, and the great object of our probation would be seriously interfered with. God's plan, therefore, is to give glimpses into the heavenly world only at the outset of a dispensation. But if our privileges are less high in this respect, we have the opportunity of exercising a nobler faith. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." V. THROWING INTO RELIEF THE OBTUSENESS OF THE JEWS. Blinded by their malicious fury, they can no more see Christ than Balaam could the angel. In this there is something

very awful. A transaction was going on in the spiritual world, which intimately concerned them, of which they were totally unconscious. So it may be with us; and there is but one thing which can make the spiritual world a reality to us, and that is the faculty which penetrates into the unseen—faith. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Stephen's outlook and vision*:—The eye of man is "the window of his soul." Through it, he himself looks out; and if any one stands high enough in his confidence, through it he may likewise look in. The direction of just one glance sometimes exhibits a whole character in a single flash of revelation: and this may be drawn forth by the same object. Lot looked down towards Sodom; thus he displayed his avarice. Lot's wife looked back towards Sodom; thus she disclosed her disobedience. Abraham looked forth on Sodom; thus he showed his faith after prayer. Note—I. STEPHEN'S OUTLOOK. 1. Its expectancy. "He looked." He was now in search of help in his extremity; it was nowhere to be found in that neighbourhood. He looked off from everything earthly, sent his mind backward after some old promise, forward for some fresh revealing of hope, and upward beyond all pain and worry for himself or the young Church he loved. Our lesson is this: Give up all responsibility for the world's history into the hands of a faithful God. How some people distress themselves about the future of their children; forgetting that they lived somehow after their parents died. God lives always. 2. Its intelligence. "He looked up." He might have, in some way, sought help from the Roman government, or sympathy from his fellow-believers, but "up" was the only way in which to look, for one who had read the Old Testament as he had (Isa. xxxi. 1). So we must rest for living help, and for dying grace, upon Jesus Christ (Heb. xii. 2). 3. Its tranquillity. "He looked up steadfastly." There is here no quailing of the coward, no cringing of the captive, no weak sympathy for those who would mourn his death. Is it not strange that the one person in all the world who would fitly express his exact feelings was at the time standing? (chap. xx. 24). And any sincere believer may depend upon his covenant-keeping God to give him perfect peace in dying, even under the most dreadful circumstances. 4. ITS TRIUMPH. "Into heaven." True faith, eminent and dauntless, has an eyesight of its own, which will prove gloriously serviceable at the final moment of life. II. THE VISION. When Stephen looked up, what did he see? Two years afterwards, the "young man" Saul saw the same grand spectacle (chap. ix. 3–5). It made him an apostle (1 Cor. ix. 1). 1. "The glory of God." Moses and Elijah appeared in glory with Christ (Luke ix. 31). When Moses and Aaron saw it, it was like a pavement of sapphires (Exod. xxiv. 10). The dying martyr saw an unutterable splendour. He sprang towards it with an impulsive gesticulation of discovery. He forgot where he was, and even ceased to think how unsympathetic an audience he had. 2. "The Son of Man." Our Lord called Himself by that name often, but no one else till this martyr died. The Son of God is still the Son of Man. Conclusion: Heaven is—1. The only real thing in the universe. 2. The only hope worth cherishing. 3. The only end worth striving for. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Stephen*:—We get the keynote of Stephen's life and character in the text—"He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly unto heaven." That was not a mere outward gesture, a solitary act, but expressed the constant habit, the normal attitude of his soul. Habitually he looked through the things that are seen to the things that are not seen, and saw life in the light of God. He saw the glory of God—the one perfect revelation of the character of God—in the face of Jesus Christ. He looked through all the changes and through all the apparent moral confusion of this world to the Divine reality behind. I. First of all, it is said, he was "full of grace and power." In the same chapter it is said he was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." Practically it is the same thing. "Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and "full of grace and power": the one is the condition of the other. The one points to the inward fact, the thing which made him what he was; the other to the manifestation of that, the impression which he left upon those who came into contact with him. 1. He was "full of grace." The expression suggests a type of character with qualities of its own, which not only calls forth our admiration, but which leads our thoughts upwards to God. There are persons who, in a special way, make us think of the Lord Jesus Christ. We recognise the character I am pointing at when we meet with it, although we may feel that we can only very inadequately describe it. It is a character partly like that of Christ Himself, but also in some essential particulars unlike it; like it in the presence of simple trust in God, and purity of heart, and prompt faithfulness of loving obedience; like it in the pain and indignation caused by falsehood and

cruelty and meanness; like it in the love that seeketh not her own, that is not easily provoked, that beareth all things and hopeth all things; but also unlike it, not only in the imperfection that belongs to human goodness at its best, but in the profound humility which accompanies deep consciousness of sin, and the grateful love which springs from sin forgiven. Yes, we know very well that there is a character which has in it something distinctive, something peculiarly its own, even when it is very imperfectly developed, something that we recognise, and we know whence it is and how it cometh. We know whence it is, for it is grace; and we know how it cometh, for it cometh by that faith which realises the unseen and lives as in the presence of Him who is unseen, which habitually looks up into heaven, which has learned to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and which, as the result of beholding the glory of the Lord, reflects it, and is changed into the same image. 2. And being "full of grace," he was "full of power." The power here indicated was not simply that of working miracles, nor was it even intellectual force—the wisdom with which he selected from a memory well-stored with Old Testament Scripture, and the cogency with which he drove home his arguments, though that was part of it; but it was above all moral force of character, the power which always goes along with grace, and suffers no life where that is to be resultless. For grace in itself is power. We can understand that Stephen was "full of power" when he was pressing his antagonists in debate with arguments which they were unable to answer, and they retreated step by step, baffled and silenced, and at last slunk away abashed. We can understand it when we perceive how, while professedly dealing with the past, he was really holding up history before them as a mirror, in which they could see themselves, and observe that in one respect at least they were proving themselves to be the children of the fathers, by doing after their deeds; and we can understand it again, when his pent up feeling at last finds vent in a burst of indignant denunciation, which must have made those men who held his life in their hands quail in his presence. We recognise that there was a power there; and perhaps it is not that in us which is most akin to the spirit of Christ, which is most quick to appreciate that kind of power; but how slow we are to realise that there was perhaps greater, wider, and more lasting power in the daily round of common duty, in the unnoticed ministries of charity, as he daily wended his way through the lanes and closes of the city among the poor committed to his charge, in his example of patience and self-mastery, in the help he gave by friendly counsel, in the silent influence of his ordinary life. It is good to covet earnestly the best gifts; but it is well to remember that there is something more excellent, for greater—greater in power—than all these is love, the love which is quickened and sustained by looking up steadfastly into heaven and beholding Jesus. II. It is in harmony with what we are told of Stephen—"that he was full of grace"—that we read of that glory upon his face in the great crisis of his life. For grace is the inner beauty of the soul; this was the shining through of that inner beauty. Who cares to stop to discuss the question whether this was, in the commonly accepted sense of the word, miraculous? Does not that which is inward ever tend to find for itself outward expression? Do not the habitual emotions and cherished thoughts of the soul record themselves upon the countenance? And if the evil dispositions write themselves upon the face, do not the best feelings of the heart—does not grace—tend to do the same? Is there not something unmistakably its own in the eye of guilelessness and transparent openness? Does not the habitual trustfulness which rests on God come at last to reflect itself in serene placidity of expression? Does not love in its purest, intensest, self-sacrificing forms—the love of a mother, for instance—almost glorify? III. The inward likeness to Christ, which comes by steadfastly looking to Him, which was manifest in the life of Stephen, making it full of grace and power, was also conspicuous in his death. He is like his Lord in faith and in love. 1. He is like Him in faith. There is similar confidence, yet with a significant difference. Our Lord in dying had said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Stephen, in his last agony, commits his spirit not directly to the Father, but to Jesus, who has bought it with His blood, knowing in whom he has believed, and that He is able to keep that which is committed to Him against that day. 2. And, once more, in his dying hour, in showing himself strong in love, Stephen reveals how full his mind and heart are of the thought of his Saviour, and how deeply he has drunk of His Spirit. While the blinding volleys of stones are flying round him, crashing upon body and brain, the last effort of his yet clear consciousness is an act of prayer; and the prayer of Jesus

for those who were nailing Him to the Cross is echoed in his expiring appeal—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We can scarcely help thinking of a wonderful contrast. In the days of King Joash, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, the faithful friend and counsellor of the king, stood forth to rebuke the corruption of the popular worship. Like Stephen's, his warning provoked an outburst of popular fury; and like him, he received the earthly recompense of his faithfulness in being stoned to death, the king, with shameful ingratitude, being a party to it: "and when he died, he said, "the Lord look upon it and require it." In what a different strain does the first Christian martyr plead. Since the old prophet's time a new revelation of Divine love had been given to men; a new example of human love had been set before them; a new motive of love had begun to work within them; a new spirit of love, the Spirit of Christ Himself, had been imparted to them; and of that Spirit Stephen was full—"full of the Holy Ghost." IV. This is the only narrative with any fulness of detail of any death in the New Testament, save One. Is it wrong to infer from this that in the New Testament greater importance is attached to the manner of a man's life than to the manner of a man's death; that in his conquering temptation in living, even more than in his triumphing over fear in dying, is the power of the grace of Christ displayed? At any rate, for once we are asked to contemplate a Christian in the hour of his departure. His was a stormy passage to the heavenly rest; but this is what we have to remember—what was true in his case is true as to the main things in all who have obtained like precious faith. There may be no brightness like the reflection of the heavenly glory lighting up the face; there may be no telling of a vision of the opened heavens; there may be only pain and weakness, dull unconscious stupor, or a clouded mind; but none the less it is true that as here, so over every dying believer the Lord Jesus Christ stands to succour and to receive the spirit he commits to Him then, or has committed long before. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all His saints. Like Stephen they fall asleep, and awake to behold His face in righteousness, and shall be satisfied with His likeness. (*A. O. Johnston, M.A.*) *Stephen's vision*:—Notice—I. THE GLORIOUS SCENE THAT EXISTS IN THE WORLD ABOVE—"the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." This Stephen saw; but it did not come into existence then; it was in existence before; it is in existence now. We find it difficult to give reality in our minds to distant and unseen things. My friend in some remote land is a really existing being, though I cannot realise his presence. None of us doubts the existence of countries on the other side of the globe. They are as real as though we beheld them. So of heavenly things. II. THOSE DISTRESSING SCENES THAT OFTEN OCCUR IN OUR WORLD BELOW. Scenes like that are often acted in our world. They seem to be a part of our fallen world's sad inheritance. To some of us the injustice, cruelty, and evil tempers of those we live with, have embittered our lives. We must not murmur at this. It is to be endured patiently, just as sickness or any other calamity. Let us, as one fruit of it, long more for a world where we and all admitted shall be creatures of another mind—all happy one in another, as well as happy in our God. III. THE CONDUCT OF THE FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN AMID THE DISTRESSING SCENES OF LIFE. "They gnashed on him with their teeth." They were becoming wild in their rage against him; yet what does he? Strive to mollify their rage? Appeal for protection to the judges? Look round to find some one less violent than the rest, to interpose in his behalf? No; great as his danger appears, he looks above his danger. "Full of the Holy Ghost, he looks up steadfastly into heaven." The expression implies that he felt sure that there was help for him there. Here is the secret of bearing trouble well—it is not to keep our eyes on our trouble, anxious for any and ready to catch at the first alleviation of it; it is to look above our troubles, to get our whole soul riveted on Christ in the heavens. IV. THE MANIFESTATION WHICH THE LORD SOMETIMES MAKES OF HIMSELF TO HIS EXPECTING SERVANTS. Our Lord had promised His disciples that if they loved Him and kept His commandments, He will still manifest Himself to them. Now to draw our attention to this promise, and to assure us of the fulfilment of it, we may conceive to be the design of this wonderful vision. At this time most certainly he was loving his Lord, and proving his affection to Him by the danger in which he had placed himself for His sake. Here, then, was an opportunity for the Lord to show how precious to Him are the people that love Him, and how mindful He is of His own word. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Seeing the glory of Christ*:—Dr. Owen, just previous to his death, said, "I am going to Him whom my soul has loved—or, rather, who has loved me with

an everlasting love—which is the sole ground of all my consolation." On Mr. Payne saying to him, "Doctor, I have just been putting your book on 'The Glory of Christ' to the press," he answered, "I am glad to hear it. But oh, brother Payne, the long-looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done yet, or was capable of doing in this world." *The presence of Christ in the dying hour*:—Robert Glover, mentioned by Mr. Foxe in the "Book of Martyrs," though he was a man very gracious and holy, faithfully bearing witness to the truth, yet it pleased God to withdraw Himself and presence from him, insomuch that he was greatly distressed while he was in prison, and, opening himself to his friend, told him how God had left and deserted him. His friend exhorted him still to wait on God, which he laboured to do, and the night before his execution spent much of that time in prayer; yet no comfort came, no manifestations of the presence of Christ. The next day he was drawn out to the stake to die for the truth, and as he went he mourned much for the presence of Christ; but when he came in sight of the stake it pleased God so to fill his heart and soul with comfort, and the incomes of His love, that he cried out unto his friend, "Oh, Austin, He is come! He is come! He is come!" The good man was in the dark a great while, but when in the darkest time then Christ came. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The martyr's gaze on his ascended Lord*:—But twice, so far as we know, since Christ's ascension has the cloud which received Him out of the sight of those first loving gazers opened its blinding folds—once for the conversion of the persecuting Saul, once for the support of the suffering Stephen. It was a great crisis in the history of the new faith. How much depended on the faithful endurance of that young champion! To him tortured men and women would look back from many a scene of agony, and take courage. But he had no example. To him, therefore, most fitly was this support vouchsafed. And mark the mode of its bestowal: "Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven." What a gaze was that! What faith, desire, love, need, supplication was gathered into it! And as he gazes, lo, the cloud melts away; being "full of the Holy Ghost," the power of intuition, so weakened in us fallen men, is supernaturally strengthened, and he sees Jesus standing, because it is the priestly attitude of the great Intercessor, and because the attitude of His intercession is the attitude of His help. And so He showed Himself as reaching out from the eternal shore into the billows of this bitter storm the pierced hand to be the stay of His martyr. And that sight changed all things to him. The lights of earth paled beneath its lustre; the sounds of earth were hushed by its ineffable harmony; the mighty throb which shot through his spirit deadened the power of marking any lower sensation, as he saw that sight of glory, and knew that countenance of love which was bent full upon him. He saw God's kingdom in its strength, its vastness, and its repose, and he was safe. How can the ripple around their darkened base stir those adamantine foundations? How can the hate of man pluck him out of that hand pierced by love and full of omnipotence? "The Son of Man—the sharer of my nature." And as the shadow of the great Intercessor falls upon him, transforming him into its own likeness, the dying martyr pleads for his murderers. And then, not as one shrinking back from pain, but as a soul in rapture, thirsting for its full fruition, he calls upon his manifested Lord to receive his spirit; until amidst that storm of murdering violence, calm as the hushed infant upon its mother's breast, he sinks into a rest sweeter than that of peaceful infancy, and falls indeed asleep in Jesus. For the sake of its great practical lessons—I. We have here a notable instance of the way in which THE WHOLE OF OUR HOLY RELIGION RESTS ON FACTS. We see what it was amongst its first confessors in a time of crucial experiment. It was not a set of beneficent maxims which leavened, and raised the tone of, society; not a set of lofty ideas which, gradually, with the help of time and distance, formed a highly-coloured medium through which reverence and affection could look back to the form of their first promulger, and gaze upon it with a wonder which at last invested him with the fancied attribute of a god. No! from the very first it was faith in a Person, Divine and human, beside His follower, and able and willing to hold him up in every struggle. Stephen's spirit did not cast itself upon sublime abstractions. No! he looks up steadfastly into heaven with the earnest, longing, searching glance of undoubting expectation, following the ascended form to where the cloud had received Him out of their sight; and before such a gaze the cloud melted, and he "saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." II. IF THUS THE WORD OF GOD WAS A SET OF FACTS, ANY ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE IT INTO A SET OF IDEAS SUBVERTS ITS VERY

FOUNDATIONS, AND DESTROYS THE WHOLE EDIFICE. For—1. This is to take a position altogether at variance with that occupied by the first believers, and thus to shake utterly their credit, inasmuch as, in this view, either they were so ignorant as to be misled, or so false as to mislead. Nor is this all; the great Teacher Himself appealed to these facts as the proofs of His commission (1 John x. 38; xv. 24). Either, therefore, the facts were real, or the Teacher was a deceiver. 2. It is not possible, consistently with any rules of reasoning, to make a selection from the facts, and yet seek to retain the ideas. A philosophy, being a speculation, may contain a multitude of great and true ideas, mixed with phantasies and fictions; and it is the office of higher intelligences to separate the precious from the vile. But in a system of alleged facts resting upon evidence, the presence of one falsehood shakes the truth of the whole fabric. This is the very issue to which St. Paul brings the whole question, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." III. THE LIGHT THROWN HEREBY UPON DIFFICULTIES AS TO GOSPEL MIRACLES. 1. These difficulties rest mainly on the supposed existence of a contradiction between the universally observed law of causes and effects, and the interposition of any intervening power to suspend or to invert those laws. Such pretended interruptions, we are told, no evidence could establish, and that a miracle therefore is impossible. The same conclusion is more gently insinuated by those who would have us think that miraculous power was nothing more than a deeper acquaintance with nature, enabling the operator to work a trick and to call it a miracle; to do, as some have done by savages, when they called to their aid the secrets of science to astonish by pretended portents the ignorance of the uncivilised. 2. But cast upon all these difficulties the brightness of St. Stephen's vision, and they are scattered in a moment; for it lifts us at once out of the dull level of naturalism into the new lights and shadows of the mountain of God. If one of these recorded facts be true and real, it is of itself enough to prove that the Lord of nature has for His wise purposes resolved to manifest to us, through our sensible faculties, His peculiar presence and His direct working; and this once admitted, the probability is in favour of the truth of any other well-attested miracles. For just as one flash of lightning evinces the existence of such conditions of the atmosphere as may be expected to produce a second, and so makes the coming of that second as probable then as at another time it would be improbable; so does one such direct proof of the manifested working of the Master's hand make it even probable that according to His wise purpose it may be followed by another. One such fact, therefore, proves that we are not under a dispensation of nature but of grace; that we are introduced into a new atmosphere, to which we cannot apply the laws which governed that from which we have been transported; that we can no more argue as to what can and cannot be from the data of mere naturalism, than we could measure the laws of light by knowledge gathered from the darkness. 3. Here, then, we are led to the real cause of such difficulties. It is to be found in a want of hearty belief of the spiritual world. To any one of such a habit of mind all difficulties multiply spontaneously after their kind. It is with such spirits as with the bodies of men who live beside open drains, or are encompassed in the malaria of a marsh; they imbibe unconsciously at every pore the lurking poison: you must lift them up to higher grounds and purer airs if you would give health to their fever-stricken limbs. To heal these troubled spirits you must place them with St. Stephen on the mountain of God. If that eye, so diseasedly minute in its small criticisms; if that apprehension, so ready but so shallow in its power; if that reason, so feverishly captious in its questions; if that bent, narrow, trembling soul could but be lifted to those heights—could but be led to look up steadfastly into heaven—its difficulties would pass even unconsciously from it, and its cure be certain. 4. Here, then, is the true mode of meeting these difficulties: not by shutting our eyes feebly to them, not by turning away from them as though we were afraid of them; but by looking at them, not in the purblind darkness of a carping petulance, but in the light of these spiritual verities. To live in this light is our Christian birthright. We need not be with St. Stephen in the agony of martyrdom to attain to it. God has so made us that common life gives us daily opportunities, if we will but use them, of gaining this insight. To every soul so seeking Him He reveals Himself; the cloud opens; the form of the Son of Man is seen; and then belief is comparatively easy, and the difficulties which must remain, whilst they keep our faith humble and watchful, cease to be perplexing to the soul. 5. If this be so, then what becomes of the supposed morality of encouraged doubts in any Christian man? Surely we can see the utter falsehood of representing them as the

patient reachings forth of an inquiring spirit for the light for which he longs Rather, assuredly, are they the wilful turning, through some fault of the flesh or of the spirit, away from the light; and instead of bearing the noble titles of reasonable and faithful inquiry, they should by every true heart be degraded to the discreditable category of suspicions nourished in cankered hearts against a father's truthfulness or a mother's honour. Dark and sad is the history of such a course. Its steps lead surely down from the mountain of light. The one only Sun which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, sinks for him who treads it in the mists which gather ever thicker and thicker round his blackening horizon. Worship in its fervour, prayer in its reality, and then trust, and love, and peace one by one are all extinguished—peak after peak loses the last lingering ray of the daylight—until all is dark (Isa. lix. 9–11). 6. It is not on the difficulties of belief alone, but upon all the struggles through which the life of God is maintained within our souls, that this vision of St. Stephen casts its light. Never can the impetuous tyranny of appetite be subdued, and the soul and body kept in purity, save by these powers of the world to come. When the flesh is strong within, what shall aid us in the strife like looking up steadfastly into heaven and seeing the Son of Man as our helper? Or, again, as years go on, and these impetuous temptations of earlier life being somewhat past, new ones of a soberer, heavier, and more stupefying worldliness have taken their place, what else can so guard us against sinking into the dull, respectable, commonplace conformity with evil which, like the white ashes after the conflagration, succeeds so naturally to the burst of youthful indulgence, as the ever-living sense of our nearness to the Lord and of His perpetual presence with us? What can arouse watchfulness, keep prayer alive, kindle love, deepen humility, renew contrition, quicken zeal, minister support in sorrow, or awaken praises in the soul which God is graciously keeping, like the perpetual realisation by the eye of faith of what is now going on within the veil? (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) *The exaltation of Christ*:—I. To understand the nature and extent of that honour and glory to which the Redeemer is now exalted, first direct your thoughts to that state of HUMILIATION to which He was once subjected upon earth. II. As the sufferings of the Redeemer had been severe beyond example, so is His TRIUMPH over every enemy complete beyond the power of description. It commenced at that moment when He broke asunder the chains of death, and rose triumphant from the tomb; and it was still more conspicuously displayed at the hour of His ascension to heaven. III. Consider the IMPROVEMENT TO BE MADE of this subject. The doctrines of the gospel either excite us to avoid the paths of sin by showing us the dangers with which they are beset, or they stimulate us to lives of faith on the Son of Man by displaying the rich rewards that await the righteous. 1. Of the latter description is the doctrine of our Lord's exaltation; and the first obvious inference that flows from it is, that it furnishes a theme of joy and exultation to the true Christian. 2. Another lesson to be learnt from this doctrine is a firm reliance on the promises of the gospel. Of the truth of these promises, the history of our Saviour's sufferings and triumph affords the most ample evidence. 3. This doctrine affords a noble and most powerful encouragement to a life of faith on the Son of Man. Our blessed Redeemer ascended to the bosom of His heavenly Father, not less to prepare a place for His faithful followers than to enter Himself into His glory. 4. Consider the exaltation of Christ as teaching us to set a just and proper value on the things that belong to our eternal salvation, and as conveying to us the important lesson of placing our affection on things above, and not on things below. For what are the honours, the riches, and the pleasures of this world, in comparison of that glory which is at the right hand of God? (*Jas. Bryce.*) *Christ appears for His people in time of danger*:—A little child in white was playing in the park. As long as she ran about on the grass, the nurse took little notice of her—she was safe. Presently the little feet chose a path leading down to the water, and the good nurse was after the little one in a moment—she was in danger. While we lie down in the green pasture of the 23rd Psalm, the Good Shepherd may not seem to notice us—we are safe; but when the sheep are among the wolves of Matt. x. 16, the Good Shepherd will run to their help—they are in danger.

Vers. 57–60. **Then they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him.**—*The first gospel martyr*:—I. THE MATTER FOR WHICH HE DIED. II. THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE WHICH HE EXPERIENCED. III. THE COMPOSURE WITH WHICH HE PASSED AWAY. (*J. A. Krummacher, D.D.*) *The first Christian martyr*:—I. THE CALL OF STEPHEN WAS TO MARTYRDOM. Neither he nor the Church knew

the honour which awaited him. Note—1. That the humblest service leads to the highest. 2. How a man may enlarge a narrow sphere. We do not want so much men for large places as men to enlarge small places. 3. What God wanted of Stephen did not fully appear at the first. All that the Church could see was, that he had qualifications for a difficult trust. God had a larger purpose. He wanted him, not to live, but to die. 4. That a man's greatest services may only begin when he is buried. 5. That no Divine cause hinges on a man. God always has another. II. STEPHEN WAS CALLED BECAUSE HE WAS FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST. Through the Spirit he—1. Had a message. 2. The power of a holy face. The baptism of the Spirit is an illumination. We have seen faces of men and women weak and expressionless, dark and evil, through conversion glorified. The change at first is in softening, idealising. As it progresses, the peace of God is reflected in the features. In its completeness there is the manifestation of unearthly power. 3. He displayed the Divine union of severity and gentleness. 4. Had a vision. 5. Was sustained. He triumphed over pain. III. THE EFFECTS OF THE MARTYRDOM. 1. On the world. He showed how a Christian could die. There had been deaths of disciples already, but they were shameful, dreadful: first Judas, then Ananias and his wife. But God now gave His people a grave to glory in. 2. On the Church (viii. 1). A general persecution was let loose. The Christians met the storm as they had been instructed by Jesus; they fled from the city and were scattered, but wherever they went they preached. Thus a part of the Divine plan appeared. In all ages persecution has been one of the greatest providential agencies for the spread of the gospel. 3. On the apostles. It was a discipline only paralleled by that which followed the crucifixion; but through it they were to become better leaders, and God would take care of His Church. They met the trial nobly. They stayed at their posts. The influence of their constancy upon the Christians, and also upon their enemies, must have been very great. 4. Upon the devout Jews. The persecution tested them. At the peril of their lives they paid the murdered man the reverence of burial. So the death of Jesus brought out Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. 5. On Saul. Upon him the impression was deep. His reference to the part he had had in the murder, when he was in his trance at Damascus, shows it. One of the goads against which, from that time, he kicked in vain, was then buried in his heart. The immediate result was to infuriate him. But he had received his death-wound. The cord of love held him. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The first martyrdom*:—Note—I. STEPHEN'S FAITH. He did not say, "All these things are against me"; if Christ had designed to own my work, He would not thus have cut it short; if this be the manner in which Christ's cause prospers below, how can I believe that He Himself lives and reigns above? Never was his faith so strong, or his vision so unclouded. While his enemies are rushing upon him he is rapt above earth and earthly things, and privileged to behold his beloved Master Himself standing at the right hand of God. II. HIS HOPE. In the midst of the uproar of angry voices, and of the flight of stupefying, crushing stones, he is calling upon his Master, not as a mere expression of pain or disquietude or weakness; or as the ignorant ejaculations sometimes heard from a sinner's deathbed, when for the first time the grasp of a mightier power is felt, which must be propitiated by abject invocation: not thus, but in the tone of one who "knows whom he has believed." III. HIS CHARITY. As the mangled frame begins to totter to its dissolution, the dying martyr kneels. That posture with which we allow any little excuse to interfere, which many of us never practise even in God's house, which few of us would practise in a season of pain or sickness, he deemed the fittest attitude even for a dying man: he would honour God with his body as well as with the spirit: and then he cries aloud, in the hearing of his enemies still thirsting for his blood, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" He prays not, as some have done, that the murderers may find out their sin one day in punishment—not even that his blood may produce a speedy and an abundant harvest, but that that cruel deed may never be weighed in God's balances against its perpetrators. Thus he prayed, and in one case at least we know that his prayer was heard and answered. IV. HIS COMPOSURE. He was laid to rest. He was lulled to slumber. The word itself is enough to take the sting from death. The case of St. Stephen himself may assure us that no circumstances of death can prevent its being this to a Christian. It matters not whether the cause of death be disease or accident, the weapon of war or the stroke of the executioner. It matters not whether the scene of death be the house or the roadside, the field of battle or the desolate prison-house. There are three conditions of such a death. It must

be—1. A rest from labour. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," &c. (1) An idle, desultory, self-indulgent life has earned no rest. Night may come to such a life, but not the sweet sleep of the healthily wearied labourer. (2) Again, a rest from what labour? Not from common worldly occupations, such as have their reward (if anywhere) here, and have nothing stored up for them in the world unseen. He who would rest in Christ must first have wrought in Christ. It is Christ's labourer, not the world's, who, when he dies, falls asleep. 2. A rest with Christ. "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." 3. A rest unto rising. A sleep not to be again broken is death, not sleep. A sleep only to be broken by terrific suffering is no sleep: it is a frightful dream, a horrible nightmare. Such is the death of the wicked. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Stephen's martyrdom*:—True Christian zeal will seek to do the highest work of which sanctified humanity is capable. Stephen is first heard of as a distributor of the alms of the Church to needy widows. Doubtless he used the office of a deacon well, and so purchased to himself a good degree. Although the onerous duty of serving tables might well have excused him from other service, we soon find him doing great wonders among the people; and not even content with that, we see him defending the faith against a synagogue of subtle philosophical deniers of the truth. He had a higher promotion yet—he gained the peerless dignity of martyrdom. Put a man without zeal into the front place, and he will gradually recede into his native insignificance, or only linger to be a nuisance; but put a man into the rear, if his soul be full of holy fire, you will soon hear of him. Observe—I. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS DEVELOPED IN STEPHEN'S DEATH, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY LEARN TO RELY UPON THAT POWER. This power is seen in—1. The fact that although surrounded by bitter enemies, and having no time for preparation, Stephen's defence is wonderfully logical, clear, and forcible. This chapter does not read like an address delivered to a furious mob. He could not have delivered it with greater fearlessness had he been assured that they would thank him for the operation. To what do we trace this mouth and wisdom but to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Ghost exerts such a power over the human mind, that when it is His will, He can enable His servants to collect their scattered thoughts, and to speak with unwonted power. Moreover, the Lord can also touch the stammering tongue, and make it as eloquent as the tongue of Esaias. When we can study the Word, it is mere presumption to trust to the immediate inspiration of the moment; but if any one of you be called to speak for your Master when you can have had no preparation, you may confidently depend upon the Spirit of God to help. It is better to be taught of the Holy Spirit than to learn eloquence at the feet of masters of rhetoric. The Spirit of God needs to be honoured in the Church in this respect. 2. The manner and bearing of the martyr. He gazes steadfastly up into heaven. They may gnash their teeth, but they cannot disturb that settled gaze. What he beholds above makes him careless of the bloodthirsty foes below. The bearing of many of the martyrs has been singularly heroic. When the King of France told Bernard Palissy that, if he did not change his sentiments, he should be compelled to surrender him to the Inquisition, the brave potter said to the king, "You say I shall be compelled, and yet you are a king; but I, though only a poor potter, cannot be compelled to do other than I think to be right." The potter was more royal than the king. Now if you and I desire to walk among the sons of men without pride, but yet with a bearing that is worthy of our calling and adoption, we must be trained by the Holy Ghost. Those men who go cap-in-hand to the world, asking leave to live, know nothing of the Holy Ghost. 3. His calm and happy spirit. It is a great thing for a Christian to keep himself quiet within when turmoil rules without. To be calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory—this is so hard that only the Divine Dove, the Comforter, can bring us from above the power to be so; but when once the art of being still is fully learned, what strength and bliss is in it! 4. His holy and forgiving temper. He knelt down, as if to make them see how he prayed, and then he prayed with a loud voice, that they might hear. Surely this is a work of the Holy Spirit indeed! We find it not altogether easy to live at peace with all men, but to die at peace with our murderers, what shall I say of it? The prayer we have just mentioned did not die in the air; it passed through the gate of pearl, and it obtained an answer in the conversion of Saul. II. THE SOURCE OF RICHEST COMFORT, WITH THE HOPE THAT WE MAY LEARN TO LOOK THERE. It was the end and aim of the Holy Spirit to make Stephen happy. How could this be done? By revealing to him the living and reigning

Saviour at the right hand of God. If we have like precious faith with Stephen, since it is a great fact that Christ is there, there is no reason why our faith should not see what Stephen's faith saw. He saw—1. That Jesus was alive. He was not serving a dead Christ; he was speaking for a Friend who still existed to hear his pleadings, and to accept his testimony. Stephen argued within himself, "If Christ lives after crucifixion, why should not Stephen live, through Christ, after stoning?" 2. That Jesus saw him and sympathised with him. Is not that the meaning of the attitude which the Lord assumed? The Man of Sorrows is alive, and sympathises with His people still. "In all your affliction He is afflicted." 3. Jesus standing at the right hand of God. That was the point in dispute. The Jews said the Nazarene was an impostor. "No," said Stephen, "there He is." The people rage, the rulers take counsel together, but yonder is the King upon the holy hill of God; and to Stephen's heart this was all he wished. I have known what it is to be brought so low in heart, that no promise of God's Word gave me a ray of light, nor a gleam of comfort, and yet, so often as I have come across this text, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him," &c., I have always found a flood of joy bursting into my soul, for I have said, "Well, it is of no consequence what may become of me so long as my Lord Jesus is exalted." Like the dying soldier in the hour of battle, who is cheered with the thought, "The general is safe; the victory is on our side." I would like to put this telescope, then, to the eye of every sorrowing Christian. Your Saviour is exalted—(1) To intercede for you. (2) To prepare a place for you. (3) As your representative. Because He lives, we shall live also. III. THE COMFORT ITSELF. We do not find that the appearance of Jesus stopped the stones. That is the plan of the present dispensation. The Lord Jesus does not come to us to forbid our suffering, nor to remove our griefs, but He sustains us under them. "My grace is sufficient for thee." How sweetly is Stephen's triumph pictured in those last words, "He fell asleep." This is the life of a Christian. When the world has been most in arms against a believer, it is wonderful how he has rested with perfect composure in the sight of his enemies. This shall be the death of the Christian. He shall shut his eyes to earth and open them to heaven. His body shall but sleep, to be awakened by the heavenly trumpeter. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Stephen's martyrdom*:—On reviewing the whole narrative we cannot fail to be struck with three things—1. The professed patrons of religion engaged in banishing it from the world. The peculiar enormity of the crime is that it was done in the name of religion. 2. The most eminent future apostle accessory to the death of the most eminent disciple. This teaches us—(1) How the conscience may be perverted. An action is not necessarily right because the author believes it to be so. (2) How concealed the spirituality of the law may be from its most diligent student. Some knew its letter, but had not learned the alphabet of its spirit. "The letter killeth." (3) How sovereign and almighty is the grace of God. Christ selected Saul to become His apostle, and the martyrdom of Stephen was one of the causes of His conversion. "He is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham." 3. The most useful man of his time allowed to be stoned out of the world as a blasphemer. Stephen appears in two opposite lights—as a victim and as a victor. Though crushed he yet conquered—illustrating the dark and bright sides of piety. I. THE DARK SIDE. Stephen dying under a shower of stones. The world has ever hated vital Christianity. Two causes led to this result—1. He held convictions which clashed with the prejudices and worldly interests of his contemporaries. 2. He faithfully declared those convictions. Had he kept them to himself, compromised them, or toned them down to the corrupt spirit of his age, he would have avoided such an end as this. II. THE BRIGHT SIDE. Piety looked upon from the world's side is rather a miserable object—but not so when viewed from the spiritual side. 1. Stephen was in vital connection with God. He was "filled with the Holy Ghost." 2. He had a glorious vision of heaven. Having God within him, everything was full of divinity. 3. His spirit was inspired with the sublimest magnanimity. 4. He had a delightful departure from the world. (1) He commended his spirit to Christ. This prayer implies —(*a*) Consciousness that he had a spirit. (*b*) Belief that that spirit would survive his expiring body. (*c*) Unbounded faith in Christ to take care of his spirit. (2) He fell asleep. Implying—(*a*) A welcome rest. (*b*) An anticipated rising. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The martyrdom of Stephen*:—I. WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF HIS MEEKNESS AND HIS BRAVERY? There must have been some Divine bestowment. Was it, then, some miraculous gift reserved for some specially chosen man? The secret lies in the fact that he was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." He did

not leap into this character. There was no special charm by which these graces clustered round him: they were the gift of God to him as they are to us. The only difference between us and him is that he grasped the blessing with a holier boldness, and lived in a closer communion with God. It was not physical hardiness then. There are men whose bravery no one dare question, who have yet been the veriest cowards in the face of moral duty, and *vice versâ*. The Duke of Wellington once despatched two officers on a service of great hazard, and as they were riding the one turning to the other saw his lips quivering and his cheek blanched. Reining in his horse he said, "Why, you are afraid." "I am," was the answer; "and if you were half as much afraid as I am, you would relinquish the duty altogether." Without wasting a word the officer galloped back and complained bitterly that he had been sent in the company of a coward. "Off, sir, to your duty," was the duke's reply, "or the coward will have doue the business before you get there." And the great man was right. There was physical timidity, perhaps the result of a highly-wrought nervous organisation, but there was an imperial regard for duty which bore him above his fears to triumph. Yes; and Church history can tell us many a story of sufferings endured for Christ by delicate and high-born womanhood. Martyrs are what they are from the "demonstration of the Spirit and power." II. THE LOT OF THE CHRISTIAN IS ORDINARILY AN INHERITANCE OF PERSECUTION. There was nothing in Stephen's character to arouse hostility. But he was faithful, and his reproofs stung his adversaries to the quick; he was consistent, and his life was a perpetual rebuke to those who lived otherwise; he was unanswerable, and that was a crime too great to be forgiven. 1. Persecution has been the lot of the Church in all ages. The prophets were scoffed, and some of them were slain. Nearly all the apostles wove the martyr's amaranth into their crown of thorns. Rome pagan persecuted, so has Rome papal, and even churches of a purer faith. 2. But apart from ecclesiasticism altogether "they that will live godly must suffer persecution." The developments of the persecuting spirit are restrained by the advance of enlightenment, the decorums of society, the interlacings of interest, the silent unrecognised leaven of Christian faith; but depend upon it, if you are a Christian the world hates you and your practice still. The father may interpose to prevent his child's devotion, the husband withdraw his wife's privileges, or the custom may be withdrawn, the preferment withheld, the suspicion insinuated. There are a thousand ways by which the latent hate may be shown—in the shrug of the shoulder, the curl of the lip, the glance of the eye, the wave of the hand. 3. If you are persecuted take it as a proof of your legitimacy. I wonder almost whether the reason that there is so little persecution now is that there is so little faithfulness. Unfaithfulness to the Christian is like the Deluge to the world—a flood to drown it: persecution to the Christian spirit is like the Deluge to the ark—a flood to lift it nearer to heaven. III. STRENGTH AND GRACE ARE ALWAYS GIVEN MOST LIBERALLY WHERE THEY ARE MOST NEEDED. In the early part of Stephen's life, when acting as deacon and evangelist, he had grace according to his day. When before the council the Spirit inspired his unpremeditated speech and gave him a vision of glory. And now amid the shower of stones he lay his head upon his Saviour's bosom and went triumphant home. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Have you not heard from the lips of the now glorified that the time of their fiercest trial was the time of their most glorious deliverance? Have you not listened sometimes in the death-chamber, and wondered at the disclosures of the realities of heaven? IV. DEATH IS NOT DEATH TO A BELIEVER. "He fell asleep." When men sleep they usually surround themselves with the most favourable circumstances. They demand quiet, they exclude light and sound. Stephen fell in circumstances very different, but when God wills a man to sleep it does not matter how much noise there is around him. In sleep there is—1. Repose. 2. Security. Men do not usually commit themselves to slumber without some prospect of safety; so there was security for Stephen's body in the grave and his soul in paradise. 3. Restoration; for after the night comes the morning. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *The death of Stephen*:—Observe—I. THE MALIGNANT EXCITEMENT OF THE JEWISH COUNCIL. We are shocked at the wickedness of which the heart of man is capable. It has many manifestations; but in no case is it so strongly marked as in the contrasts presented in instances of religious persecution. On the one hand, there is everything to conciliate regard; and on the other, there are the worst of passions. But how is this to be accounted for? Enmity to the truth of God; and hatred to them who hold it. Yet, think not that this spirit is confined to ages of persecution. It exists in ages of professed liberality. Be faith-

ful witnesses of the truth; and you will see the enmity, and often hear the growl of the savage within, though chained. Be faithful to yourselves; and you will often find when truth and its preachers press hard upon your errors, the inquiry rising, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE MARTYR. 1. The fact that he was "full of the Holy Ghost" intimates that he had in that moment a special visitation of Divine strength and comfort. How often does this appear in the Bible! Hence St. Paul remarks, "We glory in tribulations also." When the three Hebrew children were cast alive into the burning fiery furnace, "one like unto the Son of God" appeared amongst them, so that not a hair of their heads was singed. When St. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos he was favoured with the presence of his glorified Lord and of the holy angels. All these facts are designed to teach us that the Lord is "a very present help in the time of trouble." 2. The immediate effect of this visitation was, that "he looked up stedfastly into heaven," a devout committal of his cause into a supreme hand. A man whose eye is fixed on heaven tramples equally underfoot the smiles and the frowns of earth. Here is no defiance, no retreating of man into himself in search of natural courage or other principles to sustain him. In Christian heroism man goes out of himself to a higher power, and becomes mighty through God. III. THE VISION VOUCHSAFED TO HIM. How appropriate it was to the two great purposes which to him were so important in that hour! 1. To confirm his faith. Whether he had seen our Lord before does not appear; but he now saw Him in His glory. Here was faith rewarded and confirmed by the evidence of vision; just as all true faith shall finally be rewarded. For true faith fixes upon the reality of things. They exist, though the distance which separates time from eternity intervenes; and God does not work a miracle, as in the case of Stephen, to enable us to see. Still they are there, and the faith which the world despises shall be crowned with the glorious sight. Ah! how soon may God lift the veil and let the saint into the anticipated glories, and plunge the sinner into the forgotten horrors of eternity! 2. To inspire courage and comfort. It was a vision of Jesus—(1) At the place of power and authority; everything below, therefore, was under His management and control. If the sovereign Lord permitted his enemies to destroy him, it was the part of the servant to bow. Still He is at the right hand of power, to control the rage of man, to choose the moment when His servant should thus glorify Him, to afford him almighty succour, to turn his death into a means of furthering His own eternal truth, and by opening His glory to receive his spirit. (2) Standing and looking down upon him. How could he then faint? There was Christ tacitly exhorting him by His look, "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. He looks upon us; let us take care that we sin not. He requires of us patiently to bear the cross, and to suffer with resignation. He will give us the help we need. Let us look to Him in habitual reverence and stedfast trust. IV. HIS DEATH. It was a death of—1. Prayer. He died calling upon God. No former grace was then sufficient, although important; for he knew how to call upon God. Let us now learn the habit of prayer. We shall need it to our last struggle. 2. Faith. Christ was recognised by the dying martyr, and into His hands the soul was commended. 3. Certainty. In the mind of Stephen there was no gloom as to the future. "And now, O ye judges," said Socrates, "ye are going to live, and I am going to die. Which of these is best, God knows; but I suppose no man does." "I am going to take a leap in the dark!" exclaimed an infidel in the prospect of dissolution. The despairing sinner trembles at the sight of the great gulf. It is your privilege to die like Stephen. 4. Charity. A soul ripe for heaven can have no resentments. 5. Peace. "He fell asleep." (*R. Watson.*) *The death of Stephen:*—It is a glorious thing to be the first to achieve some great work—the first mariner to sail into an unknown sea, or the first soldier to mount the breach, and enter the beleaguered city—but nobler still to be the first to bear witness to a great truth, and to seal the testimony with one's blood. This honour was enjoyed by Stephen. In the story of his martyrdom we see—I. A VICTIM CONQUERING. Stephen's murderers seemed to get the victory, yet in reality they were vanquished. No wonder that their victim triumphed, for persecution is always a sign of weakness. Persecution is always an attempt to accomplish the impossible. It is an endeavour to effect spiritual ends by physical means. Not all the Acts of Parliament, decrees of magistrates, rage of princes in the world can crush the soul that is strengthened by the grace of God. The martyr triumphs over his foes. II. A WITNESS TESTIFYING. Stephen's martyrdom was an argument for Christianity. 1. He bore testimony to the facts of the gospel story. What a convincing proof of the reality of

these events! 2. He bore testimony to the power of the living Saviour. Nothing can inspire such enthusiasm and devotion as a person can excite. III. A HERO CROWNED. 1. A radiant vision. "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man," &c. The spirit-world is nearer than we often think. If our powers were developed, what spiritual glories would flash upon us! 2. A celestial spirit. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—the martyr's prayer for his murderers. How unlike the world's spirit of revenge! 3. A profound peace. "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." How striking the contrast between Stephen's calmness and the fierce excitement of his persecutors! (*T. W. Mays, M.A.*) *The death of Stephen*:—Let us regard this as refuting some practical mistakes. I. THAT CHARACTER WILL SAVE A MAN FROM HARM. That would be so in certain conditions of society, but those conditions are not present in our life. Stephen was a man of blameless character, yet when he was called upon to make his defence, and had made it, his character went for nothing. The meanest criminal could not have received more malignant treatment. A bad world cannot tolerate good men. If we were better we should be the sooner got rid of. It is our gift of compromise that keeps us going. II. THAT TRUTH NEEDS ONLY TO BE HEARD IN ORDER TO BE RECOGNISED AND ACCEPTED. But show where truth has ever been crowned readily. Truth spoken to the true will always be so received, but truth spoken to the false challenges a contest of strength. III. THAT REGULARLY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES MUST BE RIGHT. You smile at the suggestion that one odd man can have the truth, and seventy regularly trained and constitutionally appointed men do not know the reality of the case in dispute. The Church must be right; we cannot allow ourselves to be bewildered and befooled by eccentric reformers and by individual assailants. All history reverses such opinions. The truth, it would seem, has always been with the one man. The moment another man joins him he is less than he was before. The sense of individual responsibility is almost lost. The Almighty seems to have elected the individual man, and through him to have spoken to the crowd or the race. But he has not God's message simply because he happens to be one. You are not great because you are eccentric. You are not wise because you are solitary. But being called and inspired, having the assurance of the truth, and being prepared to establish that assurance by daily sacrifice, go forward, and at the last the vindication will come. IV. THAT PERSONAL DELIVERANCE IN TRIAL IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE PROVIDENCE. That is the very idea that would occur to the simplest mind that could look at the case. It is the first rush at a popular riddle; but there is nothing in that answer. If that were God's method there would never be any need of deliverance at all. There must be something grander than this. The miracle was wrought within. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Any miracle of merely personal deliverance set side by side with that miracle of grace would be an anti-climax and a pitiful commonplace. Any religion that will evoke such a spirit in its believers, and lead them under such circumstances to offer such prayers, needs no vindication of its divinity. V. THAT LIFE IS LIMITED BY THAT WHICH IS OPEN TO THE EYES OF THE BODY. It would have been a poor case for Stephen but for the invisible. "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Moses endured as seeing the invisible. Stephen said, "I see heaven opened," &c. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In great dangers God shows us great sights. What did Elisha ask the Lord to do in the case of the young man who saw the gathering hosts surrounding his prophet master? "Lord, open his eyes that he may see." That is all we want. The enemy is near: but the friend is nearer. Stephen's spiritual faith made him forget that he had a body. Think of trusting his spirit to a God that had allowed his body to be killed! This is the sublimity of faith. When the spirit is inspired, when heaven is opened, when Christ rises to receive the guest, there is no flesh, there is no pain, there is no consciousness but in the presence of God, the absorption of the heart in the infinite love. When the heart seizes God as an inheritance it fears not them that kill the body. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Stephen's death*:—I. ITS GENERAL CHARACTER. 1. It was in the midst of his service. He had been appointed an officer of the Church to see that the alms were distributed properly, and thereby he did most useful service, for it gave the apostles opportunity to give themselves wholly to their true work, and it is no small matter to be able to bear a burden for another if he is thereby set free for more eminent service than we could ourselves perform. The care which Stephen exercised over the poor tended also to prevent heartburning and division. But, not content with being a deacon, Stephen began to minister in holy things as a speaker of the Word with great

power. He stands forth as quite a leading spirit; so much so, indeed, that the enemies of the gospel made him the object of their fiercest opposition. Stephen stood in the front rank of the Lord's host, and yet he was taken away! "A mystery," say some; "A great privilege," say I. Is it not well to die in harness? Who wants to linger till he becomes a burden rather than a help? 2. In the prime of his usefulness. And is not this well? Well, first, that God should teach His people how much He can do by a man whom He chooses; well, next, that He should show them that He is not dependent upon any man. If our life can teach one lesson, and when that is taught, if our death can teach another, it is well to live and well to die. If God be glorified by our removal, is it not well? 3. It was painful, and attended with much that flesh and blood would dread. He died not surrounded by weeping friends, but by enemies who gnashed their teeth; no holy hymn made glad his death chamber, but the shouts and outcries of a maddened throng rang in his ears. For him no downy pillow, but the hard and cruel stones. Now this is all the more for our comfort, because if he died in joy and triumph, how much more may we hope to depart in peace! 4. It was calm, peaceful, confident, joyous. He never flinched while addressing that infuriated audience. He was as calm as the opened heaven above him, and continued so though they hurried him out of the city. He stood up and committed his soul to God with calmness, and when the first murderous stones felled him to the earth he rose to his knees, still not to ask for pity, but to plead with his Lord for mercy upon his assailants; then, closing his eyes, "he fell asleep." Believe, then, O Christian, that if you abide in Christ, the like will be the case with you. We wept when we were born though all around us smiled; so shall we smile when we die while all around us weep. Why should we expect it to be otherwise? Stephen's God is our God; the Holy Spirit dwells in us even as He did in him. 5. His mind was in a very elevated condition. Remark—(1) His intense sympathy with God. All through that long speech of his you see that his soul is taken up with his God, and the treatment which he had received from Israel. (2) His exclusive attachment to the spiritual. All ritualism was clean gone from him. I dare say at one time Stephen felt a great reverence for the temple; but Stephen says, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." It is noteworthy how the saints, when they are near to die, make very little of what others make a great deal of. The peculiar form of worship and the little specialities of doctrines which he made much of, will seem little in comparison with the great spiritual essentials when the soul is approaching the presence chamber of the Eternal. (3) His superiority to the fear of men. He looks like an immortal angel rather than a man condemned to die. The fitter we are for heaven the more we scorn all compromise, and feel that for truth, for God, for Christ, we must speak out, even if we die. (4) His freedom from all cares. He was a deacon, but he does not say, "What will those poor people do? What will the apostles do?" He trusts the Church militant with her Captain; he is called to the Church triumphant. Why should it not be thus with us? Our Lord managed His Church well enough before we were born; He will not be at a loss because He has called us home. (5) His triumphant death. His name was Stephanos, or crown, and truly that day he not only received a crown, but he became the crown of the Church as her first martyr. II. ITS MOST NOTABLE PECULIARITY. It was full of Jesus. Jesus was—1. Seen—(1) As the Son of Man. This is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is called the Son of Man by any one but Himself. At all times it is a gladsome sight to see the representative Man exalted to the throne of God, but it was peculiarly suitable for this occasion, for the Lord Himself had warned the present audience about "the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." (2) Standing—eager both to sustain and to receive him when the conflict was over. (3) At the right hand of God, the place of love, power, and honour. Now, when we come to die, we may not, perhaps, expect with those eyes to see what Stephen saw, but faith has a grand realising power. So long as we are sure that Christ is at the right hand of God, it little matters. 2. Invoked. Dying Christians are not troubled with questions as to the Deity of Christ. Unitarianism may do to live with, but it will not do to die with. At such a time we need an Almighty Saviour. (1) Stephen makes no mention of any other intercessor. The abomination of saint and angel worship had not been invented in his day. (2) Neither do we find him saying a word as to his good works, and almsdeeds, and sermons, and miracles. 3. Trusted. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 4. Imitated, for the death of Stephen is a reproduction of the death of Jesus. Jesus died without the gate, praying, so did Stephen;

Jesus died saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit"; Stephen says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Christ dies pleading for His murderers, so does Stephen. Now, if our death shall be a reproduction of the death of Jesus, why need we fear? III. ITS SUGGESTION AS TO THE KIND OF DEATH WHICH WE MAY WISELY DESIRE. First, it is very desirable that our death should be—1. Of a piece with our life. Stephen was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost in life, and so was he full of the Holy Ghost in death; Stephen was bold, brave, calm, and composed in life, he is the same amid the falling stones. It is very sad when the reported account of a man's death does not fit in with his life. It is ill to die with a jerk, getting as it were upon another line of rails all on a sudden. It is better to glide from one degree of grace to another, and so to glory. Death may be the fringe or border of life, but it should be made out of the same piece. A life of clay is not to be joined to a death of gold. 2. The perfecting of our whole career, the putting of the corner-stone upon the edifice, so that when nothing else is wanted to complete the man's labours he falls asleep. 3. Useful. Augustine says, "If Stephen had never prayed, Saul had never preached." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Stephen's death a witness to vital Christian truth*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF STEPHEN; or what manner of man he was: "full of the Holy Ghost." Now this Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of all "the Israel of God" (John xiv. 25, 26). What can be plainer, than that here is a Person distinct from either the Father and the Son, but intimately connected with both? And that He is not a principle, but a person. In this view, "the fruits of the Spirit" are to be always distinguished from the Spirit itself; the gifts are not to be confounded with the Giver; the Spirit of faith will make a man die contentedly; the Spirit of purity will make him die composedly; the Spirit of truth will make him die consistently; the Spirit of comfort will make him die happily; the Spirit of might will make him die triumphantly. II. HIS CONFIDENCE; or what he did: "He looked up stedfastly into heaven." Not only looked towards, but into, as one who had "cast his anchor of hope within the veil," and knew, therefore, where again to find it. 1. "He looked up," we cannot doubt, with longing desire to be there. 2. With great indifference to all things here below. We would not tolerate neglect of your proper concerns; but the hour cometh when the possession of the whole world will be of no avail; when its opinions can no longer influence, when its interests can no longer bind, when its friendships can no longer profit, and when its pleasures can no longer charm. If, then, you cannot "look up stedfastly into heaven" for comfort, ah! you have nowhere else to look! 3. In prayer. Stephen knew that a martyr's grace was needful to a martyr's constancy. "He prayed," therefore, for himself; but also for his murderers—"Holy hands must be lifted up without wrath or doubting." III. HIS VISION AND ENCOURAGEMENT; or what he saw—1. "The glory of God, and Jesus." As "the glory of God" is seen most resplendent in "the face (or person) of Jesus Christ," this was most probably the view with which his soul was blest. Somewhat of this, too, Esaias saw when at the surpassing brightness even the seraphim did "veil their faces with their wings." 2. Jesus "standing at the right hand of God," amidst His shining hosts, sovereign and supreme, arising in order to be the first to receive the dying martyr's spirit; standing, as a priest "who standeth daily ministering," to offer up this "sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour"; standing, as a judge of masteries at the end of the goal or conflict, to hail the triumph of the candidate, and Himself confer the victor's crown! IV. HIS AVOWAL; or, "what he said." "Behold, I see the heavens opened," &c. Here, then, St. Stephen gives a testimony to—1. The Trinity; for he himself was "full of the Holy Ghost": he saw the "glory of God" the Father, and this manifested in Jesus standing at His right hand. He declared also—2. Christ's humanity—"Son of Man." His faith and hope of admission into heaven: "I see heaven opened." Can there be a doubt but that there is "an open door, which no man can shut," proposed to us? "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." V. HIS ADORATION; or whom it was he worshipped. "They stoned Stephen, invocating and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Jesus, therefore, was the object of his adoration; He was the only God he invocated, and at his last extremity of suffering and distress—a period when, if ever, men pray with the utmost seriousness, and always to Him whom they conceive to be the mightiest to help. Nor is it an immaterial circumstance that this invocation was made at the very time when Stephen "saw the glory of the Father," and was himself full of the Holy Ghost"; so that neither ignorance nor inadvertency nor imperfection could occasion it. And as if conscious, too, that He who could succour could equally forgive, he prayed

again to Christ—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (*W. B. Williams, M.A.*) *The massacre*:—Stephen had been preaching a rousing sermon, and the people could not stand it. They resolved to do as men sometimes would like to do in this day, if they dared, with some plain preacher of righteousness—kill him. I want to show you to-day five pictures. Stephen—I. GAZING INTO HEAVEN. Before you climb a ladder you want to know to what point the ladder reaches. And it was right that Stephen, within a few moments of heaven, should be gazing into it. We would all do well to be found in the same posture. There is enough in heaven to keep us gazing. The whole universe is God's palace, but heaven is the gallery in which the chief glories are gathered. We have a great many friends there. As a man gets older, the number of his celestial acquaintances very rapidly multiplies. We have not had one glimpse of them since the night we kissed them good-bye and they went away; but still we stand gazing at heaven. II. LOOKING UPON CHRIST. How Christ looked in this world, how He looks in heaven, we cannot say. Painters have tried to imagine His features, and put them upon canvas; but we will have to wait until with our own eyes we see Him. And yet there is a way of seeing Him now, and unless you see Christ on earth, you will never see Him in heaven. Look! There He is. Behold the Lamb of God. Can you not see Him? Then pray to God to take the scales off your eyes. His voice comes down to you, saying, "Look unto Me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." Proclamation of universal emancipation for all slaves, of universal amnesty for all rebels. Behold Him, little children, for if you live to threescore years and ten, you will see none so fair. Behold Him, ye aged ones, for He only can shine through the dimness of your failing eyesight. Behold Him, earth. Behold Him, heaven. What a moment when all the nations of the saved shall see Him! III. STONED. The world has always wanted to get rid of good men. Their very life is an assault upon wickedness. Out with Stephen through the gates of the city. Down with him over the precipices. Let every man come and drop a stone upon his head. But these men did not so much kill Stephen as they killed themselves. While these murderers are transfixed by the scorn of all good men, Stephen lives in the admiration of all Christendom. Show me any one who is doing all his duty to State or Church, and I will show you scores of men who utterly abhor him. If a steamer makes rapid progress through the waves, the water will boil and foam all round it. You may assault a good man, but you cannot kill him. On the day of his death, Stephen spoke before a few people of the Sanhedrin; this Sabbath morning he addresses all Christendom! IV. PRAYING. His first thought was not how the stones hurt his head, nor what would become of his body. His first thought was about his spirit. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." There is within you a soul. What direction will it take? What guide will escort it? What gate will open to receive it? Oh, this mysterious spirit! It has two wings, but it is in a cage now, but let the door of this cage open the least, and that soul is off. The lightnings are not swift enough to take up with it. And have you no anxiety about it? Thank God for the intimation of my text, that when we die Jesus takes us. In that hour it may be we shall be too feeble to say a long prayer, not even the "Lord's Prayer," for it has seven petitions. Perhaps we may be too feeble to say the infant prayer our mothers taught us, but this prayer of Stephen is so short, concise, earnest, comprehensive, we surely will be able to say that. V. ASLEEP. What a place to sleep in! Stephen had lived a very laborious life. But that is all over now. I have seen the sea driven with the hurricane until the tangled foam caught in the rigging, and wave rising above wave seemed as if about to storm the heavens, and then I have seen the tempest drop, and the waves crouch, and everything become smooth and burnished as though a camping place for the glories of heaven. So I have seen a man, whose life has been tossed and driven, coming down at last to an infinite calm, in which there was the hush of heaven's lullaby. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 58. **And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.**—*Stephen and Saul*:—I. STEPHEN. The picture of a dying saint. 1. He enjoys the Divine presence and power (ver. 55), "Full of the Holy Ghost." The power of God was present when His faithful servant was passing through the flood. 2. He is lifted above the consciousness of earthly surroundings, enemies, and gnashing teeth. 3. He enjoys a full view of heavenly glory (ver. 55). He saw in that hour what many would have given their all to see, the vision of his glorified Redeemer. 4. He shows the spirit of his Master (ver. 60). 5. He has a peaceful death, though dying by violence. "He fell asleep," though the storm of stones

was crashing upon him. 6. He leaves a blessed memory (ver. 2). Though dead he was not forgotten. Godly men mourned him, and many years afterward his name was remembered (Acts xxii.). Greater still, his influence endured; for the whole life of Paul was the larger echo of Stephen's dying address. II. SAUL. We notice in him the picture of an honest persecutor. 1. His spirit of leadership (ver. 58). The young man Saul already shows himself as a master of men. 2. His sincerity. Saul was faithful to his conviction, even while in the wrong (Gal. i. 13, 14; Phil. iii. 4–6). 3. His thoroughness. He must carry out his conviction, even to the bitter end. 4. His failure to check the gospel (ver. 4). The storm which was intended to destroy the gospel only served to scatter it over new soil and to cause new churches to spring up. *Stephen and Saul*:—The meeting here described was a memorable event in the Church's history, and suggests to us some important lessons. I. DO NOT THINK THERE ARE ANY CHANCE MEETINGS IN THIS STRANGE WORLD OF OURS. 1. It was no accident that Saul was by. This perhaps may be admitted; but never let us think that saints and martyrs live under a different form of Providential government from that of common men. Impiety will sometimes wear the cloak of humility, and talk of worms like ourselves being too insignificant to be watched at every step by the Eye that never sleeps. In such reasoning there is a twofold fallacy. (1) What is little, and what is great? Take into account the wide domain which stretches from God's central throne to the farthest limits of creation, and what is our world, and what are the grandest men who move upon its surface? But take into account, on the other hand, responsibility and an immortal nature, and the relation of dependence on an heavenly parent, with all that is involved in the rewards of loyalty and the perils of disobedience; take into account the great redemption, and the univeral promise and the inspiriting thought that here God's purposes are being worked out, and then what about us is mean? which of us all, if bought with precious blood, can be overlooked and forgotten? (2) Even if some pass for great, and some are reckoned mean, in this strangely varied scene, still the two worlds intermingle at a thousand points. Something that looks little becomes the parent of an evil of portentous magnitude; or a deed, small at first as the mustard-seed, dropped into the ground at a venture, grows into a harvest of blessing by which a nation is enriched. The first link in a chain of events shall be a word spoken at hazard, a journey taken without a motive, a child's whim, a fool's false reckoning, but the last shall be a city consumed by conflagration, a kingdom convulsed by civil strife, a generation wasted and half devoured by the aggressions of war; yet the first link and the last were as certainly bound together as if an hour's interval only had elapsed between the original movement and its final consequences. 2. Saul and Stephen came together that day for good. And as God guided their steps, so God guides ours. You can tell of meetings, some of you, which have coloured your whole life, meetings which you never planned, meetings, it may be, with one unknown to you before, as the apostle was to the martyr, yet never forgotten, because step by step you can trace the occurrences which have grown out of that single interview, and which have done more, perhaps, to influence your condition or your character than all that you have deliberately planned for your own good through half a life. These thoughts are good for us, because the more we own God everywhere, and look on the common working world as His world, shaped by His wisdom, and brightened by His presence, the more diligently and cheerfully shall we do His will. II. WE MUST NOT THINK THAT GOOD TEACHING OR EXAMPLE IS LIKE WASTED SEED, BECAUSE THE FRUIT IS NOT AT ONCE APPARENT. Stephen died, and little thought who saw him die. His dying scene was like the conqueror's march; but even then room would have been found for one emphatic burst of thankfulness—to Him who can make the wrath of man to praise Him—if it had been revealed to him that one, who stood within his view, would soon rank as the champion of the Cross, and a master-builder of Christ's Church. He did not reap the harvest, nor see it reaped; yet was he sowing for it when he lived and died so well. So we may do good in the world that we never live to see. What is well done for God is never wholly lost; and half of what we fancy to be wasted may ripen and bear fruit when our course is ended. "In the morning," then, "sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it." III. WATCHFUL EYES ARE UPON US AT ALL TIMES, AND WE MAY BE DOING GOOD, OR DOING HARM, UNCONSCIOUSLY, TO SOME WHOM WE KNOW NOT NOW, AND NEVER SHALL KNOW. St. Stephen thought, perhaps, that the men before him were all alike,

He did not know that one in that crowd looked on with more eager interest and with deeper feeling than the rest. Nothing was aimed at Saul; for to St. Stephen he was but one of a hundred spectators, probably all strange to him alike; but every word was heard and remembered; and to a thoughtful, inquiring mind, an end that looked so holy must have seemed a wonder, if the dying man were indeed a profane blasphemer. Surely a lesson like that ought not to be lost upon us. If God has taught us by His Spirit, without going out of our way, or setting ourselves up to be preachers, we may wonderfully help the ignorant and ungodly to understand what living Christianity is. We may expound to them what can hardly be learnt from books, by the persuasive eloquence of a holy, consistent example. In the occupations and engagements of common life we may be testifying for God and preaching Christ, as St. Stephen was when he died. It is a blessed service rendered to the cause of truth and righteousness if we stand the test, and because God helped us to act faithfully, and speak wisely, the man shall trust us more henceforth, and receive our message more willingly. On the other hand, fearful mischief will ensue if the life contradict the lips. Parents, masters, remember this, and all of you who become teachers of others in any sense. Numbers, who are dull-sighted in other things, are sharp-sighted to detect the flaw when there is manifest inconsistency between words and deeds. (*J. Hampden Gurney, M.A.*) *Stephen and Saul:*—The Holy Spirit records Stephen's martyrdom, but does not enter into details of his sufferings and death, as uninspired recorders would have been so apt to do. The object of the Holy Ghost is not to indulge curiosity nor to harrow the feelings, but to instruct and move to imitation. Note here—I. A SUGGESTED CONTRAST. Stephen and Saul. 1. These were both highly earnest, fearless men, yet at this time they were wide as the poles asunder. (1) Stephen spiritual; giving in his address great prominence to the spiritual nature of religion, and the comparative insignificance of its externals (vers. 48-50). Saul superstitious, worshipping form and ritual, full of reverence for the temple and the priests, and so forth. (2) Stephen, a humble believer in the Lord Jesus, saved by faith alone. Saul, a self-righteous Pharisee, as proud as he could live. (3) Stephen, defending and vindicating the gospel of Jesus. Saul, giving his countenance, his vote, his assistance in the persecution of the servant of the Lord Christ. 2. Inquire if a Saul is now present. Call him forth by name. (1) Have you been a consenting party to the persecution of good men? You do not object to making Christian men the theme of ridicule. You smile when you hear such ridicule. (2) By your indecision in religion you aid and abet the adversary. In these ways the witnesses lay down their clothes at your feet, and you are their accomplice. II. A SINGULAR INTRODUCTION TO TRUE RELIGION. Many have been brought to God by means somewhat similar. The young man, whose name was Saul, met with the religion of Jesus in the person of Stephen, and thus he saw it with the following surroundings—1. The vision of a shining face. 2. The hearing of a noble discourse. 3. The sight of a triumphant death. These did not convert Saul, but they made it harder for him to be unconverted, and were, no doubt, in after days thought of by him. Let us so introduce religion to men, that the memory of its introduction may be worth their retaining. III. A REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF THE LORD'S CARE FOR HIS CHURCH. The apostolical succession was preserved in the Church, 1. Stephen's death was a terrible blow to the cause; but at that moment his successor was close at hand. 2. That successor was in the ranks of the enemy. 3. That successor was far greater than the martyr, Stephen, himself. There is no fear for the Church: her greatest champions, though as yet concealed among her enemies, will be called in due time. The death of her best advocates may assist in the conversion of others. IV. A GRACIOUS MEMORIAL OF REPENTED SIN. Did not Paul give Luke this information concerning himself, and cause it to be recorded in the Acts of the Apostles? It was well for Paul to remember his sin before conversion. It will be well for us to remember ours. 1. To create and renew feelings of humility. 2. To inflame love and zeal. 3. To deepen our love to the doctrines of sovereign grace. 4. To make us hopeful and zealous for others. Let dying Stephen be cheered by the hope of young Saul's salvation. Let wicked young Saul repent of his wrong to Stephen. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 59. **And they stoned Stephen.**—*The clearing shower of life:*—When mists have hung low over the hills, and the day has been dark with intermittent showers, great clouds hurry across the sky, and the rain comes pouring down, then we look

out and say, "This is the clearing-up shower." And as the clouds part to let the blue sky reappear, we know that just behind them are singing-birds and glittering dew-drops. So the Christian, on whom chilling rains of sorrow have long fallen, when the last sudden storm breaks knows it is but the clearing-up shower. Just behind it he hears the songs of angels and sees the glories of heaven. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Transfigured stones:*—The stones which the world lifts against the witnesses of Christ are changed into—I. MONUMENTS OF SHAME for the enemies of truth. II. JEWELS IN THE CROWNS of the glorified martyrs. III. THE SEED OF A NEW LIFE for the Church of Christ. (*K. Gerok.*) **Calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.**—*Stephen's dying prayer:*—This seems to teach us—I. THAT STEPHEN REGARDED JESUS CHRIST AS VERY GOD. There are sundry places where this prime doctrine is not so much dogmatically asserted as clearly implied. These are, in one aspect, even more satisfactory than formal assertions, because so obviously sincere expressions of the heart, and show how this cardinal truth is interwoven with the believer's whole experience. Our text in the Greek reads, "They stoned Stephen, invoking, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The intention of the evangelist was to state that Christ was the object of his prayer. In every office of the Redeemer the enlightened Christian feels that he could not properly rely on Him for salvation unless He were very God. "It is because He is God, and there is none else," that Isaiah invites "all the ends of the earth to look unto Him and be saved." But in the hour of death especially the Christian needs a Saviour who is no less than God. An angel could not sympathise with our trial, for he cannot feel the pangs of dissolution. A human friend cannot travel with us the path through the dark valley. The God-man alone can sustain us; He has survived it and returns triumphing to succour us, for He is God. Unless this Divine Guide be with us, we must fight the battle with the last enemy alone and unaided. II. TO EXPECT AN IMMEDIATE ENTRANCE INTO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST. Stephen evidently did not expect that the grave would absorb his spirit into a state of unconscious sleep until the final consummation; or that any *limbus*, or purgatory, was to swallow him for a time in its fiery bosom. His faith aspired directly to the arms of Christ, and to that blessed world where His glorified humanity now dwells. He manifestly regarded his spirit as separate from the body, and therefore, as true, independent substance. The latter he relinquishes to the insults of his enemies, the former he commits to Christ. If only we are in Christ by true faith, the grave will have naught to do with that which is the true, conscious being, and no purgatorial fires after death can be inflicted upon believers; for "Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom." To the thief it was said, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." III. TO WHAT GUIDANCE THE CHRISTIAN MAY COMMIT HIS SOUL DURING THE JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF SPIRITS. Heaven is as truly a place as was paradise. When we first arrive there we shall be disembodied spirits. But spirits have their locality. The clearer evidence, however, that heaven is a literal place is that it contains the glorified bodies of Enoch, of Elijah, of Christ, and of the saints who rose with their Redeemer. But where is this place? In what quarter of this vast universe? When death batters down the walls of the earthly tabernacle, whither shall the dispossessed soul set out? It knows not; it needs a skilful, powerful guide. But more: it is a journey into a spiritual world; and this thought makes it awful to the apprehension of man. The presence of one disembodied spirit in the solitude of night would shake us with a thrill of dread. How, then, could we endure to be launched out into the untried ocean of space, peopled by we know not what mysterious beings? How could we be certain that we might not lose our way in the pathless vacancy, and wander for ever, a bewildered, solitary rover amidst the wilderness of worlds? This journey into the unknown must issue in our introduction to a scene whose awful novelties will overpower our faculties; for even the very thought of them when we dwell upon it fills us with dreadful suspense. Truly will the trembling soul need some one on whom to lean, some mighty, tender guardian, who will point the way to the prepared mansions, and cheer and sustain its fainting courage. That Guide is Christ; therefore let us say in dying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It is a delightful belief to which the gospel gives most solid support, that our Redeemer is accustomed to employ in this mission His holy angels. "Are they not ministering spirits?" &c. When Lazarus died he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. IV. THE ARMS OF CHRIST MAY BE LOOKED TO AS OUR FINAL HOME. We are authorised to say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; not only that Thou mayest sustain it in the pangs

of dying, and guide it to its heavenly home, but that it may dwell with Thee world without end. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am," &c. Oh, blessed resting-place! In Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Let us live and die like believing Stephen, and our spirits will be received where the God-man holds His regal court, to go out thence no more for ever. (*R. L. Dabney, D.D.*) *The close of the Christian life*:—I. THERE IS A SPIRIT IN MAN DISTINCT FROM THE BODY. The body is the habitation of the soul, and only the instrument by which it acts. This is the frame of human nature, and agreeable to the original account of its formation. We find it represented as a principle of life (Gen. ii. 7). The dust of the earth was animated by a living soul. The dissolution of our constitution is described by the wise man, agreeably to this account (Eccles. xii. 7). It is a principle of thought and reason, of understanding and choice (Job xx. 2, 3; xxxii. 8). It is represented as a principle both of natural and religious action: we not only live and move, but worship God in the spirit (John iv. 24). It is represented as a distinct thing from the body, and of another kind (Matt. x. 28, xxiv. 39; 2 Cor. iv. 16). And although we do not know the precise nature of a spirit, or the manner of its union with the body, which is a great mystery in nature; as neither do we the substratum or abstract essence of matter; yet we do know the essential and distinguishing properties of them. The soul is a thinking conscious principle, an intelligent agent, a principle of life and action, which bears a near resemblance of God the Infinite Spirit, and of angels, who are pure unbodied spirits. II. AT DEATH THE SPIRIT WILL BE SEPARATED FROM THE BODY, AND EXIST APART FROM IT. Though they are closely united to one another in the present state, yet the bonds of union are not indissoluble. But then as it is a vital principle, and all life and action proceeds from the union of soul and body; so the separation of the soul from the body is the death and dissolution of it. It is destroying our present being and way of existing: the body dies and returns to the dust when deserted of the living soul. This is plainly implied here, when Stephen prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; not only that he had a spirit distinct from the body, but that the spirit was now dislodging, and ready to depart from the body. It was to be then out of the body. So the apostle says (2 Cor. v. 1, 4; 2 Tim. iv. 6). To the same purpose St. Peter says (2 Pet. i. 14, 15). The separation of soul and body is properly the death of our present nature. This came into the world by sin, and is the proper fruit of it. It is the sentence of the law executed upon the breach of it (Gen. ii. 17; iii. 19). Our death is appointed by the Divine will, though we know not the day of our death. Nature tends to a dissolution, and gradually wears out, though no evil befall it; and it is liable to many distempers, and many accidents, which often prove fatal, and hasten a separation. III. THE LORD JESUS WILL RECEIVE THE DEPARTING SPIRITS OF GOOD MEN. This was the matter of Stephen's prayer. And we cannot suppose that he would have prayed in this manner, who was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, if the case had been otherwise; if it did not belong to Him to receive it, or He was not disposed to do it. This is a more distinct and particular account of the matter, and proper to the Christian revelation. In the Old Testament we are only told that the spirit returns to God who gave it, and who is the Father of spirits; but here we are told that the Lord Jesus receives our departing spirits. It is through the Mediator, and by His immediate agency, that the whole kingdom of providence and grace is now administered in all the disposals of life, and the issues of death. But what is the import of His receiving the departed spirits of good men? 1. The taking them under His protection and care. He is their Refuge and Guide, to whom they fly, and whom they follow, when they go into a new and unknown state. He preserves the naked trembling spirit by a guard of holy angels from affrightment and amazement, from the terror and power of envious spirits, who would gladly seize it as a prey, and distress and terrify it, as the devil now goes up and down seeking whom he may devour. 2. He conveys them to God, and to a state of blessedness. What this state will be we can have no more clear conceptions than Scripture gives us, and what arises from the natural notions of a spirit, and the essential difference between good and evil. That they are in a state of activity, and in a state of rest and happiness, and vastly different from that of wicked spirits. IV. CHRISTIANS SHOULD COMMEND THEIR DEPARTING SPIRITS TO CHRIST BY PRAYER. This was directly the case here, and is the form of the expression, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This prayer was directed to Christ in His exalted state, standing at the right hand of God, and in the quality of a Mediator, who ever lives to make intercession for us. But upon what grounds may a dying Christian

offer up such a prayer to Christ? With what warrant and hope of success? I answer, upon good grounds and sufficient security. 1. His great love to the spirits of men. Will He deny us anything when He freely gave His life for us? Will He forsake them at last, and leave them exposed in an unknown state, whom He has preserved all their lives, and wherever they have been in this? 2. His relation to them. He is their Lord and Saviour, their Head; they are His subjects and servants, His members and friends, to whom He stands in a special relation, and who is endeared to them by special marks of favour. And He is concerned in the protection and care of His faithful servants, as a prince is concerned to secure his subjects. 3. His ability and power to take care of them (Heb. vii. 27). 4. His engagements and undertaking. He who by the grace of God tasted death for every man, was to bring the many sons unto glory (Heb. ii. 9, 10). And He would fail in His trust if any of them miscarried, and came short of the glory of God. Besides, He is engaged by His promise and faithfulness to preserve and secure them (John x. 28). Inferences: 1. That the soul does not die with the body, or sleep in the grave. 2. We should be often thinking and preparing for a time and state of separation. 3. The peculiar happiness of good men, and the great difference between them and others. 4. We learn what is the proper close of a Christian's life. When we have finished our course of service, and done the work of life, what remains but the lifting up of our souls to God, and commending them into His hands? (*W. Harris, D.D.*) *Prayer in death:*—Passing inside, they looked toward the bed; Dr. Livingstone was not lying on it, but appeared to be engaged in prayer, and they instinctively drew backward for the instant. Pointing to him, Majwara said, "When I lay down he was just as he is now, and it is because I find that he does not move that I fear he is dead." They asked the lad how long he had slept. Majwara said he could not tell, but he was sure that it was some considerable time. The men drew nearer. A candle stuck by its own wax to the top of the box shed a light sufficient for them to see his form. Dr. Livingstone was kneeling by the side of his bed, his body stretched forward, his head buried in his hands upon the pillow. For a minute they watched him; he did not stir, there was no sign of breathing; then one of them—Matthew—advanced softly to him, and placed his hands to his cheeks. It was sufficient; life had been extinct for some time, and the body was almost cold: Livingstone was dead. (*Life of Dr. Livingstone.*) *The martyrdom of Wishart:*—Speaking of the martyrdom of Wishart, in 1546, Mr. Froude writes: "In anticipation of an attempt at rescue, the castle guns were loaded, and the port-fires lighted. After this, Mr. Wishart was led to the fire, with a rope about his neck and a chain of iron about his middle and when he came to the fire, he sat down upon his knees and rose up again, and thrice he said these words: 'O Thou Saviour of the world, have mercy on me. Father of heaven, I commend my spirit into Thy holy hands.' He next spoke a few words to the people; and then, last of all, the hangman that was his tormentor fell upon his knees and said, 'Sir, I pray you forgive me, for I am not guilty of your death'; to whom he answered, 'Come hither to me,' and he kissed his cheek and said, 'Lo, here is a token that I forgive thee. Do thy office.' And then he was put upon a gibbet and hanged, and then burned to powder." *Fellowship in death:*—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (chap. vii. 59). I. FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING. II. FELLOWSHIP OF VISION. III. FELLOWSHIP OF PITY. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." IV. FELLOWSHIP OF ATTITUDE. With bounding might and "loud" voices the last enemy was confronted and destroyed. V. FELLOWSHIP OF BURIAL. Devout duty to the dead. This is the work of the living. Let us bury our friends reverently. They have an undying history. Let us bury our friends sympathetically. They ask a brother's interest. Let us bury our friends hopefully. They have a lasting destiny. Lessons: 1. This precious coincidence is surely not accidental. 2. Here is a proof of the true humanity of Jesus Christ. We wonder less that Stephen was like the Saviour than that the Saviour was so like Stephen. 3. How completely one are the Lord and His people! "Thou shalt be with Me." With Him heaven is not only near, but accessible. 4. Fellowship with Jesus Christ in life is the surest guarantee of His presence in death. (*H. T. Miller.*) *The last request:*—Human history is a record of the thoughts and exploits of human spirits. Wherever we touch the history of spirit, we find it invested with the gravest responsibilities. Wherever we look, we behold memorials of spirit-power. I am anxious to impress you with the

fact that you are spirits, and that your history here will determine all your conditions and relationships in the endless ages! I. MAN'S SUPREME CONCERN SHOULD BE THE WELL-BEING OF HIS SPIRIT. Because your spirit—1. Is immortal. Only eternity can satisfy it. It claims the theatre of infinitude! Yet many occupy more time in the adornment of the flesh, which is to turn to corruption, than in the culture of the spirit which no tomb can confine! You pity the imbecility of the man who estimates the casket more highly than the gem, but your madness is infinitely more to be deplored if you bestow more care on the body than on the soul. 2. Can undergo no posthumous change, whereas the body may. There is no repentance in the grave. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," &c. Moral change after death is an eternal impossibility. Not so with the body; Christ will change our vile body, and make it like unto His own glorious body. 3. Has been Divinely purchased. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things," &c. 4. Is capable of endless progress. There is no point at which the spirit must pause and say, "It is enough!" II. MAN IS APPROACHING A CRISIS IN WHICH HE WILL REALISE THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS SPIRIT. Stephen was in that crisis when uttering this entreaty. Amid the commotion of the world—the strife for bread and the battle for position—men are apt to overlook the moral claims of their nature. But remember that there hastens a time in which you must give audience to the imperious demands of your spiritual nature! I have visited the prodigal in the chamber of death; and he who was wont to scorn the appeals of Christianity—who had drunk at the broken cisterns of crime—even he has turned upon me his glazed eye, and stammered out with dying breath, "My soul!" I have stood at the bedside of the departing rich; and he whose aim it was to build around himself a golden wall—who considered no music so entrancing as that produced by the friction of coin—even he has turned his anxious gaze to me, and, with stifled utterance, has said, "My soul, my soul!" I have watched the votary of fashion—whose ambition it was to bedeck his mortal frame, whose god was elegance, and whose altar the mirror—and even he has wept and cried, "My naked soul, my naked soul!" I have stood in the chamber where the good man has met his fate: has he displayed anxiety or given way to despair? Nay, he exclaims, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" Now, seeing that the approach of this momentous hour is an infallible certainty, two duties devolve upon us. 1. To employ the best means for meeting its requirements. What are those means? Those who know the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world, emphatically testify that they cannot meet the requirements of the spiritual constitution. Faith in Christ and obedience to His will constitute the true preparation for all the exigencies of life, and the true antidote for the bitterness of death! 2. To conduct the business of life with a view to its solemnities. "How will this affect my dying hour?" is an inquiry too seldom propounded, but, when conscientiously answered, must produce a powerfully restraining influence on man's thoughts and habitudes. Few men connect the present with the future, or reflect that out of the present the future gathers its materials and moulds its character. III. MAN KNOWS OF ONE BEING ONLY TO WHOM HE CAN SAFELY ENTRUST HIS SPIRIT—the "Lord Jesus." This prayer implies—1. Christ's sovereignty of the spiritual empire. Whom does Stephen see? There are ten thousand times ten thousand glorified intelligences in the heaven to which he directs his eyes: but the triumphant martyr sees "no man but Jesus only." All souls are Christ's. All the spirits of the just made perfect are loyal to His crown. 2. Christ's profound interest in the well-being of faithful spirits. He said that He went to "prepare a place" for His people, and that where He was, there they should be also. Now one of His people proves this. 3. Christ's personal contact with departed Christian spirits. Stephen acknowledges no intermediate state; looking from earth, his eye beholds no object until it alights on the Son of Man. Stephen's creed was—"absent from the body, present with the Lord." 4. Christ's unchanging relationship to human spirits. Lord Jesus was the name by which Christ was known on earth. How He was designated in the distant ages of eternity none can tell! But when He uncrowned Himself He assumed the name of Jesus, for He came to save His people from their sins! And now that He has returned to His celestial glory He has not abandoned the name. IV. MAN ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ETERNAL CONDITION OF HIS SOUL. You make your own heaven or hell, not by the final act of life, but by life itself. Your spirit is now undergoing education. Two results ought to be produced by your trials. 1. They should discipline your spirit; bring it into harmony with the Divine will, by curbing passion, checking error, rebuking pride. 2. They should develop the capabilities of your

spirit. Trials may do this, by throwing you back on great principles. But for trial, we should never know our powers of endurance. Trial brings out the majesty of moral character. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Prayer in death*:—A Christian should die praying. Other men die in a way fitting their lives. The ruling passion of life is strong in death. Julius Cæsar died adjusting his robes, that he might fall gracefully; Augustus died in a compliment to Livia, his wife; Tiberius in dissimulations; Vespasian in jest. The infidel, Hume, died with pitiful jokes about Charon and his boat; Rousseau with boasting; Voltaire with mingled imprecations and supplications; Paine with shrieks of agonising remorse; multitudes die with sullenness, others with blasphemies faltering on their tongues. But the Christian should die praying; for "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath," &c. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" This is the prayer of faith, commending the immortal spirit to the covenant care of Jesus. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The soul*:—From this prayer we infer—I. THAT MAN'S SOUL SURVIVES CORPOREAL DEATH. This was now a matter of consciousness with Stephen. He had no doubt about it, and hence he prays Jesus to take it. This is with all men rather a matter of feeling than argument. The Bible not only addresses this feeling, but ministers to its growth. II. THAT IN DEATH THE IMPORTANCE OF MAN'S SOUL IS ESPECIALLY FELT. The "spirit" was now everything to Stephen. And so it is to all dying men. Death ends all material interests and relations, and the soul grows more and more conscious of itself as it feels its approach to the world of spirits. III. THAT THE WELL-BEING OF THE SOUL CONSISTS IN ITS DEDICATION TO JESUS. "Receive my spirit." What does this mean? 1. Not the giving up of our personality. Such pantheism is absurd. 2. Not the surrender of our free agency. 3. But the placing of its powers entirely at Christ's service, and its destiny entirely at His disposal. This implies, of course, strong faith in the kindness and power of Jesus. IV. THAT THIS DEDICATION OF THE SOUL TO JESUS IS THE ONE GREAT THOUGHT OF THE EARNEST SAINT. It is the beginning and end of religion, or rather the very essence of it. The first breath, and every subsequent respiration, of piety is, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *St. Stephen a worshipper and witness of Jesus, more than conqueror of death and of the world*:—Stephen is not a prodigy. He is an example; he is a Christian; he is a believer, nothing more; nothing more than all of us would become and be this day if we were followers of his faith. I. HE DIED IN CHARITY. II. HE DIED AS A TRUE MARTYR, CONDEMNING THE WORLD, BEARING THE CROSS OF CHRIST. His defence is no apology, as if he were pleading for life, or deprecating either death or their displeasure. Thus in Christ's spirit did he go forth, taking up his cross, and confronting all that was not of God in the world and in the Church. III. HE DIED CONTENDING AS A TRUE MARTYR FOR THE COMMON, OR CATHOLIC, FAITH. His was no sectarian stand, or fight. What was the Christianity for which he pleaded, and for which he was ready to sacrifice his life against their dead form of godliness, and conventional faith, and mere Judaism? It was a Christianity that revealed the way of access to this living God, and admission to this communion in Jesus Christ; a Christianity that revealed that new and better covenant in which these unspeakable gifts of grace were now published as man's birthright, in the faith of which he became alive unto God, the faith of which was eternal life. IV. HE DIED, AS HE HAD LIVED, BY FAITH. That opened his eyes to "see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." That made his face to the spectators in the council "as the face of an angel." The Holy Ghost wrought in him visibly. God thus sealed His martyr's ministry by a token which even his murderers could not deny, and said, as audibly as by a voice from heaven, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Stephen-like, men in general, Christians and others, die as they live. 1. There are, it is evident, few deathbeds like Stephen's. Those who are familiar with the history of the Church in ancient times could cite many a parallel to Stephen among the glorious company of its martyrs and confessors. Nor are modern biographies without instances corresponding or similar. But what are these, or the greater number still of unrecorded triumphs over death and suffering, to the multitudes that are different, to the myriads that furnish a contrast rather than a counterpart? To how few is death without a sting, a conquered enemy! 2. There are, perhaps, as few lives like Stephen's as there are deathbeds like his. What is the value of a deathbed testimony, even of triumph like Stephen's, if what has gone before has either ill corresponded, or has contradicted? Look at family life, and social life, and Church communion among us, as compared with the fellowship of Stephen's day (Acts ii. 46, 47). We shall then

cease to wonder that there are few deathbeds like Stephen's. Stephen's was but the appropriate close of a consistent life. 3. The spirit, the faith of the Church certainly now is not Stephen's, nor like those of the Church of Stephen's day. How many fail to claim the fulness of the Holy Ghost, to walk worthily of their vocation by living in the faith of this vocation? 4. Hence the Church's weakness—want of faith like Stephen's; want of the Holy Ghost. Not a withholding on God's part of grace, or of the Spirit, but a want of response, or reciprocal action on ours. We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves. (*R. Paisley.*) *A watchword for life and death*:—(Text and Psa. xxxi. 5; Luke xxiii. 46.) 1. David said in his lifetime, "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit." In the hour of torture and dissolution Christ and His servant used almost the same expression. It is not, then, necessarily a dying speech. It is as appropriate to youth as to old age, to the brightness of life as to the shadow of death. 2. The greatest concern of man should be about his spirit. His clothes wear out; his house crumbles away; his body must return to dust: it is in his spirit alone that man finds the supreme possibilities of his being. Care for the spirit involves every other care. Regard the words as supplying—1. THE TRUE WATCHWORD FOR LIFE. Life needs a watchword. Our energies, purposes, hopes, should be gathered round some living and controlling centre. We stray far from the right line when we take ourselves into our own keeping. When we commit our spirit into the hand of God, three results accrue—1. We approach the duties of life through a series of the most elevating considerations. (1) We are not our own. (2) We are parts of a great system. (3) We are servants, not masters. (4) The things round about us are beneath our serious notice, except for momentary convenience or instruction. 2. We accept the trials of life with the most hopeful patience. They are—(1) Disciplinary. (2) Under control. (3) Needful. 3. We recognise the mercies of life with joyful gratitude. The name of God is on the smallest of them (Psa. xxxi. 7, 8, 19). To the atheist the morning is but a lamp to be turned to convenience; to the Christian it is the shining of the face of God. All things are ours if the spirit be Christ's. What is your life's watchword? Have you one? What is it? Self-enrichment? Pleasure? The one true watchword is, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit," my case, my controversies, disappointments, whole discipline and destiny. II. THE TRUE WATCHWORD FOR DEATH. If a living man requires a watchword, how much more the man who is dying! How strange is the country to which he is moving; how dark the path along which he is travelling; how short a way can his friends accompany him! All this, so well understood by us all, makes death very solemn. This watchword, spoken by Jesus and Stephen, shows—1. Their belief in a state of being at present invisible. Was Christ likely to be deceived? Read His life; study the character of His thinking; acquaint yourselves with the usual tone of His teaching; and then say whether He was likely to die with a lie in His mouth. And Stephen—what had he to gain if no world lay beyond the horizon of the present and invisible? Jesus and Stephen, then, must at least be credited with speaking their deepest personal convictions. It is something to us to show who have believed this doctrine. 2. Their assurance of the limitations of human malice. The spirit was quite free. Evil ones cannot touch the Divine side of human nature. Conclusion: 1. When the spirit is fit for the presence of God, there is no fear of death. 2. All who die in the faith are present with the Lord. 3. Jesus Himself knows what it is to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. 4. The prayer for entrance among the blest may come too late. We have no authority for the encouragement of a death-bed repentance. It is but poor prayer that is forced from a coward's lips. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The dying testimony of Stephen*:—I. THE PRAYER OF STEPHEN. 1. Stephen expected an immediate transfer of his soul, in the full possession of its powers and consciousness, from a state of earthly to a state of heavenly being. He understood its high relation to the Father of spirits; and expected from Him protection and provision for its unembodied existence. 2. The prayer of Stephen contained a plain, positive acknowledgment of the Saviour's proper Deity, as one with the Father, over all, God blessed for ever. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE PRAYER OF STEPHEN WAS OFFERED. 1. Saint Stephen was, beyond all controversy, a man of uprightness and integrity. 2. Will it be answered, "The integrity of Stephen remains unimpeached: he must, however, be ranked among those every-day characters, whose intellectual weakness is in some degree retrieved by the uprightness of their principles?" Such an apology will hardly serve the turn of those who impugn or deny the Divinity of our blessed Lord. For Stephen was a wise man, no less than a man of

moral honesty and integrity. The knowledge and intellect of Jerusalem doubtless sat upon the seats of the Sanhedrin: yet they were cut to the heart with what they heard him declare, and could only answer "by gnashing upon him with their teeth." Now, it is not the part of wisdom to brave scorn, mockery, and death for an opinion unfounded in truth. Even Erasmus, one of the most amiable and learned men of modern times, who lived when the torch of the Reformation first shed its glorious light upon the benighted Church of Christ, confessed that, though he should know the truth to be on his side, he had not courage to become a martyr in its behalf. Was it, then, for one of Stephen's wisdom falsely to ascribe Godhead to Jesus Christ, when his life was endangered by the assertion, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God"? 3. I add, however, that Stephen was a partaker of knowledge more than human: he was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." "He had an unction from the Holy One, and he knew all things." No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost. 4. Once more: Stephen was a dying man. Whatever our previous sentiments may have been, yet when the things of this world are passing fast away, and the realities of eternal existence are opening upon our view, the mists of delusion are dissipated, and the true light of conviction usually flashes upon the soul. III. THE DEATH BY WHICH THE PRAYER WAS FOLLOWED. Lessons: 1. It is a deduction, easily and naturally made from our review of the passage, that doctrinal religion is not a matter so unimportant as rational divines would persuade us to believe. 2. I add that faith in doctrines, unattended and unevidenced by practical religion, will serve rather to condemn than to save. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*)

Ver. 60. **And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice.**—*The best testament of a Christian*:—To commend—1. His soul to heaven. 2. His body to the earth. 3. His friends to the Divine protection. 4. His enemies to the Divine compassion. (*Starke.*) *The power of Christ in believers*:—I. HE STRENGTHENS THEM TO BOLDNESS IN CONFESSING, the power of which their enemies cannot resist. II. HE ADORNS THEM WITH PURITY OF CONDUCT, which the tongues of blasphemers cannot stain. III. HE FILLS THEM WITH A TENDERNESS OF LOVE, which prays for their bitterest enemies. IV. HE SWEETENS THEIR DYING with a blessed insight into His eternal glory. (*Leonhard.*) *Stephen's three crowns*:—I. THE FAIR CROWN OF GRACE, with which the Lord adorned him in life and death. II. THE BLOODY CROWN OF THORNS, which he wore after his Saviour in suffering and death. III. THE HEAVENLY CROWN OF GLORY, which was reserved in eternity for the faithful martyr. (*K. Gerok.*) *The victory of dying Stephen*:—I. He triumphs over THE MURDEROUS CRY OF A HOSTILE WORLD by a look of faith to heaven. II. He overcomes THE SHARPNESS OF DEATH by a child-like surrender of his spirit into the arms of Jesus. III. He triumphs over FLESH AND BLOOD by a priestly petition for his murderers. (*Ibid.*) *The Cross of Christ reflected in Stephen, living and dying*:—I. THE SHAME OF THE CROSS. 1. Before the same council. 2. The like false accusations. 3. A similar thrusting out of the city. 4. The like unrighteous doom. II. THE GLORY OF THE CROSS, displayed—1. In courageous defence. 2. In patient meekness. 3. In love, blessing its enemies—Jesus' first and Stephen's last dying words. 4. In a blessed hope of heaven. (*Ibid.*) **Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.**—*The request of Stephen*:—The request—1. Of one dying. 2. Of a soul that entirely forgets itself. 3. Of a man who is striving after nothing but the kingdom of God. (*Schleiermacher.*) *The magnanimity of the Christian spirit*:—This is shown by—1. The victories it achieves over the corrupt affections of the human heart. 2. Its superiority to the principles, spirit, and practices of the world. 3. Its fortitude under the infliction of unprovoked injuries. 4. The support and consolation which it gives in seasons of pain and sorrow, and the victory it achieves over the king of terrors. 5. The benevolence and grandeur of its purposes, and the labours and sufferings which it prompts in the execution of them. (*G. N. Judd, D.D.*) *Forgiveness: its nature*:—A forgiving spirit is a noble, generous Christian virtue. It takes its rise in that love of God and man which is the fruit of the Spirit and the fulfilling of the law; it is made up of love and forbearance, united with the tenderness of compassion towards those who have injured us, and fortified by some just sense of our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness from God. In the full sense of the thing itself, it consists of the inward spirit of forgiveness and the outward act of reconciliation. It belongs to the heart, just as every other grace has its seat in the inner man. In this view of it, it is the opposite

of revenge, which angrily seeks redress for injuries by inflicting injuries in return. It is the inward exercise of kindness and good-will toward our enemies. (*G. Thring, D.D.*) *Forgiveness: its rarity in heathendom:*—Of forgiveness, we cannot certainly say that it was unknown to the ancients; under certain conditions, no doubt, it was very common among them. In family life, in which all the germs of Christian virtue are to be found, it was undoubtedly common. Undoubtedly friends fell out and were reconciled in antiquity, as amongst ourselves. But where the only relation between the two parties was that of injurer and injured, and the only claim of the offender to forgiveness was that he was a human being, then forgiveness seems not only not to have been practised, but not to have been approved. People not only did not forgive their enemies, but did not wish to do so, nor think better of themselves for having done so. That man considered himself fortunate who on his death-bed could say that no one had done more good to his friends or more mischief to his enemies. The Roman Triumph, with its naked ostentation of revenge, fairly represents the common feeling of the ancients. Nevertheless, forgiveness of enemies was not unknown. They could conceive it, and feel that there was a Divine beauty in it; but it seemed to them more than could be expected of human nature—almost superhuman. (*Ecce Homo.*) *Forgiveness: its nobility:*—Generous and magnanimous minds are readiest to forgive; and it is a weakness and impotency of mind to be unable to forgive. (*Lord Bacon.*) *Forgiveness: a sign of a noble nature:*—The brave only know how to forgive; it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good and kind actions; cowards have fought and even conquered; but a coward never forgave: it is not in his nature; the power of doing it flows only from a strength and greatness of soul, conscious of its own force and security, and above the little temptations of resenting every fruitless attempt to interrupt its happiness. (*Laurence Sterne.*) *Forgiveness: the mark of a Christian:*—As a seal leaves a mark of itself in the wax, whereby it is known; so it is with every one who has a readiness to forgive others: for by it the Christian may know that God hath sealed the forgiveness of his sins upon his heart. (*Cawdray.*) *Forgiveness: the power of Christ necessary to:*—"What can Jesus Christ do for you now?" said an inhuman slave-master, when in the act of applying the lacerating whip to an already half-murdered slave. "Him teach me to forgive you, massa," was his reply. (*Phillips.*) **And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**—*Stephen's sleep:*—I. EVERY MAN IS BOUND TO DO SOMETHING BEFORE HE DIE. 1. Every man is bound to be something, to take some calling upon him. We begin with our beginning, our birth. "Man is born to labour" (Job v. 7; Heb.). Howsoever honourable his station is, he is bound to do his day's work in the day, the duties of the place in the place. How far is he from doing so who never so much as considers why he was sent into this world, and in spite of all that God has done for him, and taught him in creation and redemption! Such a man passes through life as an *ignis fatuus*, which gives no light, and signifies nothing. He passes out of the world as a body out of a bath, when the water may be the fouler, but otherwise retains no impression; so the world may be the worse for his having lived in it, or else retains no mark of his having been here. When God placed Adam in the world He enjoined him to fill, subdue, and rule it; when God placed His children in the land of promise He enjoined them to fight against idolatry—to everybody some task for His glory. God made every man something, but many make the best of things, man, nothing. He that qualifies himself for nothing does so; he whom we can call nothing is nothing. God's own name is "I am"—Being, and nothing is so contrary to God as to be nothing. Be something or else thou canst do nothing, and till thou hast done something thou canst not sleep Stephen's sleep. 2. Every man is bound to do seriously, sedulously, and sincerely the duties of his calling. He that stands in a place and does not the duties of that place is a statue, and a statue without an inscription. The duty in the text is speaking, "When he had said," a duty devolving upon ministers and magistrates, and unless they speak, and speak to purpose, they cannot sleep Stephen's sleep. But as in creation God does as well as says, so we must not only speak, but act. Therefore do not complain that God exacts the duties of thy place, and say not of it that it is good for nothing, for it is good for this that when thou hast discharged its duties thou mayest sleep Stephen's sleep. 3. The better to perform those duties every one shall do well to propose to himself some example to imitate in that calling. It was the counsel of that great little philosopher, Epictetus, whensoever thou undertakest any action to consider what a Socrates or a Plato would do in that case, and to do

conformably to that. Here is an example which suits everybody. (1) Note this name, Stephen, a crown—the reward of faithfulness. Our names are debts; every man owes the world the signification of his name, and every additional name of honour or office lays a new obligation on him; and his first name, his Christian name above all. The duties of a Christianity must weigh down the duties of all other plans. (2) He became a disciple early, and therefore takes rank even before Paul. (3) He made his ambition only to serve Christ, and not in a high place, but as a deacon. (4) But Stephen's exemplariness consists not so much in what he did as in what he suffered. He cheerfully laid down his life for Christ's sake. To suffer for God is the greatest thing in the world, except God's sufferings for man. The latter was the *nadir* of God's humiliation, the former is the *zenith* of man's exaltation. Nor is it needful to suffer death to imitate Stephen. Every man who suffers injuries without resentment, who resists temptations from power or pleasure, who cheerfully bears God's crosses, is a true copy of Stephen. (5) Christ was his and our supreme pattern, as we see conspicuously here. II. TO THAT MAN WHO HATH DONE THOSE THINGS WHICH THE DUTIES OF HIS CALLING BIND HIM TO, DEATH IS BUT A SLEEP. There are two classes of men, those who die in the bath of a peaceable, and those who die upon the wreck of a distracted conscience—and the lives of each are correspondent to, and lead up to their death. 1. The death of the wicked is not a sleep. (1) It is bloody conflict and no victory. (2) It is a tempestuous sea and no harbour. (3) A slippery height and no footing. (4) A desperate fall and no bottom. 2. The death of the righteous is a sleep. They do not only go to heaven by death, but heaven comes to them in death; their very manner of dying is an inchoative act of their glorified state: therefore it is not called a dying, but a sleeping, which intimates two blessings—(1) Present rest. Now men sleep not well fasting; nor does a fasting conscience, a conscience that is not nourished with a testimony of having done well, come to this sleep. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet," and to him that laboureth in his calling this sleep of death is welcome (Prov. iii. 24; Psa. iv. 8). (2) Future waking is the resurrection (1 Thess. iv. 14). They shall awake as Jacob did, and say as he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven." (*J. Donne, D.D.*) *The death of Stephen*:—I. IN STEPHEN WE HAVE A PATTERN OF FAITH. He knew and was persuaded that his gracious Redeemer reigned on high, that He was not unmindful of His followers on earth, and would keep that which was committed to Him till the day of His appearance. Depending on this hope, he died with a composure and magnanimity which religion alone can produce. II. IN STEPHEN WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF UNSHAKEN CONSTANCY IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD. When he was chosen a deacon to assist the apostles in managing the concerns of the Church, he had a high character for piety, integrity, and wisdom. Nor did he ever afterwards do anything to forfeit that character. On the contrary, the more he was tried, the more his virtues shone forth. Let his unshaken constancy be a pattern to us. Religion does not consist of fits and starts of devotion, of resolutions that are quickly made and as quickly abandoned, of that wavering and inconsistent conduct which always indicates unsoundness in the faith. It is a steady principle abiding in the heart and influencing the conduct. III. IN STEPHEN WE HAVE A PATTERN OF PIOUS RESIGNATION. No complaining words proceeded from his lips. He discovered no distrust of the power, or the love of his Saviour. We may not have trials to endure, like Stephen, but we are placed in a situation which will afford ample scope for the exercise of resignation. We are subject to sickness, losses, and disappointments, together with innumerable vexatious circumstances, which we cannot prevent. We should ever remember that God is the sovereign disposer of all events; that He has a right to place us in what station, and expose us to what sufferings He pleases. But though the sovereignity of God over His creatures be absolute, yet we know that He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. These very sufferings may be the means of our salvation. Such considerations will prevent murmuring, and dispose us to a calm acquiescence in the appointments of Providence. This pious principle will diffuse its benign influence over the whole soul. It will soothe our sorrows, overcome our angry passions, and sweeten the bitter cup of life. The God whom we serve will grant us support and consolation here, and bestow upon us unspeakable happiness hereafter. V. IN STEPHEN WE HAVE A PATTERN OF FORGIVENESS. If we examine the history of the world, we shall find that many of the evils which from age to age have afflicted mankind, have arisen from a revengeful and unforgiving spirit. In ancient times this spirit, exerting itself without

control, diffused over every land its baneful influence, producing contention and strife and every evil work. This spirit, so adverse to human improvement, our Saviour set Himself upon all occasions to correct and to subdue. He inculcated brotherly love to an extent till then altogether unknown. "Love your enemies," &c., "If we forgive not our brethren their offences, neither will God forgive us our offences." This consideration should lead us earnestly to cultivate a meek and forgiving spirit. In this spirit there is a dignity, a magnanimity, an excellence, which the sons of dissipation and the votaries of pleasure may envy and ridicule, but which the Christian, who aspires to the inheritance of the blessed, will cherish as one of the highest attainments that can adorn his character. And while he does so, every revengeful principle will die in his breast. He will be at peace with all mankind, "and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." (*John Ramsay, M.A.*) *Death to the believer: what?*—I. WHAT DEATH IS TO THE BELIEVER. 1. A sleep. The expression conveys a sweet idea of placidity and calmness. The day of life declines; the shadows of its evening fall around; wearied and exhausted nature needs repose; its strength is weakness, yea, it may be labour and sorrow, and in the appointed moment the believer falls "asleep." 2. Nor is it a troublous rest: it is a peaceful sleep. "Mark the perfect man . . . for the end of that man is peace." The stroke of death—the pain of dissolution, is, as it were, but the kind alarm which leads a child of God to shelter himself more closely in the bosom of God's paternal love. Since the Redeemer died, death has been abolished in its penal terror. By descending, too, into the grave, He has dispelled the grave's dark horrors, and sanctified the resting-place of His dear and believing people. The grave, therefore, is now no more than the bed where the mortal remains of the believer rest in peaceful hope. 3. A sleep from which he shall awake. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" to reward them. The night of the grave will pass away; the morning of the resurrection-day will dawn, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Nothing shall resist the voice which will say, "Come forth." 4. A sleep into which, when once awakened, he will fall again no more. "Death hath no more dominion over" Christ: death shall have no more dominion over one that believes and loves and serves Him, and is "risen together with Him." As surely as "He that was dead, is alive again and liveth for evermore," so surely shall the believer rise to live for ever. In the new heavens and the new earth "there shall be no more death." The purified and ennobled powers of a glorified saint, will be too vigorous ever to need repose again. No "second death" awaits the believer. The gift of God is eternal life; "whoso liveth and believeth in Him shall never die." Thus "the righteous hath hope in his death." II. WHENCE IT IS HE DIES SO CALMLY. Simply because he is a believer. By faith he becomes interested in all the benefits which result from "the meritorious cross and passion" of Jesus Christ. Like the martyr Stephen, the believer—1. Partakes of the Holy Ghost. 2. Sees Jesus standing on God's right hand—not indeed as Stephen visibly, but by faith. And "where He is those who believe on Him may be also." In a persuasion of this sweet truth, the believer may smile in death. 3. Has a Friend, to whose care he may commit his departing spirit. Unspeakably precious is this privilege. Our earthly friends may go with us, in their kind solicitude, to the verge of death; but there the dearest ties must be severed, and a last adieu be bidden. One there is, however, that can be with us in the shadowy vale, support and cheer us through it, and while our mortal eyes are closing on all terrestrial objects, He can give to our faith such brightening views of celestial glory as will enrapture our departing spirits, and fill them with desire to wing their upward flight. As amidst the ocean's billows the shipwrecked mariner will cling with increasing tenacity to the floating plank, so amidst the agonies of death the believer lays a firmer and still stronger hold upon the hope of life in Christ. He sees his Lord above him: and whilst he hears the gracious words, "Fear not, for I am with thee," "Receive my spirit," may he cry; and very gracious will the Lord be to him at the voice of his prayer. "So the Lord giveth His beloved sleep"; and hence it is the believer dies so calmly. In conclusion let me exhort you—1. To awake from the slumbers of sin. How many, alas! are there "dead in trespasses and sins"! While they continue so, they cannot possibly "sleep in Jesus" or "die in the Lord." Do not be saying in your heart, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Take care lest your sleep in the death of sin be perpetuated till you sleep in the death of nature. Take care lest when "many of them who sleep in the dust

of the earth shall awake," you rise—not to shine as the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever, but to shame and everlasting contempt. 2. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him, to die peacefully, in the Scripture sense of the word, would be impossible. 3. To do immediately what you purpose doing. "Now is the day of salvation." (*W. Mudge, B.A.*) *Death a sleep*:—Sleep is not unfrequently used by ancient heathen writers for the same general purpose of denoting the termination of human life. The still, quiescent state into which man passes when he sinks into repose is no unapt image of what takes place in appearance when man expires, more especially if under circumstances of gentle dissolution. It was only in such circumstances that the metaphor would have been deemed appropriate by a heathen, and would not probably have been used in a case like the present. To one, however, who, like the author of this history, regarded the present life as introductory to a better world, and who held the doctrine of the resurrection, death under whatever circumstances was regarded as being merely a sleep. This language suggests two ideas. I. THE STATE OF THE GRAVE IS NOT PERMANENT: it is a sleep. 1. Sleep is not the extinction, but a suspension, of the faculties, and extends only to the body. The mind continues its activity, and when we awake the two continue as before to act together. Death is not the final end of man. The stroke which consigns the body to the grave does not destroy the active functions of the soul. It still subsists in a state of consciousness, and at the resurrection it will be again united to its corporeal companion. He whom Stephen saw standing on God's right hand had formerly suffered the pangs of dissolution. 2. On the subject of the resurrection many difficulties have been proposed and questions started, and some have taxed ingenuity in framing answers. But perhaps the best answer is a short and simple one—the resurrection is an act of Omnipotence. If this is admitted, to speculate on the supposed obstacles to its accomplishment is useless. Is anything impossible with God? But independently of Divine revelation, there are many presumptions of the resurrection. Inanimate nature undergoes an annual death and resurrection. But however striking vegetable analogies are, they afford a far less satisfactory presumption of immortality than that which is derived from contemplating the sufferings of good men, and to which even their virtues in some cases contribute. Can it be that the man, like Stephen, shall have no other recompense for his virtues but pain and torture; while ease, affluence, and secular honours shall be the lot of those who have been his tormentors? II. THE STATE OF THE GRAVE WILL, TO THE CHRISTIAN, BE IN ITS CONSEQUENCES IMPROVING. It is a sleep. 1. All have experienced the feeling induced after a day of severe exertion. Both body and mind are jaded. You know likewise what in health are the feelings after a night of sound repose; you rise invigorated, and are in some respects new men. In this the resemblance holds between sleep and death. In advanced age the mind and the body equally exhibit symptoms of decay; and disease, at any period of life, will soon produce in both mind and body the effects which are produced by age. When they are reunited, after the body has been raised from the grave, we shall be free from former imperfections, and those numerous sufferings which are connected with the body will be no more known. It must be obvious, however, from this statement, that the analogy in this case is in some respects far less perfect than in the former. In awaking after the slumbers of the night, though invigorated in comparison of what we were at the time when, through the exhaustion of nature, sleep became necessary, there is no alteration in our general condition. It is otherwise after the repose of the grave. On the morning of the resurrection we will not only be different from what we were at the time when natural decay or disease brought on dissolution, but different from what we ever have been. 2. To render a future life an object of desire, it is necessary that it should be an improvement on the present. Take away from the enjoyments of this life the pleasure connected with the hopes of another, and a good man would have little inducement to resume it. If the feelings of the worldly man were analysed, it would perhaps be found that even in his case, at every period of life, it is the hope of something better that is his chief support. Much more is hope the principle of a Christian—a hope which is not restricted to the expectation merely of another life, but includes in that other the expectation of a better. In the Christian this hope will not be disappointed. Of this highly consolatory doctrine Stephen had an ocular demonstration. In what Jesus now is, Stephen saw what His followers shall be. (*R. Brodie, A.M.*) *Death a sleep*:—When a person is asleep what is it that rests? It is simply the muscles and the nerves and the weary limbs. The heart goes on beating, the lungs respiring and expiring; and

what is remarkable in sleep, the soul never sleeps at all. It seems that when one is asleep the soul often travels to far distant lands, or sails upon the bosom of the deep, amid the blue hills and green glens of other parts of the land; exploring, thinking, searching, studying. The soul is never literally dead (though it may forget) to every thought and object, to all that enters by the avenues of the senses. If sleep be the metaphor of death, it does not prove that the soul is insensible, but only that the body, the outward garment only, having been worn and wasted in the wear and toil of this present life, is folded up and laid aside in that wardrobe—the grave—a grave as truly in the keeping of the Son of God as are the angels in glory. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Death a sleep:*—You cannot find in the New Testament any of those hateful representations of dying which men have invented, by which death is portrayed as a ghastly skeleton with a scythe, or something equally revolting. The figures by which death is represented in the New Testament are very different. One is that of falling asleep in Jesus. When a little child has played all day long, and become tired out, and the twilight has sent it in weariness to its mother's knee, where it thinks it has come for more excitement, then, almost in the midst of its frolicking, and not knowing what influence is creeping over it, it falls back in the mother's arms, and nestles close to the sweetest and softest couch that ever cheek pressed, and, with lengthening breath, sleeps; and she smiles and is glad, and sits humming unheard joy over its head. So we fall asleep in Jesus. We have played long enough at the games of life, and at last we feel the approach of death. We are tired out, and we lay our head back on the bosom of Christ and quietly fall asleep. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The sleep of death:*—Asleep amid a storm! "He fell asleep"—not, he died, or he breathed his last, but "he fell asleep." Death is but a sleep; we need no more shrink from dying than from our nightly beds; we may lie down to die with just as sure a hope of rising; we may look forward to it as the release from all the cares, all the work of life. Moses of old had been warned of the time when he should "sleep with his fathers" (Deut. xxxi. 16). The wise man talks of Samuel's "long sleep" (Eccles. xlvi. 19). David, we read, "fell on sleep" (chap xii. 36). Monarch after monarch is laid in his tomb, by the sacred writer, with the short epitaph, that he "slept with his fathers." Daniel prophesies of the time, when "those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan. xii. 2). Amid the convulsions by which Nature testified her horror at the dread hour of the Passion, "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matt. xxvii. 52). So St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 18, 20; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14). Such a faith speaks still upon the walls of the ancient cemeteries in the catacombs of Rome, where to this day the simple inscriptions are preserved, by which faith and affection marked the remains of their lost, in the first and second centuries after Christ. On one we read two words, "Victoria sleeps"—or, "Saturninus sleeps in peace."—"Zoticus is laid here to sleep."—"Domitian, artless soul, sleeps in peace."—"Antonia, sweet soul, in peace. May God refresh her."—"Arethusa sleeps in God."—"He sleeps, but lives."—Laurinia, sweeter than honey, rests in peace."—"On the 5th of November was placed here to sleep, Gregory, friend of all, the enemy of none."—Or, with a studied conciseness, "Clementia, tortured, dead, sleeps; will rise again." Faith loved to dwell upon an image which represented so sweetly her hope in dying. But Reason here comes in aid of Faith; and the more closely we look into the nature of sleep and of death, the more exact is the resemblance we shall discern. 1. Sleep, first of all, is a mystery to us. What wonder death should be? Sleep is one of the greatest mysteries of our existence here, so mysterious that were it not so familiar to us, we should every day be wondering about it, that out of the short life God has given us for our probation, full one-third should be spent in a state of inaction, when we can do neither good nor bad. Even so shall we lie inactive in our graves. Is it a mystery, again, how we die? And who can understand how we fall asleep? It comes upon us, we know not how. We cannot recollect it afterwards. Our consciousness dissolves, and we are asleep. And so it may be at death. We lie uneasily on our bed; we try to die: on a moment the last tie is loosed; and, we know not how, we are away. Sleep soothes every pain, forgets every care; angry tempers, disappointments, want, unkindness, all the miseries of life are left behind in a moment. And so it will be at death. A parting struggle or two, one last breath, and "there is neither sorrow nor sighing, neither any more pain, for the former things are passed away." 2. The hours of sleep level all the inequalities of life, and make the poor man as happy as the king (Job iii. 17-19). 3. Sleep unlooses all the ties of life, and death breaks them. In sleep the soul

is disengaged from the trammels of the body; and thus we may form a conjecture how it will exist separately from it hereafter. We lie asleep, the eyes are closed, the ears are deaf, the hands lie uselessly by our side; but the mind is busily at work, and revolves within itself all those images which have been conveyed into it in our waking hours. We can so, I say, guess how, amid the darkness and silence of the grave, the soul will be able to rehearse to itself all the experience of life; and with the avenue of the senses then cut off, will have material enough within itself for incessant activity and thought. 4. Sleep, instead of contracting the powers of the mind, gives keenness to the memory, and wings to the imagination. And will not this again help us to understand how, when we have left this material world behind us, and the sheath of the body no longer encases the soul and dulls her edge, that the emancipated spirit then will be able at a glance to recall with the exactest truth the entire history of life? And when we read of the books being opened, and the judgment set, and the dead, both small and great, being judged out of the things that were written in the books; what else may be intended here, than this book of memory and conscience, with every old impression revived afresh, so that the sinner sees all his sins before his face, and goes away to his own place, speechless and without appeal, self-condemned? In sleep the mind is emancipated from the restrictions of bodily life, and the limitation of time and space. A succession of images crowd into the mind, and we live a life long in a night. This is a sort of foretaste of the freedom from material ties, which the disembodied spirit shall enjoy. 5. It is in the time of sleep, again, that the soul, half-loosened from the body, is most open to communications from the unseen world (Job xxxiii. 15, 16). It was in the hour of sleep, in a vision by night, that the angel appeared to Mary, and to Joseph and to Daniel. The spirits of another world may have peculiar access to our souls when we are disengaged from this; and those that sleep in Jesus may so enjoy unrestrained communion with the innumerable company of angels. And the Father of the spirits of all flesh may thus be instructing and preparing them for His glorious kingdom. This long sleep of peace may thus be as needful for the expansion and perfection of our nature, as our nightly slumber is for the growth of our present frame, and for the refreshment of soul and body. Morning after morning now we each may thank our Maker, "I beheld and awaked, my sleep was sweet unto me"; and every such arising we may hail as an omen of the day, when our eyes shall be opened to behold God's presence in righteousness, when we shall wake up after Christ's likeness, and be satisfied with it. Such a waking, who will not look up and hope after? Such a sleep, who need mistrust or fear? And would we know how we may so sleep with God? A quiet conscience gives the sweetest sleep. Night after night, let us take a closer and closer view of death, and then we shall not start from it when it comes. We shall lie down at last and be glad of it, just as we are glad to fall asleep. (*C. F. Secretan, M.A.*) *The blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church*:—Stephen was dead, and it might well have seemed that all the truth which was to be the glory and the thought of Christianity had died with him. But the deliverance of the Gentiles, and their free redemption by the blood of Christ, were truths too glorious to be quenched. The truth may be suppressed for a time, but it always starts up from its apparent grave. Fra Dolcino was torn to pieces, and Savonarola and Huss were burnt, but the Reformation was not prevented. Stephen sank in blood, but his place was taken by the young man who stood by to incite the murderers. Four years after Jesus had died on the Cross Stephen was stoned for being His disciple; thirty years after the death of Stephen his deadliest opponent died also for the same holy faith. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1–8. **And Saul was consenting to his death.**—*Three great figures in the Church*:—I. THE PERSECUTING SAUL. In this part of the narrative the name of Saul occurs three times (chaps. vii. 58; viii. 1, 3). How quick the development and how sure! First of all, he watched the clothes of the men who stoned Stephen; then he expressed in every feature of his face satisfaction at the martyr's death; and then he took up the matter earnestly himself with both hands. He struck the Church as it had never been struck before. The taste for blood is an acquired taste,

but "it grows by what it feeds on." This man Saul began as he ended. There was nothing ambiguous about him. A tremendous foe, a glorious friend! We see from this part of the narrative—1. The power of the Christian religion to excite the worst passions of men. It is a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." Christianity either kills or saves. We have become so familiar with it externally as to cast a doubt upon this. It has become possible for nominal Christian believers to care nothing about their faith. The age has been seized with what is known as a horror of dogmatism. But Christianity has no reason for its existence if it be not positive. Poetry may hold parley with prose fiction, because they belong to the same category. But arithmetic does not say, "If you will allow me, I may venture to suggest that the multiplication of such and such numbers may possibly result in such and such a total." Now, in proportion as any religion is true, can it not stoop to the holding of conversation with anybody. It is not a suggestion—it is a revelation. It is not a puzzle, to which a hundred answers may be given by wits keen at guessing; it is an oracle. Can you wonder, then, that a religion which claimed to be the very voice and glory of God, should have encountered unpitying and most malignant hostility? If it could have come crouchingly, or apologetically, and have said, "I think, I suggest, I hope," it might have been heard at the world's convenience. But being with angels' songs true, it raised the world into antagonism and deadly conflict. So will every true life. We have no enemies because we have no gospel. We pass along pretty easily, because we annoy no man's prejudices or naughtinesses. We dash no man's gods to the ground; we stamp on no man's idolatries; and so we have no martyrs. In olden times Christianity attacked the most formidable citadels of thought, prejudice, and error, and brought upon itself the fist of angry retaliation. 2. That the success of the enemy was turned into his deadliest failure. "They that were scattered" (ver. 4), did not go everywhere with shame burning on their cheek, nor whining and moaning that they were doomed to a useless life. They were made evangelists by suffering. That is the true way of treating every kind of assault. When the pulpit is assailed as being behind the age, let the pulpit preach better than ever and more than ever, and let that be its triumphant reply. When Christianity is assailed, publish it the more. Evangelisation is the best reply to every form of assault. 3. Christianity followed by its proper result. "And there was great joy in that city." Joy was a word that was early associated with Christianity. Said the angel, "I bring you good tidings of great joy." Where now is that singing, holy joy? We have lost the music, we have retained the tears. The revelling is now in the other house. II. THE DEAD STEPHEN. Already there are two graves in the early Church. In the one lie Ananias and Sapphira, in the grave opened to-day there lies Stephen. In one or other of these graves we must be buried! Over the first there was no lamentation. Sad grave! The liars' retreat, the hypocrites' nameless hiding-place! Will you be buried there? Then there is the good man's grave, which is not a grave at all, it is so full of peace and promise, will you be buried there? The road to it is rough, but the rest is deep and sweet, and the waking immortality! Will you so live that you will be much missed for good-doing? III. THE EVANGELISTIC PHILIP (ver. 5). Stephen dead, Philip taking his place—that is the military rule! The next man, *Forward!* "Who will be baptized for the dead?" When Stephen was killed the remainder of the seven did not take fright and run away in cowardly terror, but Philip, the next man, took up the vacant place, and preached Christ in Samaria. Who will take up the places of the great men and the good men? Is the Church to be a broken line, or a solid and invincible square? These three great figures are still in the Church. Our Stephens are not dead. We see them no more in the flesh, but they are mightier than ever since they have ascended to heaven, having left behind them the inspiration of a noble example. John Bunyan is more alive to-day than he was when he wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress." John Wesley is more alive to-day than he was when he began to preach the Word in England. Your child is not dead when its memory leads you to do some kindness to some other child. Our fathers, heroic and noble, are not dead, when we are able at their graves to relight torches and go on with our sacred work. We cannot peruse a narrative of this kind without feeling that we are in a great succession, and that we ought to be in proportion great successors. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Stephen and Saul*:—One of the greatest demands that the Church makes on us is when she summons us to pass abruptly from Christmas Day to the feast of St. Stephen; from the peaceful joy of the holy family and angel songs to the violence of the mob; from the King of angels to the first who bore witness to his faith and patience. At a scene like that of St.

Stephen's martyrdom it is a relief to place ourselves in the position of a bystander. There stands Saul, the very antithesis of Stephen, young and enthusiastic as he, but passionately attached to Pharisaism as Stephen was to the gospel. As we know Paul in his Epistles, his great characteristic gift was sympathy. How then could he have consented to this tragedy? I. THE REASONS FOR HIS CONSENT. 1. He was following the stream of opinion. All Jerusalem agreed that Stephen deserved his fate; and Paul had as yet no reason for resisting the will of the majority. 2. He was following the instincts of religious loyalty as he understood them. To him Stephen was a rebel against authority. 3. He was following the instincts of piety. The charge against him was that he calumniated God, Moses, the temple, and the law. The first was clearly an inference from the rest, and about the rest there was this much truth, that he no doubt preached to the Christians against attending temple worship. This he thought was at variance with the world-wide mission of Christ. Accordingly he proved before the Sanhedrin that there was nothing to show that God's presence was confined to the Promised Land, much less to a particular spot in it. All this to Paul was a blasphemous novelty. II. HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE TRAGEDY. When all was over the memories of what had passed came back, and as he saw Stephen's death in retrospect he felt the force of three forms of power—suffering, sanctity, truth. 1. Suffering is power—(1) When it is voluntary. This stirs in us a fellow feeling even when undergone for an object we condemn. (2) This power is great in proportion to the sacrifice it involves. The deaths of the very old or young touch us less than that of a young man just reaching and conscious of the maturity of his faculties. He gives the best human nature has to give. So it was with Stephen, and Saul as he remembered this young manly life crushed out felt the power of suffering. 2. Sanctity is power, greatest when associated with suffering. Stephen was not merely good, keeping clear of what is evil; he was holy. He had a spirit that reflects a higher world—"full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." This sanctity illuminated his bodily frame, and was made perfectly plain in his dying prayer. This was not lost on Saul. 3. Truth is power. When Saul heard of Stephen's declaration his whole soul rose against it; yet the ideas of Stephen's speech haunted the young Pharisee, and became the great characteristic positions of his after ministry. 4. These three characteristics of the martyr find their perfect embodiment only in Christ. III. CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS. 1. The view a Christian should take of an opponent of Christian truth—that of a possible convert and ally. 2. What persecutors can and cannot do. They can put down a given belief by extermination as Christianity was crushed out in Northern Africa and Protestantism in Spain. But if persecution does not exterminate it only fans the flame, as did the persecuting emperors and Queen Mary. The persecution begun by the death of Stephen only contributed to the spread of the gospel. 3. The criminal folly of persecution by Christians since it is an attempt to achieve by outward and mechanical violence results which to be worth anything before God must be the product of His converting grace. 4. The signal service which martyrs have rendered to the world—enriching his country, church, age, with new and invigorating ideas of truth, and therefore while other sufferers die and are forgotten, the martyr rightly has his place in the calendar of the Church and in the hearts of her faithful children. (*Canon Liddon.*) *After Stephen, Paul:*—It is said of John Huss that, on a countryman throwing a faggot at his head, he exclaimed, "Oh, holy simplicity! God send thee better light! You roast the goose now, but a swan shall come after me, and he shall escape your fire." Oddly enough, "Huss" is the Bohemian for "goose," while the meaning of "Luther" is "a swan." *Strong contrasts of moral character* (texts, and chap. ix. 5, 11):—Here is moral character—I. QUIESCENTLY CONSENTING TO THE WRONG (ver. 1). From Stephen's death Saul would no doubt catch the inspiration of his future life. His Jewish education has fitted him for this crisis. He was quite prepared to guard the clothes of those who would slay a Christian. Here, then, he stands at his post calmly and unmoved, the subject of two extreme influences, the surging, passionate mob, and the earnest prayer of the martyr. This event was educational to Saul. The manly conduct, earnest speech, and saintly death of Stephen, would appeal to his diviner sentiments; while the tumult and murderous intentions of the crowd would influence his baser side. To which will he yield? All the force of his past life inclines to the latter. But cannot that pale face and devout appeal to heaven overcome his prejudice? No! he leaves the scene with a cold determination to make it typical of his future. But, as a thought may lurk in the mind, concealed and unrecognised, so the impulses awakened in the heart of Saul by this event only awaited the further touch of the

Divine Spirit to make them the master powers of his soul. Who can tell the formative power which one event may exercise upon our lives? But let us not think that we can stand to look at sin without sharing its guilt. II. IN DETERMINED HOSTILITY TO THE RIGHT (ver. 3). This hostility was—1. Daring. "The Church." He might strive to pluck the stars from the Divine grasp, but to touch the object of God's peculiar care was beyond description bold. We wonder that men dare to attack the Church, or to plot injury against it. Such conduct is a proof of their hardihood, or they would be awed by her holy presence and Divine Protector. 2. Extensive. "Made havoc." It often appears strange that God should permit men to pursue, sometimes unchecked, a course of determined harm to His Church. This fact almost staggers reason, and only faith can repose in its rectitude and wisdom. But men need not take the sword; the tale of the tattler, the formality of the hypocrite is sufficient. 3. Impudent. "Entering into every house." What right had Saul in another man's house, and especially for such a purpose? A man's house is sacred, consecrated to family union and love. No stranger unbidden, no foe should enter. But religious bigotry thinks not of social usage, much less of Christian courtesy. 4. Inhuman. "Haling men and women." When bigotry once gets possession of a man, it yields to no argument, not even to that of tender womanhood. See what quiescent sin comes to. Men that commence by keeping the clothes of persecutors, soon become persecutors themselves. The path of sin is ever downward. III. AROUSED AND INQUIRING (chap. ix. 5). The transitions of moral character are often—1. Sudden. Saul little expected in a few months to be praying to the very Being whose followers he was murdering; he was on an errand of rage, and he never thought that it would turn out a mission of mercy to himself. 2. Overwhelming. Saul is almost stunned. His moral being is altogether confused. The change now working within his soul is too great to be made calmly. The only relief of his half-unconscious soul is the cry, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" 3. Astonishing to others. What would the Jewish council say to the change that had come over Saul? The disciples of Christ received him half with suspicion. What an impression would his conversion make upon the general public! 4. Productive of great results to mankind. How many have received truth and benefit through the toils of the Apostle Paul during his life; and how many minds has he instructed, how many souls has he aided in life's struggles by his writings! Thus we see that the sudden changes that come over moral character are often productive of great results to the individual himself, and to mankind at large. IV. IN COMMUNION WITH GOD (chap. ix. 11). 1. Prayer is an index to character. The praying man is not Saul the persecutor, but Saul the penitent sinner. Persecutors do not pray to Jesus Christ. Whenever you see a man in earnest prayer to Christ, you may have some idea of his moral character. 2. Prayer is a reason for help. Ananias was to go to Saul and instruct him, "for behold he prayeth." No matter what our circumstances, if we will but pray, God will send His aid and comfort. It is not the rule of heaven to help a prayerless soul. Do you know of a penitent soul, it is your duty to take to it a message of peace and hope. 3. A life commenced by prayer is likely to be useful. Has not Paul been useful to the Church and the world? And why? Was it not because God could say of him, "Behold, he prayeth." 4. God notices the first prayer of contrition and calls attention to it. "Behold." It is an interesting sight even to heaven. 5. God sends succour to contrite souls. Has He not frequently sent an Ananias to you, fellow sinner? What have been the moral contrasts of your life? Is there a Damascus journey amongst them? Conclusion: Learn not to entirely estimate the character of men from a past remembrance of them. Suppose an associate of Saul's who had known him in the earlier part of his life, but who had not seen him for some time, had spoken of him as a persecutor and Jewish bigot, how mistaken would have been his opinion, and how unjust to the converted apostle! We should not be hasty to pass an opinion on our friends from a past remembrance of them. They may have since undergone a moral change for the better. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The wonderful ways of the Lord in the propagation of His kingdom:*—1. The martyr Stephen waters the Church with his blood. 2. The raging Saul serves, even as a persecutor, unconsciously to the extension of the kingdom of Christ. 3. The fugitive Christians are the first messengers of the gospel to a distance. (*K. Gerok.*) **And at that town there was a great persecution.**—*The persecution after Stephen:*—Here we have—I. A MAN WHO BECAME THE GREATEST APOSTLE OF CHRISTIANITY ACTING AS ITS MOST MALIGNANT FOE. 1. Saul was an accomplice in the martyrdom of Stephen, and rejoiced in it (chap. vii. 58; xxii. 20). 2. He was an infuriated leader in the

general persecution. The word "made havoc" is commonly applied to wild beasts (chap. xxi. 10; Gal. i. 6). Now the fact that this man became the greatest apostle demonstrates—(1) The greatness of his conversion. (2) The power of the gospel. (3) The infinitude of Divine mercy. II. MEN RISING ABOVE THE MOST POWERFULLY HOSTILE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The apostles stood calmly in the scene where their lives were in the most imminent danger, and when most of their fellow disciples had fled. 2. Devout men discharged a duty most exciting to the rage of their enemies. Away, then, with the dogma that man is the creature of circumstances. He is only so as he loses his manhood. III. THE MOST INTOLERANT PERSECUTION FURTHERING THE CAUSE OF TRUTH. Persecution—1. Throws the persecuted more and more on their God. 2. It enables them to furnish in their lives a nobler manifestation of Christianity to the world; more earnest, united, devout. 3. It awakens general sympathy among men on their behalf, and thus disposes them to attend to their teachings. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The effect of persecution*:—The sacred fire, which might have burnt low on the hearth of the upper chamber of Jerusalem, was kindled into fresh heat and splendour when its brands were scattered over all Judæa and Samaria, and uncircumcised Gentiles were admitted by baptism into the fold of Christ. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) **They were all scattered abroad.**—*The dispersion*:—Jerusalem was naturally the chief scene of the persecution, and the neighbouring towns, Hebron, and Gaza, and Lydda, and Joppa, became places of refuge. It was probably to this influx of believers in Christ that we may trace the existence of Christian communities in the two latter cities. The choice of Samaria was, perhaps, suggested by the hatred of that people to the Jews. Those who were fleeing from a persecution set on foot by the priests and rulers of Jerusalem were almost *ipso facto* sure of a welcome in Neapolis and other cities. But the choice of this as a place of refuge indicated that the barriers of the old antipathy were already in part broken down. What seemed the pressure of circumstances was leading directly to the fulfilment of our Lord's commands, that the disciples should be witnesses in Samaria as well as in Judæa (chap. i. 8). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The extension of the Church*:—I. GOD INTENDED THAT HIS CHURCH SHOULD BE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD. 1. There was a tendency in our humanity at first to remain together; hence the first grey fathers endeavoured to build a central tower around which the race should rally. But God confounded their language, and scattered them that they might people the world. Jernsalem was first the central point of Christianity, and the tendency doubtless was to keep the centre strong. I have often heard the argument, "Do not have too many out-stations, keep up a strong central force." But God's plan was that the holy force should be distributed; the holy seed must be sown—to do this the Lord used the rough hand of persecution. One went this way, and one the other; and the faithful were scattered. 2. Every Church endowed with the Spirit will be spread abroad. God never means the Church to be shut up in a shell or, like ointment, enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Now that persecution has ceased godly men are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that young men should have to go to a distance, that families should have to migrate. But does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some of His servants in places where there is no light; and they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, "Where can I do most good?" And if we will not go afield willingly, God may use providential necessity as the forcible means of our dispersion. II. GOD'S DESIGN IS NOT THE SCATTERING IN ITSELF, BUT SCATTERING OF A PURPOSE—to preach the Word. The word "proclaim" is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." The latter has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is telling the gospel out in any way. Note—1. The universality of the work of evangelising. All the scattered went everywhere; there does not seem to have been any exception. You thought it would read "the apostles," but they were just the people who did not go at all. Generals may have to stand still in the centre of the battle to direct the forces; but this was soldiers' battles, and of this sort all the battles of the Cross ought to be. 2. There were no personal distinctions. It is not said that ministers preached the Word, scarcely anything has been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ than the distinction between clergy and laity. No such distinction appears in the Bible. "Ye are God's *Kleros*": all God's saints are God's inheritance. "Ye are a royal priesthood." Though God gives to His Church apostles, teachers, pastors, &c., yet not by way of setting up a professional

caste who are to do all the work while others sit still. Every converted man is to teach what he knows. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The scattered Church; or good out of evil:*—History is God teaching by example. The worst things in history are not necessarily without some elements which may be Divinely used for good. The reins never fall out of the guiding hand. The heathen rage. But the Lord sits as King in Zion. The contrasted lights and shadows of this narrative deserve, and will repay, closest attention. I. HUMAN SYMPATHY AND KINDNESS MANIFEST THEMSELVES AMID EXULTANT CRUELTY. The phrase in relation to Saul means to approve, take pleasure and delight in what others have done. He was "exceedingly mad" against the believers in Jesus. Amid such manifestations of cruel depravity there were devout men who carried the mangled remains of the martyred deacon to a reverent burial. The phrase refers to the better elements of Jewish society—the moderate men who hated persecution. Violence always overreaches itself. Sympathy is awakened when wrong is boasting its victories. Stephen dies; but those who fear God, although they have not adopted his faith, are emboldened to breast the currents of unjust opinion and to go in the face of the mob who applaud an infamous deed. It was the same in the case of Jesus, who was buried by Joseph and Nicodemus in Joseph's garden. History is full of such contrasts. Humanity has its recoil from injustice and violence. Successful villainy is always ruinous. Passions, ecclesiastical or political, satiated with blood, involve blunder as well as crime. Religious animosities are met by this immense force in human nature, and there is no withstanding the influence of that pity which unjust violence evokes. The tears shed over a martyred corpse are more potent than the mightiest engines of persecution. II. ADVERSITY AND PERSECUTION ARE OVERRULED BY THE ASCENDED LORD FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH. The signal, by Stephen's death, was given for a general outbreak to exterminate the Christians. When wild beasts taste blood their fury becomes madness. "As for Saul." The word used means violent outrage and physical maltreatment. He made a ruin of the Church by brutal and bloody assaults on the persons of its members. Oriental religious fanaticism has always been tigerish in its cruelty. Beneath the Crescent have been wrought deeds of blood which have cursed and doomed Mahomedan fanaticism. The Lord reigneth. Christians are fugitives; but they carry Christianity wherever they go. New centres of Christian life and organisation spring up everywhere. When Rome drove out our own reformers they found leisure on the Continent to perfect translations of Holy Scripture in the mother tongue. God's hand was in it when the power of Rome was established in our land. Caesar "meant not so, neither did his heart think so." Beneath his eagles was borne the cross. Britain was conquered by the Romans that it might be conquered by Christ. III. A PRINCIPLE AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT RESPECTING CHURCH EXTENSION. Fugitive believers are the first messengers of the gospel to distant regions. Philip was not an apostle, nor a pastor. His was a secular office. But when those duties ceased through the scattering, he was still ready for service. Changing his place, he did not change his disposition. He found new work for himself. While within the Church, for teaching and ruling, men receive a special call and ordination of the Lord, there is a service of Christ for which official appointment is not indispensable. Men who are Christians can and ought to make Christ known to those who are not. Order is seemly; but it is not to displace energy and zeal. (*W. H. Davison.*) **Except the apostles.**—The apostles stayed bravely in Jerusalem. They might be cast into prison, or even put to death, but they would not go. They must be there to help and comfort the poor people in their danger. I have often read of shipwrecks, and have generally found that when the terrible waves were dashing over the ship, and the sailors were letting down the boats that the passengers might escape, the captain and the officers remained on deck to the very last. The apostles were like those brave officers. Will the ship sink? No; but if it should they will sink with her. But many others left the city. It was as right for them to go as for the apostles to stay. Several of them may have had little children dependent on them, for whose sake they must try to live and work. Then while they lived they could speak for Christ, and so do good to others. (*S. G. Green, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **And devout men carried Stephen to his burial.**—*The burial of Stephen:*—I. THE DEVOUT MEN exemplified—1. The constancy of Christian friendship. They did not need the sound of his voice and the echo of his steps to remind them of the duties they owed to him. The friendships induced by Christianity are the firmest and most enduring. Our friend may be no longer on earth, but he lives with Christ and so is still

ours. 2. The heroism of Christian friendship. These men were in danger of sharing their friend's fate. They might have said, "What is the use of risking that now Stephen is dead?" But the instinct of friendship was stronger than the fear of danger, and they went forth confessing that they were followers of Him in whose name Stephen had died. Christian friendship is not influenced by selfish considerations. 3. The practical kindness of Christian friendship. A saint who dies in the midst of saints is sure to have a loving burial. He may be poor, but his claims will not be unheeded. II. THE CAUSES OF THEIR LAMENTATION. 1. Their own personal loss. One dear to them had been taken away. Our religion does not chide the tears of the bereaved. "Jesus wept," and manifested a tender feeling for the hearts of others when He said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" 2. The Church's loss. Stephen seemed to be needed more than ever. Saul was becoming a terrible opponent, and there was no Stephen to answer him. A pillar strong with truth, and beautiful with love, was overturned when it was wanted to sustain the temple of God. A standard bearer had fallen when foes were gathering thickly about the camp. A shepherd was taken away when the flock was likely to be scattered. 3. The world's loss. The world could not understand this. It was nothing to the soldier, the merchant, the priest; but it was a far greater calamity than if Cæsar had fallen from his throne. III. THE ALLEVIATING CIRCUMSTANCES. There was no need for the lamentation as far as Stephen was concerned. 1. A little before he died he had a vision of Christ. 2. He died in the calm assurance of a life to come. 3. He died in love and charity with all men. (*J. Marratt.*)

The burial of Stephen:—The action of these devout men—I. EXPRESSES AFFECTIONATE SORROW FOR THEIR DEPARTED FRIEND. The religion of Christ does not destroy our feelings as men. It makes the already gentle and loving heart more loving and gentle still, and fills the stern, the frozen breast, with warm and generous feeling. What a change it wrought in that young man, at whose feet Stephen's murderers laid their clothes! The devout men were not yielding to unmanly or unchristian emotions. The religion of Jesus would moderate their grief, but it would not restrain their tears. Jesus Himself wept at the grave of a friend. And Stephen had been their friend. II. IMPLIES THAT THEIR SORROW WOULD BE CHASTENED BY SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD. They knew who had said, "The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." They also knew who had said, whilst Himself drinking a cup far more bitter than Stephen's, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." And did they not know that that sufferer had left His disciples an example that they should tread in His steps? and that now He was Lord of all, and could dash His enemies in places, like a potter's vessel? And therefore these devout men would in submission say, amid all their tears, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good. The Lord gave—the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." III. INFERS THAT THEY WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY KINDEST SYMPATHY TOWARDS STEPHEN'S SURVIVING RELATIONS. What was their loss compared with the loss sustained by such? The loss of a friend is not so great as the loss of a son—the loss of a father—the loss of a husband. To such the loss would be irreparable, or could only be made up by Him who is better than ten thousand sons, and who has said, "Leave thy fatherless children unto Me, I will provide, and let thy widows trust in Me." And would not these devout men sympathise with the widow and the orphan and the mother who had lost such a relative as Stephen? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." IV. LEADS US TO SUPPOSE THAT THEY COULD NOT ALLOW SUCH AN OCCASION TO PASS AWAY WITHOUT EARNEST PRAYER THAT THIS BEREAVEMENT WHICH THE CHURCH HAD SUSTAINED MIGHT BE SANCTIFIED TO THE CHURCH'S INTERESTS. The burden of their prayer would probably be, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth," &c. Who can tell what influence they had in the calling of Saul of Tarsus? Would they not also pray, "Lord, teach us to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and trust alone in Thee"? And would not these prayers be blended with thanksgivings for the grace given to their departed brother? V. SUGGESTS THE HOPE OF A BLESSED RE-UNION WITH THEIR DEPARTED FRIEND AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST. They sorrowed not as men without hope. They knew their brother had fallen asleep in Jesus; and surely they believed that them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. VI. WOULD THERE NOT BE RENEWED CONSECRATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD? The storm of persecution raged, and they were scattered by its violence—but not as a flock that has lost or left the shepherd. No; rather scattered as rays of light, to

become the lights of the world, to be as flames of fire in the service of the Saviour (ver. 4). And He that gave the word went with them, giving effect to the Word of His grace, so that the Word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified. So it ought ever to be. The work of the Lord must be done. It will be done, whether by us or not; but if not, we gain no reward. "Work while it is called to-day —the night cometh in which no man can work." (*P. C. Horton.*) *Stephen's funeral:*—I. A VERY SELECT FUNERAL. 1. Pre-eminently select. "Devout men"—not rich, learned, or titled, but good men; those who discharged thoroughly, from the purest motives, all the duties of life. (1) Virtuous, or true to themselves. (2) Philanthropic, or true to their fellow-men. (3) Godly, or true to the Most High. Christians—men of the highest type. 2. Suitably select. The good burying the good. The pious should care for each other to the last. 3. Wholly select. Occasionally funerals are very mixed. Some attend because the dead man had been a good customer; some because they were neighbours; some because of a necessary family connection; some as an expression of readiness to put the deceased out of the way; some from a denominational bias. Stephen's funeral was unmixed—composed of sincere and practical lovers of God and man. Perhaps heaven's inhabitants streamed to the balconies of the celestial city and gazed with wonder at the novel sight. II. A VERY SAD FUNERAL. 1. There have been many non-attendant burials, not an individual present to grieve. 2. There have been largely attended funerals, but the signs of regret were correspondingly small; more talk than tears. 3. Stephen's funeral was attended by men of sense and sanctity, who rent the air with the cries of their broken hearts. (1) Their sadness was an expression of homage to the excellencies of the departed. (*a*) To great religious intelligence. (*b*) To moral and religious character. The gospel lived in him, and he in it. (*c*) To usefulness. (2) An expression of sympathy with the sufferings of the departed. It was the loss of—(1) A leading man. (2) In a sudden manner. (3) By cruel treatment. (4) When he was most needed. (*B. D. Johns.*) *The lamentation at Stephen's funeral:*—This was something more than a conventional funeral. The people among whom it occurred were given to burial rites of elaborate and studied ceremonial. Like all orientalists, their mourning was chiefly marked by a pains-taking and intentional publicity. With them grief for the dead meant baring and beating the breast, sprinkling or sitting in ashes, songs of lamentation, and the employment of mourning women. And so, when the martyred Stephen is buried, the customs are not changed. True, he was not merely a Jew, but a Christian; yet the infant Church still clung to the cherished ceremonies of the elder, and what was usual was followed here. It was indeed the hatred and vindictiveness of Judaism which had slain this godly man, yet, when he is dead, the manner of his burial is the usage of Judaism itself. To have changed it would have been to have surrendered his claim as a veritable and loyal Israelite; and doubtless, also, to have grieved and wounded his surviving relatives. All the more because his death had been so cruel and distressing, would they have his burial decent and reverent and painstaking; even as when the nation buries some honoured soldier she surrounds his funeral *cortége* with every element of pomp and state and ceremony, as though she would atone for the hardships of his bitter and lonely end upon the field of battle by utmost tenderness and reverence in dealing with his lifeless body. And thus it was with the bruised and mangled form of Stephen. The funeral order of his race was carefully observed. But there was this difference —and it comes out with a singular and touching significance in two Greek words, used here only in all the New Testament: the mourning at Stephen's funeral was the mourning of unaffected feeling, and the attendants who followed him to his grave were not hired mutes nor paid mourners, but grief-stricken and godly men. This scene suggests the thought of the difference that there is in funerals. The Church has one common ritual for all her baptized dead. She does not attempt to discriminate either in her customs or her utterances. She is not a judge with such infallible insight that she can weigh character and prophesy of destiny. Most wisely, therefore, does she use one common office for all her dead, leaving scarce any discretion to her ministry, and uttering one uniform voice to her people. Her language is general, not specific. She writes as Inspiration has written before her, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," but she utters no verdict of application in connection with their use. She speaks words of Christian hope; but they are coupled with the Scriptural conditions of all Christian hope. In a word, her language is that of Christian faith and trust; and while it is utterly devoid of any

specific application of its very general terms, we feel that its tone is only what the tone of anything save a heathen burial ought to be. And yet, when we come to use it, we recognise what a really tremendous difference there may be in even the Church's funerals. As with Stephen's burial by the elder Church, there are the same preliminaries, the same customs, the same words, and yet, as there, there may be the widest and most radical difference in what those words and customs express. Have we not all witnessed funerals where even the sublime ritual of the Church seemed powerless to touch the heart or lift the thoughts? With utmost charity, with every willingness to leave the vanished life in the hands of a Love at once deeper and wiser than ours, we cannot bind that life and the Church's tones together. Somehow, they do not fit into, and form a part of, each other. Verily, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours." But if they have not lived in the Lord, nor laboured for Him—we may say these questions are useless; but we cannot help asking them. On the other hand, there are other funerals where we use precisely the same ritual; where there is no diversity in usage or custom from what is wonted, unless in the direction of greater simplicity; where merely the Church's appointed words are said, and no others, and yet where the emotions of our own hearts and the very atmosphere of the whole occasion are utterly and wholly different. There is a deep and wide-spread sorrow, but it is a grief gilded with light. We listen to the words of inspired hope and promise, and, as we lift our eyes from the bier before us, lo! the clouds are parted, and we see how, to a Christian, the grave is only a low-browed portal, through which, bending as he passes, he emerges into larger life and freer. (*Bp. H. C. Potter.*)

Ver. 3. **As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church.**—*The smiter smitten:*—Read and compare the following passages, the text and chap. xiv. 19; chap. ix. 1 and xxiii. 12; Gal. i. 13 and 2 Cor. xi. 23; chap. xxvi. 10 and xvi. 23; Ezek. xviii. 25 and Gal. vi. 7. All these experiences were undergone by the same man—the persecutor was persecuted; he who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the saints was himself pursued by the vengeance of furious men. Note, then—1. THAT A MAN'S LIFE COMES BACK UPON HIM (Gal. vi. 7). One feels in reading such experience that the sense of justice is satisfied. Had Saul after his conversion settled down into a state of Christian enjoyment there would have been a want of moral completeness. Paul himself would have been injured. He must reap what he had sown. Such is the severe but beneficent law which keeps all things equal. If any man could mingle bitter cups for others and never be compelled to drink them himself, he would soon become a devil. God shows him that his turn is coming. All history has shown this—*e.g.*, Adonibezek, Agag, &c. The testimony of Holy Writ is consistent and emphatic. "He shall have judgment without mercy that showeth no mercy." See how literally and terribly this was fulfilled in the case of Paul. God forgot not one of his misdemeanours, and the most terrible of persecutors received the measure of his own fury. II. THAT A MAN'S CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE MUST BE AFFECTED BY THE UNCHRISTIAN LIFE HE HAS LIVED. One would suppose that after conversion all the former life would be done away. But physically it is not so, and why should it be so spiritually? Look at the reasonableness of the doctrine. A man has lived a self-indulgent life, been careless of the rights of others, &c. After all this he is converted; is he then to complain of the trials of the Christian way as if some strange thing had happened to him? Is there not a cause? Old neglects have to be made up; old wrongs have to be avenged. Is not the way of the Lord equal? We complain of the arduousness of the Christian way, but was the devil's way easy? What about the cost and consequences of vicious luxuries? We were selfish, tyrannical, inconsiderate, and is it likely that all this can have passed away without leaving deep effects on our life? Across our very prayers there will be blown the bitter wind of the land we have lived in so long; and through our tenderest charities there may be breathed somewhat of the old selfishness which once enclosed us in its prison. Let us, in honesty, trace many of our trials to the life we have lived in the flesh rather than to any arbitrariness of Divine grace. Conclusion: In reviewing these statements in the light of history and revelation we see—1. That the distribution of penalties is God's work and not man's. "Vengeance is Mine," &c. 2. That under all the apparent confusion of life there is a principle of justice. 3. That the greatest sufferings may be borne with patience and hopefulness. When did Paul complain of his lot? When did he say that he had suffered more than his share? From him let us learn how good a thing it is to

suffer and be strong. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Different kinds of martyrdom*:—They say that martyrdoms are ended. It is true that the stake is abandoned; Bloody Mary is dead; Smithfield is a commonplace sheep-market, with only an inscription on one side of it to record the fidelity of John Rogers. And perhaps it is not necessary to force the rhetoric which calls Abraham Lincoln the "martyr president," or to assert beyond strict accuracy that an assassin could make President Garfield a martyr by shooting him. We need not plant ourselves upon a plane so high or so tragic as this. There are small martyrdoms for Christ's sake which in ordinary life are quite within the reach of our attainment. It is a very plain truth that we find in the line of the German poet, Heinrich Heine: "Wheresoever a great thought is born, there always has been a Golgotha." When any genuine man is called into conspicuousness, and forced to take a stand for an unpopular or advanced principle against obloquy and opposition, there will be persecution as common as "the common prison" into which the apostles were hurried after they preached the resurrection. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Thoughts under persecution*:—When I am driven from the city, I care nothing for it; but I say to myself, If the empress wishes to banish me, the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If she would saw me in sunder, let her do it; I have Isaiah for a pattern. If she would plunge me into the sea, I remember Jonah. If she would thrust me into the fiery furnace, I see the three Hebrew children enduring that. If she would cast me to the wild beasts, I call to mind Daniel in the den of lions. If she would take my head from me, I think of John the Baptist. If she would deprive me of worldly goods, let her do it; naked came I into the world, and naked I shall go out of it. (*Chrysostom.*)

Ver. 4. **Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.**—*The aggressive power of Christianity*:—That it is pre-eminently by aggressive movements that the Church is to prosper. By this means she is to maintain spiritual life in her own soul—cause religion to flourish at home, and extend its triumphs abroad. 1. The truth of this doctrine is suggested by the first impulses of the religious principle—the spirit of love in every Christian's bosom. False religionists, both among Pagans and nominal Christians, have, I know, taught that piety was a kind of dormant, contemplative spirit; that its power was to be manifested in patient endurance rather than holy action; in a voluntary withdrawment from the world to avoid its contaminations, rather than in resolute efforts to make the world better. The unsophisticated promptings of the new-born soul are always to active effort for God. This is strikingly exhibited in young converts. It is illustrated with great beauty in the conduct of Christ's earliest disciples. It conceives plans, it demands efforts, for the world's conversion. Every real Christian that lives in the spirit of religion may consult his own consciousness on this subject. See the lives also of eminently holy men in later times—Baxter, Brainerd, Martyn, Payson, &c. 2. The doctrine I have stated further appears from the fact that truth is the grand instrument which God employs to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, and advance and establish the kingdom of His Son. The Word of God must not only be translated into all the languages of the earth, but it must be carried to every man's door; nay, its great truths must be pressed home upon every man's conscience. What a mighty work here opens for Christians of every name! It is, moreover, eminently an aggressive work, a missionary movement. How are they to accomplish it by shutting themselves up in cloisters? 3. Both the necessity and the vital importance of the aggressive movements of the Church appears from the very attitude of a fallen world towards God. It is one of hostility to His character and opposition to His truth. The world will not come to the Church and crave instruction at her lips. As her Saviour sought her, so He requires her to seek sinners. In other words, she must make external and aggressive movements. She must not study so much her own comfort as her enlargement. 4. The whole current of Scripture precept and representation is in perfect accordance with this view of the subject. The Bible never instructs the Church that she is to conquer the world by her passive virtues—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." 5. The entire history of the gospel confirms this view of the subject. When has any signal advance been made in the work of human salvation, except by a movement similar to that described in the text? The Mosaic institution was peculiar. It was conservative rather than aggressive. Turn to a still later page in the history of the Church. How was it at the Reformation? How was it at the period when Whitefield and Wesley appeared? And just in proportion as any branch of

the Christian Church, in the spirit of Christ, attempts spiritual aggression, in the same proportion its interests are prospered. It is seen fulfilling its high destiny. Remarks: 1. We see why the Church is organised. 2. This subject also indicates the grand object of all preaching to the Church. 3. This discussion throws light upon the providences of God towards the Church. Now, as in former days, He allows heresies, persecutions, schisms, and various forms of affliction, from time to time, to invade the Church. Missionary efforts formed no part of their original plan; they were the plan of Providence. 4. This subject throws light upon the melancholy fact, "known and read of all men," that many Churches which have numbers, and wealth, and much secular influence, have no corresponding moral power. Woe to Churches and to ministers who are thus "at ease in Zion." (*J. H. Tinsley, D.D.*) *The gospel—its propagation and effects*:—I. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD TO PROPAGATE HIS SON'S GOSPEL; and in all ways, through circumstances adverse or prosperous, He gives it free course. Sometimes it is by opening the commerce of nations, so that the messengers may occupy new fields; sometimes by some spark from a martyr's pile kindling a fire in a land or in a heart. Great as has been the effect of the patronage of kings, it has been as nothing in comparison with that constancy of faith even unto death, of which Stephen was its first instance, followed by those of whom our text speaks. This was all that remained of the effects of the first Christian persecution; an added testimony, a wider circulation, and a more decided devotion. II. WHAT IS THIS GOSPEL? 1. It is called "the Word." A word is the utterance of a mind, reason communicating itself. Do we believe that the gospel is the expression of God's mind, the communication of His will? It is a glorious view which is thus opened. God has spoken concerning us, and to us. That mystery which for ages and generations had enveloped the ulterior designs of the Almighty Creator touching His rebellious creatures is at last revealed. God has announced to us the forgiveness of sins through a Mediator and a Sacrifice; the sanctification of sinners, their recreation in His own lost image, by means of an indwelling Holy Spirit; that prayer is the one connecting link between us and these two unspeakable gifts; that it is His intention to raise the dead to an immortal existence, the character of which, for happiness or misery, will depend upon the life here led by us. These things are amongst the disclosures embodied in that Word which these dispersed disciples preached, and which we, if we be faithful to our commission, are preaching still and still hearing. 2. But, as they preached the Word, so Philip preached Christ (ver. 5). There was no difference between the two. Christ is "the Word," and is so designated because He is the Revealer of God: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." To preach Christ, in His person, in His character, in His work, is to proclaim God's Word, in its simplicity, fulness, and strength. III. THE CREDENTIALS OF THIS GOSPEL. When we preach the Word, or Christ, how do we establish it? No doubt we go back to the evidences: we speak of God's triple seal, of goodness, wisdom, and power, as set to the words and works of Christ. These arguments are never worn out; nor can it ever be safe to disuse them. But when our Lord said, "These signs shall follow them that believe," He taught us to look for more than a mere historical proof. When Philip preached, certain results followed (ver. 7). Thus he could appeal to effects, and say, Judge ye whether a doctrine which brings with it these infallible signs be of man or of God. These visible tokens do not now attend our preaching, and we ought not to want them; and "if we hear not Moses and the prophets," if we refuse the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, neither should we be influenced by any outward sign. But a changed life, an altered spirit, the formation of Christian habits, and the diligent use of Christ's ordinances—these are the true proofs of the gospel Word in our days; by these things other men take knowledge of its power and of its virtue. IV. THE EFFECT OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD (ver. 8). It is long, we may fear, since in any whole place there was joy on account of the gospel. Let me ask then as to the individual soul, Which of you knows what joy is in things spiritual? Who, in days of health and prosperity, finds his happiness simply in Christ? Who, in days of sickness and disappointment, does not find to his consternation that the light of heaven is gone out too? Joy is the overflowing of happiness, the exuberance of a comfort and a tranquillity habitually felt within. Oh where is such joy as that of which our Lord spoke, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"? Levity there may be, and too much of it; cheerful spirits in some, domestic happiness in some, contentment and even thankfulness in a few; but where

amongst us is that grace of Christian joy which seemed to flow so naturally, in other days, out of the very first reception of the tidings of a Saviour? And yet such joy lies nearer than we imagine: sin forgiven, the atonement believed in, the Holy Spirit cherished—it is the natural effect of these things to inspire joy. Ask of God the power to grasp them as realities, and joy will enter with them; a joy not of this world, a joy the very foretaste of heaven. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The liberty of prophesying*:—The great majority of the dispersed Christians held no ecclesiastical office whatever. Yet they preached wherever they came, without being called to do so by official duty or express commission, but entirely from the internal pressure of faith, which cannot but speak of that which affects the heart, from the impulse of the Spirit by whom they were appointed, and from love to the Saviour to whom they were indebted for the forgiveness of their sins and for their blessed hopes. According to human ideas of Church government and office, it ought not to have been so. But the Lord of the Church does not so confine Himself even to the office of the apostolate established by Himself, as that everything must take place entirely through it in order to be lawful, pleasing to God, blessed, and full of promise. Christ thus shows that no man and no finite office is indispensable and absolutely necessary; only He Himself is ever and everywhere indispensable. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *The aggressive character of Christianity*:—A Christian is one who knows and receives as true what Christ has revealed in His Word, whose inward state (religious consciousness) is determined by that knowledge, and whose life is devoted to the obedience and service of Christ. Christianity is therefore a system of doctrine, an inward life, a rule of action. When, therefore, we speak of the aggressive character of Christianity, we may mean the antagonism of truth to error, the expansive power of the principles of spiritual life, or the opposition of good to evil in the outward life; or, as the Scriptures call it, the kingdom of God. We may mean by the aggressive character of Christianity, its inherent force, by which it tends to gain more and more the complete control of the individual man and of human society; by controlling all the forms of human thought, the inward character of men, and their outward conduct. I. CHRISTIANITY IS THUS AGGRESSIVE. It does tend and strive to subdue. 1. This is variously taught in the Scriptures. It is compared to a stone, cut out of a mountain, which gradually fills the whole earth; to a tree whose branches extend over all lands; to leaven; to a temple in the process of erection; to the sun in its course through the heavens. 2. It is deducible from its nature. Truth is necessarily antagonistic to error, and holiness to sin. The one must strive to overcome the other, both in the individual and the world. Besides being a religion suited to the necessities of all men, and absolutely essential to their well-being here and hereafter, it cannot be embraced by the individual without the consciousness on his part of the obligation to uphold and extend it. A Christian, from the nature of the case, is fired with zeal for the glory of Christ and with love for his fellow-men. 3. It is illustrated in the history of the Church. The original promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head has expanded into the whole system of Christian doctrine. The hundred and twenty disciples in Jerusalem occupied Syria, Egypt, Greece, Italy; and since then Christianity has gained the civilised world. It has banished idolatry, elevated man, and moulded human society. 4. It is proved in the experience of every Christian. His inward life is a progress. He passes from infancy to maturity. The truth becomes better known and more firmly believed. Indwelling sin becomes weaker, and grace stronger. Where this is not true, there is no true life. II. TO WHAT IS THIS AGGRESSIVE POWER DUE? 1. Not to anything in itself as a system of truth. If revealed to the lost in the other world it would be powerless. If revealed to fallen men, sent in books or by living teachers to the heathen, it would, if left to itself, be universally rejected. The opposition of Satan and the evil heart would be too much for it. 2. Not to the subjective effect on the hearts of those who are led to embrace it. If nothing were done *ab extra* to induce the reception of the gospel, the inward effect and the outward agency would fade away. 3. But to the purpose of God and the co-operation of the Spirit. When a woman puts leaven into a measure of meal, she is sure that the whole will be leavened, because the effect is due to the operation of invariable physical laws. But when the gospel is introduced into a community, whether it will take root and extend, or not, depends on an *ab extra* sovereign working of Divine power. Hence a sense of dependence is to be acknowledged and cultivated. It is because Christianity is the life of God (*i.e.*, of a present Christ) that it must prevail. 4. Although the gospel is thus dependent on

supernatural agency for its preservation and extension, yet human co-operation is ordained as the means. Faith and love are the powers which we are to wield, depending on the Spirit of God. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The service of persecution to the Church*:—The dispersed preached the gospel. Thus by the storm tho seeds hitherto collected in one place are scattered hither and thither, and carried to a distance, where they germinate and bear fruit. Thus the Redeemer knows how to convert that into good which was intended only for evil; *i.e.*, not only to hinder the contemplated wicked designs, but by means of them to obtain an unexpected furtherance of His kingdom. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *Sparks carried by the wind*:—The storms of persecution are only winds which fan the fire of faith in the Church, and carry the sparks of truth to a distance. (*K. Gerok.*) *Wider growth of the Church*:—We spring up the thicker the oftener we are mowed down. The blood of the martyrs is their harvest-seed. (*Tertullian.*) *The zeal of the apostles*:—As a tree on fire kindles a whole forest into a flame, so the apostles, burning with the fire of heaven, have set in a blaze the whole world, and have filled it with the light of truth and the warmth of charity. (*St. Augustine.*) *Useful incendiaries*:—The apostles were as burning coals, scattered throughout the nations, blest incendiaries of the world! (*Archbishop Leighton.*) *What true preaching is*:—I do not suppose that these good men stood up in pulpits and gave sermons. This also is good; but for this there would often be no time; the men must make haste—their enemies were close upon them—they must flee into the next village! But, before they went, "Just listen," they would say. "You ask why we are here, why we are in trouble and danger, what is the matter? We will tell you." Then would come the sad tale of Stephen. And the Name that Stephen had loved would again be spoken; with the glad tidings that Jesus who had died was risen again, and was at the right hand of God, to save from their sins those who repented and believed in Him. "And He has saved us!" those preachers would say; "and He is ready to save you!" They might not be, all of them, very wise, but they could tell as much as this. And to tell this truly and earnestly is to "preach the gospel." May not even a child, then, sometimes preach? (*S. G. Green, D.D.*)

Vers. 5–8. **Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.**—*Philip at Samaria*:—I. THE PREACHER—"Philip." 1. His native place—"Cæsarea," most likely. 2. His official status—"Evangelist," and one of the first deacons. 3. His new charge—"Samaria." 4. His specific work—"Preached." 5. His theme—"Christ." 6. His directness—"Unto them." He took aim at his audience. He did not take long range at antediluvian iniquity, but poured hot shot and shell into the living iniquities of Samaria. II. THE PREACHER'S SUCCESS. 1. He made a fine impression—"The people with one accord gave heed," were impressed with his (1) Teachings, (2) Character, and (3) Spirit. 2. He impressed them with his power—"Seeing the miracles." 3. He surprised them by his authority—"Unclean spirits crying came out." 4. He blessed them by his presence—"Many with palsies." 5. He gladdened them by his ministry—"There was great joy in that city." (*T. Kelly.*) *Philip preaching at Samaria*:—The early Christians were not disposed to leave Jerusalem. They had been counselled to abide in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high; but Pentecost had come and gone, and still they tarried. Perhaps they were in a measure constrained by their lingering prejudice against the gathering in of the Gentiles. The martyrdom of Stephen was the stirring up of the nest. The infatuated Jews who wrought that murderous deed may have fondly hoped that it would prove the death-blow of the little Christian Church. But God maketh the wrath of men to praise Him. Thus it is written, "The disciples that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." The Church perforce begins her aggressive march. Providence made them all missionaries. The apostles alone remained in Jerusalem, which became henceforth "a centre not of concentration, but of radiation." I. Philip, the evangelist, COMES TO SAMARIA. Among those who fled from Jerusalem at this juncture was Philip, one of the seven deacons. He was a man full of the Holy Ghost and power, and with a special fitness for evangelistic work. On reaching the city of Samaria he began at once to "preach Christ unto them." In all the world there was probably, at that moment, no city whose conditions were more unfavourable to Christian effort. The people were half heathen at the best. Rejecting all of the Scriptures except the five books of Moses, they were addicted to all manner of superstitious observances. Just now they were under the spell of a

certain necromancer, known to us as Simon Magus, who called himself "The Great Power of God." Under these circumstances a prudent evangelist might have thought best to pass on to more congenial soil. But Philip was not prudent in that wise. He followed the lead of Providence, the only safe plan. For "he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" (Eccles. xi. 4). II. His coming is FOLLOWED BY A REVIVAL. Some men are a curse to the cities they live in; others are a blessing. At once he set about two things:—1. "He preached Christ." It is noteworthy how often we come upon this and similar expressions in the Scriptures—"preaching the Word," "preaching the gospel," "preaching the Lord Jesus," "preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Nothing is said about fine essay work in the pulpit or about profound scientific and philosophical disquisitions. No truth was presented which did not emanate from Christ as a sunbeam from the sun. The mission of a minister is to preach the gospel; and the gospel is the good tidings that Jesus saves. A hundred philosophers, bending all their efforts for a hundred years upon a single sinner would fail to save him, but one faithful herald of the old-fashioned gospel of the Cross can stir a whole city to its depth. Philip was only a deacon, an evangelist; there were many wiser men in Samaria; but, alas! the truth as it is in Jesus had not set their hearts on fire. So he had the advantage of them all. "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which he spake." 2. And they were all the readier to listen to him by reason of the miracles which he wrought in the name of Jesus. "For unclean spirits came out of many that were possessed; and many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed; and there was great joy in that city." The very best evidence of the truth of Christ's gospel is in its influence upon the community. Take a map of the world and mark off the countries where happiness and prosperity prevail in largest measure, and in every instance they are the countries that acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. The gospel, wherever it goes, proves its Divineness by working miracles of beneficence. And the Christian proves the truth of his message by showing what it has done for his own heart and conscience, and by dispensing of its virtues to all around him. So one man turned Samaria upside down. Before the people knew, probably before he himself realised it, they were in the midst of a great revival. III. PETER AND JOHN COME TO HIS RELIEF. No better could have been selected than these two whom we so often find in each other's company—Peter the Man of Rock, and John the Son of Thunder. We may imagine the delight with which the faithful, overworked evangelist welcomed them. These apostles came, moreover, not only to preach Christ to the Samaritans, but to confer upon the Christian workers the *charismata*, or gifts of the Holy Ghost. On the arrival of these apostles the work went forward with renewed energy, but Philip was less conspicuous. No doubt he recognised their superior fitness, and was content to take a subordinate place. Where the mind of Jesus prevails there is neither clash nor jealousy. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Philip's ministry in Samaria*:—Consider the suggestions arising from—I. THE SCENE of his ministry. In selecting the "city of Samaria" we discover—1. His practical sagacity. Christ had been there and had prepared the way. 2. His obedience to Christ. Christ had commanded it (chap i. 8). 3. His largeness of soul. They were a people hostile to his own, by political and religious prejudices. 4. His intrepidity of conduct. He was doing that which would put him directly against the Jews. II. THE SUBJECT. "Christ," not Moses; Christ, not creed—the living Christ, the anointed of God, the Saviour of the world—probably:—1. As the burden of past promises, as "Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write." This is what we have to do. 2. As the foundation of all future hopes. His the "only name given," &c. No one else to look forward to. III. THE RECEPTION (ver. 6). They gave proper attention to what he said. What would be proper attention to a theme like this? 1. Profoundly reverential. It is a Divine communication. 2. Devoutly grateful. Infinite love is displayed in the message. 3. Earnestly practical. Demanding most strenuous personal application. IV. THE ATTESTATION. His miracles which were—1. Illustrations of the benign glories of his ministry. 2. Powers to impress the Divinity of his ministry. V. THE INFLUENCE (ver. 8). They had been partly prepared for this by Christ's conversation with the woman. The gospel brings joy to a people because it is "good tidings," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Philip preaching in a Samaritan city*:—Philip—I. WENT DOWN TO A CITY OF SAMARIA. 1. Went down, *i.e.*, from Jerusalem. The place physically was high; it was also the centre of government and worship—hence the expressions "going up" and "going

down." If there is one super-eminent mountain in a country the clouds of heaven congregate round it, and from it the water flows in every direction to refresh the land. Such, spiritually, was Jerusalem. The clouds gathered round it at Pentecost, and under the influence of the mighty rushing wind they were precipitated, and bore the gospel of grace to all nations. Christ's name and work is that central mountain now. The Spirit without measure is poured out upon Him. The Jerusalem that now is is His Church, around which all heavenly influences congregate, and from which they flow forth. Hence missions. Christians engage in mission work as mountains discharge rivers; they cannot help it, it is a law of their being. Love in redeemed hearts swells, and would rend them unless they opened. 2. To a city. The efforts of the first Christians were directed chiefly to the great cities. When the strongholds are won, the surrounding country is more easily occupied. Cities seem destined to play a greater part in modern than they did in ancient times. As yet no symptom appears of any natural law that shall check their increase. The thought of London makes the heart falter. But "this is the victory that overcometh the world," &c. Lord increase our faith. 3. A city of Samaria. It was near; it was needy. Its inhabitants were a mixed people with a patchwork religion. Samaria is near us to-day, and if we are willing to go, we need not lack a mission-field. II. HE PREACHED CHRIST UNTO THEM. 1. He preached—the first and chief work of a missionary, as a herald of peace from the king to a rebel country. Teaching and printing are useful auxiliaries, but they must not usurp the first place. 2. He preached Christ. To this the teaching of the Bible constantly comes round. Not law, morality, philosophy, or even the Scriptures or true doctrine, but Christ. 3. Unto them—to each heart. Not a general scheme of redemption, but a personal Saviour to a personal soul. Let the sunbeams passing through ordinary glass be spread over your naked hand and the effect is imperceptible; but let the rays pass through a convex glass and be concentrated on one point, and they will shine brilliantly and go to the quick. The gospel may be preached or heard in both these ways; hence its diverse effects. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The advent of the gospel to Samaria:*—With the history of Philip commences a new stage in the development of the Church. In the first commission to the twelve the glad tidings were restricted to the Jews, to the express exclusion of the Samaritans. This, however, was cancelled in the final commission, and Samaria first and then the whole world were thrown open to the gospel. But the honour of executing this commission, in both its narrowest and widest extent, fell not to an apostle, but to a deacon. Samaria directly, and Africa indirectly, were evangelised by Philip, the forerunner of Paul in his work as Stephen was in his preaching. "Coming events cast their shadows before." The forms of Stephen and Philip, projected on the canvas of sacred history, give us some idea of the gigantic figure in reserve. What moved Philip is not recorded. Perhaps the persecution was specially directed against him, as his name occurs next to Stephen's, and because he was as a Grecized Jew more liberal than his brethren in Palestine. He went down to *a* (not *the*) city of Samaria, probably Sebaste or Sychar. The orderliness of the spread of the gospel should be noted. It was to begin from Jerusalem as its centre, and first to permeate Judæa, the province of which Jerusalem was the metropolis, and thence to Samaria, the contiguous province, and thence to the uttermost parts of the earth. Now this collocation of Samaria (between Judæa and the uttermost parts of the earth) is not so much to be understood geographically as morally. The Samaritans were Judaised Gentiles, just as the Hellenists were Gentilised Jews. And it is obvious that Judaised Gentiles might play the same part which Hellenists played—act as a bridge between Judaism and heathenism. The Samaritans were probably purely heathen by extraction, descendants of those with whom Shalmanezer repeopled the desolated country (2 Kings xvii.), whose corrupt religion soon found for itself a local habitation and a name. Manasseh, the son of a Jewish high priest, being threatened with expulsion from the priesthood for contracting marriage with a Samaritan lady, permanently sided with them, built a rival temple on Gerizim, and founded a rival priesthood. The Samaritan Bible was a copy of the law of Moses, and that only, showing, however, many alterations of the text. Thus where Moses commands the people to build an altar on Mount Ebal, Gerizim is substituted for Ebal. Thus the Samaritan religion was a spurious and mutilated Judaism. And hence the antipathy of the Jews to them exceeded their antipathy to mere Gentiles. Nothing do men hate more than a caricature of themselves. Accordingly Samaritans were cursed in every synagogue, excluded as witnesses from Jewish courts of justice, and could

never become proselytes. These rancorous prejudices were foreign to the Spirit of Christ, and He took every opportunity of counteracting them. But while He forbids all animosity against them, He gave no sanction to their religious claims. It will be seen, therefore, that a strict Jew of the high orthodox school would have had a vast deal of prejudice to surmount in carrying the gospel to Samaria. But Philip did not belong to this school. His circumstances and office would give him wider sympathies than were to be found among Hebrews of the Hebrews. The original diaconate was now broken up, and Philip, the distributor of alms, appears in the new character of evangelist—a striking proof that the wisest plans for Church government must be subject to modifications by the Providence of God. Yet while the form of the early diaconate passed away, its principles remained, and we hear of deacons at Philippi, and of a gift of "helps" at Corinth. A concluding word on the slow development of the ideas which were to form Christendom. The Church had much to learn after Pentecost, which experience and struggle only could teach. The outpouring was not a magical enlightenment on all points of truth, but rather the implantation of a principle of light and love, which was to work out its results according to the laws of the human mind. Placed under the guidance of the Spirit the views of the apostles became gradually clearer and wider. Pentecost did for society what conversion does for the individual. Conversion is a period of warm and lively emotions, but the work of sanctification, so far from being finished, has only begun. Our young strength has to be approved by trial, and our little knowledge to be enlarged by experience. So it was with the early Church. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Samaria made joyful:*—I. THE PREACHING OF CHRIST. Christ is to be preached as—1. All almighty; 2. All sufficient; 3. Only; 4. Gracious and compassionate, Saviour. II. ITS HAPPY EFFECTS. 1. The blessings it brings. 2. The prospects it unfolds. Conclusion: 1. What reasons we have to be thankful for the gospel! 2. What use are we making of it? (*W. Dransfield.*) *Preaching Christ:*—I. CHRIST IS THE PROPER SUBJECT OF PREACHING. This means—1. That the subject of preaching was not the wisdom of the world. 2. That it was the revelation concerning Christ. (1) The nature of His person. (2) The character of His work in all His offices. (3) The method of salvation through Him: what we must do to obtain an interest in His salvation. (4) The duties we owe Him. II. CHRIST AS THE OBJECT OF PREACHING. The objects which men have are various, and some selfish and degrading. Some preach Christ of strife and envy. Others have objects which are legitimate, but subordinate, as the temporal or eternal well-being of men. The true specific and appropriate object is the exaltation and glory of Christ; that He may be known, worshipped, and obeyed. III. REASONS WHY WE SHOULD PREACH CHRIST. Because—1. He is our God and Saviour. 2. This is requisite to men becoming Christians. 3. To make men Christians is the best means of glorifying God, and the only means of promoting the happiness, holiness, and salvation of men. IV. TO PREACH CHRIST IS A GRACE. The reasons why it is so great a favour are because—1. It is the highest service of God and Christ. 2. To serve Him is the highest honour, and the greatest source of happiness. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *How Christ should be preached:*—I. AS THE MESSIAH OF ANCIENT PROPHECY. II. AS INCARNATE. 1. Very man. 2. Very God. III. AS CRUCIFIED AND RISEN. 1. Atoning for sin. 2. Triumphing over death. IV. AS GLORIFIED. 1. For Himself. 2. For His people. V. AS JUDGE. *Living to make Christ known:*—I wonder how many Christian people here could have their biographies condensed into this line, "He lived to make Christ known." Might it not be said of one, he lived to open a shop, and then to open a second? or of another, he lived to save a good deal of money, and take shares in limited liability companies? or of a third, he lived to paint a great picture? or of a fourth, he was best known for his genial hospitality? Of many a minister it might be said—he lived to preach splendid sermons, and to gain credit for fine oratory. What of all these? If it can be said of a man, "He lived to glorify Christ," then his life is a life. Every Christian man ought so to live. Oh that my memorial might be: "He preached Christ crucified"! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ not in the sermon:*—The late Bishop F——, of Salisbury, having procured a young clergyman of promising abilities to preach before the king; and the young man having, in his lordship's opinion, acquitted himself well, the bishop, in conversation with the king afterwards, wishing to get his sovereign's opinion, took the liberty to say, "Does not your majesty think that the young man, who had the honour to preach before your majesty, is likely to make a good clergyman, and has this morning delivered a very good sermon?" To which the king in his blunt manner, hastily replied, "It

might have been a good sermon, my lord; but I consider no sermon good that has nothing of Christ in it." *Christ in every sermon*:—A lady named Ruth Montgomery, writing in an American journal, tells us of hearing a young man just entering the ministry, who visited her grandfather when she was a little girl, deliver an address on some public secular occasion. Years afterwards, when grown to womanhood, she heard the same speaker deliver a lecture of deep interest, in a town in the interior of New York. Standing at the entrance of the pew, as he passed down the aisle to the door, she shook hands with him, and said: "I am little Ruth." A smile lighted up his countenance, and he replied, "Do you know that you said something to me when I was at your grandfather's that I have never forgotten?" "Oh, no," I said; "it cannot be possible!" "Yes, you did," he replied; "when I returned from the lecture, you said, 'Dr. D., you didn't forget to bring in the Saviour into your lecture.' And I determined then I never would forget it. I have remembered it from that day to this, and tried to keep my resolution." *The duty of Christians to speak about Christ*:—Many years ago, when S. D. Rickards was walking home with a young lady, talking to her of the good Lord and His willingness to help us (in accordance with a resolution made still farther back that he would never be alone with any young person without speaking concerning "the better things"), he found that she had been longing to be a Christian for a considerable time; she wanted to love and trust the Lord Jesus, but she did not know how. In the simplest way he told her how—that trusting Christ was no more difficult than trusting him. Did she believe that he would save her if he could, if she asked him? And when the reply came, "Yes," the question was put whether He, the Infinitely Good, was not much more to be trusted than a poor weak being like himself. Would He not be sure to save her if she asked Him, and could she not trust Him to say yes? A few days after, a little note came, thanking him for the conversation, relating how now she could say she trusted the Lord Jesus and was glad in Him, and adding these few words: "If any one during the last three years had spoken to me as you did the other night, I should have been a Christian. It was just what I was wanting. I often wonder Christians talk so little about Christ." (*J. L. Nye.*) **And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.**—*Fruit—joy*:—I. THE PEOPLE LISTENED TO THE MESSENGER. There was great earnestness and unanimity. They did not oppose him or remain unmoved. It is a great advantage when an awaking becomes general. Solitary Christians are like solitary trees near the sea coast; the cold winds keep down their growth or kill them. But in a thick wood all contribute to shelter each. So quickly and generally did this harvest grow up to Philip's hand that we are compelled to believe that a sower had been previously at work. This was so. The Master had sown, the servant now reaped. II. THE PEOPLE BOTH HEARD HIS DOCTRINES, AND SAW HIS MIGHTY WORKS. We have the same doctrines and the same results in conversion, but not the miracles? Why? They were the credentials of the first preachers; why, then, cannot we have them to authenticate ours? For the same reason, perhaps, that the miracle of Creation has not been repeated. To set the world going powers were necessary that are not necessary now. The present organic laws are sufficient for the continuance of the species, but not to account for the commencement. Why, then, should it be thought impossible that God should exert a power to establish the gospel which was not needed afterwards? Existing spiritual forces are sufficient for all gospel purposes, and are mightier even than the miracles employed to establish it. III. THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THE CITY. Hear this, ye butterfly flutterers, that flit from flower to flower, satiate with each sweet as soon as you alight upon it, and hastening unhappy to another, trying every flower all day, and at night bringing no honey home! Hear this, all ye who study hard to keep religion at arm's length, lest it should cast a gloom over your heart or home! When an earnest missionary who had risked his life for Christ's name preached in a city, the people, instead of growing gloomy, became glad. This is a phenomenon worthy of study. But do not mistake its meaning. The instinct which prompts the vain and worldly to keep religion away, lest it should destroy their pleasure, is a true instinct. Every creature's instinct is for its own preservation. To embrace Christ is to crucify the old man, who does not die without struggle and pain. But when he is put off a new nature is put on, and the new nature has new joys. What the Samaritans felt is the ultimate result, not the first effect, of preaching Christ offered to a city or a soul, and kept out seems a terror, but received becomes a joy which life cannot give or death destroy. (*W. Arnot,*

D.D.) *Genuine and spurious miracles:*—Undesigned coincidences are a most satisfactory evidence of the truth of Scripture. We have one here. From the account of our Lord's sojourn in Sychar, given by John—a very different writer from Luke—we gather that the Samaritans were a simple-minded people, with a childlike taste for the marvellous, and an equally childlike credulity, keenly anticipating the coming of a great Prophet and Deliverer, but having the moral faculties undeveloped. Now it is exactly among such a people that magic is likely to make way, as the narrative tells us it did. Thus the Samaritans of the Acts are true to the character incidentally ascribed to them in St. John. But among nations of a much higher civilisation there was at the time a susceptibility to magical arts. Religious ideas were in a state of fermentation, and religious minds in a state of high excitement. There was a general expectation of the advent of a great Ruler, due partly to the dissemination of Jewish ideas and associations through Israel's dispersion, and to the growing disbelief in mythology. Men must have some religion, and so intelligent heathens held on to the old forms, with an occasional sneer, for the want of a better, but they yearned for something truer and more satisfying. Now this state is connected with credulity and an appetite for signs and wonders; and wherever there is a demand there is sure to be a supply. And, to go beyond the phenomena to the causes, by the manifestation of God in the flesh, the powers of evil were stirred up to a desperate effort for the maintenance of their supremacy. Demoniacal possession was one result of this effort; a great swarm of impostors was another. Apollonius of Tyana is said to have performed miracles which are parodies of those in the Gospels. By the side of the genuine coin which God minted was issued from the devil's mint a whole school of counterfeit coins. The gospel was to fare as the law had done; when the sorcerers were able to do the same wonders as Moses up to a certain point, after which they are constrained to see "the finger of God." So here the magician is forced to acknowledge that God is in the gospel, and is baptized, though without change of heart. His policy was, without relinquishing the purpose of his life, to ascertain the secret of this new power: and he seems to have regarded baptism as a magical rite on a level with his own spells. And Luke, in describing his state of mind while beholding the miracles of the gospel, used the same Greek word which he employed to describe the effect of Simon's own powers. "He bewitched the people of Samaria, . . . and beholding the miracles and signs which were done, *he* was bewitched." Note some of the characteristics of Philip's miracles which distinguished them from those of the sorcerer. The former had upon them—I. THE SEAL OF GOD'S GLORY. The sorcerer preached himself—"Gave out that he was some great one"; whereas Philip "preached Christ" and "the things concerning the kingdom of God." He announced that the devil's empire was broken, and that whosoever would come to God might have priceless blessings. Miracles of a corresponding character attested the message. Unclean spirits were expelled in token of Satan's shattered kingdom, and in evidence that a new power had come into humanity many were healed. At the sight of these miracles the people rejoiced. But mere wonders have no aptitude to produce joy. Simon's sorceries produced only amazement and dread. What produced the joy was the glad tidings which Philip preached. Where miracles redound, by many thanksgivings unto the praise of God, we may believe that they had their origin from God; but when they redound to the glorification of men, we may suspect them. II. THE SEAL OF LOVE TO MAN. They brought relief to suffering humanity. But not a word is said of the beneficence of Simon's miracles—they were simply wonders that bewitched folk. Conclusion: 1. True miracles are never shown for their own sake, but for some doctrine which has to be attested by them. They are never advanced to make people wonder, but as signs to make them believe. Hence, as soon as the doctrine has gained a firm footing, the miracles cease. When marvels are professed to be wrought by some occult power, do not credit them unless they are in confirmation of some Divine message. 2. There is a correspondence between the character of a true miracle and the doctrine which it is wrought to establish. Thus, *e.g.*, the plagues of Egypt were all directed to establish the superiority of Jehovah to the idols of Egypt, and those of Philip to prove that the gospel was good tidings of great joy. And the people saw the correspondence between the two (ver. 8). (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The spiritual miracles of the gospel:*—I. IMPURITY IS EXPELLED. II. WEAKNESS IS STRENGTHENED. III. SORROW IS CONVERTED INTO JOY. Joy—1. At the forgiveness of sins. 2. In the enjoyment of God. 3. In the hope of eternal salvation. (*K. Gerok.*) *The only cure for soul disorders:*—Some years ago I

was at Birmingham when the onion fair was being held, and thousands of people came from the Black Country to attend it, and to witness the sights that seem to be a part of all such gatherings. The London Bible Society sent an agent to sell copies of the Bible. There was also a woman selling a patent medicine, and some young fellows from the Black Country went up to her, and one of them said, "Missis, can you cure us?" "What's the matter?" inquired the woman. "Oh, we've got the devil in us," was the reply. "No, young man," said the woman, with a reverence for the truth that deserved something better than to be selling patent medicine, "I cannot cure you. Your disorder is of the soul; my physic is only for the body. If you want to be cured, you must go to the man that's selling Bibles yonder." (*J. S. Pawlyn.*) **And there was great joy in that city.** —*The grounds of Christian joy*:—There was joy on account of—I. TEMPORAL MERCIES. The circumstances attending the benefits, as well as the benefits themselves, would render this joy peculiarly great. For many hopeless maladies were cured instantaneously and completely, neither subjecting the patient to any painful operation, nor leaving any portion of the distemper unremoved. And their joy would be still more enhanced by perceiving the hand of God in all this, and that it was illustrative of the mercy and power on which they might rest their confidence in Him for future and higher blessings. For they welcomed the redeeming message thus recommended and attested, and embraced the faith and hope of the gospel. Now, when any blessing is put into your lot, your hearts will doubtless be affected with joy. And the joy will be in proportion to the native sensibility of your minds and to the blessing received. But the great subject of anxiety should be that your joy shall be worthy of the faculties with which God has endowed you, and of those sentiments and anticipations which He has taught you to entertain. What is the nature of your joy after temporal benefit? Is it a mere animal excitement, like the gratification of the brutes when they are getting their hunger and thirst appeased, or when they are liberated from pain or confinement? Or is it the feeling of those worldlings who are happy only when their lower appetites are ministered to? In order for the joy to be Christian, those blessings by which the emotion has been excited must be considered as to their origin and as to the higher purposes which they are designed to subserve, both in your present and your future condition. 1. You are joyful for temporal benefits, but remember that these are not the fruits of your own exertion, or of the benevolence of your fellow-men, or of fate or accident. They are the gifts of God. The kind interpositions here recorded were miraculous; but if you have taken your principles and impressions from the Holy Scriptures, you will not need a miracle to lift your contemplation to Him by whom a mercy has been manifested. Every comfort you will regard as descending from heaven. And how sweet and satisfying is that joy which you draw from this reference of every blessing to God! Were you to be informed that any happy event which had befallen you originated in the contrivance of an individual, who combined with general worth a strong and disinterested attachment to you, would not this discovery add much to your pleasure by giving birth to sympathies which could not otherwise have existed? And if this individual should turn out to be the father whom you had done much to displease, would not this increase the enjoyment to a still higher degree? And must not this be realised in a style which no reciprocity of kindness between man and man can ever exemplify, and in a degree which no display of mere human generosity can ever create, when you are able to receive all the good things of life as proceeding from the hand of your Father in heaven? And in proportion as you see the finger of God in whatever contributes to your preservation and your comfort will your joy be regulated, not by the greatness of the prosperity which gives occasion for it, but by the Divine bounty which it indicates whether it be great or small. 2. But besides this, you should be joyful in the experience of temporal good, because it restores or increases your means of personal improvement and of social usefulness. There can be little doubt that many of the rejoicing Samaritans felt in this way. From their having been subject to various infirmities, they must have been not only debarred from useful exertion, but have even been a burden both to themselves and to their friends. But when freed from such bodily calamities, the faith they embraced in consequence of this Divine interposition would lead them to employ their recovered powers in advancing their own good and the good of their neighbours, and to rejoice that the ability was restored, while the inclination was also given, to glorify God in practical acknowledgments of His healing mercy. And, as under the impulse of this holy ambition everything which retards your progress will be a subject of regret, so

whatever tends to promote it will make you glad in proportion to its power of adding to the warmth of your piety and the extent of your virtue. Nor can you fail to be conscious of the same emotions in reference to the welfare of others. (1) You were long confined, perhaps, to a bed of sickness, which has interrupted your course of active duty. Now that, through Divine mercy, you are permitted to exchange the chamber of disease for the scene of wonted industry, you indulge in the gladness of soul which such a transition is fitted to inspire. But are you glad merely that you are again permitted to partake of the amusements, or mingle in the business, of the world? No; your gladness, if it be Christian, will rather arise from this—that you can now follow out the important purposes for which your Lord has qualified you. (2) Perhaps you had a dear friend in whom you trusted for advice and encouragement; and as it had pleased God to afflict him, so it has pleased God to give him back to your prayers and your affections. But you must have poorly appreciated his value if you did not hail his return, not merely on the ground of friendship, but because you were to be again blessed with his counsels and admonitions and example. (3) Or perhaps you have been rescued from worldly embarrassments which had checked you in the cultivation of your talents, and almost destroyed your power of promoting the good of your fellow-men. And in the relief from these embarrassments this will hold an influential and distinguished place, that you have recovered that by which you can make greater progress in the things that are excellent, and be instrumental in furthering the grand interests of humanity and religion in the world. II. SPIRITUAL MERCIES. Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans, and they embraced Him as an all-sufficient Redeemer, and by baptism vowed to undertake all the duties of their Christian profession. Now, if we have welcomed the gospel as they did, we must be similarly affected with joy. The gospel is of such an interesting description, and is so calculated to work upon the principles and susceptibilities of our nature, that whenever it meets with belief and obedience it cannot fail to produce joy. So much is this the case that Christianity is distinctively "good tidings of great joy." 1. Let us only think of the information which Christianity conveys, that we may see how necessarily it excites gladness. (1) Do we rejoice to learn that some temporary evil that we greatly feared has been averted? Well, then, we learn from the gospel that the greatest of all calamities is provided against so effectually that there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (2) Do we rejoice to be assured that some earthly friend to whom we had given just offence is willing to reinstate us in his favour? Well, then, the gospel assures us that God Himself, whose favour is life, whose displeasure is death, but against whom we had sinned, has made such arrangements that our iniquities may be blotted out, and our peace with Him regained and secured. (3) Do we rejoice to be told that a distemper which threatened to be mortal may be arrested? Well, then, the gospel tells us that death, which we so much dreaded, is deprived of its sting—stripped of its terrors—and that it need not be feared any more. (4) Do we rejoice when, through the unmerited kindness of some relative, we have the reversion of a fortune or an estate which we must soon leave to others? Well, then, the gospel informs us that God has reserved for us "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." 2. But it behoves us to have this feeling of interest in the blessings of the gospel created and established according to the Scriptural method. Some people are comforted and gladdened by the discoveries of the gospel without any good warrant. They imagine that merely because a Saviour is provided, and a work of redemption accomplished, they may banish all their fears and be "joyful in the Lord." Whereas, according to the gospel scheme, this fact is of no avail to any sinner till it is received by him, and submitted to by him, "as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." Now, this attainment is made by faith in Christ, and the moment that Christ becomes our Saviour joy exists there, and ought to be cherished there, as sanctioned by Him from whom the pardon and salvation which produce it have been derived—as itself a privilege which He confers, equally valuable and divine. We are not to rejoice because we believe, as if our joy were to arise from anything within ourselves, but because the Saviour, in whom we trust, is all-sufficient for us. Thus it was with the Samaritan converts. They had great joy. But it was an immediate sequence of their "believing the things that Philip preached concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." There may be a strong faith, and there may be a weak faith. The clearer and more multiplied our evidence is of the truths of the gospel, and of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in whatsoever that evidence may consist, the more vivid and

vigorous will be our faith; and the more vivid and vigorous our faith, the more lively, substantial, unmingled will be that joy which faith, in its every degree, is fitted to produce. And, therefore, that we may abound in joy, let it be our care and our study to abound in faith. 3. But remember that the same authority which commands you to believe and to rejoice, also presents to you delineations and enforcements of a character which you must possess, otherwise all your "religion is vain." The faith which you repose in Christ, and which gives joy to your heart, is a faith which receives Him, that He may redeem you from the power and pollution of sin, and consecrate you to the service of God; and were it possible for you to believe in Him to the exclusion of that part of His saving character, your joy would be presumptuous and delusive. So that spiritual joy and spiritual renovation are inseparably united. And as you believe and rejoice, so you must give all diligence to abound in godliness. The Samaritans acted in this manner. We do not read of their after conduct; but so far as the narrative goes they did all of which their time and opportunities admitted. They were baptized—and this implied incalculably more than it does among us. By undergoing the rite, they braved all the terrors of persecution, and pledged themselves to maintain that purity of demeanour which the washing with water signified. A holy life, in reference to our spiritual joy, is of vast importance in two ways. (1) It is the test by which we are to ascertain that our joy is not false and delusive. There is a joy which proceeds from frames, and feelings, and fancies. To guard against a deception so fatal, it is necessary that we "examine ourselves whether we be in the faith," wanting which the gospel speaks nothing that is good to us, and whether we are entitled to be glad in the Lord as our Lord, our Saviour, and our portion. (2) While practical godliness thus satisfies us that we are not rejoicing without warrant, the more we possess of that character, the stronger evidence do we obtain of our interest in the blessings of redemption, and the stronger reason have we for encouraging ourselves in that joy with which the blessings of redemption are so well fitted to fill the spirit. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *Joyful import of the gospel*:—I. IT IS DESERVING OF REMARK, THAT THE SEAT OF THIS HOLY TRIUMPH WAS "THE CITY OF SAMARIA." Well may it be said, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose;" for such indeed was the city of Samaria. Thus the Lord builds up Jerusalem, and gathers together the outcasts of Israel (Psa. cxlvii. 2; Isa. lvi. 6–8). II. THE JOY WHICH NOW PREVAILED IN THE CITY OF SAMARIA IS FULLY ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE CAUSE WHICH PRODUCED IT. Joy is never incited but on some great occasion, and the seasons of religious joy are distinguished by some interesting or extraordinary occurrence. Such was the joy and gladness at the preparation for building the temple of Jerusalem (1 Chron. xxiv. 9), at Hezekiah's passover (2 Chron. xxx. 25, 26), at the rebuilding and dedication of the city wall (Neh. xii. 43), at the birth of Christ (Luke ii. 10–14), at the appearance of the star to the eastern magi (Matt. ii. 13), and at the ascension of our blessed Saviour (Luke xxiv. 52). All these were great events, and furnished an abundant source of joy and rejoicing. We may therefore expect something great and interesting in the present instance, to fill a whole city with joy—and what was it? 1. Is it not ground for joy that the Lord is come into the world to save sinners? 2. Is it not ground for joy that Christ has laid down His life for us, and redeemed us unto God by His blood? 3. Is it not a matter of great joy that Christ is risen from the dead? This proves that He was the true Messiah, that His sacrifice is accepted, and that justice is fully satisfied. 4. Is it not matter of joy, too, that Christ has ascended into glory, and that He ever liveth to make intercession for us? 5. That through faith in His name there is forgiveness of sin, and acceptance with God? 6. Is it not a source of joy that this gospel is now sent to all nations? 7. Was it not a special matter of joy to the Samaritans, that they themselves had believed the gospel? Reflections: 1. If, then, the gospel bring tidings of great joy, why is it reproached as tending to gloom and melancholy? Can anything be more unreasonable and unjust? 2. Why do individuals despond while there is such an exhibition of mercy? Because they do not hearken to the gospel, nor receive the record which God hath given of His Son. 3. Why do not Christians possess more joy and peace in believing? Because we have not more religion, do not live more under the influence of the gospel. Lord, increase our faith. (*J. Benson.*) *The joy of salvation*:—John Bowen, afterwards Bishop of Sierra Leone, being, while a young farmer in Canada, converted by a sermon, wrote in his diary, "I experienced such an ecstasy last evening in prayer that I

doubted if I were in my right senses. Christ was slain for me. I could give myself up to Him unreservedly. I cannot describe my sensations of joy. I could not praise God sufficiently for the great scheme of salvation. I remained a long time giving thanks and praying that such a heavenly joy might not be taken away from me." *Joyousness of Christianity* :—Religion is good both for a man's body and soul, both for time and eternity. It has the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. It not only teaches men to govern their spirits, but also to take care of their bodies; not only to watch over their tempers and dispositions, but also to manage, in a prudent manner, their worldly business. If men were truly religious, they would not only have brighter prospects for heaven, but they would also have far more cheerful and happy homes on earth. Religion brightens everything it touches. It strengthens the weak, comforts the disconsolate, encourages the despondent, lifts up those that are bowed down, and fills the mind, even amid worldly anxieties and cares, with peace and joy and hope. *The unique effects of the gospel* :—There was never found in any age of the world, either philosophy or sect, or law or discipline, which could so rightly exalt the public good as the Christian faith. (*Lord Bacon.*) *The Christian city* :—1. All around Philip was the misery and sin of a great city. He told them of Him who had come to relieve misery and forgive sin. As a symbol of the new life which he told them of, he touched some of their sick and their health came back to them. Not merely a few scattered souls caught the new inspiration; it seemed to fill the air and flow through all the life of the whole town. 2. There is something clear and peculiar in this joy of a whole city over a new faith. We can all feel it when a thought or an emotion which has lingered in a few minds starts up and takes possession of a whole community. It is as when a quiver of flame which has lurked about one bit of wood at last gets real possession of the heap of fuel, and the whole fireplace is in a blaze. There came a time when Christianity, which had lived in scattered congregations, at last seized on the prepared mind of the Roman Empire, and all Europe was full of Christianity. So it is a phenomenon possessing its own interest and demanding its own study, when beyond Christian souls you have a whole community inspired with the feelings and acting under the motives of Christianity. A city as well as an individual is capable of a Christian experience and character. It is more than an aggregate of the experience of the souls within it, as a chemical compound has qualities which did not appear in either of its constituents; it is a real new being with qualities and powers of its own. 3. Christianity is primarily a personal force, and only secondarily does it deal with communities. The souls of men must be converted; and out of those the Christian Church or the Christian State must grow. To begin by making the structure of a Church or a State, and expect so to create personal character, is as if you began to build a forest from the top. This is the error of all merely ecclesiastical and political Christianity. But none the less is it true that when a great multitude of personal believers, who have been fused together by the fire of their common faith, present before the world the unity of a Christian Church or nation, that new unity is a real unit, a genuine being with its own character and power. 4. We see the Church possessed as a whole of qualities which she must gather, of course, from her parts, but which we can find in no one of her parts. She is more permanent, more wise, more trustworthy than the wisest and most trustworthy of the men who compose her membership. The city is a being dearer to us than any of the citizens who compose it. Many a man goes out to war and gives his life gladly for his country who would not have dreamed of giving it for any countryman. The Bible is full of this thought. Israel is more than any Israelite; Jerusalem is realer and dearer than any Jew. The New Testament reverts to the individual, but it too advances towards its larger personality, and leaves the strong figure of the Christian Church and the brilliant architecture of the New Jerusalem burning upon its latest pages. 5. But let us come to our subject. Is anything more to be expected than that here and there throughout a city men and women should be Christians? Can we conceive of Christianity so pervading the life of a community that the city shall be distinctly different in its corporate life and action from a heathen city? Christianity, or the change of man's life by Christ, has three ways in which it makes its power known. It appears either as truth, as righteousness, or as love. Every soul which is really redeemed by Christ will enter into new beliefs, higher ways of action, and deeper affections towards fellow-men. Now take these one by one, and ask if a city is not capable of them as well as an individual. I. Look first at FAITH. 1. Perhaps this seems the hardest to establish.

There was a time, we say, when cities had their beliefs, when no man could live comfortably in Rome without believing like the Pope, or in Geneva without believing like Calvin. Then every proclamation was based upon a creed. But see how that is altered now. A thousand different beliefs fight freely in our streets, and it is almost true that no man is the less a citizen for anything that he believes or disbelieves. But this implies that the only exhibition of a faith must be in formal statement. It ignores for the city what we accept for the individual, that the best sign that a man believes anything is not his repetition of its formulas, but his impregnation with its spirit. It may have grown impossible, at least for the present, that cities should write confessions of faith in their charters; but if it is possible—nay, if it is necessary—that the prevalence through all a city's life of a belief in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit should testify of itself by the creation of certain spiritual qualities in that city, then have we not the possibility of a believing city even without a written creed or a formal proclamation. Just look at London. This is a believing city. And why? Not because an occasional document is solemnised with the name of God, nor because a few verses of the Bible are read each morning in your public schools, but because that spirit which has never been in the world save as the fruit of Christian faith prevails in and pervades your government and social life, the spirit of responsibility, of trust in man, and of hopefulness. This is the Christian faith of your community, showing in all your public actions. It has not come by accident. It has entered into you through the long belief of your fathers which you yourselves still keep in spite of all your scepticisms and disputes. 2. If we doubt this, we have only to forecast the consequence if a heathen belief were prevalent. We have some men who disbelieve intensely and bitterly in every Christian doctrine. The spirit of these men we know: it is hopeless, cynical, despairing. If they are naturally sensual, they plunge into debauchery; if they are naturally refined they stand aside and sneer at or superciliously pity the eager work and exuberant feeling of other men. Now fancy such men's faith made common. What would be the result? Would any generous work be done? Could either popular government or an extended system of business credit still survive, since both are based on that trust of man in man which is at the bottom a Christian sentiment? Would you not have killed enterprise when you had taken hopefulness away, and given the deathblow to public purity when you had destroyed responsibility? 3. No, the city has its Christian faith. Its belief is far from perfect: it is all stained and broken with scepticism, but it is vastly more strong than many of you believe. Every now and then comes a revival. "What does it mean?" we say; "when men seem settling placidly down into unbelief and indifference, all of a sudden this great outbreak? People crowding by tens of thousands to hear some homely preacher, the city shaken with the storm of hymns, thousands confessing their sins and crying out for pardon?" Is it not clear enough what it means? Here many of the men to whom the people most looked up have been sending down to the uplooking people the barren gospel of their scepticism. But by and by they have pressed too terribly upon the spiritual consciousness; the sense of God, the certainty of immortality, has risen in rebellion; the great reaction comes; the wronged affections reassert themselves. One must rejoice in such a healthy outburst. To complain of its extravagances or faults of taste is as if you complained of the tempest which cleared your city of the cholera because it shook your windows and stripped the leaves off your trees. 4. The methods by which this faith may be perpetuated and kept pure are open to endless discussion. No doubt the city in which it is liveliest stands the most in danger of ecclesiasticism on the one hand, and of dogmatic quarrelsomeness on the other; but about this one fact we are most clear, that a city may believe, and as a city may be blessed by its belief. It seems to open an appeal to any generous and public-spirited young man, to which he surely ought to listen. Not only for your own soul and its interests you ought to seek the truth, but for the community, because these streams of public and social life which run so shallow need to be deepened with eternal interests, because your faith in God will help to make God a true inspiration to the city's life. Remember the simple old parable in Eccles. ix. 14–16. Wisdom in the Old Testament means what faith means in the New. II. RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. A man who is a Christian holds certain truth, and then he does certain goodness. And every city has a moral character distinguishable from, however it may be made up of, the individual character of its inhabitants. This is seen in two ways. (1) In the official acts which it must do, the acts of justice or injustice, by which it appears as a person acting in its official unity among its sister

cities. (2) In the moral atmosphere which pervades it, and which exercises power on all who come within it. You send a child to live in some heathen brutal community where vice is in the very atmosphere, and he is certainly contaminated. What is it that contaminates him? Not this man's or that man's example, but the whole character of the city where he lives. The brutality is everywhere, in all its laws, its customs, its standards, its traditions. You send him back to live in old Pompeii, where the abominations which modern times have uncovered and made the subject of cool archæological study were live things, the true expression of the heathen city's spirit. As he enters in you see his soul wither and grow spotted with corruption. Then bring your boy and put him here in Christian London. It is not only this or that Christian whom he meets. It is a Christian goodness everywhere: in the just dealing of the streets, in the serene peace of the homes, in the accepted responsibilities and obligations of friends and neighbours, in the universal liberty, in the absence of cruelty, in the purity and decency, in the solemn laws and courteous ceremonies—everywhere there is the testimony of a city wherein dwelleth righteousness. And when we think how imperfectly Christ has been welcomed and adopted here—how only to the outside of our life He has penetrated, then there opens before us a glorious vision of what the city might be where He should be wholly King. 2. We dwell on the iniquity of city life in modern times. But it is not the riotous and boastful wickedness of heathen times. Men have at least seen clearly enough the Christian standard to be ashamed of what they are not willing to renounce, and hide in secret chambers the villainies which use to flaunt upon the public walls. It is one stage in every conversion of the converted city as of the converted man. The next stage is to cast away the wickedness of which one has become ashamed. Of cities in the first stage there are instances everywhere through Christendom. Of the second stage—of the city totally possessed by Christ and so casting all wickedness away, there is as yet no specimen upon the earth, only the glowing picture of the apocalyptic city, the New Jerusalem. That sounds very visionary and far away; but consider that to bring about that city so different from your London you need only vastly more of the same power that has made your London so different from Pompeii. 3. Again we come to a lofty ground of appeal. If you are pure and true remember that your righteousness is not for yourself alone, nor for the few whom you immediately touch; it is for your city. I am speaking to business men who may help to put a more Christian character into business life; to women of society who may make the social character of the town more Christ-like; to young men on whom it rests to develop or to destroy for their city the character that their fathers gave her. If you fail, you Christian men and women, what chance is there for the city? III. CHARITY. When a man becomes a Christian, he believes right, and then he does right; and then he tries to help his fellow-men. And now again the question comes, can a city too do good as the issue and utterance of its Christian character? The Christian character of charity is very apt to elude us, and the connection of a charitable act with Christian faith is lost. You say it is all impulse when you give your money to the poor; but what is the impulse? Is it the same as the savage's? Has Christianity done nothing to keep down the other impulse to harm, and to strengthen this? And so you say the city's charity is all economy; her hospitals are merely expedients for saving so much available human life. But who taught her this economy, and that a human life was worth the saving, and how is it that the most highly organised among un-Christian nations have had but the merest rudiments of hospitals? No! The charity of a city is a distinct testimony to one thing which has been wrought into the convictions of that city—the value of a man; and that conviction has come out of Christian faith. A poor neglected creature drops in the crowded street; a horse strikes him, and the heavy waggon crushes him as he lies; or in the blazing summer sun he is smitten to the ground insensible. Instantly the city—not this pitying man or that, but the pitying city—stoops and gathers him up tenderly, and carries him to the hospital, which it has built. Is there no Christ there? Once there was a city which, when Christ came to it, hated and scorned Him, and would not be satisfied till it had seen Him die in agony. To-day here is a city which, if Christ came to it in person, would go out and welcome Him, would call Him Lord and Master, and hang upon His words and glory in the privilege of giving Him its best. In that first city there was no hospital; in this new city the hospitals stand thick for every kind of misery. Has not the Christian city a right to hear the Saviour's words as if He spoke to her: "Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou

hast done it unto Me"? Who doubts that if the city were tenfold more Christian than she is the hospitals would be multiplied and enriched till it should be an impossibility for any sick man to be left unhelped. Deepen the city's Christianity and the city's charity must deepen and widen too. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

Vers. 9–24. **But there was a certain man called Simon.**—*Simon the Magian unmasked and put to shame*:—This Simon was the first heretic in the Christian Church, the first to claim its fellowship while out of sympathy with its fundamental truths. His mistakes were many and grievous. 1. He began with an unscrupulous ambition. No sooner had Peter and John begun to confer the gifts of spiritual power by the laying on of hands than Simon saw that his own juggleries were cast into the shade. All that he perceived were the outward phenomena; the inward grace did not occur to him. 2. He was guilty, thus, of utter insincerity. His pious airs and phrases, while he worshipped with the Christians, were all make-believe. His heart was wholly unchanged; he was still an unregenerate sinner, in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. 3. He was grievously mistaken as to the purchasing power of money. He thought that money could do anything. His mind was so utterly sordid that he was as honest as he could be in proffering coin for the sovereign gifts of God. There are men in our times who seem to have a like confidence in filthy lucre. Their very souls grow yellow as they bow before their wretched golden god. They subordinate all things to personal gain. Friendship, beneficence, patriotism, and piety are of value only, as they can be made to serve their selfish ends. 4. He was a blasphemer. He should have been appalled at the mere thought of tampering with the influence of the Divine Spirit; but "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." God was nothing to him, and sacred things were of value only to grind at his mill. It is well that Peter and John had the courage to unmask this miserable impostor. There is no telling what harm he might have done otherwise in the early Church. As it is, he vanishes from our sight cringing under a terrific warning and whining for an intercession which, had it been offered, would have seemed to him only another of the apostles' masterly conjurations. Farewell to him! And may no disciple of his ever again pollute the pure atmosphere of the Church of God! (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Christianity true and false*:—I. THE TRAITS OF A TRUE CHRISTIANITY. 1. It has growth. A true gospel has germinative power; it propagates itself; it is a seed which springs up wherever it is dropped, whether in Judea, Samaria, or Antioch. 2. It has breadth. It overcomes the prejudices of race and nation, breaks the bounds of sect, and brings Jews and Samaritans into one fellowship. 3. It has power (ver. 7). The physical miracles of the apostolic age were pictures of spiritual power in all ages. Even now the gospel drives out unclean spirits and gives power to the impotent. Men can see the results of its power though they may not understand its source. 4. It brings joy (ver. 8). Every soul truly converted tastes the joy of salvation, and is glad with an indwelling happiness. 5. It has discipline (vers. 14–16). The Church recognises a central authority, to which all its workers are loyal. 6. It has high moral standards, which are not framed to suit base natures nor influenced by worldly considerations (vers. 20–23). II. THE TRAITS OF A FALSE CHRISTIANITY. Even in the true Church, and in its purest days, there was to be found a Simon the sorcerer. 1. The false Christianity is often concealed under the formal rites of the Church service. Outwardly Simon was a baptised member, inwardly he was a hypocrite. 2. It is revealed in the spiritual manifestations of the Church. When the Holy Ghost descends, Simon is at once detected. 3. Its spirit is that of selfish ambition, seeking for power over men rather than power with God. 4. It should be dealt with promptly, rebuked unsparingly, and should find no countenance in the Church. 5. It may find mercy and forgiveness if the false disciple will seek the Lord. *Simon Magus, or wrong-heartedness*:—This short sketch reminds us—1. That men in every age have been prone to deify great wickedness. 2. That great wickedness, to answer its end, has often identified itself with religion. 3. That true religion exposes all such imposture. We take Simon as the representative of wrong-heartedness. Note—1. ITS ESSENCE—covetousness. "He offered them money." In relation to this observe that—1. It is opposed to mental improvement. It necessarily blinds the eye and limits the intellectual horizon: whereas benevolence elevates the mind, gives vastness to the view, and places every object in the full light of heaven. 2. It is condemned by moral consciousness. There is a principle within which is an infallible indicator of the soul's health, and this ever condemns covetousness. The selfish man wears

out his self-respect, and stands before God and himself a wretched man. 3. It is condemned by the verdict of society. Society may flatter but it cannot respect a covetous man. Hence men assume the features and speak the language of benevolence. 4. It is incompatible with moral order. This requires one-ness, mutual attraction. But selfishness repels from one another and from God. 5. It is denounced by Scripture. Covetousness is declared to be idolatry, against which as the most revolting form of depravity the heaviest judgments are denounced. II. ITS TENDENCY—ruin. This is no constitutional infirmity claiming palliation, but a disease of the heart. As in physics, so in morals, if the heart be wrong the most serious consequences are imminent. The text reminds us of three evils. 1. It involves the greatest sacrifice, "Thy money perish with thee." Peter took it for granted that he would perish. A good man's money lives in its consequences. 2. It precludes an interest in religion, "Thou has neither part nor lot," &c., *i.e.*, in Christianity with its glorious doctrines, promises, and provisions. 3. It necessitates great personal wretchedness. Covetousness is at once—(1) A bitter "gall," and (2) A slavish life, "bonds." III. ITS CURE. 1. Prescribed. (1) Repentance—a change in the controlling disposition. (2) Prayer—conscious dependence upon God. (3) Forgiveness. Covetousness is a sin against God, and for it a sinner must be either forgiven or damned. Repentance and prayer are essential to pardon. 2. Ignored. Simon did not attend to the heavenly prescription. He did not repent of his sin although he deplored its consequences. He did not pray for himself, but he asked Peter to pray for him, and not that his heart might be changed, but that the consequence of his sin might be averted. Observe the two evils ever prevalent in false religions. (1) Selfishness. To avoid misery is the leading idea in the religion of millions. (2) Proxyism. The tendency to trust others in religious matters is the foundation of all ecclesiastical imposture and the great curse of the world. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Simon the sorcerer* :—Look at—I. THE CONDITION IN WHICH PHILIP FOUND THE CITY OF SAMARIA. You find there the condition of the whole world represented. Samaria was diseased, possessed, and deluded. These are the conditions in which Christianity has always to fight its great battle. Christianity never finds any town prepared to co-operate with it. We are none of us by nature prepared to give the Christian teacher a candid hearing. We "hate the fellow, for he never prophesies good of us." The literary lecturer pays homage to his audience, but the preacher rebukes it, humbles it. The early preachers did not trim, and balance, and smooth things. It was because they did fundamental work that they made progress so slow, but so sure. The world is—1. Diseased—there is not a man who is thoroughly and completely well. If he suppose himself to be so, he is so only for the moment; he was ill yesterday, or will be to-morrow. You stand up in the mere mockery of strength; it is when we lie down that we assume the proper and final attitude of the body. How ill we are, what aches and pains! 2. Possessed. Possessed with demons, unclean spirits, false ideas. Why make a marvel about demoniacal possession, or push it back some twenty centuries? We are all devil-ridden. Out of Christ we are mad! 3. Deluded. Samaria was bewitched. Understand that somebody has to lead the world. In republicanism there is a sovereignty. In a mob there is a captaincy. There is only one question worth discussing so far as the future is concerned, and that is who is to rule. To-day you find men making churches for the future. You might as well make clothes for the future. My question is, who is to be the man, the life, the sovereign of the future? Christ, or Simon? As Christians we have no difficulty about the result. II. PHILIP'S COURSE IN SAMARIA. 1. He took no notice of Simon. There are some persons who think we ought to send missionaries to argue down the infidels. Let us do nothing so foolish. There is nothing to be argued down. Argument is the weakest of all weapons. If occasion should naturally arise for the answering of some sophistical argument, avail yourselves of it, but do not imagine that Christianity has to go down to Samaria to fight a pitched battle, face to face with Simon Magus. 2. He preached Christ. Simon had been preaching himself. Philip never mentioned himself. Thus Philip did not argue down Simon, he superseded him. The daylight does not argue with the artificial light. The sun does not say, "Let us talk this matter over, thou little, beautiful, artificial jet. Let us be candid with one another, and polite to one another, and let us treat one another as gentlemen talking on equal terms. Let us thus see which of us ought to rule the earth." The sun does nothing but shine! What then! Men put the gas out! "Let your light so shine before men," &c. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Simon the sorcerer:—The phases of human conduct do little more than repeat themselves along the ages. "There is nothing new under the sun." Dugald Stewart remarks, "In reflecting on the repeated reproduction of ancient paradoxes by modern authors, one is almost tempted to suppose that human invention is limited, like a barrel-organ, to a specific number of tunes." A period of deep religious and emotional feeling is always apt to be accompanied by a superstitious and mystical craving. Stephen's martyrdom brings to light two typical characters at once; Saul with harassing persecutions, and Simon with delusions calculated to deceive even the elect, and the spurious professor was more dangerous than the violent foe. Note from the story that—I. MERE WORKING OF WONDERS DOES NOT PROVE THAT A MAN COMES FROM GOD. For the marvellous performances may not be miracles at all. In every age founders of religious systems have attempted what silly people have accepted as veritable interpositions of God. Human credulity is swift to assert that what is mysterious is divine. So fortune-tellers, spiritualists, necromancers, and quacks have swayed men and led women captive. II. MIRACLES ARE AT THE BEST ONLY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY. Of themselves, they never converted a soul. The genuine wonders wrought by Philip mocked this magician; as in Moses' time, there was one supreme limit beyond which no human sleight of hand could go. Simon astonished, but Philip healed. So they left the impostor and went over to the Christian deacon in a body (ver. 12). Not that Philip was more eloquent or persuasive than Simon; not that his miracles stirred them more; but Philip preached Christ. Marvels arrest the mind, and that is in demand when audiences are dull; but it is the Spirit of grace only who touches the heart. How curious it must have appeared to those spiritually-minded converts that Simon Magus at last came over into the Church. III. THE BEST METHOD IN DEALING WITH ERROR IS TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH, AND LEAVE RESULTS TO GOD. We are to advance the banner of Jesus Christ right out into the field brightly as if we trusted it, and most opponents will melt away before the mere marching of God's host, without even a skirmish (ver. 13). IV. IT IS GENERALLY PRUDENT TO WAIT FOR A LITTLE BEFORE ADMITTING UNTESTED PERSONS INTO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP. It is a most interesting question, to be decided according to individual and local circumstances, how long one is to be delayed in ascertaining his own mind before he becomes publicly committed. These incidents are worth study in our modern times; for if the apostles could be deceived, it is possible for Church officers now. V. GROWTH IN SPIRITUAL GRACES RENDERS ONE MORE GENTLE IN FEELING AND MORE CHARITABLE TO OTHERS (vers. 14, 15). The apostolic company at Jerusalem were glad to hear what the Lord was doing, and Peter and John went over to the scene of action, and began to pray that God would bestow the gift of His Spirit. We cannot forget that the last wish of John's concerning the Samaritans was that fire might fall on them (Luke ix. 52–56). He was older now, and kinder, and gentler. VI. ORDER OUGHT TO BE OBSERVED IN THE OFFICIAL ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH (ver. 17). These little significant forms are not to be lightly esteemed. The people had received that gift of the Holy Ghost by which their hearts had been renewed; but not the extraordinary gift by which they could work miracles. There was no physical transmission of anything in this laying on of hands; it was a mere sign. And it is not likely that all converted persons in Samaria were endowed with this superior gift; some discrimination must have been made according to fitnesses of character or grades of office (1 Cor. xii. 8–11). VII. EVERY SIN HAS ITS MEASURE OF DESERVED RETRIBUTION, AND MEETS ITS APPROPRIATE MONUMENT (vers. 18–20). This hypocrite's fate it has been to add a new word to our language; so, everywhere the Bible goes, that wicked thing which he did is held in everlasting remembrance. VIII. THE ESSENCE OF A SIN RESIDES IN THE INTENTION (ver. 22). Solemn admonition is given in the intimation that a wicked man is held responsible for his "thought" (Isa. lv. 7). Peter's expression would look like a curse, if it were not for the suggestion that repentance and prayer might yet find the door open for pardon. IX. PROFESSION OF RELIGION IS NOT REAL PIETY. (*American Sunday School Times.*) *Simon the sorcerer, an admonitory example of a false teacher:*—I. HE GAVE HIMSELF OUT TO BE SOME GREAT ONE. False teachers do not seek the glory of God, but their own. II. HE BEWITCHED THE PEOPLE. False teachers seek to dazzle by popular arts, instead of enlightening and converting. III. HE BELIEVED, WAS BAPTIZED, AND CONTINUED WITH PHILIP. Thus the unbelieving often speak the language of Canaan, because they observe that it is effective; and contract a hypocritical bond of fellowship with the servants of God, in order to cover their foul stains with the cloak of pretended sanctity. (*K. Gerok.*) *Simon Magus and Simon Peter:*—I. SIMON THE UPRIGHT. 1. As a zealous servant of his Lord whom

he serves everywhere with joy, in Samaria as in Jerusalem. 2. As an earnest admonisher of sins, which he reproves with holy zeal. 3. As a faithful guide to the way of salvation by repentance and prayer, which he knew from his own experience. II. SIMON THE IMPURE. 1. In the lying nature of his heathen magic. 2. In the hypocrisy of his deceitful Christianity. 3. In the defective nature of his superficial repentance. (*Ibid.*) *Saul, Simon, and Philip*:—I. THE UPRIGHT ENEMY. II. THE FALSE FRIEND. III. THE FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD. Each indicated according to the disposition of his heart, his manner of acting and his fate. (*Ibid.*) *The sin of Simon*:—On a general view of this passage, notice—I. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GOSPEL MIRACLES AND THOSE OF A MERE MAGICIAN LIKE THIS SIMON. 1. Power by itself is an ambiguous sign. There are other powers in the world besides God's. Powers which have broken loose from Him, which oppose Him, and which He permits, for a time, for the trial of His people, and for the overthrow of His foes. Such a power was that exercised by this sorcerer. It came for the exaltation of a creature; to make beholders say, "This man is the great power of God." It did not come to attest anything—to say, I have a message for you from God; and if you ask how you are to know that it is from God, this is the sign. That is the true use of power, in connection with Divine truth. It ought to come as the third part of God's triple seal: first goodness, then wisdom, then power. That was the use which Jesus Christ made of power. This has never been the order of an impostor. He may astound and bewitch men with sorceries: but he will never succeed in counterfeiting those other parts of God's seal, which the truly wise will wait for before they call either him or his the great power of God. 2. We are all in danger of too much worshipping power. Money is power, and talent, and rank, and office, and knowledge. But all these are of the earth, and will perish with it. Power-worship is too often devil-worship. Let the power you worship be all God's power. You will know it by its signs; by its pointing upwards; by its drawing you towards God; by its making the unseen world real to you, and the world of show and semblance less attractive. II. THE EXISTENCE OF A VISIBLE AS WELL AS AN INVISIBLE CHURCH. We see how men fight against this truth. Men have been weary of the formality and hypocrisy and heartlessness which had taken possession of the visible fold, and have sought to go apart with a few, of whose consistency and devotion they could be assured. But there was a Simon Magus baptized by Philip the Evangelist, and recognised as a member of the Christian community by two of the apostles themselves. "Let both grow together until the harvest," is the rule of Divine wisdom as much as of Divine forbearance. If you attempt to judge, you will err both ways: you will often be taken in by loud profession, you will oftener be driven into uncharitableness, into injury of souls. While the day of grace lasts, we must shut out from hope and from privilege no one who desires and claims either. And if others were to sit in judgment upon us, where should we be? We need patience, but we need severity too; patience from others, severity from ourselves, and a union of both from God. III. THIS PARTICULAR SIN WHICH REQUIRED IN THE CASE BEFORE US SO STERN A REPROOF. Simon offered money to the apostles to share their gift with him. He would purchase the Holy Ghost with money. The very idea is blasphemy. The law of this land calls a particular offence, that of buying and selling sacred offices in the ministry, by a name derived from that of this man, Simony. But this is not the only nor the chief sense in which we can be guilty of the sin of Simon. Simon had that mercenary mind which St. Paul calls the root of all evil. He thought that money could do everything. He deified money. Knowing what it was to him; how he taught, practised sorcery, and aimed at popularity, and set himself up as some great one for money; he took it for granted that every one else regarded money in the same way. Alas! "let him that is without sin among you" in this matter "cast the first stone" at him! If there are none now who seek to buy God's gifts with money, at least are there not some who consent to sell their own souls for money? Oh these dishonesties in trade, in speculation, in trusts, yes, even in charity! If we really cared for God's gifts, I can even fancy that some of us might offer money for them. If we do not offer money for God's gifts, is it not because we care ten thousand times more for things which money can purchase? But I will tell you what no money can buy: it cannot buy any one of God's highest gifts; it cannot even buy health, eyesight, comeliness, affection, repose of conscience, hope in death, or a single ray of the love of God. And therefore a man who learns by long habit to think that money is everything, is as much what the Scripture calls a fool, as he is what the Scripture counts a sinner. The sin of Simon is the being altogether of the earth, and yet

expecting to have heaven too. It is the bringing all that is base and mean and corruptible, and expecting to receive—not in exchange for it, but along with it—all that is spiritual and eternal and Divine. To such a spirit it may well be said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter," &c. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The sin of Simon; or trading in holy things:*—The way in which the Holy Ghost is introduced here throws light upon apostolic usages and upon problems of Christian life in all ages. Compare chap. xix. 1-7, in which, however, there is a difference, inasmuch as the disciples had not advanced beyond the teaching of John. They had not so much as heard of the Holy Ghost. The Samaritans were favoured with distinctive Christian teaching and baptism, but lacked that experience which we identify with conversion, viz., the receiving of the Holy Spirit. This, alas, is not peculiar to that age. Multitudes now are Christians, and yet not Christians. Strange paradox! Many become Christians by persuasion, conform to rites, live moral lives, without attaining consciousness of Divine sonship. We are not justified in excluding such from our assemblies; but their condition is full of danger, and renders them liable to fall into the gravest sins. To all such let Simon be a warning. As to his offence, notice—I. WHAT IT WAS. 1. An insult to God. It could not have been the unpardonable sin, however, since the apostle holds out hope of forgiveness; but it may have been one of those sins which prepare for and predispose to it. (1) It betrays a low estimate of the Holy Spirit. One who could speak as Simon did must have regarded Him very cheap! No more than a piece of sordid merchandise! Of a like character are all conceptions of monopolising spiritual privileges, of selling or buying such, or of bribing God by money, good works, &c. (2) It was a contradiction of the principle on which the gospel is based—grace not works—that no man might boast or presume. Grace is the ground not of pardon only, but of every Divine gift. 2. A desire through Christianity to aggrandise self. Spiritual life springs from, and consists in, the crucifixion of self. In Simon self was alive and rampant. With him as with so many professors it was self first and God and righteousness afterwards. Every Christian worker should examine his heart and see whether he is serving self or the Master. II. HOW HE FELL INTO IT. This can never be fully answered; it is a part of the "mystery of iniquity." But note—1. His previous life tended to lead him into such an error. He was a magician. One who blended the mystical doctrines of Eastern wisdom with the practice of sorcery, and prepared the way for the subsequent monstrous growths of heresy, called by the general name of Gnosticism. 2. He had not yet fully understood the gospel. Probably he had learnt only a few of its doctrines, and those only imperfectly. 3. He was inwardly a stranger to Divine grace. He had not yet been converted. This defect is at the root of most heresies. III. ITS PUNISHMENT —destruction. 1. Imminent and impending. The sentence was not only uttered by the apostle, it was inherent in the sin itself. 2. Graciously postponed. His might have been the fate of Korah and Ananias, &c. God gave him space for repentance. (*St. J. A. Frére, M.A.*) *Simony:*—The traffic in Church matters and spiritual gifts. I. FROM WHAT IT PROCEEDS—a covetous and ambitious heart. As Simon was for so long held in estimation and had bewitched the people, but was now displaced by the Christian evangelists, so he now resolved to regain his old status by money. Thus have all, who by impure means attempt to force themselves into the ministry, no other designs than to serve the idols of honour, sensuality, or mammon. On this account the Church has regarded Simon as the father of heresies and the type of sectarianism; for the mainspring of almost all founders of sects is love of power, which, united with arrogance, by its audacity and hypocrisy, bewitches the people cleaving to externals. II. WHAT IT SUPPOSES. A bitter and unrighteous heart. His heart was full of gall, *i.e.*, envy towards the apostles, and the preference given to their preaching above his arts; of unrighteousness, for notwithstanding his Christian profession he would be no follower of the Cross, but a proud miracle worker. He apparently attached himself to the apostles, but in heart was offended at them. Hence hypocrisy. He thought to bewitch these servants of Jesus with money as he had bewitched the people with magic, and himself with honour and mammon. Consequently unrighteousness towards the apostles, and a low estimation of their office and persons. Envy and jealousy, an earthly disposition and a low estimation of the ministry and its office bearers, mark even still the followers of Simon. III. AT WHAT IT AIMS. Not grace, but power. He did not wish to save souls by the preaching of the gospel, but only to acquire for himself a name by deeds of supernatural might. In this are all like him who desire the office but not the grace:

who have in view not the service of Christ, but personal dignity and prerogative; and those, too, who are covetous of gifts for the office—learning, eloquence, &c.—but dispense with the qualification of holiness (Luke x. 20). IV. How it acts. Simon offered money. Few offer actual money, now, for the ministerial office, but many employ means no less base. How often must this or that patron be gained over by crooked ways! How often is the office converted into a marriage portion! V. What it entails. Simon along with his wicked designs retained a slavish fear of Divine punishment. He dreads damnation but will not have salvation. So all Simonists are slaves. They carry about them an evil conscience, and can have no true freedom in their ministry. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *The fortune hunter:*—We see here—1. The power of ignorance. Simon used sorcery and the people were bewitched. Society in all ages is troubled by these artful characters, and strange to say people are ever ready to submit to them. 2. The power of religion. The sorcerer and his dupes believed the gospel. At dawn the unclean animals of the night flee to their dens; so gospel light chases away the morally unclean. We notice—I. The duty of the Church towards the ungodly (ver. 14). Wherever the primitive Church found a tendency toward the truth, they were ready to help. The true spirit of the gospel removes all party walls. Jew and Samaritan, black and white, &c., are all brethren according to the New Testament. Let us follow His example Who came to seek and to save the lost. II. The existence of good and evil in the Church. Judas was among the twelve, false teachers were at Corinth, &c., heretics abounded in the early churches, superstition was rampant in the Middle Ages, strange errors abounded in reformed communities. Why? Because of the limited knowledge of men. Christ likened His kingdom to a net full of fishes—good and bad. The Church may suspect many, but to select is dangerous, because of the imperfect knowledge of the selectors. The Church is often censured because of its imperfections, but, its enemies being witnesses, it is the best of moral schools. III. In the life of men there are events which exhibit the master principle (ver. 18). Simon saw here an opportunity of making his fortune. A bad man may go through the routine of Christian duties, deceiving and deceived, but some event will happen which will discover the inner man. This will not be usually in great public matters, but in small things connected with the home or shop. Simon was one of those fortune hunters which are so numerous to-day, whose God is Mammon, whose Bible the Ledger, and whose creed Gain. A quite incidental circumstance, of whose issue in an opposite direction he was quite sure, found him out. Thus the devil makes fools of the wisest. IV. When the evil is found out it is the duty of the Church to reform it. Peter's conduct is an example to the Church in all ages, and teaches us that church discipline should be administered—1. Impartially. God is no respecter of persons. Simon's policy had paid him well; he was rich and powerful. But Peter cared nothing for his position. Woe to the Church which palliates evil because of the social status of the offender. Achan in the camp means disaster in the field. 2. Compassionately. Though Peter spoke the truth frankly, he opened up the path to mercy (Gal. vi. 1). V. Bad men when disciplined will often have their own way. Peter told Simon to repent and pray, but Simon only wanted immunity from punishment in his own wicked course. So now God offers pardon on certain conditions, but men refuse the conditions, and go on pleasure seeking, mammon worshipping, hoping that at last some good man's prayer will secure mercy. (*W. A. G.*) *Sudden conversions not always genuine:*—Fish sometimes leap out of the water with great energy, but it would be foolish to conclude that they have left the liquid element for ever; in a moment they are swimming again as if they had never forsaken the stream; indeed it was but a fly that tempted them aloft, or a sudden freak: the water is still their home, sweet home. When we see long accustomed sinners making a sudden leap at religion, we may not make too sure that they are converts; perhaps some gain allures them, or sudden excitement stirs them, and if so they will be back again at their old sins. Let us hope well, but let us not commend too soon. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 14–25. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.—*The first Church visitation:*—I. The occasion. There is—1. Christian life to be fostered (ver. 14). 2. A want in the Church to be supplied (ver. 16). II. The visitors. 1. Peter—apostolic zeal. 2. Evangelical tenderness. III. The functions. 1. Prayer in the name of the Church (ver. 15). 2. Imposition of hands in the

name of God (ver. 17). IV. THE EFFECTS. 1. The strengthening of the Church (ver. 17). 2. The sifting (ver. 18). (*K. Gerok.*) *The deputation to Samaria:*—This must have been a most instructive experience to John. The apostle who would have prayed for destructive fire is himself sent down to Samaria to invoke the falling of another flame that burns but does not consume! We cannot tell what we may yet do in life. Amongst our old enmities we may yet find our sweetest friendships. Do not seek to destroy any man, however much he may reject you or misunderstand you. A time may come when you can render him the service of prayer. I. THE APOSTLES RECEIVE A REPORT FROM SAMARIA (ver. 14). The text is now easy reading, but there was a day when it was a grand story. It is the dawning of a new day, the winning of a great battle; that day the Gentiles were admitted into the kingdom of Christ. We lose so much by forgetting the circumstances of the case. This is a verse now read as if it had no atmosphere. What is it that we lose in history? The atmosphere; that which gives the novelist or the dramatist supremacy over the dry, technical, and most learned annalist! The dreariest part of every missionary meeting to many persons is the reading of the report—a reading which should bring all the Church together in its noblest enthusiasm, shouting as a conquering host—"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." II. WHEN THIS REPORT WAS MADE THE APOSTLES SENT DOWN PETER AND JOHN. Was Peter then really "sent down"? We thought that Peter would have sent down other men! Yet how delicate the tribute to his undoubted primacy of love and enthusiasm! He it was who was selected to go down. There is nothing papal here. The Pope is not "sent down," he sends down. Our greatest men should always be sent down to the villages under circumstances such as these. Our very grandest preachers ought to he our missionaries. III. WHEN PETER AND JOHN WERE COME DOWN WHAT DID THEY DO? This will reveal the right aspect of apostolic influence and office. Let us read the text in a way of our own, "Peter and John sat upon a great and high throne, and waved over the astounded Gentiles a staff that was supposed to have singular power in it, and the amazed and wonder-struck villagers fell back before such dazzling dignity and bewailed their own unworthiness." That would be poor Scripture! How does the text really read? 1. When they were come down, they prayed for the villagers. Pray for inquirers; do not overpower them. Pray in great religious crises, and thus magnify the event, and do not lessen it. Do we pray now? Do we ask as if we meant to have what we ask? 2. They prayed that Samaria might receive the Holy Ghost. Then what had Samaria already received? Only the first baptism. Water will do you no good. It was meant to be a beginning, not an end. We have believed, but have we received the Holy Ghost? People imagine that when they have believed, the work is done. As well tell me that when you have put the fuel into the grate the fire is lighted. We know the truth, what we want is the burning spark! There is no mistaking that. No man can mistake fire. You may paint it, but you cannot warm your hands at the flame on the canvas. Fire is like nothing but itself. It separates man from man, yet unites man to man. It burns up selfishness; purifies, glorifies. It gives a man individuality. It detaches him from the common crowd and gives him a singularity of his own. When the Church has received the Holy Ghost she will be unlike every other community. When the pulpit has been baptized by the Holy Ghost it will stand alone in the supremacy of its power. At present it is the retreat of the mumbler, the living of the essayist. Our religion is at present an argument, our desire is that it may become a passion! IV. SIMON, HEARING THAT THROUGH LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS THE HOLY GHOST WAS RECEIVED, OFFERED THEM MONEY. 1. It is easy to abuse this man, but he acted a most natural and rational part, considering his training, avocation, and the influence he had acquired. He had lived all his life in the market-place; he had never breathed a purer air; he knew but one world, and one language. He saw only the outside—which of us sees any further? We think because we have been to church we are Christians. That is precisely the reasoning of Simon. There has grown up a custom which is known as Simony. He who would hold his place in the Church by virtue of having bought it is guilty of it. But simony is not in the pulpit alone. We may buy influence, status, and authority in the Church by the use of money. Who is there that does not imagine that everything can be bought? Yet how little in reality can we buy with money! Can you buy sound judgment? Poetic fire? Prophetic insight? Any form of spiritual and enduring power? Know ye that money has but a little world to live in, and that the highest gifts are not to be purchased with gold. God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and strong in power. To the poorest

man He says, "Take this gospel and preach it." A manger will do for a cradle when there is in it the Saviour of the world. Do you suppose that because you have little money you have little power, life, responsibility? What have you? You may have the power of prayer! You may be able to "speak a word in season to him that is weary." You may have the gift of hope and the faculty of music, and you may be able to lift the load from many a burdened heart. Poorest man, do not despair! You may be rich in ideas, in sympathies, in suggestion, and in all the noblest treasures that can make men wealthy with indestructible possession. 2. There was probably no fixed sum in the mind of Simon. If such a bestowal as that of the Spirit could be effected upon him, money should not stand in the way. This was the hour of apostolic temptation. Silver and gold they had none. Money is always a powerful temptation to the empty pocket. It is very easy when there is no temptation to say what we should do; but when the money is in the hand of the tempter, and when in one moment more it may be in our own, and when the thing asked for in exchange is itself a good thing, where is the man who can return a denial with the emphasis of thunder, and the accent of lightning? The Church is always tempted in this same way. We must always reject the unholy patronage. Do I address a minister who preaches to a moneyed pew? Your ministry will be blighted with well-merited condemnation. Do I minister to a Church that could accept secular patronage in order to preach a settled and determined theology? Such a Church would have sold its birthright for a contemptible price. Faith must spread its own daily board. Love must pay its own way. Do I speak to some who represent very feeble communities? Do not ask any man to help you, unless his help be the inspiration of love. Never be bribed into silence. Never keep back the truth of God, lest you should forfeit status or income. It is not necessary for any man to live, but it is necessary for every man to be loyal to Christ's truth. When the king came to meet Abram, and offered him great hospitality and patronage, Abram said, "No, lest thou say, I have made Abram rich." The chief power is spiritual, not financial. But the Church has wonderfully fallen under the fallacy which teaches that the Church ought to be socially respectable. V. How was it that the apostles were enabled to escape this potent temptation? The answer is that they had a true conception of the spiritual election and function of the Church (ver. 20). The Church had not then become a machine. Ordination was not then a thing to be arranged. It was inspiration. Men are now "prepared" for the ministry. Now we "educate" men for the pulpit. Educate men for the ministry! "Thy education perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God" could be purchased by schooling. Get all the education you can; be the best informed man of your circle; but inspiration makes a minister and makes the Church. "Not by might, and not by power," &c. Are you, young man, considering whether you will enter Christ's ministry or not? Then pray God you may never enter it; for it is not a question for consideration. There are those, shame on their grey hairs, who are telling us that if the Church would offer more money to the young men of our "better families," they might possibly give themselves to the ministry! A malediction from heaven be upon such thoughts! Does Christ want the members of our "better families" to be kind enough to accept position as His ambassadors, and expositors, and friends? He will choose His own ministers. He will see to it that the pulpit is never silent. VI. Peter spoke in his own characteristic tone (vers. 21–23). His speech was not a mere denunciation. His moral dignity is positively sublime, and yet, having uttered the word of malediction, he shows that the true object of the denunciation of wrong is to save the wrong-doer. Here is the gospel in an unexpected place. After such a thunderstorm who could have expected this voice of lute and harp? Repent! Forgive! Give up no man. Do not spare his sin; hold the fiercest light over it, but point the wrong-doer himself to the possibility of forgiveness through repentance and supplication. VII. Simon did not—nor could he be expected to—seize the spiritual idea which ruled the apostle's thinking. His reply is most natural, though often condemned (ver. 24). He asked for prayer, so far he was not wrong. He suggested the prayer "that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." There he failed to see the right meaning of prayer. We must not go to God in supplication merely to escape penalty, but to escape sin. Yet let a man come through any gate that first opens, only let him come! If one man should come through hatred of sin, if another man of lower mould should say, "I fear hell; God have mercy upon me." Let him also come. Every man must pray as he can. You cannot send the heart to school to teach it how to pray. Where the pain is, the prayer should be. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The apostle's visit to Samaria:—I. THE EFFACEMENT OF PHILIP. Like the Baptist before our Lord, Philip retires when Peter and John come on the scene. There is something touching in this willingness to be eclipsed. Philip might naturally have felt that he had borne the burden and heat of the day, and that the apostles' success was due to his efforts. "He had laboured" (words spoken about Samaria), "and they had entered into his labours." He had dug the soil, sown the seed, watered it, until the field was white; and now it only remained for the apostles to reap. Nor is he in the least jealous. His aim was the reverse of Simon's, and accordingly any increase and confirmation of faith was a matter of joy. Only those who after honest labour have been superseded by men of more brilliant gifts can appreciate the trial and the grace to bear it. II. THE APOSTOLIC DEPUTATION. 1. The men chosen. (1) Peter's presence was required by his position in prophecy and providence. Our Lord had entrusted him with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, indicating that he was to throw open the gates of the gospel dispensation. (2) John is so constantly associated with Peter, that we are not surprised to find them companions here. But it is a striking coincidence that he who, giving vent to the prevailing hostility against the Samaritans, called for fire from heaven to consume them, should, now that a more loving spirit actuated him, be selected to call down the fire of God's illuminating and quickening grace. 2. Their official act. (1) This forms the scriptural ground for the rite of confirmation. Baptism is in the nature of a contract into which Christ enters with the soul, and the practice of *infant* baptism makes it almost a necessity to have some period at which a baptized child may consciously, and of his own accord, enter into this contract. How suitable, then, that they should receive the completion of their baptism by prayer and the imposition of hands. This consecrates, as it were, the baptized person to the royal priesthood, and sets him apart solemnly for the service of Christ. Yet, while we discover in holy Scripture the germ of this rite, we do not regard confirmation as having the universal necessity or virtue of a sacrament. For the gift of the Spirit was vouchsafed independently of the imposition of hands, as in the cases of Cornelius, Saul, and the Ethiopian eunuch. 3. Their treatment of Simon. Once before had money been offered to Peter, in order to gain a fair reputation. Ananias had laid money down at his feet, wishing it to be understood as the whole. Simon now does the same thing to win power and influence. The secret of the apostles' power was just what he wanted to regain his lost influence and eclipse Philip. What he coveted was not the Holy Spirit, but the power of communicating the Spirit to others. And what he cared to communicate was not the grace of the Spirit, but His gifts. And there can be little doubt that what he offered money for, he intended to win money by. Peter's reproof, and his insinuation of the difficulty of saving a character so far gone in evil ("perhaps") was not too strong for the occasion. Had there been a single stirring of conscience, a single aspiration after goodness, the rejoinder would have been far more lenient. 4. The contrasts of character in the Church. Here is Simon the apostle, a man of the most intense disinterestedness, who had forsaken all to follow his Master, confronted with Simon the sorcerer, who had nominally embraced Christianity as a possible means of wealth and power. What a natural repulsion must there be between the minds of the two when each gets an inkling of the other. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The Church and the world*:—Between no two things is there a greater contrast. The contrast is a double one—between the natural and supernatural, and between the holy and the sinful. With respect to the first, they are for each other; and therein lies the task of the Church. With respect to the second, they are against each other; and therein lies the danger of the Church. Both the task and the danger are exemplified here. I. THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD. 1. The extension of the Church in the world. (1) The words of our departing Lord (chap. i. 8) are the theme of all Church history, as well as that of the first days. The evangelical history of the first thirty-four years of our dispensation conducts us from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The apostolic history of the same number of years leads us from Jerusalem to Rome. The bridge between Jerusalem and the heathen world was Samaria, a field planted by our Lord, whose prophecy of the harvest there (John iv. 35–38) was now fulfilled in Philip, driven thither by persecution. The storm destroys flowers, but scatters seeds—a consolation for the Church in every age. (2) Philip was a guardian of the poor, but the Holy Ghost made him an evangelist. The liberty of the Spirit is not bound by human order. He founded the Mother Church of Missions at Antioch by means of private Christians, and the Church of Rome by men unknown; prisoners brought the gospel to the Goths in Europe. He "bloweth

where He listeth." (3) In the days of Jesus, Samaria had been greatly moved; then there arose a sorcerer who won the people. Hunger grasps at any food, for which reason also they accepted the word of salvation. The conversion of the Samaritans was a sign for the Jews (Matt. xxi. 43), and the apostles understood it well. The spread of the gospel is always a sign of warning. In our days the age of missions has begun anew. May not this be a sign that the word of grace will depart if we esteem it slightly. "Buy," says Luther, "while the market is at your door. Gather in while the weather is bright and fair. Use the word of God's grace while you have it. The Jews had it once; but they lost it, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to Greece; but they lost it, and now they have the Turk. Rome and Italy had it; but they lost it, and now they have the Pope. And you Germans must not think that you will have it for ever; for ingratitude and contempt will not suffer it to remain." 2. The Church preserving its unity in the world. The apostles send Peter and John to sanction the work of Philip, and to incorporate the Christians into the Apostolic Church. The rending of the body of Christ into such a multitude of sects is to be deeply lamented. Unceasingly should we think of the words of Jesus (John xvii. 12). But a self-conceived, self-made unity, only leads to schism. Unity gives strength, but only true unity—unity in the truth. 3. The testimony of the Church in the world (ver. 15–17). It must not be understood that the baptism of Philip was ineffective, and that laying on of apostolic hands made it so. The action of the Holy Ghost is twofold. He is a Spirit of life and a Spirit of work. He makes us children of God and servants of God. The first work of the Spirit was accomplished through Philip, the second through the apostles. The first is alike in all, the second manifold. God gives various gifts of service, and these are not necessarily and obviously miraculous. The gifts of knowledge, doctrine, guidance, &c., have nothing striking in themselves, and yet they are as much gifts of the Spirit as others. Without the power and blessing of God's Spirit, all our toil and skill are vain; but with that, our work gives evidence to the world that the Church is the possessor of heavenly powers. II. THE WORLD IN THE CHURCH. 1. The gathering of the world into the Church. The net cast into the sea collects all manner of fish. The condition of the Church is necessarily mixed; the wheat and tares must grow together here. When the reapers come at the Judgment, then will the Church be pure. Let us judge not, lest we be judged; but let us see to it that we are the children of God. 2. The spirit of the world in the Church. What is the spirit of the world and the spirit befitting the kingdom of God (Matt. xx. 25–28). The world strives to rule, the Christian rejoices to serve; the one wants to be great, the other is willing to be nothing. It was not enough for Simon to be a Christian; he wanted to play the same great part as before his baptism; and to use the powers of the Spirit for the gratification of his self-seeking mind. And yet his sin grew from the corrupt soil of the heart, which is the same in all. Scarcely is the pride of the natural man driven out, when there comes the pride of the spiritual man. And, as Luther says, "the white devil is worse than the black." How hard it is to seek nothing but the favour of God, whatever man's opinion may be. 3. The Church's judgment on that spirit. "Thy money perish with thee"—*i.e.*, all thy arts by which thou thinkest the powers of the Holy Spirit are to be obtained. How marvellous will it appear when, at the Judgment, those now esteemed "great" will be cast out, and the little ones esteemed great (Matt. vii. 22, &c.). This judgment we can only escape by a penitent judgment of ourselves. (*Prof. Luthardt.*)

Ver. 17. **Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.** —*Confirmation:*—According to—I. ITS ORIGIN. No sacramental institution of our Lord, but a time-honoured ordinance of the Church. II. ITS IMPORT. No substitution for, or repetition of, baptism, but a ratification of baptismal confession and grace. III. ITS EFFECT. No infallible communication of the Spirit, as here by the apostles, but an incalculable spiritual blessing for susceptible hearts. (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 20–24. **But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee.**—*The impotence of money:*—I do not know that the age in which Simon lived was especially a commercial age; but whatever may have been its distinctive peculiarity, there cannot be much doubt about ours. There have been successive ages, each of a characteristic type, as, *e.g.*, the age of the shepherds, illustrated in the long centuries of pastoral life in the East; the age of conquest, as depicted in the story

of the Persian kings; the age of the arts and of letters, as seen in Greece; the age of civic rule and military despotism, as revealed in the history of Rome; the age of religious enthusiasm, as traceable in the history of the middle ages and the crusades; the age of luxury, as found in the France of the Louises, and of revolution, as found in the France of the Buonapartes. But, though in all of them men recognised the uses of wealth, and sought it, in no one of them was the conception of its capabilities so fevered and exaggerated as in our own. We are living in times when men not merely believe that wealth is of all things the most desirable (men have believed that from the time of the rich young man), but when they believe also that there is nothing that cannot be purchased with money. And therefore it is that this answer of Peter is so timely. "This power you covet is communicable, but you cannot buy it! You have seen these common people quickened into a disclosure of powers such as your poor arts have never dreamed of; but the wealth of an empire could not purchase the least or lowliest of them." "Well, what of it?" one might answer. They are not the gifts and powers that I crave. But the things I do crave can be purchased with money. I look about me and see that there is nothing so potent as wealth. I find that in society nothing covers so many faults as money; that neither birth nor death are separate from the questions, "What will he inherit?" or "What did he leave?" That while we scorn the French marriage of convenience in name, we observe in fact; that poverty, if not a disgrace, is an impertinence; that every taste that I cultivate makes wealth more desirable and poverty more irksome; that while I can acquire the habits of luxurious living with facility, I can surrender them only with pain; and finally that, no matter how selfish or unscrupulous has been my career, it is only necessary that it shall have been exceptionally successful to secure for me, when dying, the applause of mankind. Wherein, then, consists the folly or even the error in my owning also that everything that I do care for can be purchased with money? That error and that folly consist in this: that these gifts of the Spirit which Simon would fain have bought with money are but the type of every other best gift in all the world, and that of these as of those, it is everlastingly true that they are not for sale. Recall some of them for a moment, and see if it is not so. I. HEALTH. Some of us have drifted into one of those European refuges of the invalid like Ems or Karlsbad; places where people whose lungs or limbs or livers are diseased have come together to drink the waters and submit to the regimen, or be washed whole again in the baths. Oh, those melancholy processions of gloomy-visaged and despondent men and women! I have heard of one of them bursting into a storm of passionate denunciation because a healthy-looking servant had entered his apartment. How dared such an one insult him with the offensive contrast of her unwelcome presence! And yet the one was only a peasant girl, and the other a prince and a millionaire. Would he not have been willing to have shared his millions if he could have bought with them the other's single gift of health? Unfortunately, however, it is not for sale. II. Next in rank is that higher boon of MENTAL CULTURE. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women who rarely know a day without an experience of pain, who yet are possessors of a secret which makes them habitually insensible to it. There are accomplishments in which they can so lose themselves that, for the time, nothing unwelcome really touches them; and above all, in the pages of a book, they can so pass out of the consciousness of their outer world into the consciousness of that inner world to which the poet, or the historian has introduced them, that penury and loneliness and pain will be for the time being forgotten. But such a pleasure as this is not purchasable. Indeed, just because high living is usually so fatal to high thinking, the pleasures of culture are almost prohibited to the merely rich. Now it does not matter that such persons have never known (because incapable of knowing) the joys of high intellectual activity and so cannot greatly miss what they have never tasted. What they do know is that weariness of *ennui*, that proneness to idle gossip, to coarser indulgence which is the everlasting tendency of an habitually luxurious life. So thoroughly is this understood where wealth is hereditary that occupations have to be created as a defence against the dangers of their peculiar circumstances. But when such occupations are wanting, the intellectual apathy is at times a hideous and appalling nightmare. III. More tragically is this true in the domain of the AFFECTIONS. Love is not for sale; and that mysterious sentiment which must be won and deserved—not purchased, never goes along with a jointure nor can be made over with transfers of real estate. There have been plenty of people with no capacity for such an affection

who have bartered themselves for some one else's possessions, but in selling their persons or their accomplishments they have usually sold all that they had to sell. The power of greatly and unselfishly loving another was not in them, and what they had not to deliver they could not sell. But, where in any man or woman there has been such a capacity, the heart has steadily and invariably refused to follow the beckoning of mere worldly possessions. If any one else loves us, we may be sure that it is not for what we have, but for what we are. IV. And that reminds me of one other unpurchasable possession—A GOOD CONSCIENCE, or peace of mind. The world has always had in it people who, having lived selfish lives, have striven, before they were done with life, to square accounts by the lavish distribution of their means. All along they have been uncomfortably conscious of the compassion of thoughtful men and quiet women. And when they have encountered such they have been dimly sensible that these people had a secret of peace, of hopeful and certain anticipation, of which they themselves knew nothing. Oh, what would they not give if they could buy that! Nay, more, as they look backward what else would they not give if they but had it to give, if somehow they could transform those cruel and accusing memories. But that peace of God which passeth all understanding, passeth all price as well! Conclusion: I want to say one word to the young. You are living in an atmosphere where the loudest bid that is made is the bid for money. Be afraid of an idolatry so poor and mean! Money, in itself considered, is neither good nor bad. It is an instrument. You may have it without being bad and you may be without it without being good. But to live for it, to fret because you are without it, is the death of all nobleness and the doom of aspiration. There must have been some hours in your life when your heart has thrilled with a genuine aspiration, and when, sitting alone, you have pored over the page that has told you of the great names that have made humanity immortal, and who, as they moved onward and upward have left behind them the lustre of a nobility that can never pale. And at such moments, surely you have longed to be like those nobler beings and to follow their radiant footsteps. Cling to that longing and follow it, for, sooner or later, this love of goodness will bring you into the presence of One who is the divinest of all. And yet, how poor He was! How utterly and absolutely Christ triumphed without the aid of money. Nowadays there is no enterprise, however unworldly its aims, that must not rest upon a pecuniary basis. And yet there has lived in the world One, who from first to last was penniless. Since He came and went away, what colossal fortunes have been heaped up, what mighty combinations of capital have ruled the credit of the civilised world and made even princes and sovereigns to fawn obsequiously upon their possessors. What has become of them? Who remembers them? But all the while the sway of that Galilean peasant who had not where to lay His head, broadens and deepens and advances. Would you possess the secret of His resistless spell? Verily, if like Simon you come to buy it with mere money, you and your money shall most surely perish together. But if you come discerning that the gifts of God are gifts which money cannot purchase, then indeed you may hope to learn that secret, which shall make you rich for ever! (*Bp. H. C. Potter, D.D.*) *Gift and purchase*:—As we read Peter's words, their very sound brings out the nature of the sin, for their terms express the contradiction that is involved in the misuse of money. To purchase a gift is evidently impossible. One of the two words must be wrong. Either the thing is not a gift, or else we have not purchased it. Is the world, is our life, a gift or a purchase? Between those two ideas we are for ever vacillating. Our belief in God says it is a gift; our lives of activity and energy say it is a purchase. We talk of Providence, and then are discouraged at our misfortunes or our failures, as if we had never heard of such a thing as God's providence. We pray for all blessings, temporal and spiritual, and then congratulate ourselves when we have put ourselves in a position to obtain them. Now, into these lives, for ever tossed between these two ideas, enters the element of money. Its one reason of existence is purchase. We cannot eat it or wear it; the man who hoards it for the mere pleasure of looking at it is acknowledged to be a pitiable fool. Can we not see how at once this universal thing, so necessary and so much desired, throws all its weight on the side of purchase in our view of life? It makes one continual barter. Purchase is a necessary element of life, and money represents it. It is needed for our independence; without it we sink down into gift-receivers from our fellow-men. The strong, self-reliant character that belongs to men of business comes entirely from their holding so natural a relation to their fellow-men; they receive what they pay for, they expect to be paid for what they give. That is

the simple law of honest trade and of honest manhood, and woe to the man who attempts to avoid it, whether by begging or gambling. The very money which he receives is a rebuke to him, as it tells him of the universal existence of that law of purchase between man and man which, like all other laws, will punish the man who violates it. But when money, with the principle which it represents, begins to enter into our relation to God, then the contradiction comes, and the sin with it. Just as living on men's gifts spoils our true relation to them, so trying to purchase of God spoils entirely the true sense of our relation to Him. God must give: that fact is written in our belief of Him as our Creator, our great Superior, infinitely above us. It is the fact that is repeated in the tone of authority that fills every revelation of Him; it is the thought of every heart that cares to look for Him in the earth around us. There is no God if we can purchase things of Him. Money is utterly atheistic in its very central principle when taken out of its proper place; and, as men heap it up, we have only the repetition of the old-storied struggle of the giants who heaped mountain upon mountain, all of which were so good in their places on earth, that they might reach to heaven, and unseat God from His throne. As money grows in power and influence, this will be its destructive power upon men's lives. Beware of this danger; it meets all, as they pass out of childhood's state of gift-receiving into manhood's time of purchase. There is nothing with which to meet it but the simple knowledge of God cultivated by every means which is thrown about us, and by every spiritual influence which can be brought to bear upon us. The relation to God must be learned more and more closely in all its special features. The thought and the effort must be fixed directly on Him by morals, by religion, by worship, by study, by prayer. Never more than in these times, when money is the world's great power, did mankind more need the simplest, purest, most childlike belief in God, that life may be truly complete on both sides, toward man and toward God. The two sides will not remain without effect upon each other. The dependence of the one will soften and save from cruelty and haughtiness the independence of the other. He who knows that he is constantly receiving from One above him cannot be cruel and exacting toward one below him; nay, he cannot keep from being like his great, bountiful God in sweet acts of charity. The independence of the one will add a sense of responsibility and power to the other; he who appreciates the power that God has given him among his fellow-men will more gladly enter the service of that God to whom he owes so much, thankful for the opportunity to do something. And see how, once more, the relation between rich and poor is touched by this higher view of God as a constant and manifold Giver. Must the poor man stand aside, and see his neighbour, who has money, go before him in opportunities of doing good, in acquisition of high and refined motives and character in life? From how much does the want of money shut him out? Of how many of God's gifts does it deprive him? Of but one—ease of bodily relation toward his fellow-men, one of the most dangerous gifts that can be bestowed. Shall he stand mourning for that one, while all the time God waits to bestow character here, salvation hereafter, while moral possessions and eternal life are open to him, and means of doing good by personal growth and work which wealth can never buy are at his hand? "Thy money *perish* with thee." Money is perishable—in substance, form, possession. Our souls are immortal. Which shall affect the other? Shall we and our money perish together? or shall our lives, knowing our God, lift up the money by the devotion of us to whom it belongs? Shall it dazzle us with its glitter, and prevent our seeing God? or shall we save it by our power of serving God? We are the greater, surely, and to us God has opened a path out of this bondage in which earthly things are for ever holding us. Walk in it; break the chain, golden though it be, that binds our immortal souls to this earth; and seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and with that gift all other gifts shall be a blessing, and not a destruction. (*Arthur Brooks.*) *Simony assumes various forms*:—Simon desired to obtain spiritual power and office, not in the Divine method, but in low, earthly ways. Money was his way because it was the one thing he valued and had to offer; but surely there are many other ways in which men may unlawfully seek for spiritual office and influence in the Church. Many a man who would never dream of offering money in order to obtain a high place in the Church, or would have been horrified at the very suggestion, has yet resorted to other methods just as effective and just as wrong. Men have sought high position by political methods. They have given their support to a political party, and have sold their talents to uphold a cause, hoping thereby to gain their ends. They may not have given gold which comes from the mint to gain spiritual position, but they have all the same

given a mere human consideration, and sought by its help to obtain spiritual power; or they preach and speak and vote in Church synods and assemblies with an eye to elections to high place and dignity. An established Church, with its legally secured properties and prizes, may open a way for the exercise of simony in its grosser forms. But a free Church, with its popular assemblies, opens the way for a subtler temptation, leading men to shape their actions, to suppress their convictions, to order their votes and speeches, not as their secret conscience would direct them, but as human nature and earthly considerations would tell them was best for their future prospects. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) **Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.**—*The natural heart:*—In meditating upon the story of the Samaritan impostor, and studying our own depraved nature in it, we may remark —I. THAT THE NATURAL HEART HAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE THINGS. 1. According to some modern teachings, all men have a religious instinct, and worship God in some honest way, which, as He is a kind God, must be acceptable to Him. On analysis, we shall find that this is only either the action of a guilty conscience or of a poetic fancy. In the one case the man has a vague idea of retribution for his sins, and strives in some crude way to appease the offended divinity. In the other, the same disposition of mind which makes the painter and the poet makes the dreamy weaver of cobweb thoughts about the unseen. There is a desire to avert evil, and a blind ceremonial in consequence, or there is a constructive imagination indulging in its exercise. 2. But is this religion? Is this knowing and serving God? Can this satisfy the heart and purify the life? The religion of pagan nations is largely the product of this instinct. Does a comparison of these with Christian nations lead us to covet their condition? The religious instinct is of no higher character than the eating and drinking instinct, as far as true religion is concerned. They are both of the earth, earthy. Men are cut off from God by sin, and they can return only by the use of Divine means. 3. That which Simon brought out into full relief was simply the common character of the natural man. Divine things are treated with low, earthly affections, and, of course, as low, earthly things. Simon in trying to buy God's power was no worse than the many who try to buy God's pardon. 4. The prominent sinners of Scripture are only prominent by reason of their circumstances, not their sin. That is common to all. Pharaoh, Balaam, Doeg, Ananias and Simon are only types raised up high enough for all to see. II. THAT MAN'S WICKEDNESS BEFORE GOD IS IN THE CONDITION OF HIS HEART. Men posit sin in overt acts, and fail to explore the pollution of their hearts. Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount endeavours to correct this fatal error, and shows that the seat of murder, &c., is in the heart, and that the sins may there reside when these outward exhibitions are avoided. Simon's desire, not his request, was his sin. God saw the wickedness in his heart. He cannot allow wickedness concealed any more than wickedness in display, and can receive none except as the unholy heart is renewed. This fundamental truth is what the poets and philosophers ignore. They would reform man on the basis of the old evil heart. They would make the outer circles of life pure, and leave the core rotten. If, however, they say that the heart of man is pure, how then did it ever produce such universal impurity in life? But some will say, "We believe the heart must be renewed, but why cannot man renew it himself?" In reply, we say —III. THAT ONLY GOD'S POWER CAN RENEW THE HEART. When the affections are in the wrong, how can their own influence take them out? Where is the first impetus to come from when that which forms the force of the life is fixed upon evil? Do you take refuge in the thought that there is some element of good in the heart, and that this at last accomplishes the renewal? Then why does it not always accomplish it? Any exceptional case destroys your theory, for Nature always works in the same way. But, besides that, how could the good element in the heart overcome the bad unless it had a majority? And if it had a majority, how came the heart ever to go wrong? No. The evil heart cannot renew itself. God alone can do that. Its condition without God is described as being in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, wretched and helpless. The bound prisoner cannot loosen himself; another must do it. The conspicuous examples of this truth, such as the drunkard and the gambler vainly striving (in order to save their bodies or their property or their reputation) to stop their excesses, are only specimens of a universal rule. IV. THAT THE HOPE OF MAN IS IN PRAYER. "Pray the Lord." The "if" was not a doubt whether God would pardon if Simon prayed, but whether Simon would ever pray. Prayer must have penitence as its spirit. "Repent." It must have a deep conviction of personal sin. Simon

seems to have been too far gone to have any such conviction. Hence we find him only afraid. Though Simon apparently did not take the road to pardon and to God, we see in Peter's injunction what the road is. It is prayer to God. The heart needs His forgiving grace. That grace, through Christ's sacrificial death for sin, fills the Divine reservoir, and is ready to be outpoured on every seeking soul. Prayer is that act of faith which makes the connection with this reservoir; the acceptance of the Divine power, which is waiting to be gracious to every sinner. (*H. Crosby, D.D.*) *A right state of the heart*:—I. BY A MAN'S HEART WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND HIS PREVAILING VIEWS, DISPOSITIONS, AND DESIRES. When these are such, as his situation requires, then his heart is right in the sight of God. Now man by sin has lost God's favour and ruined his soul. But by grace he is placed in such a situation that he may recover God's favour and save his soul. The offers of salvation are made to him. When therefore he accepts this offer, when his prevailing views, dispositions, and desires are such as, in this situation, they ought to be, then his heart is right in the sight of God. II. WHAT ARE THE PARTICULARS IN WHICH THIS STATE OF HEART CONSISTS. When the heart is in a right state—1. It is deeply humbled before God on account of its sinfulness. God sees that all men are great sinners, that sin is a dreadful evil. When a man, then, esteems himself to be a little sinner, or perhaps hardly a sinner at all; when he endeavours to excuse, or even to justify whatever he has done amiss, it must be clear that his heart cannot be right before God. In order to be right he must think of sin as God thinks of it, and feel his own depravity. 2. It thankfully believes in Christ for the pardon of his sins. God, who is rich in mercy, is not willing that sinners should die eternally. He hath, therefore, provided for them a way of salvation. So long, then, as a man rejects God's offers of pardon and continues at enmity with his Maker, how is it possible that his heart can be right in the sight of God? It never can be right till he obey the gospel, and comply with the terms of it. And these terms are "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." 3. It longs after holiness. God is holy and would have all men to be holy. How is it possible, then, for the heart to be right in His sight, if it does not love what He loves, and desire to be what He is? III. THE NECESSITY OF ITS BEING SO. Till a man's heart be thus right in the sight of God—1. He can have no interest in the promises of the gospel. Call to mind what these promises are, as well as the persons to whom they are given. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," &c. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." "This is the promise which God hath given us, even eternal life," &c. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Sin shall not have dominion over you," &c. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness," &c. Now, how is it possible for a man to have any share or lot in the matter, whose heart is not right in the sight of God? 2. He cannot perform the duties of religion. This is not merely to go through the forms of religious worship. This a man may do irrespective of the state of his heart. To perform the duties of religion is to perform them in a spiritual manner, with a penitent, a believing, and an holy frame of mind. But how can this be done by those who are unhumbled in heart, who have no living faith in Christ, nor any real desire after holiness? 3. He cannot taste the pleasures of religion. Consider what they are. They spring from a sense of pardon; from God's love shed abroad in the heart; from communion with Him. Now what can the man unhumbled, unbelieving, and unholy, know of these? 4. He can have no meetness for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness in the life to come. The things which constitute the happiness of the saints in light are that they see and serve God. They are with Christ, they behold His glory, and sing His praises. But to the unhumbled, the unbelieving, and the unholy, heaven then would not be heaven. They have no taste nor meetness for it, and consequently they have no part nor lot in the matter. (*E. Cooper.*) *Right hearts*:—As Sir Walter Raleigh laid his head on the block, the executioner, before lifting the dreadful axe, said, "Does your head lie right, Sir Walter?" Sir Walter turned his face to the headsman, saying, "You know, good friend, it matters not how the head lies if the heart be right." Then he laid his head on the block, and in another moment the head of the brave man rolled on the straw of the scaffold floor. Sir Walter's last speech is an everlasting truth. Nothing comes amiss when the heart is right; but a man may have all the riches of England, yet if his heart be not right he will have fits of misery, which would make his friends avoid him if he were not rich. But you may find another man who lives at the top of a house in a back room, and chiefly on bread

and weak tea; yet if that man's heart be right in the sight of God, he rejoices evermore and in everything gives thanks. Have you a right heart? If you have not, it is the cause of all your trouble; it is making your life one long toilsome weariness. The language of a wrong heart is, "Oh, dear, is it always going to be like this?" Many and many a time you may hear a wrong heart sigh, "Oh, I am so tired of my life!" Men can do great things. We can draw down electricity and send our message on its wings across the ocean in a moment. We dig down into the bowels of the earth for our light and heat; we sail on the wings of the wind; we dive to the bottom of the sea for our pearls; we make spindles to pull out and twist a thread so fine as to excel that of a spider; we put together looms to weave the most beautiful and intricate patterns: and have made a hammer which can either crack an egg, or dash a piece of steel into powder. But there is one thing we cannot do; we cannot make a human heart right. If your watch should get out of order, you know that it can be set right; but some of us have tried many years to patch up our heart; but it is the one thing which humanity cannot do; it is the act of an Almighty Being to fix aright the human heart. What a blessed position if we could say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!" The French have a proverb, that if a man would enjoy a happy life, he must have good digestion and a hard heart. That may be a wise worldly proverb; but I will tell you a better, that if your heart be right in the sight of God, you may have a bad digestion, and yet enjoy a happy life. It is a good thing to visit the hospital and see those still, pale, painful faces, and hear some of them say, "It's all right!" What! with broken limbs, with crushed body, with cancer within and sores without, "all right"? Yes; when the heart is right with God, your life shall also be right at all times. Your heart cannot be right nor your life happy —I. UNLESS YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF A LOVING, FORGIVING, AND HELPFUL GOD AT ALL TIMES. During a drought I noticed a mountain torrent pouring its stream of water from rock to rock. Whence this flow of water? It comes from the Creator's reservoirs inside the mountains. Kneel down, put your ear on the heather, and in the stillness of the mountain solitude you will hear the water trickling beneath from God's hidden reservoir to the torrent yonder. When the rain teems on the hills, the surface water flows into the streams, but a much larger quantity of water quietly sinks through the earth into great cisterns which God has provided there; and these cisterns pour themselves out through crevices in the rock by a natural syphon arrangement. Whenever I place my ear to the ground to listen to the quiet trickling of the underground water-supply, it reminds me of God! He is invisible, but near; and there is never a time when the flowing of His love is suspended. There are times of drought when the underground cisterns are emptied, and then, of course, if you put your ear to the mountain, you will hear no trickling of water; but there never is a time when a man can find a place in the world without God. Some people have an idea of the presence of God which they do not put into daily use. You have certain garments which you put away in summer and bring forth in winter. So, some people keep in their minds an idea of an ever-present God; but they do not make a daily practical use of this idea. When there is a fever, or a railway accident, or something terrible, they rush to their memory-box for the idea which has been kept wrapped up there, and cry, "O God, help me!" Such a life is miserable. The idea of a present God should be like a garment which is always suitable and comfortable at all periods. III. UNLESS WE KNOW THAT GOD IS NIGH AT HAND AND NOT AFAR OFF. Here is a gentle girl earning her living amongst strangers. She is much tempted in her position, and longs for help; and feeling that if she does not get it, she may fall, she goes to the telegraph office to send a message to her father far away. While she waits there, it comforts her to know that the click of the instrument is a message coming from her father, saying, "My child, keep up your heart and do your duty!" The message cheers her, but she goes away to her lonely lodging saying, "Ah, if father were only nearer." Likewise, the soul which is wearied with its trials and sins, needs a loving and forgiving God nigh at hand. A distant God cannot comfort us; we need a God to abide with us; such as we have in the heavenly Father who manifests himself to us in Jesus. See in that room, at midnight, lies a timid child, who in the darkness is afraid. But while she is trembling, she hears her father cough in the other room; and, in a moment, the child is comforted. Likewise, when we are in the darkness of sorrow, or bereavement, or affliction unto death, we are always afraid unless we can feel that God is near. Some years ago, one of my children one night when I went to kiss her while she lay in bed, said, "Papa,

are you going out to-night?" I replied, "No, dear!" She said, "What are you going to do?" I answered, "Going to write in the study." She said, "Then will you put your hat on the chair, and when I am afraid, I shall see by your hat that you are at home, with me!" So the promises of Jesus are tokens to us of our heavenly Father's love and care. But we need something nearer than the telegraph, closer than a cough in the other room, more tangible than a hat on a chair. It is comforting to have an idea of a God somewhere; but oh, how much more consoling to feel that He dwells in our heart! When we walk in a garden at night we can feel the sweet perfume of the silent flowers, and even in the darkness of night the flowers though silent speak to us. And he will probably exclaim:—"Oh, what lovely flowers; how delighted I am with this sweet garden!" The blind man cannot see the flowers, but they speak to him with the sweet odour of their fragrance and comfort. Most of us grope through life in the dark; but as we grope, we feel at times that God is touching our spirit, and we say, "Oh, blessed fact, God is speaking to me." III. UNLESS IT IS INSPIRED WITH LOVE TO JESUS FOR LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE ON THE CROSS. A young English nobleman, an officer in the Life Guards, was charged with the serious offence of forgery; but he was not guilty. A younger brother had done the deed; and the brave soldier took the blame on himself, and bore the burden of a guilt that was not his own. He enlisted as a private soldier under the French, who were then at war in Algeria. While there, he won the admiration of the French and the respectful fear of the Arabs. But there was one French colonel who hated him. Why? A beautiful Arab princess was taken prisoner whom the colonel seized as his victim; and the English nobleman revealing his name and rank, threatened that if the Frenchman did not act righteously towards the lady, he would expose him. The colonel yielded, and sent the princess back to her father, but, after that, he hated the English nobleman, and sought an opportunity of disgracing him. One day, the colonel taunted the noble private, and stung him so keenly that he pulled the coward from his horse and dashed him to the ground. According to French military law, there was only one verdict for such an offence—death. Now it happened that this nobleman, unknown to himself, had won the heart of a pretty French girl, a vivandière—a woman who sells to the soldiers provisions and liquors—whom he had treated with polite kindness. When she heard that he was condemned, she galloped off to headquarters and obtained a reprieve. Away she sped with the precious pardon, and when she came near the camp, she saw the signal that the last moment had arrived. A shrill cry was heard: "Wait! in the name of France." But the stern word of command sounded out upon the silence, "Fire!" and the girl's cry came too late. But while the volley was being fired, more fleet than the bullets, she had flung her arms about him, and then turned her head backward with her brave smile as the balls pierced her own bosom. She dropped on the ground, and he caught her up, saying, "My child! they have killed you! "What am I worth that you should perish for me!" Looking up quickly at the sorrowing soldiers, he exclaimed, "Oh, that you had fired one moment sooner!" She heard him, and in an unspeakable look which revealed her secret, she said, "I cannot speak as I would. But I have loved you. All is said!" Then she gave a tired sigh and the brave, loving creature lay dead in his arms with her head on his breast. He obtained his release, and his younger brother having confessed his crime, he was reinstated in his old position. Years passed away, but whenever the name was mentioned of the young creature who had lain down her life for him, he would bow his head as before some sacred thing. I have told you this touching tale in order that you may be reminded of Jesus who laid down His life for you and me. Does not your heart bow in tenderness at the sound of His name? Then consecrate your life in return for that wondrous love which bled and died to save a wretch like you. Oh, that you would believe that Jesus died for you! See, here is a boy who in the darkness of night is playing by swinging on the teagle chain of a lofty warehouse. He is swinging in and out of the top room, when suddenly the break gives way, and the chain rattles over the wheel carrying the boy quickly down. It is quite dark, and the poor boy hangs there holding on with both hands; but he is getting tired, and he fears he will be dashed to pieces in the yard below. Now one arm drops helpless, and finding his strength giving way, he shrieks in terror, and falls; but instead of being dashed to pieces, he finds that he has dropped only two or three inches from the ground! In his fright in the darkness, he feared he might fall a hundred feet, when he was really close to the ground. Likewise, some of you are in dreadful misery on account of your

sins; but if you would trust Jesus, you would find yourself at liberty. Drop into His arms! He is so near! Believe that He died instead of you. Venture to think that He really loves you. The proverb is applicable in great things as well as small. "Nothing venture, nothing have." (*W. Birch.*) **Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart be forgiven thee.**—*Peter's admonition to Simon the sorcerer:*—I. THE WICKED INTENTIONS OF MEN REQUIRE PARDON. "The thought of thine heart." Simon did not obtain his wish; but it was in his heart. The essence of the sin was there. He laid the plan, and began its execution, but was foiled. Hence Peter lays stress upon what was in the man's heart. He had been received into the fellowship of the saints; but this availed nothing so long as he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Something was out of order in the man, and that the main thing: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for," &c. The apostle would not allow him to console his conscience with the mere circumstance that he had failed in his attempt. In the new creation the Holy Ghost, therefore, makes the heart His first care. This is the citadel, which having been captured by grace, the whole man is gained for Christ. To be clean, we must be cleansed from secret faults; and not until the thoughts of our hearts are forgiven shall we stand justified before the Lord. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE WICKED ARE TO SEEK PEACE WITH GOD. "Repent . . . and pray." The foundation of duty and privilege in the spiritual kingdom is the blood of the Lamb, but there is another vital fact involved in our rescue from sin. It is a moral being who has sinned, and who requires the sovereign remedy of grace. The activity of his moral nature must assert itself. Though only willing in the day of God's power, he must not expect to be dragged like a stone to the fountain of cleansing, or like a brute to the altar of mercy. God's Spirit meets him in the path of sin, and this is His charge: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness." The sacrifice of Christ has made an open door for penitence. "Him hath God exalted," &c. If the sinner repents in an evangelical manner, he will be found in Christ. III. THE BARE POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE SINNER TO USE THIS MEANS OF GRACE. "Pray God if perhaps," &c. In what are called worldly adventures, men are not only willing, but eager, to take their chances, and though a thousand chances are against it, they bend every energy toward its attainment. Can it be that the soul is not worth a venture? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Peter did not intend to deny the validity of the promises, or to cast doubt over the effectiveness of repentance or prayer. His misgiving arose from Simon's own state. He may have thought it highly improbable that Simon would ever become at heart a better man. In accordance with the text we sing, "Venture on Him"; but we imply no venture of risk, but one of courage. The uncertainty of your salvation is, indeed, alarming, but it lies in your neglect of the means of grace. If there were but the slightest possibility of Christ's being able to save you, it would be amazing stupidity in you to slight Him. It is not a possibility, but a certainty. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost," &c. (*H. R. Raymond, D.D.*) **For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.**—*The gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity:*—I. THIS MAN'S STATE. In a state of nature as evidenced by his covetousness, ambition, and hypocrisy. This state is called—1. The gall of bitterness because it is bitter (1) To God; which appears by the bitter sufferings of Christ (Isa. liii. 6; Matt. xxvi. 38). (2) To every good man as felt in their first awakenings, bitter remorse (Matt. xxvi. 75), bitter reflections. (2) To the impenitently wicked (Mark ix. 44). 2. The bond of iniquity (Prov. v. 22). This bond is—(1) Strong. (2) Reproachful (Prov. xiv. 34). (3) Unprofitable. II. HOW IT WAS PERCEIVED. By its fruit (Matt. xii. 33, 35). A man's state may be discerned—1. By his ignorance of Divine things. 2. By the company he keeps. 3. By the books he reads. 4. By his places of resort. (*S. Barnard.*) *Sin and salvation:*—How true and comprehensive this description of the sinner's state! Our first parents thought the forbidden fruit of the sweetest, they found it of the bitterest, and this transgression involved in their miserable gratification involved bondage to evil. True parable and prophecy of the history of their sinful descendants. How sweet the intoxicating draught to the drunkard, but how bitter the consequences, especially the enslaved habit. So with all evil. Note here that—I. SIN is—1. The gall of bitterness. The term bitter is applied by us to—(1) Disappointment. When a man makes a speculation which turns out badly, or transacts business that does not pay, centres his hopes on objects which eludo him, he suffers a "bitter disappointment." Does sin turn out well? Does it pay? Has

it ever fulfilled man's aspiration? (2) Hard circumstances. When a man is deplorably poor, or overtaxed, or afflicted, we say what a "bitter lot." He then surely must suffer the quintessence of bitterness who is destitute of God's riches, who groans under the devil's burdens, and who suffers from the mortal malady of sin. "The way of transgressors is hard." (3) Ruin. When a man has made his last throw and lost, when he is hopelessly bankrupt, or when he suffers the fate of a felon, we exclaim, "How bitter!" What, then, must be the feelings of a man who has gambled away his life, who has become bankrupt in morals, who has soon to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. 2. The bond of iniquity. Sin is the servitude of—(1) The mind which it imprisons in the sphere of matter. (2) The affections which it sets upon earthly things. (3) The will which it paralyses for good. II. SALVATION. 1. Sweetens every bitter lot. It brings—(1) Pardon to the sinful. (2) Comfort to the wretched. (3) Rest to the burdened. (4) Heaven. 2. Liberates the most enslaved. It gives freedom of thought, heart, and will. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 26–39. **And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go.**—*Man versus angel*:—Why didn't the angel go himself? Because this was a mission where a man was worth more than an angel. In the Lord's plan of salvation there is a place for redeemed sinners as witnesses for Christ, to do a work that no angel could accomplish. It is not for us to say that God could have had any better plan than this. As the plan stands, the man is needed for its prosecution. The best that an angel can do is to come as a messenger from God, and tell the man to arise and go. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Toward the south . . . unto Gaza, which is desert.**—*Gaza*:—The history of the city so named (appearing at times in the English verson—Deut. ii. 23; 1 Kings iv. 24; Jer. xxv. 20—as Azzah) goes even as far back as that of Damascus, in the early records of Israel. It was the southernmost or border-city of the early Cananites (Gen. x. 19), and was occupied first by the Avim, and then by the Caphtorim (Deut. ii. 23). Joshua was unable to conquer it (Josh. x. 41, xi. 22). The tribe of Judah held it for a short time (Judg. i. 18), but it soon fell into the hands of the Philistines (Judg. iii. 3, xiii. 1), and though attacked by Samson, was held by them during the times of Samuel, Saul, and David (1 Sam. vi. 17, xiv. 52; 2 Sam. xxi. 15). Solomon (1 Kings iv. 24), and later on Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 8) attacked it. It resisted Alexander the Great during a siege of five months, and was an important military position, the very key of the country, during the struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, and in the wars of the Maccabees (1 Macc. xi. 61). Its name, it may be noted, meant the "strong." (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Unto Gaza, which is desert*:—1. When Philip is introduced to us, we find him engaged in promising work, and there was much still to do. Philip might justly have supposed that he would be allowed to remain in such a rich and suitable field until he had exhausted all its possibilities. And yet he was Divinely summoned to abandon it and go away to the desert. This place was at the extreme south, farthest removed from all the scenes and associations of Philip's life, and if he had reasoned he would naturally have wondered much why he should be sent to such an out-of-the-way place. What good could he do there? And yet he immediately obeyed the Divine command. And as he did so the will of God was made known to him. He found there a more fruitful field of usefulness than even Samaria. Scientific men have shown us the wonderful arrangements by which insects and flowers are brought together in order to carry out the ends of the vegetable world. The blossom is furnished with a honey-cell, is painted with brilliant hues, enriched with fragrance, and shaped in a particular way, in order to attract and guide insects, by whose agency the plant may be fertilised and enabled to produce seed. More wonderful still are the providential arrangements by which God brings together the soul and the Saviour. 2. Some may say that it was not worth while to take Philip away from the great task of converting multitudes for the purpose of saving a single stranger. But such persons have not so learned of Christ, who said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" and who told the parable of the lost sheep. But it was not the salvation of a single soul only that was involved. The Ethiopian eunuch was a great dignitary, next in rank to the Queen of Ethiopia; and the influence which the conversion of such a man might be expected to exercise would, in the nature of things, be immense and far-reaching, and tradition ascribes to him the conversion to his new faith of Candace and of many of her subjects, and he may have prepared the way for the wonderful work which took place among the Ethiopians at

a later period, when the whole nation became Christian, and the ancient prophecies of Scripture, that Ethiopia would yet lift her hands to God, were fulfilled. The superiority in religious faith and in all the arts of life which the Abyssinians enjoy over all the benighted children of the sun may be attributed in the first instance to the work of the Ethiopian eunuch. We have a similar instance of the wise methods of Providence in Paul being obliged to abandon his large and important field of labour in Asia, and to go over into Europe, which seemed to him, in comparison, a desert place. 3. The scene of the eunuch's conversion was admirably adapted for the purpose. When Jesus was about to cure the deaf and dumb man, He took him aside from the multitude; and when He was about to open the eyes of the man born blind, He took him by the hand and led him out of the town. Jesus isolated the men that, apart from the interruptions of the crowd, they might be made more receptive of deep and lasting impressions. And so was it with the Ethiopian eunuch. He had taken part in all the solemn services of the grandest of Jewish festivals. A proselyte of rank and influence like him, moreover, would receive much attention. But the atmosphere of the Holy City was unfavourable to the quiet meditation which clears the inner eye, develops the spiritual life, and opens the heart to receive the truth of God. And so what he could not obtain in the crowded city he found in the lonely desert. A spirit of inquiry had been stirred up within him; and here nothing would distract his thoughts. When Philip joined himself to him his mind was made plastic and his heart sensitive to spiritual impressions. Shut out from the world, alone with God and the works of His hands, reduced to their primitive simplicity, both the eunuch and the evangelist felt how dreadful was this desert-place. It was none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. There the ladder was set up by which the benighted African climbed to the light and the joy of heaven. He found there not only water by which he was baptized as a Christian, but in his own soul a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 4. This incident is a type of what often happens in the experience of God's people. Our Lord Himself on one occasion left the busy, crowded cities where He was carrying on a most beneficent ministry, for the lonely desert, in order that there He might cure the solitary demoniac, who, in his turn, was the means of a wonderful spiritual awakening among the people of Decapolis. Peter was sent from the large maritime city of Joppa, where he could preach to persons from all parts of the world, in order to instruct a single Gentile family in the small town of Cæsarea. And so God bids His servants still leave the ninety and nine and go after the one lost sheep. We fancy that we need to get together large meetings in order to produce a deep and widespread impression. But crowds have not always been helpful in the matter of progress. Not unfrequently, by their distractions, they have placed hindrances in the way. A man has in a crowd no calmness of mind to think, but is swayed exclusively by the feelings of the moment. Our Lord's own best work, so to speak, was not done in crowds; and the sayings of His that sink deepest into our hearts were uttered when conversing with a solitary woman beside a well or near a tomb. The fickle crowds fell away from Him in His hour of need; but the solitary souls whom He called to Him one by one from the sea-shore and the receipt of custom, and the desolated home, clung faithfully to Him to the last. 5. But we may give a wider application to the lesson. Whatever outward circumstance or inward motive induces us to leave the crowd and go down unto "Gaza, which is desert," for rest and meditation, we may be sure that it is the prompting of the angel of the Lord. We need to obey the Divine injunction more frequently, for our religious life is too social; it depends too much upon the excitement of meetings and associations, and is too often incapable of standing alone. It is urgently required, therefore, that not only in the enjoyment of the means of grace, but much more in their absence, we should work out our own salvation. We need more of the blessed solitude of prayer. It was at the back side of the mountain on which he fed his flock that the vision of the burning bush appeared to Moses. In the front he saw no door opened in heaven. And so, too, if we are to behold something of the sight which Moses beheld, and to be changed in some measure as he was changed, we must often retire to the background of the mountain on which we live and labour. If we refuse to go voluntarily unto "Gaza, which is desert," God will providentially compel us. He will make a desert around us, so that under its bitter juniper-tree we may learn the true lessons of life. The gain to individuals themselves and to society by the training of enforced loneliness cannot be overestimated; and wanting in the best and highest qualities is that man or woman to whom Christ does not say, at one period or other of life, "Come ye yourselves apart

into a desert-place and rest awhile." (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *Philip on his way to Gaza, a type of a true minister*:—1. The pious obedience with which he follows the impulse of the Spirit. 2. The apostolic courage with which he lays hold of a soul strange to him. 3. The evangelical wisdom with which he fans the spark into a flame. 4. The priestly unction with which he seals, at the proper moment, the saved soul to the Lord. 5. The Christian humility with which, after the work of salvation is completed, he steps behind the Lord. (*K. Gerok.*) *Philip and the Ethiopian*:—I. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DIRECTION IN INDIVIDUAL LIFE. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip." This meeting of Philip and the Ethiopian was not the result of mere accident or chance. A species of pre-established harmony existed between these two souls before they were conscious of each other's existence in this world. An angel messenger gives the directions by which they were to be brought together. Frequently we speak of accidents determining a man's destiny, forgetting that in the vocabulary of God there is no such word as chance. It seemed a mere chance that Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. "But Eternal choice that chance did guide." A dusty pilgrim overtaken on the desert road by the chamberlain of a Pagan queen, that is all the world's wise ones see in this incident of our lesson; but in this chance meeting there is the hidden fire of a Divine purpose. Behind all life's varying scenes—its joys, its sorrows, its social positions and its political ambitions, its individual cares, its national crises—there is the guiding hand of God. What comfort to short-sighted, burden-bearing pilgrims, to think that God's angels are ministering spirits marshalled under King Jesus to guard and defend us against the assaults of our great adversary, the devil, who is continually striving for our destruction. II. THE WILLING AND OBEDIENT SERVANT. Notice the nature of the directions given by the angel, and what was involved in obedience thereto. Verse 26 gives us the text of the angel's commission to Philip. In a sense Philip is to proceed under sealed orders. The directions are simple in terms as far as they go. Go to a certain road. Yet in a sense they are vague and indefinite. Sixty miles of desert highway, with the haughty, wicked city of Gaza at the southern terminus, was a command seriously requiring some more definite statements as to what duty was to be met, and where the field of future work was to be found. The angel had revealed to Philip just enough to indicate some of the difficulties in the way. To ordinary human nature such directions would make room for two or three questions of a very practical character just here. Natural, indeed, would have been the questions, Why limit the sphere of my ministry by taking this unfrequented way? Here I am in the populous city, multitudes are being stirred with the gospel message, converts coming every day. Because of this there is great joy in the city. Why, then, must I be side-tracked? why leave the city appointment to take the country charge? That was the voice of expediency, and we will always find crouching somewhere in the near neighbourhood of that voice the cowardly tempter. And thus the tempter speaks: A long desert journey on foot, a lone pilgrim, prowling wild beasts, night coming on, and no shelter! Philip, there is danger ahead, "lions are in the way." Besides, if you reach Gaza, and it is revealed to you that there is your new field of work, consider what difficulties and dangers await you. Gaza is hardened in crime, bitter in its rebellion against God. It is one of the most ancient cities of the world. Joshua could not subdue it. It was assigned to Judah, but even that warlike tribe could not retain its possession. Yet to have yielded to his fears, to have doubted the Divine wisdom, would have been to have lost the opportunity of meeting the man for whose conversion Philip was the Divinely appointed instrument: "Only the willing and obedient shall eat of the good of the land." We have heard inspiring sermons on that word "Come" of the gospel, and truly it is a blessed word, inviting weary hearts to the sweet asylum of rest found in Jesus Christ. But, as believers in the Cross of Christ, have we realised the blessed privilege of that other great word of the gospel, that small yet mighty word "Go"? "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." "Go, work to-day in My vineyard." It was the inspiration of that great word that moved Philip to obedience. We dare not leave this thought of loving obedience to the commands of God without emphasising another fact in this connection, namely, that in proportion as we obey present revelations of God's will, future and fuller revelations will appear. Philip had plainly revealed to him the direction he was to take, "Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that . . . is desert." This command was sufficient for prompt action at that hour. Philip had capital enough at that moment to go right to work for God in the new field. When the hour of oppor-

tunity came for other work than walking a desert highway, verse 29 informs us that another revelation was given. Philip is on the journey, he is overtaken by the chariot of the Ethiopian; "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." This higher revelation was given to Philip through obedience to the former revelation. God always furnishes revelations of duty in instalments according to the necessities of the hour and the measure of our faith. The way at first may seem dark. The commands of God may seem foolish to the demands of expediency. Human reason may stagger and fall and refuse to go farther. But to the eye of faith the "inventory of the universe is in heaven." He will reveal place and method when the hour of opportunity strikes. III. A BIBLE-READING TRAVELLER. How seldom do we see the Word of God in the hands of travellers to-day! If you want to be conspicuous and regarded as a little "cranky," take your Bible and read it on the railroad train. This Bible-reading traveller offered Philip a better chance to preach the gospel to him than the average hearer furnishes the preachers of to-day. He was prepared for the message. It is a significant statement in the lesson that Philip "opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The eunuch had come from a period of profound meditation on the Word of God to hear the gospel sermon. Many times have we heard the casual remarks dropped from the lips of the careless hearer as he retired from church: "The preacher did not strike me to-day." "He did not reach my need." "I don't think he prepared that sermon with his usual care." Dear friend, what about your preparation as a hearer by an hour's thought on the Word of God, or a few moments' earnest meditation on the interests of your soul before you heard that sermon? You come from the wild clamour of the Stock Exchange; you come from the cankering cares of the business week, and expect the man in the pulpit to banish all this influence in the short hour of service, and feed you with the "bread of life," without one moment's preparation by earnest prayer or devout reading. Again, this Bible-reading traveller had some difficulties in the way of his receiving the truth as it is in Jesus. He had his doubts, as we all have. But he did not make an idol of his doubts and set it up as an object of worship. Almost in the same breath whereby the Ethiopian expressed his doubt he uttered the words of his confession of faith, "I believe that Jesus Christ" is the Son of God, and that moment the recording angel wrote his name in the Book of Life. IV. THE REJOICING CHRISTIAN. Our Bible story ends well. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Philip had been the instrument of converting the eunuch to Christ, not to the preacher. The soul that truly finds Christ does not backslide when the evangelist goes away, or when the minister changes his appointment. He is in possession of the Divine Comforter as Companion. The man has entered a life of trust whose elements are joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. (*E. M. Taylor.*) *Worker and seeker*:—I. THE EARNEST WORKER. 1. He is in full fellowship with the Spirit, quick to receive Divine influences, and living in the atmosphere of Divine companionship (vers. 26–29). 2. He is obedient and self-denying, prompt to go wherever sent, ready to exchange a large field for a small one, Samaria for the desert (vers. 26, 27). 3. He is aggressive, eager to get at his work, running to meet the one with whom he is to labour, and at once beginning the conversation without waiting for an invitation (ver. 30). 4. He is skilful. He speaks kindly and cheerfully to the Ethiopian. "Philip's only recorded words contain a pleasantry" (ver. 30). 5. He is scriptural, taking the Word of God as his text, and showing how every page points to Christ (vers. 30–35). 6. He is practical, leading to personal faith in Christ and to union with the Church (vers. 35–37). 7. He is broad in his views, recognising the privilege of Gentile as well as Jew to be saved and baptized (vers. 37, 38). II. THE SINCERE SEEKER. It is hard to say whether the worker or the seeker in this lesson shines in the brighter light. 1. He is a noble seeker, a man of high rank and many public cares, yet a humble follower of God (ver. 27). Christian politicians are not so numerous as they should be (ver. 27). 2. He is a diligent seeker, living twelve hundred miles away, yet journeying to the temple and reading the Scriptures on the road (vers. 28, 29). 3. He is a teachable seeker, eager to learn the truth, willing to be instructed by a layman far below him in social position, and ready to embrace any opportunity to learn the way of salvation (vers. 30–34). 4. He is a believing seeker, exerting personal faith in Christ, and receiving Him as his Saviour (ver. 37). 5. He is a confessing seeker, not ashamed to profess Christ in the presence of his company (ver. 38). 6. He is a rejoicing seeker, going on his way happy in his new experience. *A special mission*:—Note here—I. THE PRACTICAL CARE OF GOD FOR

THE INDIVIDUAL SOULS OF MEN. 1. The object of all this whole transaction was one single conversion. Not only will God have all men to be saved, but He will have each man separately to be saved—showing the universality and the minuteness of His love and care. 2. Through such single agencies God's chief and most abiding work is ever wrought in our world. Each soul that is really brought thus to God becomes in its turn a little centre of light and life. We must never count any time wasted that is spent upon one human being. And let no man count his own soul's culture a thing of trifling moment. He, too, may be the evangelist, if not of a nation, yet of a family or of some one precious soul. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY. 1. Philip had to take a long journey in quest of one convert, and without knowing that he was to make one convert. Oh, what excuses should we have made! How should we have urged the disproportion between the means and the end; the distance, the difficulty, the improbability, the waste of strength and time; till we should have persuaded ourselves that we never were called to it. 2. God does not now speak to us by an angel, yet there is often something within which says, There is such or such a person whom you might benefit. And these inward promptings are easily resisted; but they are the tests of our Christianity. They say to us, Here is something which you might do for your Saviour. Perhaps it may fail; but there is a chance also of its succeeding. If you feel your debt to Him as you ought you will go and do it. If a man always find an excuse for putting it aside and is glad when something makes it impossible, he has upon him the mark of the unprofitable servant, who was satisfied to dig in the earth and hide his Lord's money. 3. On the other hand, how frequently is an effort of this kind consciously rewarded! You have roused yourself to leave your warm fireside; you have walked through rain or snow to the poor man's cottage, and you regarded it all as a penance; how often have you found that the visit was singularly seasonable; and it was your happiness to be an evident instrument in God's hand for the refreshment or restoration of a soul. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ALWAYS IN PURSUIT OF GOOD. 1. The Ethiopian was studying God's Word: eager to hail a new teacher. To him that hath shall be given. This man had an Old Testament. Many of us would have said—for we say it now—I can make nothing of it; it only puzzles me; but the Ethiopian, like Simeon, like Nathanael, like older saints still, desired to look into the mysteries of the ancient Scriptures. And therefore they saw what to others was mere confusion. There is a growth in knowledge proportionate to a growth in grace. 2. Many of us err grievously in this respect. We have no patience in the things of God. We take it for granted that in God's truth a thing must either be self-evident or unimportant. In this one, this greatest science of all, we consider study superfluous. IV. THE IMPORTANCE, BOTH FOR STRENGTH AND FOR COMFORT, OF HOLDING A SIMPLE GOSPEL. Many of us pass through life without one single experience of the effect of the gospel upon this stranger. We are so mistaught, or else so slow to learn; we are so afraid of presumption, and so fond of adding something to the work and word of God, that we never reach anything that can call itself the glad tidings of Jesus, or send us forth on our way rejoicing. What Philip preached, what the Ethiopian received, was something which needed but one conversation for its statement, and but one hour for its reception. Out of this gospel flows all peace and all strength. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Changing spheres: a word for workers:—I. ARISE, AND GO! And if the Church at Samaria was as unbelieving as the Churches often are to-day, they said, "What a mistake! To take Philip away just as he is getting to know us so well. And to Philip it must have seemed harsh. In the very midst of his successful work, there came Peter and John to take it out of his hands, and he is sent away to the desert—above all places! And so many towns and villages were pressing him to come and tell them of Jesus. Really, it seems a waste to send a man like that to such a place. That is certainly not what Philip would have chosen. So, then, the appointment of the worker needs be in wiser hands than his own. It is not what the Church would have chosen for him. So the worker must look to a higher authority than the Church. No; there is but one way of safety for us. We don't know what we need for our own discipline or usefulness. This sphere may be attractive; but who can tell what condition of affairs will come about there? what particular gifts will be needed? what temptation the worker may find there? The Lord knows it all. And the only safety is to let Him have His own way with us. But our very practical age smiles at this religious weakness. "That sounds all very well, my dear sir, and was, no doubt, the right sort of thing in an age of

miracles. But, depend upon it, nowadays—The Lord helps those that help themselves." But the teaching of the Book of God is, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." II. AND HE AROSE AND WENT. There see the secret of the man's power. There are no "buts," no "Nay, Lord," no loitering, no turning aside, like Jonah. God would not have used him in Samaria if there had not been this putting down of self that made him ready at a moment's notice to be off to the desert. I watched an old man trout-fishing, pulling them out one after another briskly. "You manage it cleverly, old friend," I said. "I have passed a good many who are doing nothing." 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 is, Keep yourself further out of sight. And the third is, Keep yourself further out of sight still. Then you'll do it." "Good for catching men, too," I thought, as I went on my way. There was the secret of Philip's usefulness. He kept himself out of sight. He dared not go picking and choosing for himself. The Master said, "Go the way that is desert." That settled it. To Saul there comes the word of the Lord, Go, smite the Amalekites, and all that is theirs. But Saul spared of the best to sacrifice unto the Lord their God in Gilgal. A very thoughtful and pious arrangement, surely. No. Forth came Samuel with that dreadful inquiry and menace. Obedience is the secret of service. If we could go into the storehouse of our great Lord, whence His mighty men have fetched their gifts, what should we choose? Here are splendid gifts of intellect, eloquence with which to thrill men, deep knowledge of the human heart, courage that will not give in, faith that never wavers, hope never dimmed, and charity carrying her kind heart in every look and tone and manner. No, there is something higher and better than all these. "I am crucified with Christ." III. THE DESERT BECOMES A FRUITFUL FIELD. Philip sets out. He reaches the dreary desert. What a place for this earnest worker! It is all right. The Lord has sent him here. Now afar off the dust rises, and a prince comes this way in his chariot. And here are some things which we shall do well to imitate. 1. Catching sight of the traveller, Philip did not rush off at once "to talk to him about his soul." Not they that be zealous merely to win souls shall shine as the stars, but they that be wise. Philip waits for orders; he does not stir until he gets them: "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Of course, idle folks will use this doctrine as an excuse. But never mind; they would do nothing if they had not the excuse, so there is nothing lost. The Master will not waste His special orders upon them that are not ready to obey. Only let a man live waiting for the Lord's word, and near enough to hear Him, and that man shall not lack a plain direction. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Uzzah dies because unbidden he stretches out his hand to steady the ark of God. How often thoughtless hands are reached out in the service of the Church, meaning well but really harmful, because not bidden of the Lord. 2. When the Lord bids him go, he does not hang back because it is a rich man in a carriage. He had been a plain man working amongst simple people. And as he caught sight of the trappings of this Ethiopian prince he might well have thought twice before he moved towards him. The intelligent foreigner watching our ways of working might come to the conclusion that rich people have no souls; or else that they are sure of getting to heaven. Tracts, City missionaries, out-door services, &c., are all for the poor. And yet the rich are just as far from the kingdom of heaven, and have more difficulty in getting there. To Philip it was nothing who this man was, or what: the Lord had sent him; that was enough. 3. And Philip ran—the arrow is loosed from the string. And well he might run. The opportunity would soon be lost. The chariot was speeding on its way, and a dignified loiterer would have missed it. "The King's business requireth haste." And that the King has sent him is enough; he need not wait until he can get an introduction, or is fit to be presented. So the simple evangelist bursts upon the nobleman and asks, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" It was all right. How could it possibly be otherwise? God had sent him; and He always makes things fit in perfectly when we do but perfectly obey. IV. WHEN GOD SENDS US ON HIS ERRANDS HE MAKES A WAY FOR US. Philip found the nobleman in the middle of a passage that gave the opportunity of preaching Jesus. Perplexed and wondering, he was at the very point where Philip could step in to help him. "And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." Think, if we had been sent on this errand how we should have come along nervous and afraid as to what our reception

would be. And when it all opened up so, how we should wonder at it! Yet is it really so very wonderful that our great Father, who sets the stars their courses, and orders the coming of the seasons, should be able to time our affairs so as to make them fit? If the regulator of our going were not so often pointing to "fast" or to "slow," instead of keeping God's time exactly, we should wonder when things fell out otherwise. But turn aside for a moment to see a sight worth looking at. Philip has gone into the lonely desert at the Lord's bidding—and he finds a "chariot" to ride in, and a prince, "of great authority," for his travelling companion. He never had so much honour paid him in Jerusalem, or even in Samaria. And is it not always so? The moment we set foot in the wilderness we are the Lord's guests, and He ever keeps His table right royally furnished. He has brought Israel into the wilderness—but it was a blessed change! No more the muddy water of the Nile, but the sparkling brook; no more the rank vegetables, but manna, fresh every morning. Elijah has got away into the wilderness, and the ravens brought him bread and flesh morning and evening. The thousands that followed Jesus into "a desert place, did all eat, and were filled." John goes forth to the desert isle of Patmos, found his glorified Master, and the visions of the eternal city, and the fulness of joy at the Lord's right hand. The Master Himself goes into the wilderness, but, "behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." It is true still. That country toward the south hath a goodly aspect—it faceth heavenward. When the Lord bids us go the way to Gaza, it is no more desert; it is the garden of the Lord. As they rode on together, Philip preached Jesus to the nobleman. And he believed and was baptized, and "went on his way rejoicing"—went, most likely, to open a whole country to Christianity. So Philip never did a better day's work than when he went forth at the Lord's bidding unto the way—which is desert. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *Comparisons and contrasts:*—The conversion of the eunuch suggests a comparison of his case with that of present-day hearers of the gospel. I. COMPARE THE PRIVILEGES ENJOYED. What had he? 1. The Scriptures. But only the Old Testament. We have more, the New as well as Old. 2. He had a preacher, but, so far as we know, only one, and only heard one sermon. We have the constant ministration of the Word, line upon line and precept upon precept. 3. He had the Holy Spirit, awakening and influencing his mind and heart. We have more, for He has striven often in our hearts. II. COMPARE THE RESPONSIBILITY SUSTAINED. Ours greater by as much as our privileges are greater. To whom much is given of him much shall be required. III. COMPARE CONDUCT WHICH RESULTED. 1. He prized and read his Bible. To-day sadly neglected, even by those who profess to value it. 2. He was possessed of a sincere desire to know the way of life. How few to-day seem to concern themselves about the great question of salvation. 3. He paid earnest attention to the preacher's words. How many careless, thoughtless hearers to-day, all eyes and ears for the sights and sounds of earth, but blind and deaf to all that pertains to heaven. 4. He applied to himself the truths he heard. Philip "preached unto him Jesus." Many to-day hear for other people, or hear as though what they heard in no way concerned them. Surely, here the contrast is in favour of the eunuch. IV. COMPARE EXPERIENCE WHICH RESULTED. He went on his way rejoicing. Have we found any joy in the gospel? Some have, but many have not. Are we not bound to confess that with fewer privileges his conduct is such as to put to shame the indifferent and unbelieving hearers of the gospel to-day? (*Homilist.*) *A typical evangelist: A striking conversion:*—The first Christian labourer has fallen, but a great stride is now to be taken. Stephen is dead, but Philip takes his place. That is the military rule. There was no panic or running away in cowardly terror, but Philip, the next man, took up the vacant place, and "went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ." "And there was much joy in that city." An electric shock went through it. And no wonder, for multitudes were blessed and led to faith in Christ. Our problem of to-day is the city—the city crowd, the city poor, the city criminals, the city multitude out of work—and that problem is to be solved on the lines of Philip. Let us see to it that we are content with nothing less. It was while Philip was in the midst of this great enterprise—changing the very face of the city, pulling down the strongholds of darkness—that the incident occurred which is narrated in this paragraph. I. A TYPICAL EVANGELIST. 1. Notice that the Lord directs His servants in the path of duty. "An angel of the Lord spake unto Philip." But why an angel? Why this extraordinary method of guidance in this particular case? Why this unusual honour placed upon Philip? Dr.

Goulburn suggests that this external message of the angel directing Philip where to go was here vouchsafed as God's answer to the thoughts and doubts which were then springing up in His servant's mind. For though Philip was doing a great work, yet he had received an unpleasant check which must have caused him some annoyance. Simon Magus' wickedness had come to light, and it had met with an apostle's censure. In the simplicity of his heart Philip had admitted this bad man into the fold of Christ, and it might easily have occurred to him that he ought to be more cautious, that his evangelistic zeal was too great. Then, had he been right in preaching to these Samaritans at all, and admitting to baptism a race hitherto held accursed? He had dared to brave the opinion of many good men, and one result had been that such a bad character as Simon Magus had crept into the Church. The Lord, who watches over His people and sees all their difficulties, comes therefore to his rescue, and, by one of His ministering spirits, conveys a message which assures His fainting servant of His approval and of His guidance. "An angel spake." How often this is so! God's servants are filled with a glorious discontent with the rate of progress they are making, and enter upon new and bold enterprises for Him; they try experiments in His service, they do and dare much, and for a time perhaps see nothing but disaster and failure and opposition where it might be least expected. Then, when their hearts are cast down and perplexed, He sends His angel with a message of encouragement. Was it not so with Elijah? "As he lay and slept under the juniper tree, behold an angel touched him." "An angel." Was there a visible representation? We cannot tell. The text gives no hint as to the character of the messenger. Philip went on his journey under Divine direction—this is the great thing for us to remember—and that direction is within our reach; though the form may vary the fact remains. He is in full fellowship with the Spirit, quick to receive heavenly influences, and living in the atmosphere of Divine companionship. Such a man as this does not often miss his way. And when the way is made clear he proceeds with great confidence. 2. Notice His prompt obedience. "He arose and went." "He went," not knowing the purpose for which he was sent. He went forth with sealed orders. "He walked by faith, not by sight." "He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Yet what a work he was doing in this great town of Samaria! What a wide door for usefulness! It was a great trial to his faith. It required a mighty effort of will to fall in with this Divine plan. That he knew it to be Divine did not make it more easy to flesh and blood. Duty is Divine, and we all know it; but knowledge of its Divineness does not remove our difficulties in the performance of it. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe tells us that the first and last word uttered in the meeting-houses where she worshipped as a child was "submission." And in this department of our Christian lives, that of service, this is the first and last word. Philip had learnt that all true spiritual power lies in submission to the Divine will. "If I do this, what will So-and-so say? And shall I not be putting myself in a disagreeable position?" When God meets with such an one who just says, "Lord, just glorify Thyself in me," He can use him, and does use him. 3. He is aggressive and eager for work. "Behold a man of Ethiopia." "And Philip ran to him." Ethiopia was an influential kingdom south of Egypt, corresponding to what we know as Nubia and Abyssinia. And this traveller was making his way home after worshipping at Jerusalem. There were two great roads open to him leading to Gaza, and he had chosen the desert one, passing through districts inhabited then, as now, by only wandering Arabs. "And Philip ran thither to him." There is no waiting, no hesitation, the work is there and it must be done. When God gives us a call, how many of us creep and limp instead of running to obey it. 4. Philip falls in with the Divine order in this respect, that much of our work lies in the personal dealing with individuals. "Behold, a man of Ethiopia." In our aggressive zeal we are all liable to overlook the individual. Hitherto Philip's labours had been among masses of people, but now, by Divine command, he is withdrawn from this large sphere of usefulness, and sent to deal with a single man, attended, probably, only by two or three retainers. It has been observed that this is the first instance on record of a private ministration of the gospel. The lesson is to be continually kept in mind. Even the apostles, who had a commission to "go and teach all nations," and in virtue of that commission might have challenged the whole universe of immortal souls as their audience, did not think themselves exempt from the labours of private administration. Are we not all, as Christian workers, no matter what position we take in the campaign, too desirous of crowds and too little occupied with the units

of which they are composed? Dr. Stalker, in his latest work to preachers, says: "Gentlemen, I believe that almost any preacher on reviewing a ministry of any considerable duration would confess that his great mistake had been the neglect of individuals. If I may be permitted a personal reference. When not long ago I had the opportunity, as I was passing from one charge to another, of reviewing a ministry of twelve years, the chief impression made on me, as I looked back, was that this was the point at which I had failed; and I said to myself that henceforth I would write "Individuals" on my heart as the watchword of my ministry." Philip was now wisely engaged in individual work. 5. Philip, under Divine direction, went outside and beyond the ordinary methods. "And the Spirit said, 'Go near and join thyself to this chariot.'" "And Philip ran to him." What spiritual freedom characterises the whole incident—its scene not the temple, not a Christian congregation, but the wilderness; its time not a Sabbath but a work-day, when men may harness horses to chariots and go a journey; the minister not an apostle, but one who had been designated to a more or less secular ministration. I heard a preacher say the other day: "We shut up our religion in churches; we limit it to days; we restrict it to services. And by shutting it in, we shut it out, and we shut others out too." How true this is! II. A STRIKING CONVERSION. Let us briefly turn our attention specially to the Ethiopian and his striking conversion. 1. He is "a man of great authority" seeking after truth. He was Chamberlain of the Queen, and held the post of First Lord of her Treasury. The Samaritans among whom Philip had just been labouring, and where he had great success, were a simple people, and the converts, as far as we can judge, were chiefly of the lower class, not persons of station and influence. But here is a man seeking light of large wealth and high position and of some education—the first minister at a Queen's Court. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," hardly because their possession entices the heart to trust in them for a contentment and a satisfaction which they never can bestow. But the man before us is also a courtier and a politician. To judge from what we often hear of the political world, we might, for some countries at any rate, invent a new text, "How hardly shall they that are politicians enter into the kingdom of God." 2. He is an earnest seeker after truth. Philip "heard him reading." He was reading aloud after the manner of Eastern nations. It is more easy for some minds to learn by the ear than by the eye. His attention may have been called to this portion of Holy Scripture during his visit to the temple, or he may have met the apostles. At any rate, he was making a diligent use of the means of grace. He used the light he had, and eagerly sought for more. What a contrast this man in high position presents to many in the upper ranks of society of to-day! "Agnostics" many label themselves, and when they have spoken this word they appear to think that they have done everything that can be rightly expected of a human being. 3. He is a perplexed seeker after the truth. "Understandest thou . . . ?" "How can I except some man should guide me?" The passage in Isaiah was a difficult one, as taught by Jewish instructors, to understand. It seemed almost impossible to put together the idea of Christ as a sufferer, as despised and slain, and the promise that He should be a glorious King, triumphing over the world. Only the facts could solve the problem. I would say to you, Do not be distressed if you meet with obscurities and are bewildered by religious mystery. Again and again every thoughtful man meets with "things hard to be understood." Difficulties we shall always have which our finite minds cannot solve. 4. He is a teachable seeker of the truth. "And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him." He made no idol of his perplexities. He welcomed help directly it was within his reach. 5. The truth being announced to him, he accepts it, confesses it, and rejoices over it. "And he baptized him." "He went on his way rejoicing." (*A. Wood, B.A.*) **And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority, under Candace.**—*The Ethiopian*:—1. The visit of the eunuch could not have been at a more opportune moment. Jerusalem was still thrilling with the tremendous sacrifice that had just been consummated. During his stay the apostles had stirred all Jerusalem with their doctrine, and Stephen had died for the faith. Never was a soul thirsting for peace and truth so near to their source; and yet this Ethiopian passes whole days in Jerusalem without hearing the name of Christ! How was this? Follow his steps and you will understand. He betook himself to the temple, for he came to worship, and of course met there priests and Pharisees,

whose most strenuous desire was to conceal Christ and to silence His followers. Fools! They know not that at a little distance are assembled in an upper chamber some of those despised Galileans who hold the destinies of the world in their hands, and the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. Poor Ethiopian! why do you not know the way to that upper chamber? Blind leaders have misled him. One would say he is the plaything of an inexplicable fatality. But no! God is watching over this soul that seeks Him. 2. On leaving Jerusalem he takes with him the Holy Scriptures. That which Pharisees have so sedulously hidden from him, Isaiah will set before him. Fifteen centuries later, a German monk stirred, as was this Ethiopian, by profound aspirations, after having vainly sought peace in lacerations and penances, went to another holy city in order to adore the God of his fathers. Day after day he wandered through it, halting at every place of pilgrimage, meekly believing their legends. Rome was then governed by Julius II., the warrior pontiff; it was at the time when Machiavelli said that atheism went on increasing in measure as one neared Rome. Everywhere reigned the scandalous traffic in holy things. Luther went back terrified. "Rome," said he, "is built upon a hell." What was it which saved him? The Scriptures, which he found again in his monastery at Wittenberg. And so it has been with many since. 3. Queen Candace's steward then went on his way reading the Scriptures. He read without understanding them, yet he persevered. Where, amongst us, are they who are willing to study the Scriptures in the spirit of this heathen? People often say, "We have sought truth, have read our gospel, but no light has come to us; our hearts have remained cold." True! Study the gospel as a mere critic, and it will remain an object of study to you and nothing more. God does not reveal Himself to mere intellectual inquirers; those whom He promises to satisfy are they who, like the Ethiopian, are hungering and thirsting for righteousness and truth. 4. Philip was on the road taken by the stranger. Here we have one of those coincidences called fortuitous, but which, from our text, we see to be an intervention of God. There is no such thing as chance. 5. What strikes us in the first words of the Ethiopian is his good faith. He avows his ignorance. Is it such a difficult thing to avow ignorance? One would hardly think it, for nothing is more common than to hear, "I do not know," in matters of religion. But there are two ways of saying those words. In the mouth of many they mean, "What does it matter to me? I do not want to know." And why not? Because, to know God is to know His claims upon us. To know ourselves—O my brethren! who does not shrink from this painful knowledge? But that day when, anxious for truth, with heart dismayed before those dark mysteries of sorrow, sin, and death, you cry, "I do not know," it will be in a very different spirit; those words will then be a prayer rising up to God. When a man, animated by the spirit of humility, says, "I do not know," he is already very near the truth. 6. A singular abuse has been made of the next words. "How can I understand except some man should guide me?" "You see," has been said, "it is evident that by themselves the Scriptures are unintelligible. It is therefore necessary that an authority established of God have the sole mission to explain them." Let us examine this; without doubt the Scriptures contain many mysteries. But a revelation without mystery were unheard of. In borrowing the language of men, Divine truth cannot find in it expressions capable of presenting it with sufficient lucidity. How can beings trammelled by time and space, *e.g.*, and with no other means of reasoning save by recourse to these two mediums—comprehend a Being for whom time and space are not? But without taking such high ground, there are in Scripture difficulties of date, place, origin, grammar, translation, history, and science. Needless to say that here piety cannot take the place of learning; and that nothing would be more absurd than to see ignorance usurping doctoral authority. This reservation made, there is, however, one thing which has ever struck men of good faith, and that is the marvellous lucidity of the gospel upon everything that touches essential questions—those of grace, pardon, and salvation. I take it, therefore, that it is a positive act of treason to prohibit the free circulation of the Bible among the people, under pretext of its obscurities and the possible errors that may ensue from wrong interpretation. Look at those nations which have been nourished upon the generous milk of Holy Scripture. Is it not a certain fact that they are the only ones that are making steady progress towards light and liberty? This said, let us see what is the true idea contained in my text. "How can I understand," cries the Ethiopian, "except some man should guide me?" Herein I see the confirmation of the Divine law which created the Church. We

are not made to stand alone. "No man liveth to himself." From our first steps we have been led by others; and the Church's work in forming of our ideas and most personal convictions is immense. Like the Ethiopian, not one of us would have understood the greater part of those truths to which we are most attached if he had not had some guide to say to him, as did Philip to Nathanael, "Come and see." The Church is the witness to, not the lord of, truth. 7. Here, then, we have Philip sitting beside the Ethiopian, explaining the Scriptures to him. His task was easy; for, by one of those coincidences in which there is an intervention of God, the eunuch's eyes had lighted upon a passage of Isaiah which had deeply moved him. Hearken to the mysterious words uttered by the prophet so many ages before Christ, and say if they do not impress you by their startling, pregnant nature (Isa. liii.). Gather together all the features of this mysterious picture, and you will understand the exclamation of the Ethiopian's (ver. 34). Endeavour to explain this prophecy by the sole inspiration of nature. Suppose an Israelite, dreaming of the future greatness of his nation, had essayed to describe the hero who was to bring it about; is it not evident that he must have depicted him as a triumphant avenger? By what strange reversal of ideas is it that a totally different ideal is here presented to us? Weigh well the value of the expressions here employed; judge if one can conscientiously see in them merely the description of an Israelite who immolates himself in order to save his nation; see if this be not a spiritual work which is here predicted; if, above all, it be not sin which is here to be expiated. 8. We can understand the light cast upon this obscure text by Philip's burning words, and his words, penetrating to the innermost depths of the man, stirs his soul and begins the work of conversion. One of those dramas takes place unknown of the world, but which the angels of God look upon. Looking only on the surface, who would ever have suspected its importance? The smallest public event, the most insignificant battle would have attracted far more attention. But the gospel, which does not even make mention of the successive Cæsars who governed Rome, concentrates upon the destinies of a few people unknown to the world in whose hearts God has established His kingdom. There are hours that are as years; such are those moments when some great decision is being made. 9. The Ethiopian is now wholly gained for Christ, and he cries, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What hinders you, rash man, are all your future earthly prospects. Are you aware to what you are exposing yourself in becoming a follower of this new faith? Are you not taking for conviction what is but a passing sentiment? Do you know anything of this Philip? Can you, upon the faith of his words, take a step the consequences of which will affect your whole after-life? See the path you are to follow, already watered with the blood of martyrs. No matter; he will be baptized. Like a soldier who binds himself by a solemn oath, if need be, to die for his colours, so he desires, by this open act, to irrevocably bind himself to the service of Jesus Christ. He receives baptism, and goes on his way rejoicing. Conversions of such nature are now so rare that they are nowise believed in. People believe in a gradual change of heart; they are unwilling to give credence to the sudden manifestations of mercy which attest in too signal a manner the intervention of God. This mistrust is in part due to the spirit of the age, which is more given to calculation than to enthusiasm or to heroism. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*)

The Ethiopian convert: a typical man:—The Ethiopian still lives amongst us. Let us look at this man as—I. AN INQUIRER. 1. He was in a bewildered state of mind. I do not rebuke the bewilderment of honest inquiry. In the realm of spiritual revelation things are not superficial, easy of arrangement, and trifling in issue. Do not be distressed because you are puzzled by religious mystery. The most advanced minds have had to pass through that experience. But the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Do not make idols of your perplexities. You know that there is a subtle temptation to talk about your doubts as those of a man whose mind is not to be put off with solutions that have satisfied inferior intellects. Be honest in your bewilderment. 2. He was teachable. He said, "I wonder what this means; would that God would send some director to lead me into the light." Teachableness is one of the first characteristics of honesty. If you are self-trustful and dogmatic you are not a scholar in the school of Christ, and deprive yourself of all the gifts of Providence. Yet how few are teachable! So many of us go to the Bible and find proofs of what we already believe, but the true believer goes unprejudiced, humble, honestly desirous of knowing what is true. 3. He was obedient. A revelation cannot afford to be argumentative. Any gospel that comes with hesitancy or reserve vitiates its own credentials, and steps down

from the pedestal of commanding authority. The eunuch, having heard Philip, obeyed. "Here is water, what hindereth me to be baptized?" He would have the whole thing completed at once. So many persons are afraid that they are not fit, prepared. They have heard the gospel a quarter of a century or more, but still they are wondering about themselves. Such people are trifling. What hindereth him? No man should hinder you from coming to Christ. I fear sometimes that the Church makes fences, over which men have to climb, but in the gospel I find only one word for all honest, teachable men—welcome. Hindrances are man's inventions. As to the form of baptism, please yourself. I believe in life-baptism. The spirit of baptism is greater than any form. II. A HEARER. He was—1. Prepared; he was already seriously perusing the mysterious volume. He had not to be called from afar. Where are those who now come to church from the Bible itself? What is the work of Philip nowadays? It is to persuade, to plead, to break through iron-bound attention and fix it upon spiritual realities. Philip has now to deal with men who are reading the journals, the fiction, the exciting discussions of the passing time, and from any one of these engagements to the Scriptures of God there may lie unnumbered miles! A prepared pulpit fights against infinite odds when it has to deal with an unprepared pew. 2. Responsive. He answered Philip. His head, heart, will, all listened. Who can now listen? To hear is a Divine accomplishment. Who hears well? To have a responsive hearer is to make a good preacher. The pew makes the pulpit. It is possible to waste supreme thought and utterance upon an indifferent hearer. But let the hearer answer, and how noble the exchange of thought, how grand the issues! Do not suppose that a man is not answering because he is not speaking. There is a responsive attitude, an answering silence, a look, which is better than thunders of applause! III. A CONVERT. As such he was—1. Enlightened. He had passed from the prophetic to the evangelic. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Then Philip must have been preaching this doctrine. You know the sermon by the hearer. Say ye, "It was a beautiful sermon"? Show the solidity, the Scripturalness, and the power of the discourse by living it! 2. Deeply convinced. There are hereditary, nominal, halting, merely-assenting, and non-inquiring Christians. "And they because they have not much deepness of earth soon wither away." There are also convinced Christians—men who have fought battles in darkness, who have undergone all the happy pain of seeking for truth, and, proving it, have embraced it at the altar as if they had wedded the bride of their souls. These will make martyrs if need be. These are the pillars of the Church. 3. Exultant. "He went on his way rejoicing." You have not seen Christ if you are not filled with joy. See the eunuch, oblivious even of Philip's presence. He saw Divine things, new heavens, a new earth, bluer skies, greener lands, than he had ever seen before, and in that transfiguration he saw Jesus only. Philip, miraculously sent, was miraculously withdrawn, but there sat in the chariot now "one like unto the Son of Man." And so preacher after preacher says, as he sees the radiant vision coming—"He must increase, but I must decrease." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The converted nobleman*:—Here we have—1. A MODEL MINISTER. 1. He was under Divine guidance (ver. 29). The success of the gospel ministry will be always in proportion to our nearness to God, and the influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Learning, eloquence, and organisation are useful handmaids of the truth, but, like the wire of a telegraph, they are only a medium over which the Divine fluid may pass. 2. He was personal in his appeal (ver. 30). We speak too much about doctrines, doubts, and evidences, and too little to individual consciousness. 3. He was orthodox in his doctrine (ver. 35). Christ is the centre and circumference of the gospel ministry. II. A GENUINE TRUTH-SEEKER. Men study for display, for discovery, to baffle an antagonist. The eunuch was in real mental distress whilst searching for the truth. 1. He was devout and earnest. He respected the outward rites of the old religion, and travelled scores of miles to be present at the passover. There he procured for himself a manuscript of the "Evangelical Prophet," and perused it eagerly on his way home. It is a great thing for us to be on the path of duty. A parallel case may be found in the history of Luther discovering the Latin Bible at Erfurt. The earnest and devout inquirer never seeks in vain, as is proved in the history of Nicodemus, Cornelius, and Lydia. 2. He was frank and honest. He confessed his ignorance (ver. 31). Seldom will human nature acknowledge its defects. Self-love prompts man to hide his faults from his dearest friends, yea, from Omniscience. That which is quite plain to us was to him an inscrutable enigma, because there was such discrepancy between

public expectation and the description of the Prophet. The Jews expected a Prince, and the eunuch could not reconcile His humiliation with royal pomp and victory. 3. He possessed an unprejudiced mind. Men too often study the Word of God with pre-formed creeds—hence they warp the truth to support falsehood. The crew of a ship in distress are not over-scrupulous respecting the medium by which they are rescued—a raft, plank, rope, anything is welcomed that can bring them safe to land. Even so the man who traverses the boisterous sea of scepticism, if afraid of being engulfed in the yawning waves, he lays hold of the most insignificant medium, so as to reach the shore of truth safe. 4. Once convinced he did not procrastinate (ver. 36). Thus he received one of the outward signs of discipleship. Thousands are satisfied that Jesus is the only Saviour of the world, still they procrastinate. These are like a somnambulist walking upon the verge of a precipice; or, like a man sleeping upon the rails, that shall soon be swept over by the ponderous wheels of the express train. III. A TRUE CONVERSION. His conviction was instantaneous and enlightened. 1. He possessed faith. "I believe." Faith is indispensable to salvation. The faith of the eunuch was in the right object—"Jesus Christ"—not in circumcision, nor in the Virgin Mary, nor in priestcraft, but in the God-man. The Jews stung by the fiery serpents could not be healed without looking upon the brazen serpent; even so, without looking up to a crucified Redeemer with the eye of faith, the wounds and bruises of sin cannot be healed. 2. He possessed a peaceful mind (ver. 39). Well might he rejoice, for he was now delivered from guilt and condemnation; he had peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost. (*W. A. Griffiths.*) *Philip's audience of one:*—I. THOSE WHO WATCH FOR PROVIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES WILL FIND THAT PROVIDENCE IS WATCHING FOR THEM. There was a chance of saving a fellow-man down in the desert; God offered it to this Christian preacher (chap. viii. 26). If a man's heart is alert, and his temper willing, some sort of an "angel" will be discovered looking for him for a good work. II. NO SELF-SACRIFICE IS TO BE CONSIDERED TOO GREAT WHEN A SOUL IS TO BE SAVED. Here we find Philip starting out cheerfully to go sixty or seventy miles for a foreign convert (ver. 27). III. GOD'S KINGDOM OF PROVIDENCE IS SUBORDINATE TO GOD'S KINGDOM OF GRACE. Philip could not have known where he was going, except in a general way. Two persons might pass each other a hundred times in the trackless journey, and never know it. It was like starting out on the ocean to meet a ship, when nobody could tell the exact line of sailing. But Divine foreknowledge understood where the eunuch would be, and Divine sovereignty ordered that Philip should meet the traveller out in the sands, for the Divine purpose was to save that soul. IV. GOOD MEN ARE TO BE FOUND SOMETIMES IN THE UNLIKELIEST PLACES. It is a great surprise to us to discover in this officer of an Egyptian queen a proselyte to the ancient religion. So we are told that Christ, even in "Cæsar's household," had saints (Phil. iv. 22). And we have a record of one Christian in Herod's family (Luke viii. 3). V. IT IS WORTH WHILE TO PUT FORTH A CREDITABLE MEASURE OF EFFORT TO ATTEND CHURCH. In the kingdom of God, "not many noble are called" (1 Cor. i. 26–29), and whenever one out of those high ranks is visited by Divine grace, it is best to look up the man's record somewhat. It offers a most suggestive comment on the laggardness of some Christian people, when we find this African stranger putting forth such supreme endeavours in order to render his spiritual obedience unto God as best he knew how. VI. ONE MAY GO THROUGH A MOST EXTRAORDINARY SEASON OF THE LOFTIEST RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE AND YET REMAIN UNENLIGHTENED. When we recall the unusual history which had been transpiring, we cannot help thinking how much had happened calculated to arrest both the mind and the heart of such a foreigner in Jerusalem. But even silent sorrow under the shadows of Calvary will not save a soul from death, just by itself. It is possible for one to pass through a whole revival of religion serious and sympathetic, and still remain unregenerate. VII. RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS ARE SIMPLY INESTIMABLE. The eunuch journeyed across the known world in fatiguing travel in order to find peace in the worship of the true God. He is going home, his soul not at rest. Still, though disappointed, he clings to his purpose; he shouts aloud, like the little schoolboys in Ethiopian schools, the verses of that pathetic old chapter in Isaiah, till Philip hears him and comes to his help (ver. 29, 30). There is nothing like that impressive moment in which an aroused soul begins to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" If, in that crisis, those gracious feelings are stifled, or suffered to pass away, they may never arise again. VIII. HOW UNRIGHTEOUS ARE THE MODERN SNEERS ABOUT CREEDS AND COMMENTARIES! We wonder what the eunuch could have done without that good

deacon coming up. IX. IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO BE BOLD, BUT ALSO TO BE POLITE, IN OFFERING TRUTH TO INQUIRERS. Philip was unabashed, but you will look in vain for any discourtesy in his action. When "the Spirit" says, "Go near," it is safe to approach any one in the name of Christ (ver. 29). The Lord will never set a timid Christian at the task of speaking to a nabob or a politician like this, without going beforehand and, as it were, clearing the way of access. X. So WE SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH AN AUDIENCE OF ONLY ONE. Dean Swift is said to have made a joke of it: "Dearly beloved Roger [his clerk], the Scripture moveth us." Lyman Beecher is said to have preached his sermon right along, and his one hearer was converted. Jesus Christ gave almost all His supreme revelations to audiences of one, like Nicodemus, and the woman at the well. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Philip the evangelist:—The little that is known about Philip, the deacon and evangelist, may very soon be told. His name suggests, though by no means conclusively, that he was probably one of the so-called Hellenists, or foreign-born and Greek-speaking Jews. This is made the more probable because he was one of the seven selected by the Church, and after selection appointed by the apostles to dispense relief to the poor. The purpose of the appointment being to conciliate the grumblers in the Hellenist section of the Church, the persons chosen would probably belong to it. He left Jerusalem during the persecution "that arose after the death of Stephen." As we know, he was the first preacher of the gospel in Samaria; he was next the instrument honoured to carry the Word to the first heathen ever gathered into the Church; and then, after a journey along the sea-coast to Cæsarea, the then seat of government, he remained in that place in obscure toil for twenty years; dropped out of the story; and we hear no more about him but for one glimpse of his home in Cæsarea. I. We may gather a thought as to CHRIST'S SOVEREIGNTY IN CHOOSING HIS INSTRUMENTS. Did you ever notice that events exactly contradicted the notion of the Church, and of the apostles, in the selection of Philip and his six brethren? The apostles said, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Pick out seven relieving-officers—men who shall do the secular work of the Church." So said man. And what did facts say? That out of these twelve, who were to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, we never hear that by far the larger proportion of them were honoured to do anything worth mentioning for the spread of the gospel. But, on the other hand, of the men that were supposed to be fitted for secular work, two at all events had more to do in the expansion of the Church, and in the development of the universal aspects of Christ's gospel, than the whole of the original group of apostles. So Christ picks His instruments. Christ chooses His instruments where He will; and it is not the apostle's business, nor the business of an ecclesiastic of any sort, to settle his own work or anybody else's. The Commander-in-Chief keeps the choosing of the men for special service in His own hand. Christ says, "Go and join thyself to that chariot," and speak there the speech that I shall bid thee. Brethren, do you listen for that voice calling you to your tasks, and never mind what men may be saying. II. The next lesson that I would take from this story is THE SPONTANEOUS SPEECH OF A BELIEVING HEART. There came a persecution that scattered the Church. Men tried to fling down the lamp, and all they did was to spill the oil, and it ran flaming wherever it went. And so we read that, not by appointment, nor of set purpose, nor in consequence of any official sanction, nor in consequence of any supernatural and distinct commandment from heaven, but just because it was the natural thing to do, and they could not help it, they went everywhere, these scattered men of Cyprus and Cyrene, preaching the Word. And when this Philip, whom the officials had relegated to the secular work of distributing charity, found himself in Samaria, he did the like. So it always will be; we can all talk about what we are interested in. The full heart cannot be condemned to silence. Do you carry with you the impulse for utterance of Christ's name wherever you go? And is it so sweet in your hearts that you cannot but let its sweetness have expression by your lips? III. Another lesson that seems to me strikingly illustrated by the story with which we are concerned, is THE GUIDANCE OF A DIVINE HAND IN COMMON LIFE, AND WHEN THERE ARE NO VISIBLE NOR SUPERNATURAL SIGNS. Philip goes down to Samaria because he must, and speaks because he cannot help it. He is next bidden to take a long journey, from the centre of the land, away down to the southern desert; and at a certain point there the Spirit says to him, "Go! join thyself to this chariot." And when his work with the Ethiopian statesman is done, then he is swept away by the power of the Spirit of God, as Ezekiel had been long before by

the banks of the river Chebor, and is set down, no doubt all bewildered and breathless, at Azotus—the ancient Ashdod—the Philistine city, down on the low-lying coast. Was Philip less under Christ's guidance when miracle ceased and he was left to ordinary powers? Did it seem to him as if his task in preaching the gospel in these villages through which he passed on his way to Cæsarea was less distinctly obedience to the Divine command than when he heard the utterance of the Spirit, "Go down to the road which leads to Gaza, which is desert"? By no means. To this man, as to every faithful soul, the guidance that came through his own judgment and common sense, through the instincts and impulses of his sanctified nature, by the circumstances which he devoutly believed to be God's providence, was as truly direct Divine guidance as if all the angels of heaven had blown the commandment with their trumpets into his waiting and stunned ears. And so you and I have to go upon our paths without angel voices, or chariots of storm, and to be contented with Divine commandments less audible or perceptible to our senses than this man had at one point in his career. There is no gulf for the devout heart between what is called miraculous and what is called ordinary and common. Equally in both did God manifest His will to His servants, and equally in both is His presence capable of realisation. We do not need to envy Philip's brilliant beginning. Let us see that we imitate his quiet close of life. IV. The last lesson that I would draw is this—THE NOBILITY OF PERSISTENCE IN UNNOTICED WORK. What a contrast to the triumphs in Samaria, and the other great expansion of the field for the gospel effected by the God-commanded preaching to the eunuch, is presented by the succeeding twenty years of altogether unrecorded but faithful toil! Persistence in such unnoticed work is made all the more difficult, and to any but a very true man would have been all but impossible, by reason of the contrast which such work offered to the glories of the earlier days. Philip, who began so conspicuously, and so suddenly ceased to be the special instrument in the hands of the Spirit, kept plod, plod, plodding on with no bitterness of heart. For twenty years he had no share in the development of Gentile Christianity, of which he had sowed the first seed, but had to do much less conspicuous work. He toiled away there in Cæsarea patient, persevering, and contented, because he loved the work. He seemed to be passed over by his Lord in His choice of instruments. It was he who was selected to be the first man that should preach to the heathen. But did you ever notice that, although he was probably in Cæsarea at the time, Cornelius was not bid to apply to Philip, who was at his elbow, but to send to Joppa for the Apostle Peter? Philip might have sulked, and said, "Why was I not chosen to do this work? I will speak no more in this Name." It did not fall to his lot to be the apostle to the Gentiles. One who came after him was preferred before him, and the Hellenist Saul was set to the task which might have seemed naturally to belong to the Hellenist Philip. He cordially welcomed Paul to his house in Cæsarea twenty years afterwards, and rejoiced that one sows and another reaps; and so the division of labour is the multiplication of gladness. A beautiful superiority to all the low thoughts that are apt to mar our persistency in unobtrusive and unrecognised work is set before us in this story. Boys in the street will refuse to join in games, saying, "I shall not play unless I am captain, or have the big drum." And there are not wanting Christian men who lay down like conditions. "Play well thy part," wherever it is. Never mind the honour. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Philip and the eunuch*:—I. PHILIP MEETING THE EUNUCH. 1. An "angel of the Lord spake unto Philip." Whether there was a visible representation or not we cannot tell—very likely there was. But certain it is that he spake. The partition between men and angels is very thin—they can hear us talk, we can almost hear them. The two spheres of rational existence adjoin and seem sometimes to overlap each other. Angels, in the first century of our era, busily interested themselves in the affairs of the Church. Have they been withdrawn? No. "Are they not all ministering spirits," &c. We believe that evil spirits insinuate wicked thoughts. Why, then, deny the same power to good spirits? We sit leisurely in the house, when suddenly a thought shoots through the mind that we must "go towards the south"—visit a certain street. It is not impulse, nor feeling, for both bid us remain where we are; but we have no rest—the thought continually recurs. At last we go; and lo! we discover that our presence and assistance were sorely needed. Alas! we are not equally obedient with Philip. 2. The angel said, "Go toward the south," &c. One cannot help wondering at the angel's knowledge; but Palestine is not the only country with whose geography angels are acquainted. 3. That the message would prove a trial

to Philip's faith is unquestionable. It required that he should deny his most cherished predilections. Succeeding so remarkably in a city of Samaria, no doubt he was much tempted to prolong his stay. He might, with a great show of reason, raise formidable objections, but did not. The unbeliever always raises objections, but the believer always puts them down. "He arose and went." 4. As soon as he arrived in the unpromising neighbourhood, he saw a chariot occupied by a "man of Ethiopia"—probably the region now known as Nubia and Abyssinia. The eunuch, therefore, was one of the sable descendants of Ham. Human reason is much embarrassed that God should order His servant to forsake the populous city to preach to a foreign traveller in a desolate path. But God pays as much heed to the one as to the many. His government is special, attending to the minutest wants of individuals, as well as general, attending to the collective wants of the multitude. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner," &c. The "man of Ethiopia" was also an "eunuch." Eunuchs were numerous in the East, but were forbidden in Israel. Divine religion never encourages the mutilation of the body. False religions do. Their only method of overcoming sin is to disable the body to commit it. But true religion inculcates subjugation. Wherefore the Ethiopian eunuch could only be an outsider—devout, pious may be, but still an outsider. He was employed under Candace, and was set over all her treasures, *i.e.*, her Minister of Finance, the most important office of all under a despotism. But the Grand Vizier of Ethiopia discovered to the bitterness of his soul that earthly possessions, however vast, cannot satisfy the profound yearning of our humanity. That is why "he went to Jerusalem to worship." 5. The best spirits of the nations turned at this period with loathing from heathen religions and superstitions. Some betook themselves to atheism; others to witchcraft. But the better disposed passed over to Judaism. They found in it what the other systems of religion failed to give—pure morality and strict monotheism. So the eunuch travelled to Jerusalem "to worship God." II. PHILIP PREACHING TO THE EUNUCH. 1. The eunuch was now returning, and humbly studied the Word of God on his way from the temple of God. We often erase all good impression received in the house of God by frivolous dissipating talk on our way home. But the eunuch, "sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet." People nowadays, going on a tedious journey, take with them frivolous and exciting books with a view to "kill" the time. Better I should imagine did they learn a lesson from the religious African and read the Bible not to "kill" the time but to improve it. 2. He was "reading aloud," as was customary among Orientals. But the word also signifies to read to another. He was endeavouring to benefit his charioteer as well as himself. A truly generous man! The section of Scripture he was reading was singularly appropriate. It was the very section which treats of the close relation eunuchs were to sustain to the Church of God under the New Dispensation. Not by chance was he reading this portion of Holy Writ. No; he was studying it rather than any other that he might come to some definite conclusion respecting his own chances of ultimate salvation. 3. The chariot was driving leisurely along when Philip, wearied and dust-stained, arrived in sight. The paths of the two men were now to intersect. At the beginning an angel spake; now that he has obeyed and his work is at hand, the "Spirit of God said unto him." As a reward for cheerful and implicit obedience, the presence of the angel of God is superseded by the presence of the Spirit of God. The angel was adequate to bid "Philip arise and go"; but not to bring about the conversion of the traveller. Angels minister unto the heirs of salvation but cannot sanctify them. "The Spirit said unto Philip." He did not speak, converse in audible tones, as the angel did, but expressed Himself distinctly in the inward voice of the soul. Angels can never speak *in* the soul, at best they can only speak *to* it. We cannot help wondering at the marvellous combination of distinct agencies: the Word, the Servant, the Angel and the Spirit of God all work together to effect the salvation of one soul! 4. Philip then "ran" and said unto the eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "The eunuch answered," &c. (ver. 31). If he did not understand, he had the first qualification to do so, he knew he did not understand, and was candid enough to avow it. Many now are like him in their ignorance of the Scriptures, but very unlike him in their unconsciousness of that ignorance. They occupy exalted positions in science and literature, but they claim to understand theology likewise better than its professed students. Talk of the dogmatism of theology! Why, it has never been half so dogmatic as so-called philosophy. But the eunuch, humble as a little child, expressed his willingness to learn of the footsore pedestrian.

Then he read over the passage again, and said, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man?" Forgetting his social superiority in his intense eagerness to solve the great problems of religion, he beseeches Philip to explain the prophetic riddle. The prophet speaks of the "Servant of the Lord." But who is this Servant? "himself or some other man?" A right honest and thoughtful question—one still hotly debated between the rationalistic and the evangelistic schools. But of Philip's answer there can be no doubt—he pointed him in plain unambiguous language to that "Other Man." "Philip opened his mouth," and delivered himself of his momentous message. Some people when they open their mouths shut the Scriptures. They darken counsel with words without knowledge. But Philip "opened his mouth," and thereby opened the Scriptures. "He began at the same Scripture," but he did not finish there. That Scripture is the climax of the Old Dispensation, which never reached a higher strain. But the climax of the Old is the starting-point of the New. Where Esaias left off, there Philip began. The only way to expound the Bible is to preach Jesus. Omit Him, and it is a dark riddle which no human ingenuity can unravel. He is the key to unlock the prophecies. 5. In a city of Samaria, Philip "preached Christ"; but to the eunuch "he preached Jesus." The Samaritans expected the Christ; and were full of theories respecting Him. Among them, therefore, Philip had to dwell principally on the Christhood of the Saviour. But the eunuch was not hampered with any preconceived notions. What he supremely desired was a personal Saviour. To him, therefore, Philip preached Jesus. But Philip was not content with a mere exposition of the prophecy. He pressed the Saviour on his acceptance. There is reason to fear that much of modern preaching is not personal enough. You pick up a volume of sermons "preached before the University of Oxford." Before, forsooth! Let the beams of the sun fall broadly on your hand, and you hardly notice it; concentrate them on one spot and they burn. And the gospel light shines fully and broadly on our congregations, but how few the conversions! We diffuse the light instead of focussing it. III. PHILIP BAPTIZING THE EUNUCH. 1. Modern Churches require candidates to submit to a tedious process of probation. Prudence now counsels delay, but the eunuch was baptized immediately. 2. But he was baptized on making a confession of his faith. Whether ver. 27 is genuine or not, the truth it contains will still remain intact. Only on a candid confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God can a man be legitimately received into the Christian Church. Correct views on other doctrines are of great importance to a robust, vigorous, spiritual life; but they do not necessarily endanger our ultimate salvation. But a correct belief respecting the Person of the Saviour is an element absolutely essential to salvation—without it no man can be saved. 3. The eunuch, being baptized, "went on his way rejoicing." Prior to his interview with Philip he was restless and unhappy. He carried a sorrow he could not explain. His profound grief found vent in the tearful strains of Isa. liii. But Philip's teaching dissipated the gloom. The strings of the burden snapped in sight of the Cross, and the eunuch was delivered from that which he feared. Many foolishly imagine that religion is a melancholy thing. A sad mistake! (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Philip and the eunuch: a remarkable meeting:*—It was a meeting—I. OF REMARKABLE MEN. Each stood out amongst his contemporaries—the one distinguished by his political position, the other by his advocacy of a new faith. In appearance and worldly position they greatly differed, for Philip was poor and without status, whereas the eunuch was affluent and high in his country's esteem. Philip was a footsore traveller, the eunuch wended his way home provided with all that the civilisation of the age could supply to make the journey pleasant. II. BROUGHT ABOUT BY EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The direction of Philip to Gaza by an angel of the Lord. 2. The occupation of the eunuch—reading Isaiah; if to relieve the tedium of the journey, how much better than our practice of devouring the trash sold at railway bookstalls! Or was it for the purpose of intellectual culture? Or to see if the character claims of the recently crucified Jesus corresponded with those of prophecy? It matters not. It was Bible reading that brought him in contact with Philip. 3. The Spirit's impulse that prompted Philip to join the chariot. There was something more than human in this boldness. III. TURNED TO RARE SPIRITUAL ACCOUNT. Coming together, what did they do? Converse on politics? No, on the Scripture. 1. The eunuch was enlighted by Philip—for which work two things are necessary. (1) On the part of the one a disposition to receive knowledge (ver. 31). (2) On the part of the other, a power to impart it. This Philip had. 2. The eunuch was

baptized by Philip. IV. TERMINATING BLESSEDLY. 1. For Philip. He was transferred to another sphere of usefulness. 2. For the eunuch. He went on his way rejoicing. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Philip and the Ethiopian:*—Simon the sorcerer and the Ethiopian officer are at contrast. In his seeking, Simon's heart was not right in the sight of God, while the heart of the Ethiopian commended itself to Divine favour. Simon was after power—the Ethiopian was after truth. The thought of the one was only of self—the other had no thought of self at all. Simon was rebuked, but the Ethiopian was helped. Simon was filled with fear—the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. Note, then, the danger of approaching God with wrong motives, and the encouragement to every one who sincerely desires to know and do the will of God; how severely a selfish seeker may be rebuked, and how ready the Holy Spirit is to help an earnest inquirer after truth. Let us see what the Holy Spirit did to help such an one. I. HE SENT TO HIM A HELPER. Notice the instrumentalities employed—angelic and human—teaching us the value that in heaven is placed upon a single soul. There is here, too, a suggestion of the way that angels are made ministering spirits. The angel "spake" unto Philip, but he could not be the guide into the way of life. It needed a redeemed soul to speak of a Redeemer. The world is to be won to Christ, not by the testimony of angels, but by the witness of saved men. II. HE SENT TO HIM A SUCCESSFUL HELPER. Philip has a good record as a Christian worker. He was the sort of instrument that the Holy Spirit could use. Though in the midst of a great work, he gives it up without even a query to go down to a desert. His faith accounts both for his obedience and his success. It takes great faith to give up a work for one that seemingly is small. But teaching one man in a desert may be of more importance than teaching a thousand in a city. III. HE DIRECTED THE HELPER IN HIS WORK. Philip not only was sent down, but was told what to do. The juncture was admirably timed. The Holy Spirit never inspires to unseasonable labours. IV. HE SENT THE HELPER TO ONE WHO NEEDED HELP. The Ethiopian was a man of station, and had made some progress in the right way. But that which brought him help was the cry of his soul for truth. That cry had been heard in heaven even before he had consciously called, and the answer was at hand! V. HE SENT A HELPER OF TACT. The fact that one is sent by the Spirit should not cause him to be careless of methods, but should make him call to his aid all the skill and ability of which he is the master. VI. HE SENT A HELPER CONVERSANT WITH THE SCRIPTURES. Philip could fit the prophecy to the facts. And not merely that, he showed his familiarity with other prophecies. "Beginning from this scripture," Philip preached Jesus. If one desires to be a power for Christ, he should become familiarly acquainted with the Word that bears witness to Him. VII. HE SENT JUST THE HELP THAT WAS NEEDED. Having heard the Word explained, the Ethiopian joyfully accepted the truth, and desired immediately to have that rite performed that would seal him to Christ as a believer. VIII. HE CAUGHT AWAY THE HELPER WHEN HE WAS NO LONGER NEEDED. Naturally, both instructor and scholar would have liked to have kept company together indefinitely. But the purpose of Philip's sending had been accomplished. There was work for the evangelist to do elsewhere, and work, it is to be presumed, for the Ethiopian to do at home. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *How the Ethiopian treasurer found the true treasure:*—I. THE PLACE WHERE HE FOUND IT. A solitary road through a waste. II. THE CHEST WHEREIN IT WAS HID. The Scripture with its dark saying and seals. III. THE KEY WHICH HE OBTAINED by the sermon eagerly received. IV. THE JEWEL WHICH SPARKLED TO HIM. Christ who died for our sins and rose for our justification. V. THE RIGHT OF POSSESSION which was acknowledged to him in baptism. VI. THE JOY WITH WHICH HE CARRIED THE TREASURE HOME. (*K. Gerok.*) *Courtiers and conversion:*—Courtonne, a celebrated pastor of Amsterdam, notorious for the freedom of his preaching, was urged to preach at court. He consented on condition that the household of the Prince of Orange should be present, and that no one should be offended at his freedom of speech. When the time came, a great and distinguished audience assembled, and the preacher took for his text the present subject, which he said contained four subjects of astonishment, which increase one upon the other. I. A COURTIER WHO READS THE HOLY SCRIPTURE, which is sufficiently surprising. II. A COURTIER WHO OWNS HIS IGNORANCE, which is more surprising still. III. A COURTIER WHO ASKS HIS INFERIOR TO INSTRUCT HIM, which should cause a redoubling of the surprise. IV. A COURTIER WHO IS CONVERTED, which brings the surprise to a climax. (*A. Coquerel.*) *How all things co-operate to promote the salvation of a soul desiring to be saved:*—I.

GOD, by His angel and Spirit. II. MAN. Philip, by his meeting and discourse. III. SCRIPTURE. The prophecy of Isaiah. IV. NATURE. The water by the way. (*K. Gerok.*) *The Christian teacher's work and its rewards*:—The Book of Acts contains a gallery of missionary portraits. One is inspired by studying them, but none leave an impression more distinct and abiding than Philip's. He appears suddenly; the sketches given of his labours are very short; he quickly disappears. Like Elijah, when he is seen he moves with the Spirit, and is moved by the Spirit. He awakens joy wherever he goes; and his four daughters inherit his spirit and become prophetesses. Consider—I. CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER'S WORK. 1. His implicit obedience to the Spirit. The angel said, "Arise and go." He arose and went. Divine guidance to particular service is often accompanied by special evidence of its source. It is always in perfect accord with the Scriptures; there are providential circumstances pointing towards it; and often the call is emphasised by the counsel of God's most devoted servants, though no unseen angel now brings His command. 2. His eagerness to impart the gospel. He see a distinguished foreigner on the road. Many a teacher would have said, "He is no scholar for me." Only a heart full of love to men could have made him quick to obey the Spirit's direction. Whatever openings we see, we must press into. No one lives where souls are still unsaved, where God does not open a way for him to carry the gospel. Take the first step, and God will point out the next. 3. His usable knowledge of the Scriptures. Strangers interested in the Scriptures meet on common ground. A Frenchman thrown into the company of a German, tried many ways to communicate with him; but neither could speak the language of the other. At last he took from his pocket a little Testament, and pointed to John iii. 16. The German could not read the language, but the Word was the message dear to his heart. They each looked at the verse, then into each other's eyes, then clasped hands across the book. Philip had made no immediate preparation, but he had prepared himself for such emergencies, both by experience and study. He could begin right there and preach Jesus. II. SOME OF HIS REWARDS. 1. He finds a heart prepared to receive the truth. One who is filled with the love of Jesus finds intense delight in kindling that love in others. Philip expected immediate results. It was not his purpose to sow the seed and be content to leave it. He led the eunuch on from willingness to learn to eagerness to be a recognised disciple of Jesus. Such a reward is Divine. We never forget the triumphs of such moments. 2. He found new evidence of being a co-worker with God. What a reward is the evidence that God makes the efforts of His faithful servant effective! 3. Philip secured a witness for the gospel. That which he was so eager to make known would now be proclaimed by another also. 4. Philip filled a life with joy. The eunuch, like Zaccheus, like the Philippian jailor, like countless thousands more, rejoiced because he had found Christ as his Saviour. Wherever Philip goes, he leaves a trail of joy behind him. Samaria rejoices in his presence: so did also the desert. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Four noble guides to the way of salvation*:—I. THE VOICE IN ONE'S HEART, which longs after God. II. THE INTIMATION OF SCRIPTURE, which points to Christ. III. THE GUIDANCE OF THE MINISTRY, which explains both the presentiments of the heart and the counsels of Scripture. IV. THE EFFICACY OF THE SACRAMENT, which seals to us the Divine grace, and nourishes and strengthens within us the Divine life. (*K. Gerok.*)

Ver. 28. **Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.**—*Oriental reading*:—If the eunuch followed the general custom of the East, he was not only reading to himself aloud, but so as to be heard easily and distinctly by any one in the immediate neighbourhood. The prayer, or praying, of the Orientals is not usually very noisy, but their reading is a continual sound. They study aloud, read their sacred books aloud, and rehearse their lessons aloud, to an extent that is not seen among the Occidentals, nor enjoyed by an Occidental listener. When there are many together, the babel is astonishing. The idea that it might disturb any one never enters their heads. But the Orientals do many things with noise which we of the West prefer to do with quietness. Our talking seems painfully low and still to them, as theirs seems painfully loud and noisy to us. Yet the Orientals are not very much beyond the ordinary Italians in that respect. (*Prof. I. H. Hall.*) *The Word of God, the best reading for a journey*, not only on the way from Jerusalem to Gaza, but on the way through time to eternity. 1. We forget thereby the hardships of the way. 2. We look not aside to forbidden paths. 3. We make thereby blessed travelling acquaintances. 4. We go forward on the right path to the blessed.

goal. (*K. Gerok.*) *Reading the Scriptures* :—I. SOME REMARKS ON THIS SUBJECT. It is a duty—1. Incumbent upon all. 2. In accordance with the dictates of reason. 3. To be performed irrespective of rank and condition. II. INSTRUCTION RESPECTING IT. 1. Before you read consider whose book it is. 2. Read with a teachable spirit. 3. Practise what you learn. 4. Never read without prayer. (*J. Clayton, M.A.*) *Reading the Scriptures : its advantage* :—The Word of God is the water of life; the more you lave it forth, the fresher it runneth: it is the fire of God's glory; the more ye blow it, the clearer it burneth: it is the corn of the Lord's field; the better ye grind it, the more it yieldeth: it is the bread of heaven; the more it is broken and given forth, the more it remaineth: it is the sword of the Spirit; the more it is scoured, the brighter it shineth. (*Bp. Jewel.*) *Method of Bible reading determined by need and purpose* :—Ah! the way a man reads the Bible—how much that depends upon his necessity. I have unrolled the chart of the coast many and many a time, particularly in these later days, since there has been so much interest attached to it. I have gone along down with my finger, and followed the shoals and depths in and out of this harbour and that, and imagined a lighthouse here and a lighthouse there that were marked on the chart, and have looked at the inland country lining the shore, and it has been a matter of interest to me, to be sure. But suppose I had been in that equinoctial gale that blew with such violence, and had had the command of a ship off the coast of Cape Hatteras, and the lighthouse had not been in sight, and my spars had been split, and my rigging had been disarranged, and my sails had been blown away, and I had had all I could do to keep the ship out of a trough of the sea, and I had been trying to make some harbour, how would I have unrolled the chart, and with two men to help me to hold it, on account of the reeling and staggering of the vessel, looked at all the signs, and endeavoured to find out where I was! Now, when I sit in my house, where there is no gale, and with no ship, and read my chart out of curiosity, I read it as you sometimes read your Bible. You say, "Here is the headland of depravity; and there is a lighthouse—born again; and here is the channel of duty." And yet every one of you has charge of a ship—the human soul. Evil passions are fierce winds that are driving it. This Bible is God's chart for you to steer by, to keep you from the bottom of the sea, and to show you where the harbour is, and how to reach it without running on rocks or bars. If you have been reading this book to gratify curiosity; if you have been reading it to see if you could not catch a Universalist; if you have been reading it to find a knife with which to cut up a Unitarian; if you have been reading it for the purpose of setting up or taking down a bishop; if you have been reading it to establish or overthrow any sect; if you have been reading it so, then stop. It is God's medicine-book. You are sick. You are mortally struck through with disease. There is no human remedy for your trouble. But here is God's medicine-book. If you read it for life, for health, for growth in righteousness, then blessed is your reading; but if you read it for disputation and dialectical ingenuities, it is no more to you than Bacon's "Novum Organum" would be. It is the book of life—it is the book of everlasting life—so take heed how you read it. In reading it, see that you have the truth, and not the mere semblance of it. You cannot live without it. You die for ever unless you have it to teach you what are your relations to God and eternity. May God guide you away from all cunning appearances of truth set to deceive men, and make you love the real truth! Above all other things, may God make you honest in interpreting it, and applying it to your daily life and disposition! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Reading the Scriptures : unprofitable method of* :—To some the Bible is uninteresting and unprofitable, because they read too fast. Among the insects which subsist on the sweet sap of flowers, there are two very different classes. One is remarkable for its imposing plumage, which shows in the sunbeams like the dust of gems; and as you watch its jaunty gyrations over the fields and its minuet dance from flower to flower, you cannot help admiring its graceful activity, for it is plainly getting over a great deal of ground. But in the same field there is another worker, whose brown vest and business-like, straightforward flight may not have arrested your eye. His fluttering neighbour darts down here and there, and sips elegantly wherever he can find a drop of ready nectar; but this dingy plodder makes a point of alighting everywhere, and wherever he alights he either finds honey or makes it. If the flower-cup be deep, he goes down to the bottom; if its dragon-mouth be shut, he thrusts its lips asunder; and if the nectar be peculiar or recondite, he explores all about till he discovers it, and then having ascertained the knack of it, joyful as one who has found great spoil, he sings his way down into its luscious recesses. His rival of the painted velvet wing has no

patience for such dull and long-winded details. But what is the end? Why, the one died last October along with the flowers; the other is warm in his hive to-night, amidst the fragrant stores which he gathered beneath the bright beams of summer. To which do you belong?—the butterflies or bees? Do you search the Scriptures, or do you only skim them? (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Reading the Scriptures: motive for*:—Other books can nourish our minds, but only God's Word can feed our souls. *The great prophecy*:—A few years ago a Brahmin of the highest caste, profound in all the history and language and religion of Brahma, came to England. By chance, or rather by special providence, a copy of the Scriptures fell into his hands. He devoured it with avidity; he did not consult any one to interpret for him a single passage, but the light broke upon him, and what produced the greatest effect upon his mind was that which converted Lord Rochester on his death-bed. He read Isaiah liii., and compared it with the account of the crucifixion, and became a profound Christian. That man is now in high favour with the Nizam of Hyderabad, and has founded a church which has several hundred Christian worshippers. (*R. Bruce.*) *Reading the Scriptures: fruits of*:—A Roman Catholic priest in Belgium rebuked a young woman and her brother for reading that "bad book," pointing to the Bible. "Sir," she replied, "a little while ago my brother was an idler, a gambler, and a drunkard. Since he began to study the Bible he works with industry, goes no longer to the tavern, no longer touches cards, brings home money to his poor old mother, and our life at home is quiet and delightful. How comes it, sir, that a bad book produces such good fruits?" *Reading: kinds of*:—The first class of readers may be compared to an hour-glass; their reading being as the sand: it runs in and runs out, and leaves not a vestige behind. A second class resembles a sponge, which imbibes everything, and returns it in nearly the same state, only a little dirtier. A third class is like a jelly-bag, which allows all that is pure to pass away, and retains only the refuse and dregs. The fourth class may be compared to the slave of Golconda, who, casting aside all that is worthless, preserves only the pure gems. (*S. T. Coleridge.*) *Reading: results of good and bad*:—Do not buy, do not borrow, do not touch bad books. One book may decide thy destiny. The assassin of Lord William Russell said he committed that crime as the result of reading the romance, then popular, entitled "Jack Sheppard." George Law was made a millionaire by reading a biography in childhood. Benjamin Franklin became the good man and philosopher that he was by reading in early life Cotton Mather's "Essays to do Good." John Angell James, as consecrated a man as ever lived in England, stood in his pulpit and said: "Twenty-five years ago a lad loaned me a bad book for a quarter of an hour. I have never recovered from it. The spectres of that book have haunted me to this day. I shall not, to my dying day, get over the reading of that book for fifteen minutes." A clergyman, travelling towards the West, many years ago, had in his trunk Doddridge's "Rise and Progress." In the hotel he saw a woman copying from a book. He found that she had borrowed Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" from a neighbour, and was copying some portions out of it, so he made her a present of his copy of the "Rise and Progress." Thirty-one years after, he was passing along that way and he inquired for that woman. He was pointed to a beautiful home. He went there. He asked her if she remembered him. She said, "No." Then, he says, "Do you not remember thirty years ago a man gave you a copy of Doddridge's 'Rise and Progress'?" She said, "Yes; I read it, and it was the means of my conversion. I passed it round, and all the neighbours read it, and there came a revival, and we called a minister and we built a church. The church of Wyoming is the result of that one book which you gave me." The reading of Homer's "Iliad" made Alexander a warrior, and the reading of the "Life of Alexander" made Cæsar and Charles XII. men of blood. It is well known that Rochester was, for many years of his life, an avowed infidel, and that a large portion of his time was spent in ridiculing the Bible. One of his biographers has described him as "a great wit, a great sinner, and a great penitent." Even this man was converted by the Holy Spirit in the use of His Word. Reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, he was convinced of the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of the Messiah, and the value of His atonement as a rock on which sinners may build their hopes of salvation. On that atonement he rested, and died in the humble expectation of pardoning mercy and heavenly happiness.

Ver. 29. **Then said the Spirit to Philip, Go near.**—*Lessons from the desert ways*:—These two men were alike in a few respects, but in all others different.

Both were travellers, both were stewards, and each had authority. But one was rich, the other poor. One was the steward of a great queen, and returning to her court and to the charge of all her treasure; but the other was going down to Gaza which is desert, in trust with the gospel ministry and the commission of the Most High. Here is an instance to the point; men were feeling after Christ, in the unsatisfied hunger of the soul. Whatever impression that equipage may have made on Philip, as he looked, he was greatly in error if he thought, "Here is probably a haughty man of the world!" Appearances deceive. The humble and meek may be in kings' courts; under the robe of wealth and state may beat a heart uncorrupt before God. This person, for example, had the charge of vast earthly treasure, and yet his thoughts are far away; he is meekly reading the Word of life, and seeking the pearl of great price. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *Guidance in doing good:*—There was an unseen chance of serving a fellow-man down in a distant desert. Christ offered that chance to this Christian preacher. If a true believer's heart is alert, and his temper willing, the Lord will surely put him and keep him in the way of doing good. Only he must watch for heavenly providences to summon him, and instantly obey. I. NO EXERTION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TOO DIFFICULT, NO PROSPECT TOO DISCOURAGING, IF DOING GOOD IS OUR PURPOSE. Philip cheerfully started to go sixty or seventy miles just to save a single soul. "He arose and went." Sprang to meet the command. On the other hand the eunuch traversed more than half a continent to render God worship and find peace. II. SOMETIMES THE HOLY SPIRIT CHOOSES THE BEST PEOPLE IN THE UNLIKELIEST PLACES. Christ had saints in Cæsar's household and Herod's family; so there was a seeker after truth in the court of Ethiopia. III. RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS ARE OF INESTIMABLE VALUE, AND OUGHT TO BE CHERISHED AS WE WOULD CHERISH LIFE ITSELF. The eunuch had been all the way to Jerusalem without any helpful illumination of grace. But he will not give up without the blessing; so he searches the Scriptures on his way back, in spite of the tediousness of the journey. IV. IT IS WRONG TO BE FASTIDIOUS ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES. Wherever souls are, in the desert or not, there let us try to save them. V. WE ARE NEVER TO DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS. Philip, like our Lord at Sychar, had an audience of one—but he preached notwithstanding. VI. THE MEASURELESS WORTH OF A SINGLE CHANCE OF TELLING A FELLOW-BEING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST. Philip had not met this man before: there is nothing to show that he met him again. A moment lost might have been the loss of a soul. VII. COURTESY IS NEVER LOST ON ANYBODY IN THIS UNEASY AND SOMEWHAT ROUGH WORLD. A churl would have told this stranger to move on and attend to his own concerns. VIII. NOTICE THE ETHIOPIAN'S HUMILITY. He was ignorant and acknowledged it. To be conscious of ignorance is the first step to knowledge. IX. WHOEVER DESIRES TO DO GOOD MUST FIND OUT WHERE THE SPIRIT IS LEADING HIM, AND SIMPLY AND HUMBLY FOLLOW ON. X. WATCH EVEN CHARIOTS PASSING BY. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The meeting:*—Marriages, they say, are made in heaven; *i.e.*, the steps of two, both being God's dear children, are so directed that after each has passed over many windings, the two paths converge, and the two lives meet and melt into one like two rivers, flowing thenceforth one broader, deeper, stronger stream. Meetings that are of shorter duration, and partnerships that are less intimate, come under the same rule. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If God's purposes in creation require the meeting of two circling worlds, He will so arrange that the two shall touch at the very point of space and time which He has designed. The same might and wisdom have been at work to arrange a meeting wherever one earthen vessel charged bears Christ, and another empty receives Christ at a brother's hand. This case is recorded as a specimen of the Lord's way. Such meetings occur now, and ye know not the day nor the hour when the messenger sent by God to meet you may heave in sight—in church, street, lonely path, or home. Those who desire to meet him will not miss him. Though the place was desert and the path dimly traced, and the time not told at all, Philip and the Ethiopian met with all the exactitude of tides and seasons. These meetings, long prepared and wisely arranged, are sometimes lost through obstinate unbelief. What a meeting was that between Paul and Felix! How far up the lines of preparation for it ran; and how skilfully they were held by God until the missionary and the ruler met! Now, Felix, or never. "Go thy way," &c. Fool! You will never get another. He thought he was only politely putting off the Christian: in reality he was rudely rejecting Christ. To lose such a meeting may be to lose your soul. Philip ran to meet the eunuch. Hitherto he had walked, perhaps slowly. So when two objects attract each other by hidden

magnets, their mutual motion towards a meeting is scarcely perceptible at first; but when they have approached near the movement quickens, and they traverse the rest of the space at a rush. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *A providential meeting:*—At one of Mr. Moody's meetings in Belfast, the Rev. Wesley Guard mentioned an incident of which he said the facts had just been related to him. It was to the effect that a farmer, living three miles out in the country, wanted to come into the meeting one day, but was unexpectedly detained, and did not know how he would get there in time. He started, and presently he heard a car coming behind him. When it came up the vehicle was stopped, and the man said to the driver, "Thank you, sir, for giving me a lift." "I did not offer you a lift; but as the horse stopped you had better get up." The farmer got up, and they drove on. After a little conversation the driver confessed that he was in great distress about his soul, and the tears began to fall. The good man told him the way of life, and there and then as they journeyed on the car the gentleman found salvation. Said he, "I can see now why the horse stopped; it was that I might get into the light." *Little events leading to great:*—In walking across Alpine glaciers, travellers often come upon narrow and apparently insignificant fissures, that seem to be merely superficial cracks; while the guides know that, if one but sounds them, they shall be found sinking down, fathom after fathom, to the very bottom, and sometimes, though small to the eye externally, they are cavernous, and at the bottom torrents rush and roar in silence, for so far down are they, and so in-covered, that their angriest noises are smothered. It is just so in human life. The most insignificant incidents often lead to great events. Often, if we hear God's voice in the small matters of life, and obey His commands, we shall find that we are led on to great things. Philip was told in what direction to go, and by going in that particular direction he met the Ethiopian, and was able to lead him to Christ. *A timely visit:*—It is recorded of Mr. Dod, one of the Puritan ministers, that being one night late in his study, his mind was strongly inclined, though he could assign no reason for it, to visit a gentleman of his acquaintance at a very unseasonable hour. Not knowing the design of Providence, he obeyed and went. When he reached the house, after knocking a few times at the door, the gentleman himself came, and inquired if he wanted him upon any particular business. Mr. Dod, having answered in the negative, and signified that he could not rest till he had seen him, the gentleman replied, "Oh, sir, you are sent of God at this very hour, for I was just now going to destroy myself," and immediately pulled the halter out of his pocket by which he had intended to commit the horrid deed, which was thus prevented.

Vers. 30-39. **And Philip ran . . . and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?**—*Understanding the Word:*—1. Notice the preliminary fact that the Scriptures challenge investigation. "Let us reason together," says Isaiah. The Bible is a definite and positive force. You can no more eliminate it from the world's life than you can take oxygen from its atmosphere, or Columbus and Constantine from history. The life and words of Jesus invite, demand intelligent study. 2. These Scriptures are a growth. The Word of God is not "dropped ready-made from heaven." 3. Our understanding of the Word is a growth. We must get more and more the true perspective. I. WHAT RULES OF INTERPRETATION ARE WE TO ADOPT? 1. At the outset we assume the fact that the Word is not a sealed volume, but a plain book, in the study of which reason, common sense is needed. Rationalism enthrones reason above the Bible, we need not go to the other extreme and ignore it. We find necessary facts in the Scriptures. Things, indeed, there are which are hard to be understood, but we need not magnify difficulties into doubts. To recognise difficulties is not sinful, but doubt, at least, is not holy. We are to remember that God is not limited to our comprehension of Him. We cannot rule out all difficulties. Faith has its place as well as reason. 2. The Scriptures, in the next place, appeal to our moral nature, the conscience, affections, to hope and fear. Christ says, "I will tell you whom ye shall fear." The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Love, too, lifts the veil from many a mystery. This is true in even human friendship, but in a grander sense love is an interpreter of God. We quarrel with the facts of His character and government until we learn to love Him. Then all grows plain. The Word of God meets the soul's yearning for pardon. The conscience of Felix was appealed to, and he trembled. Christians need to make their consciences more discriminating and sensitive. 3. Again, we are to interpret the Word of God in its unity and rest upon it as God's truth, not content with fragmentary facts. Our spiritual universe

is more than one story high. We cannot leave our belief in a future existence. Deep and reverent scholarship shown in the study of Divine truth has always been honoured of God. We ought to be content only in a large outlook. II. PERILS IN METHODS OF INTERPRETATION. 1. Some come to the Scriptures for a purpose and bend it to a theory. 2. Others come to the Scriptures with a captious spirit to pick out faults and errors. 3. Some cultivate a merely intellectual, speculative knowledge, and know nothing of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. 4. Others are literalists. They make a great deal about the horses in Revelation and their colour. 5. Others, still, go to the opposite extreme, and spiritualise everything. 6. The Bible advances as a positive revelation, definite and fixed, while science every year abandons one theory after another. (*M. Burnham, D.D.*) *Asking questions*:—A Persian philosopher being asked by what method he had acquired so much knowledge, answered, "By not allowing shame to prevent me from asking questions when I was ignorant." *The Bible*:—Philip had been summoned by the Spirit of God into the desert of Gaza. It may have been to save him from the intoxication of success. We all know how prone we are—when God gives to us success—to take the credit to ourselves. It may have been therefore on this account, to save Philip from being puffed up by pride by his popularity and power, that he was summoned thus into the wilderness by God. We do not say that he was so puffed up; if he were, Simon Magus would have a thorn to prick the bladder of pride on this account. But we do say that ofttimes in our own case, God sees fit to call us aside for awhile with Him. In Philip's case it may rather have been to save him from the paralysis of despair. For now no sooner was his work tested, than the very best of his converts failed. Doubtless there would be heart-searching in the mind of Philip himself. "Was I too anxious to get that man?" "Did I soften the terms of the message so as to win him on my side?" "Was I sufficiently satisfied with the deepness of the work which he professed had taken place?" But God is a good Master, though this Simon Magus had so egregiously failed. God was about to give Philip another soul, one in whom he might indeed rejoice, and of whom—though perhaps he would never see him again—he might hear how gloriously he was carrying on the work of God in a distant land. Now there are four questions I think suggested here. In the first place, "What are you reading?" In the second place, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And then the third question asked by the Ethiopian eunuch himself, "How can I understand?" And lastly, "What doth hinder me from obeying these precepts?" I. WHAT readest thou? This is distinctly a reading age. Take heed what you read. Beware of any impure books which may vitiate the imagination. Beware of any flippant and frivolous books which may make you tired of the monotony of daily life. Beware of any sceptical books, which blasphemously and irreverently decry God and His Holy Word. I know that there are men who say that you must read both sides of a question. I don't see why, if a man chooses to publish a libel upon my wife, I am obliged to wade through it on the plea of reading both sides of the question. How much is read which will scarcely bear inspection. Here this eunuch is travelling back to his own country. He had no need to be afraid of Philip asking him the question, "What readest thou?" There was no need for him to hide the book under his carriage cushion, and say, "Nothing"; no reason for a blush to come across his face. We know if he had lived in the nineteenth century, the Word of God would have been about the last thing that he, as a seeker after truth, would have considered it right to read. But not so in that century. It is as an earnest, honest seeker after truth he studied God's own Word, and asked, "What saith the Scripture?" Ah, some of the heathen will rise up in judgment against us. We read of a wild Pathan giving one-third of his month's pay in order to obtain a copy of the Word of God. II. But Philip's question is directed, not merely to what it was he was reading, but he asked him, "UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?" This is very important. God deals with us, not as horse or mule that has no understanding, but He puts before us a Word that requires all the best efforts of our intelligence and reason. The first great requisite of good ground to receive the seed is this—that a man understand the Word. III. Now comes the question, "HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND?" "How can I," said the eunuch—"how can I understand?" The first thing you can do is to ask the Author to explain it. If you were reading any book you could not quite understand, and the author is in the next room, it is very easy to go to the author of that book. The author of this book is God the Holy Ghost, and you can ask Him to explain it far better than any commentator. IV. Then lastly comes the question, "WHAT DOTH HINDER YOU

FROM BEING BAPTIZED?" The eunuch knew this: If it is true, I must come out and confess. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*) *Alacrity in God's service*:—"Philip ran to him." That is the way a man goes at the Lord's work when he is full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. He does not shuffle along in a half-hearted way, as if he were not sure whether to go or to hold back; or as if he thought that to-morrow or an hour hence would be as well as now for duty doing. He just runs as if everything depended on his not losing a minute. And if the man whom he is sent to is in a chariot, and has a fair start of him, he has need to run. A great many opportunities of doing the Lord's work are lost because of delay. There are times when resting and waiting are in order; but when we know of a soul in need, and when we have had a prompting from the Holy Spirit to go to that soul, the one thing for us to do is—to run. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *A weighty question*:—I. IT SUPPOSES that we read the Bible. Is this correct, or does this half heathen put us to shame? II. IT DISCLOSES our natural blindness. Is not our Bible reading often an unintelligent reading, our Bible a book not understood? III. IT EXCITES us to seek the true Interpreter and Guide. He it is who spake by Philip—the Spirit of God, who always lives and operates in the Church. Lessons: 1. Readest thou what thou hast? 2. Understandest thou what thou readest? 3. Obeyest thou what thou understandest? (*K. Gerok.*) *Understandest thou what thou readest?*—1. How this chamberlain came to be a proselyte we do not know. The book which he was so fond of reading may have been the means; certainly it has answered that purpose thousands of times. At any rate, he followed the light he had. Be true to truth as it comes to you. If God gives you only common candle-light, make good use of it. Those who are willing to see God by the moon of nature shall soon be illuminated by the sun of revelation. 2. Having become a proselyte, the eunuch made a long and perilous journey to Jerusalem. After he had enjoyed the solemn feast he returned; and while he travelled along he read the very best text that Philip could have selected. The like conjunction of Providence and the Holy Spirit constantly occurs in conversions. How often have the talks of young men by the wayside been reproduced by the preacher! 3. This nobleman is reading—a hopeful sign. In these days we need hardly exhort young men to read. But then Philip asked, "What readest thou?" and that suggests a necessary inquiry. Much that is read nowadays had far better be left unread. Souls have been ruined by reading a vile book. Young men, you will read—but take heed what you read! The best of reading is the reading of the best of books. I do not like to see in a lending-library all the works of fiction needing to be bound two or three times over, while the books of sober fact and solid teaching have never been read, since they have not even been cut. 4. It was a very sharp-pointed question that Philip put to this gentleman. We find it tolerably easy to put questions to a man who is poor, but how shall we approach the rich? We have sermons for the working classes, why not for the Houses of Parliament. Are there any bigger sinners anywhere than you might find in those two chambers? 5. The Bible was meant to be understood, and it benefits us in proportion as we get at the meaning of it. The mere words of Scripture passing over the ear or before the eye can do us little good. "I read a chapter every morning," says one. Quite right; keep that up; but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "Well, I learn the daily text." Yes, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" That is the main point. The butterflies flit over the garden, and nothing comes of their flitting; but look at the bees, how they dive into the bells of the flowers, and come forth with their thighs laden with the pollen, and their stomachs filled with the sweetest honey for their hives. This is the way to read the Bible. A thoughtful book needs and deserves thoughtful reading. If it has taken its author a long time to write it, it is due to him that you give his work a careful perusal. If the thoughts of men deserve this, what shall I say of the supreme thoughts of God? I. WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS BOOK? I believe that it is contained in the passage which the eunuch was reading. Already he had noted the words, "All we like sheep have gone astray," &c. What is wanted is that we understand—1. That we have all gone astray. He who does not know that will not care for the Shepherd who comes to fetch him back again. 2. That salvation is the gift of Divine mercy to the guilty, and is never the reward of human merit. Christ did not come to save you because you are good, for you are not good. I hear the doctor's brougham rattling down the street at a great pace; but it never occurs to me that he is rushing to call upon a hale and hearty man. So Christ came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." 3. That "the Lord hath laid on

Him the iniquity of us all"! Now every man who believes in Jesus may know that his sin was laid upon, borne by, and put away by Christ. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. You cannot bear it, but Christ bore it; you are to accept Christ as your Sin-bearer, and then you may know that your sins have gone. II. WHAT IS THE TEST OF A MAN'S UNDERSTANDING HIS BIBLE? 1. That Jesus Christ is everything to him: for Philip, who did understand it, when he explained it, preached unto the eunuch Jesus and nothing else. I try to preach Jesus, and I love to meet with people who delight in this theme. Every young man, when he believes in Jesus, should give himself to Jesus, heart and soul, for ever. "That's the kind of young man for my money, for he is O and O," said a certain person, meaning, "Out and out for Christ." Jesus was out and out for us; there should be no half-heartedness in our dealings with Him. If we have read Scripture aright, we have not received the kind of Christianity which sanctifies us on Sunday, but enables us to be dishonest throughout the week. I like this eunuch for proposing that he should be baptized. He was not advised to do so, but he gave himself up to do the Lord's bidding at once. Whichever way the Scripture bids you dedicate yourself to God, set to work about it, and let it be done at once. 2. That they made him glad, for this eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." The man who from reading his Bible goes forth with a pious resolution that he will make everybody as miserable as he can, wants converting again. 3. That they make him care about the salvation of others; for this Ethiopian nobleman, when he got home, I have no doubt, spread the gospel throughout his native land, and was probably the founder of the Abyssinian Church. One of the holiest instincts born in a renewed man is that of longing to save others. Being saved, we wish to co-operate with the Saviour in His gracious work. 4. That his message to others is what the message was to him—Christ, Christ. You have nothing else to employ as the means of good, except the salvation of Jesus, and there is nothing else worth telling. III. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO OBTAIN SUCH A DESIRABLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES? 1. When you read a passage which you do not understand, read it until you do. Here is a little boy whose father is an artizan, and uses a great many technical terms. The boy is apprenticed, and wants to know all about it, and therefore he listens to his father, and when the day is over he says to himself, "I heard my father say a great deal, but I do not understand much of it." "But you did understand a little of it?" "Oh, yes." To that little he is faithful, and day by day he adds to his store of information, learning more by the help of that which he already knows, and at length he can talk like his father, using the same words with understanding. So when I do not comprehend a chapter, I say, I will hear my great Father speak, even if I do not understand at first what He may say to me, and I will keep on hearing Him until at last I grasp His meaning. Do as the photographer does, when he allows an object to be long before the camera until he obtains a well-defined picture. Let your mind dwell on a passage till at last it has photographed itself upon your soul by the light of God. 2. Always read with a desire to understand. Have the crackers with you to crack the nuts, that you may feed upon their kernels. 3. Pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. When I cannot understand a book I write and ask the author what he means. Can we do that with the Bible? You may consult learned commentators, but that is not half so satisfactory as to go to the Author of the Book. Remember that you can also go to the Maker of your mind, and He can open it to receive the truth. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A personal question*:—At our meeting for prayer and fasting last Tuesday, a brother, who was, I think, the best man amongst us, made a confession of cowardice, and we all looked at him and could not understand how he could be a coward, for a bolder man I do not know. He told us that there was a man in his congregation who was a wealthy man. If he had been a poor man, he would have spoken to him about his soul; but, being a wealthy man, he thought it would be taking too much liberty. At last one of the members happened to say to him, "Mr. So-and-So, have you found a Saviour?" and bursting into tears, the man said, "Thank you for speaking to me; I have been in distress for months, and thought the minister might have spoken to me. Oh, I wish he had; I might have found peace." (*Ibid.*) *Humility in an inquirer*:—"Understandest thou what thou readest?" asked Philip of the eunuch. And the great man candidly acknowledged that he understood it not at all. And therein he showed his real greatness, for an intellectual liliputian would have made believe that he understood it all. The most insufferable ignoramuses are the men that are omniscient. The writer well remembers that upon one occasion, in his early ministry, during a protracted

meeting he approached an old sinner, who seemed to be thoughtful, and, sitting down beside him, undertook to open up to him the way of life, but the aged reprobate scornfully said, "Young man, you cannot tell me anything." And after that we did not try, nor would it have been worth while. He was wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. There is more hope of a fool than of such a man. A genuine inquirer is always humble, and ready to welcome truth from whatever quarter it may come. A lord treasurer, seated in his chariot, did not think it beneath him to be instructed by a travel-stained evangelistic tramp whom he picks up on the road. "How can I, except some man should guide me?" was a form of speech that did the distinguished Ethiopian infinite honour. A man possessed of such spirit has commonly not very far to seek. "To this man will I look," saith the Lord, "who is of an humble and a contrite heart, and that trembleth at My word." "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." While such a spirit is essential to every seeker after Christ, it should characterise followers of Christ at every stage of experience. Those who have taken the deepest sea soundings and have climbed the loftiest mountain heights realise most profoundly the limitations of their knowledge, and are evermore the most willing to learn. And he who thus acknowledges his ignorance is in a fair way to mend it, for like the Ethiopian eunuch he is ready to reach out for the guidance of a friendly hand, and commonly he has not far to seek. (*Baptist Teacher.*) *Bible reading*:—The Bible should be read—I. INTELLIGENTLY. Very often the time spent in Bible reading is time wasted. There is a certain sect in the East whose priests use a praying machine, and there are people who read the Bible every day, but they read like machines. Reading the Bible does us no good unless we understand what we read. I have met with people who have gone abroad to a beautiful country, just to be able to say that they had been there. They never noticed the beauties of the scenery, their one object was to get to a certain place and then get back again. So it is with many Bible readers. Their one object is to get through so many chapters or verses. Some of the first discoveries of gold in Australia were made by accident. A man saw a mass of rock, and struck it carelessly with a pickaxe and broke it, and found that it contained gold. Now some parts of the Bible may appear like the rock, hard and uninteresting, till we can work into them, then we find gold. II. PRAYERFULLY. We may make mistakes about the Bible as well as any other book. If you were to read some medical works, and had not received the education of a doctor, you would soon fancy that you had several different diseases; and if you were to try to treat yourself for them you would probably become really ill, or perhaps die. In the same way people may make mistakes about the Bible. A lady once came to me during a mission utterly miserable because she thought she had committed "the unpardonable sin," without knowing what it was. John Bunyan nearly went mad at one time from the same mistake. We must have light to read the Bible by; light given directly by God in answer to prayer; and from the teaching and explanation of God's Church. Men of science have just taught us how to store electricity, so that we can lay in a stock of it just as we lay in coals, sufficient to light our lamps for a given time. Well, we can store light to understand the Bible by; the more we pray over our Bible the more light we store in ourselves. III. MEDITATIVELY. Food not digested is almost as bad as poison; and so many people get positive harm from their Bible reading because they do not digest what they read. As properly digested food makes our bodies what they are, flesh, and bone, and blood, and muscle, so God's Word properly digested makes a member of the Church a Bible Christian, in the true sense of the term. IV. TO FIND JESUS THERE. You know how they collect gold dust? They take the soil which has been dug out, and wash it in running water, carefully watching for the sparkling grains. Well, we should take what we have dug out of the Bible by study, and examine it carefully, and look into it again and again till we find gold, signs of Jesus Christ. When we approach one of our English towns or villages, the most conspicuous object is the tower or spire of the church or minster rising above all other buildings and casting its shadow over all. So when we approach our Bible reading we should see Jesus first, and His Cross rising above all other topics, and casting its shadow on every page. V. WITH THE AID OF THE SPIRIT. There is an instrument called an Æolian harp, which is silent till placed where the wind can blow upon it, then its strings give forth sweet music. Your Bible will be silent to you till the breath of God blows upon it, then it will be the music of the gospel to you. Old legends say that when the rising sun shone upon the statue of Memnon, in Egypt, the figure uttered tuneful sounds. So when the sun of the Holy Spirit shines upon the pages

of your Bible, God will send forth thence His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear?" VI. PERSONALLY. Do not try to fit the warnings and teachings and threats of the Bible on others, but on yourselves. People too often study God's Word to find out their neighbour's sins, instead of their own. They need the sharp message—"Thou art the man!" In the old days of Greece, they tell us of a philosopher who went about from place to place with a lantern, and when asked what he was seeking, he answered that he was looking for an honest man. We are too fond of taking the lantern of God's Word, and examining our neighbours with it. Let us try to turn the light more strongly on ourselves. VII. TO REALISE WHAT YOU READ. I heard of a poor woman who heard the account of the Saviour's sufferings read; she was very ignorant, and being told that these events happened long ago, and in a foreign land, expressed a hope that after all the account might not be true. I believe that many people read the Bible, or hear it read, and never feel it, never realise its truth. It is a custom in Greenland for a stranger, when knocking at the door, to ask, "Is God in this house?" If the answer, "Yes," is given, he enters. Let the Bible ask you this question. When you read God's Word, listen for God's voice asking you the question—"Is God in this house?" Is it well with thee, is it well with the husband, is it well with the child? Let your Bible speak to your innermost heart, and let your answer be, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (*H. J. W. Buxton.*) *Fruitful Bible reading*:—A hint as to—I. CASUAL PERUSAL OF THE BIBLE. When a man employs his occasional leisure in endeavouring to master a subject we have no need to question his interest in it. The study of the Bible in a railway carriage is a course which any Christian would be glad to pursue if he could do it unostentatiously. Travellers like the eunuch are not numerous. Men prefer the novel. But the grand lesson is the use of passing opportunities for following up what we have learned of the Lord, and fitting us to hear more of Him. II. THE EXERCISE OF THOUGHT WHICH THE BIBLE DEMANDS. It cannot be "understood" without fixing the mind on its statements, and trying to perceive what they mean. Many truths are perfectly clear, but others are so recorded as if God were aiming to make us search, pray, watch, and be humble. And so with the study of nature. We cannot understand it by mere gazing. III. THE INSTRUCTORS THE SPIRIT WILL PROVIDE FOR THE THOUGHTFUL BIBLE STUDENT. The Spirit moved Philip. To warrant the expectation of spiritual help two conditions here illustrated must be fulfilled. 1. The eunuch was reading the Scriptures for himself. He was not taking the account from others, but was perusing the very words which "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2. He was conscious that help was needed. So help came in this unexpected way. It is not that teachers are few, but that our eyes are dull. The best helps, teachers, commentaries, &c., are useless without the Spirit of God. IV. THE GREAT PURPOSE OF THE SPIRIT THAT OF LEADING READERS OF THE BIBLE TO CHRIST. The written Word is to tell of the living Word, and would never have been written but for that. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) *Intelligent reading of Holy Scripture*:—I. MANY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY READ. Through—1. Ignorance. 2. Lack of teachers. 3. Want of spiritual insight. 4. Prejudice. This is a great moral loss. II. HOW WE MAY UNDERSTAND WHAT WE READ. By—1. Attention. 2. Meditation. 3. Prayer. 4. Aid of the Holy Spirit. 5. Help of friends and ministers. III. WHY SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND WHAT WE READ? The Bible is—1. The Word of God. 2. The way of salvation. 3. The joy of the sanctified heart. Is the Bible an open book to us? (*Family Churchman.*) *The relations between Holy Scripture and the Church*:—1. This interview is a specimen of the private ministration of the gospel, and teaches us how such ministration should be opened and conducted. Philip fell in, not only with the eunuch, but with the train of thought his mind was pursuing. It is surprising how many good and even Scriptural words utterly fail to take hold of the mind, because not in a state which requires that particular counsel. Now as there is in nature a specific for every physical disorder, so there is in God's Word a specific for every spiritual malady. If the right specific is offered to an individual, he appropriates it; it is what his conscience requires; but if the wrong, no effect or a bad one is produced, not because it has lost its virtue, or is essentially deleterious, but because there is no correspondence between it and the patient's state. Now in order to offer men remedies to meet their case we must study the direction of their thoughts. And when we come upon them off their guard, and observe how they are occupied, we can obtain a clue to their thoughts. The Ethiopian was reading the Scriptures as if he took pleasure in them, which showed him to be a religiously minded man. What followed brought out his docility

and willingness to be enlightened. So Philip, guided by Providence and by the turn of his hearer's mind, spake a word in season. 2. Our Lord had instructed His disciples to "salute no man by the way." In common intercourse men begin with trifles before they pass on to topics of importance. But trifles do not befit the character of God's messenger. So Philip does not open the conversation by talk about the weather or the crops, but begins at once with the business of his mission. He was abrupt, judged by the standard of the world's manners, but not as regards the Ethiopian's state of mind, who therefore invites him up into his chariot. Alas that our thoughts, unlike his, should be exercised so much on secular things that spiritual remarks seem to us an intrusion and a want of tact! 3. The eunuch's response, "How can I understand," &c., intending to express nothing more than the sentiment of the moment, contains an important principle. The Scriptures are the Church's law, they contain all principles of faith and duty, and are given by inspiration of God. Moreover the Church stands on them; for if the acts and the commission of Christ to His disciples did not exist the Church would have the ground cut from under her. In this point of view Scripture is paramount to the Church and prior in order of thought. Yet the Church is prior to Scripture in order of time. No book of the Old Testament was written before Moses, and yet from the time of Abel there were believers. No book of the New Testament had been composed at this time, yet there was a flourishing Church in Jerusalem. And each one of us, as we come into the world, is approached by the Church, *e.g.*, in baptism, before he can be approached by the Scriptures. That is the principle on which godparents, who represent the Church, and on which religious teachers act. The child is taught by catechisms compiled by the Church, but gathered out of Scripture. Now, suppose a man competently educated, but whose mind has been left a blank on religion, were to sit down to compile a creed for himself out of the Bible, how many years would he take? The mind must proceed in the first instance upon human authority; but in after days, having been imbued with the faith, he can recognise it in Scripture, and see how it can be proved thereby. The Bible can be with none of us the original teacher of truth, but we must not shrink from the duty of testing by this infallible criterion what we first receive on human authority. We have no fear that the Catholic faith will be shaken by this examination if made in the spirit of prayer. Yet as regards lesser points of belief about which there are two opinions a word of caution is needed. Correct conclusions are scarcely likely to be arrived at if we discard the commentary drawn from the sentiments of the primitive Church. Take, *e.g.*, infant baptism. There are passages from which it may be inferred that it is conformable to the mind of Christ. Yet it would be too much to say that it is proved from the Bible. But if you allow the usages of the early Church to be any evidence of what apostolic practice was, then the evidence is overwhelming. The relations between the Church and Scripture are illustrated by those between the judicial and the legislative power in the State. A judge has no authority to make the law: that is made by Parliament; he is only the interpreter and the administrator. On the one hand the judge is as much under the law as those whom he tries, and on the other, juries would often go wrong unless the judge directed them. Well, Scripture is the law; the Church is the judge; the individual soul is the jury. In interpreting the Scripture the individual soul needs the guidance of the Church, which if he rejects, he rejects the aid God has given him for arriving at a right conclusion, and kicks down the ladder by which he has risen to what he knows of Divine truth. And yet should the Church, as Rome has done, impose new articles of faith, he must break with such a society. Whenever the judge imposes new laws, it is time to side with the law against the judge. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Directions for profitable study of the Word of God*:—I. DOST THOU READ THE SCRIPTURES AT ALL? Is such an inquiry necessary in a community professedly Christian? Yes, there are multitudes whom God continually solicits by the Bible in vain. Books that corrupt, or dissipate, or at best amuse, are read, to its exclusion. "I have written unto them the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing." The humble inquirer who asks, "What must I do to be saved?" needs the voice of the book of God to say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian pilgrim needs its guidance to direct him to rest; and he who has grown in grace equally requires its help. It is like the line of the architect, as needful to lay the top stone as to lay the foundation. And yet how many professing Christians suffer the truth to solicit them in vain! Your own reason and human advisers can no more renew a lost soul than they can create a living man. And yet the voice of God in the Bible is too often unheard. Neither the terrors of

the law compel, nor the love of the gospel allures. The unwise mariner may not feel the want of his chart or his compass while the sea is calm and his way apparently clear; but as he would feel his deadly error in leaving them behind him when the winds lash the waves into fury, and he knew not whither to turn for help, so the time of sorrow, darkness, sickness, death will come; and then what will ye do, when the redeeming God of the Bible is to you an unknown God? II. "UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?" "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c. He wants the sight, the hearing, the touch of faith. Many understand not because—1. They read it with cold indifference. They may take it up occasionally, but it discloses nothing that meets their case, because they are ignorant of their want. Is it wonderful that they should see no beauty in Christ, and no merit in His atonement, who have never realised their sin? 2. It aims a death-blow at the pride of self-righteousness. The Abana and Pharpar of our own Damascus seem more efficient, as they are always more grateful to the natural man. The gospel will be understood as a remedial revelation, only when Divine grace shall make us willing to come, naked and empty handed, to Him who justifieth the ungodly. 3. It opposes the prejudices of unrenewed men. We approach it, too frequently, rather that we may find materials there on which to build up our own system than to find Christ and salvation. But God's immutable truth will never adapt itself to the miserable shibboleth of our device. 4. It utterly condemns sin, and men love sin. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." III. IN WHAT MANNER THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE SAVINGLY READ. The conduct of the Ethiopian will furnish us with a directory, by teaching us to study them—1. With constancy and diligence. He beguiled his journey by reading the prophet Isaiah, who testified so wondrously of Christ. And Christ says, "Search the Scriptures," &c. Be not contented with cold, formal, occasional reading; but look into them, as he who is in search of a mine digs deeply, follows each vein, and minutely examines every appearance of the gold which his heart covets. 2. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Thus Philip began with the passage in Isaiah, and preached unto the eunuch Jesus. Read your Bibles with their references; see how the law shadows forth the gospel, how the mind of God in one place corresponds to the same mind in another. Such an examination will assist you more surely than all the commentators; for the Holy Ghost will always be found the best Expounder of His own Word. 3. With prayer. As the dial bears all the hours of the day marked upon its surface, but will not show the time unless the sun shine upon it, so doth the Word of God disclose all His mind, but not to saving apprehension, unless by the light of the Eternal Spirit. To the worldly wise, the Bible is a letter written in cypher. The Holy Ghost interprets the writing by bringing His people to the secret of a sanctified experience, as a clue to those high and dear mysteries of grace which before were hid from their eyes. 4. Seeking the help of others, who have been taught of God. "And he desired Philip," &c. Thus Apollos availed himself of the help of Aquila and Priscilla. 5. With humility. Imitate the teachableness of the Ethiopian. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "Learn of Christ, for He is meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (*R. P. Buddicom.*) *The seed sown and the harvest reaped*:—1. Sometimes a sermon is reported word for word, at others the substance only. The report of Philip's sermon is the briefest, yet most complete. "He preached to him Jesus"—not only Jesus, but Jesus unto him, then and there. Here often our preaching fails. The gospel is fully declared; but Jesus is not pressed on the conscience of every man. The outspread rays make all the ground bright; but the concentration of the rays on a spot makes it burn. The Ethiopian understood the message, believed, and was baptized. 2. He went on his way. He is not instantly carried home. He pursues his journey under the hot sun, and on the hot sand. Christ prayed not that His disciples should be taken out of the world. The winter is as cold and the summer as warm to them as to others. The Ethiopian began that journey before he had accepted Christ; and now that he is a Christian he does not turn aside; and when he reaches his home he will attend to the duties of his office. So, Christian, if your business was lawful before, you need not desert it after you become a Christian. And, besides, the eunuch would do more good in Ethiopia than in following Philip northward. Everywhere the earth is corrupt, and needs salt. 3. He went on his way rejoicing. Surely it is not a sorrowful thing, whatever people may say, even in this world to know that the next is all your own. 4. Observe what power a thirsting soul exerts, not over earth, but over heaven. An empty human heart, longing for living water, can command all the

fulness of the Godhead for its supply. The longing soul of this Ethiopian not only drew Philip from his successful ministry, but forgiving love from its fountain in God. In certain sandy tracks travellers sometimes fall in with a living plant, whose leaves when cut give off refreshing water. How comes this? Because that lowly herb has all the waters of the Atlantic at its disposal. A multitude of microscopic mouths open in every leaf. These suck from the air what moisture it contains, and the air, thus divested of a portion of its moisture, draws from the distant ocean to fill the void. Blessed are they that thirst, for they shall be satisfied. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The conversion and baptism of the eunuch*:—1. Note the circuitousness of the method by which they were brought about. This man had just visited Jerusalem on an errand of devotion. The apostles still remained in the city, and frequented the temple. Why was it not arranged, therefore, that he should fall in with one of them? Instead of this, an angel is sent to an evangelist, bidding him travel in a distant region, where he falls in with the eunuch. Perhaps the answer is that this arrangement was most significant of the designs for His Church which God was then unfolding. The ministry of the deacons was the dawn of that of Paul—freer, wider than that of the apostles. It was far more conformable, therefore, with the then state of the Christian dispensation that, instead of receiving the gospel in the confined atmosphere of the holy city, the Ethiopian should hear "a voice crying in the wilderness," the freer breezes of which were a symbol of the liberty with which God's Word went forth to the ends of the earth. 2. Whatever the reason, the practical teaching is obvious. Men often find God where they least expect to meet Him. We may find Him in the desert, and miss Him in Jerusalem. There is a difference in this respect between the laws of nature and those of grace. In the one, the effect is tied to the means; in the other, good impressions are not limited to ordinances. The Spirit is often pleased to act independently of His ordained channels. A casual interview with a stranger, a book read on a journey, some striking incident or scene, has often proved a means of grace when sermons and sacraments have failed. The avenues by which God reaches the hearts of men are almost as various as their characters. 3. The reason for the eunuch pitching upon Isaiah liii. may have been because it was part of a section which also embraces chap. lvi., where such encouragement is given to eunuchs. But whatever his motives, the text, applying as it does only to the Christ he knew not, perplexed him, and gave Philip the opportunity of preaching Him in whom the prophecy was fulfilled—"Jesus," not Christ the Messiah of the Jews, through whom he could offer an universal salvation. 4. The Ethiopian drank in the good news, and requested enrolment among the disciples of the new faith, and Philip could make no objection. Had not God brought him to the spot for this very purpose? Let us now turn to the practical reflections to which the passage gives rise. Note—(1) The spiritual freedom which characterises the whole incident—its scene, not the temple, but the wilderness; its time, not the Sabbath, but a work-day; the minister, not an apostle, but an officer more or less secular. And yet the great features of this procedure of Divine grace are the same as those we find everywhere. Our Lord commissioned His Church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, &c., and had said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water," &c.; and St. Paul speaks of Christ as "sanctifying and clearing the Church by the washing of water by the Word." Two elements, according to these passages, enter into the idea of admission into the Church—the action of the Word of God on the conscience, the outward sign of washing with water. Both these are found here. Philip, it is true, preached not in a church, but in a chariot; not to many souls, but to one; still, it was preaching, and then there was baptism. So that there was here a Church according to the definition, "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments administered." "A congregation!" you will say. Yes. "Where *two* or three are met together in My name," &c. What a consolation to ministers whose congregations are thin! One good listener is better than one hundred indifferent ones. (2) The immediate administration of baptism to one whose knowledge must have been immature. It was the same in the case of the Philippian jailer. No doubt the circumstances warranted the act, whereas now ordinarily a probation would be wise. Yet it must be remembered that baptism is only matriculation, not graduation, in the school of Christ; and in the great commission, the teaching which qualifies for baptism is distinguished from that which succeeds it. It is not the amount of a catechumen's knowledge which is to be looked to, but his spiritual receptivity. 3. The passage which proved the means of the eunuch's conversion is one which describes the meek

and resigned passion of the Saviour, and was the means also of the conversion of the celebrated Lord Rochester. The subject with which it deals was the means of a mighty awakening in Greenland, after long and fruitless efforts, to get at the hearts of the people. Our Lord predicted that His Cross should prove the supreme attraction, and Paul determined to know nothing but it. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Vers. 32–38. **The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. . . . Then Philip . . . began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus.**—*Philip's sermon:*—I. THE TEXT. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter," &c. Here is no difficulty, but there are two difficulties following which require explanation. 1. "In His humiliation His judgment was taken away." He appeared in such a condition that Pilate, though convinced of His innocence, did not consider Him of importance enough to risk anything for His deliverance. "Taking away His judgment" means the denial of the rights of legal justice. 2. "And who shall declare His generation?" Some have referred this to His eternal generation from the Father; some to His being conceived by the Holy Ghost; others to His resurrection; others again to His spiritual seed. But there are only two probable meanings: (1) Who shall declare the manner of His life? Before the execution of criminals, proclamation was made, "Will any one testify anything in favour of the condemned?" Sometimes they saw one hastening with a long white flag, and exclaiming, "A witness is come." But there was no white flag on Calvary! "They all forsook Him and fled." (2) Who shall declare the generation of men in which He lived? Thus Luke says, "He shall suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Therefore there was no one in this sense to declare His generation, the wickedness of the men in whose day He lived, suffered, and was slain. II. THE SERMON. 1. It was unpremeditated. The apostles were admonished not to meditate beforehand, for "it should be given them in that same hour," &c. And ministers should never be at a loss to say something about Christ. Our Saviour says, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto an householder," &c. Ye would not deem him a good housekeeper who, if a friend calls suddenly, could not bring something to feed him. Sometimes a minister's best thoughts will be those produced by present circumstances and present feelings. Baxter was once preaching, when there occurred a tremendous storm which threw his audience into great consternation. He paused and exclaimed, "My brethren, we are assembled this morning to prepare against that day when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up." This hushed and calmed the audience. When Peter was preaching, a multitude exclaimed, "What shall we do?" but Peter was not disconcerted. 2. Its subject was Jesus, as it was in Samaria. This was his constant practice, nor was it peculiar to him. Paul said to the Corinthians, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The Saviour, when He commissioned the apostles, instructed them to preach in His name. This is the subject which, though so old, is always so new; and not only a faithful saying, but "worthy of all acceptation." In order to be useful to others we must preach the truth as it is in Jesus; "for "there is salvation in no other." 3. This sermon was very Scriptural: "He began at the same Scripture," and this was a good beginning; but we must extend the thing. According to Christ's own testimony there are things concerning Him in all the Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of Me." Divide them, arrange them as you please, and you will find that He is "all in all." Wherever, therefore, you step on this holy ground, immediately a star is in motion, going before you till it stands over where the young child is; wherever you listen, you hear a voice saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world"; wherever you open the leaves in this sacred book, "His name is as ointment poured forth." (*W. Jay.*) *Philip's sermon:*—I. THE SUBJECT OF PHILIP'S PREACHING. 1. The "Scripture" here referred to was one of the most striking prophecies concerning Christ. It is very minute, and seems to unite the most opposite extremes; so that this Jewish proselyte might well inquire, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" (1) The mysterious person mentioned by the prophet was to be treated with hatred and scorn (Isa. liii. 2, 3). (2) He was to suffer from God as well as from His countrymen (ver. 10). (3) He was to be free from sin (ver. 9). (4) He was to be an example of perfect meekness and submission under all His sufferings (ver. 7). (5) He was to be subjected to a violent death, with which some peculiar circumstances were connected (vers. 8, 9) (6) He was to rise from

the dead (ver. 10). (7) He was to have a progeny, be invested with great power, and to carry on a prosperous work in the earth, under the Divine approval, and to His own satisfaction (vers. 10, 12). Here, then, we have a prophecy most comprehensive in its range, most minute and singular in its details, which alone, in all its particulars, is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. To what conclusion are we then brought by a comparison of the prophecy with the events of our Lord's history? First, that the prophet was inspired; for no human sagacity could foresee, at a distance of more than seven hundred years, the facts which he has described: and, secondly, that Jesus is the Son and the Christ of God. None but a Divine person could endure the sufferings He underwent, could redeem, and govern, and save mankind; and Jesus was anointed of God to accomplish these momentous objects. Philip therefore preached Jesus to the Ethiopian, and when this subject was presented to his candid mind conviction immediately flashed upon his understanding and conscience; and being inspired with a love of the truth, he "received Christ Jesus the Lord." 2. In this prophecy several of the leading truths of Christianity are explicitly asserted. (1) The universal sinfulness of mankind. "All we like sheep have gone astray," &c., and it is assumed not only that we have "infirmities" and "sorrows," but also "sins," "transgressions," "iniquities." (2) The fact of Christ's substitution in the place of sinners. His "soul" was made "an offering for sin"; our "iniquities were laid upon Him"; "He bare the sin of many," &c. (3) The universality of Christ's atonement. The remedy is as extensive as the evil. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." (4) The use which Christ makes of His atonement with regard to God. He "made intercession for the transgressors." (5) The fruit of Christ's atonement with regard to fallen man. The sufferings which He endured were "the chastisement of our peace" (Rom. iii. 24, 25). II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ETHIOPIAN RECEIVED THE EVANGELICAL MESSAGE. 1. With deep seriousness and attention. The man who had renounced idolatry, who had become a worshipper of God, who had taken a long and dangerous journey that he might render to Jehovah the homage He required, was not a man to treat any question of religion with indifference. His heart was evidently deeply impressed with the things of God. The relations in which men stand to their Maker, the obligations which He has laid upon them, the provision which He has made for their salvation, the final happiness of the just, and the perdition of ungodly men—these are subjects which none but either the grossly ignorant or wicked will ever treat with levity. Every wise man will perceive that, if Christianity is true, it is worse than madness to neglect it, and will make it his first and most anxious concern to inquire into its nature and claims; that he may not run the terrible risk of neglecting that mercy which, when it is once passed away, will never return. 2. With exemplary meekness and humility. He did not resent the inquiry of Philip, abrupt as it might seem. No feeling of self-importance, as a man of office and rank, induced him to turn away. With the utmost frankness he at once confessed his ignorance, invited Philip into the chariot, solicited instruction, and assumed the character and attitude of a learner. This is precisely the spirit in which Divine light is received. The wrangling disputant has a thousand objections to offer before he can admit one single principle of evangelical truth, and when all those objections have been met his dark and vain mind is as far from true wisdom as it was when he began his idle toil. The philosopher, full of his own speculations, has almost everything to unlearn before he can receive the truth as the instrument of his salvation. 3. In faith. That he trusted in Christ as his Redeemer and Saviour we have ample proof in the subsequent part of the narrative. 4. In the spirit of submission and obedience. As the Ethiopian was "swift to hear" and to understand, so was he prompt to obey. When his understanding was enlightened, the assent of his will was gained. Being instructed in "the doctrine of baptism," he waited not to be earnestly and repeatedly urged to a compliance with the Lord's command. He was the first to propose the immediate administration of the ordinance; that he might at once practically declare his subjection to Christ, and receive the salvation which the gospel reveals as the fruit of His passion. III. THE HAPPY RESULT OF HIS CONVERSION—"He went on his way rejoicing." He was miraculously deprived of his teacher, but he was left in possession of a treasure which filled him with sacred joy. 1. He doubtless rejoiced that he had found the truth. To be ignorant of God, and of the things belonging to our peace, is one of the greatest calamities. 2. As a believer in Jesus Christ he rejoiced in the favour of God. The favour of God is better than life, as His wrath is more terrible than death. 3. The approbation of his own conscience would be another ground of re-

joicing. Conscience is a powerful instrument both of happiness and of misery. 4. He rejoiced to be the bearer of good tidings to others. A regenerated heart yearns over men who are dying in their sins, and at the same time it burns with desire to promote the honour of the Lord Jesus, and the extension of His kingdom. Under the impulse of these feelings a believer cannot be silent on the subject of his religion. He who had so unexpectedly found mercy could not be indifferent to the spiritual wants and claims of his own countrymen. 5. In common with all true believers he rejoiced in hope of eternal life. Conclusion: The subject forcibly reminds us—1. Of the great benefit connected with the public worship of God. Had not this noble Ethiopian attended the temple at Jerusalem the probability is that he would have remained a stranger to the Christian salvation. 2. That the great object at which we should aim in the use of God's ordinances is the knowledge of Christ as our Saviour. The Ethiopian, with all his sincerity, failed in this grand point, and an angel was employed in providing for him the requisite instruction so that he might believe to the saving of his soul. 3. Of the necessity of missions to the heathen. (*T. Jackson.*) *Jesus and the Scriptures*:—I. THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE. And that "same Scripture," while so eminently illustrious, is only one of many innumerable scriptures at which Philip might have begun and by which he might have sustained his proclamation of the Jesus. Gather into your hands, as so many threads, all "the same scriptures" from which Philip might have pursued his theme, and delightedly gaze on the Pattern into which the New Testament fashions them. Can the charm of their unity be surpassed? II. THE END OF SCRIPTURE. To set forth Christ, to attract human thought and fix it on Him, is the steadfast aim to which everything is subordinated. Many are the "voices of the prophets," but they swell into only one chorus of which He is the song. III. In the intensity of the converse of Philip and the eunuch we see THE INTEREST OF SCRIPTURE commended. No fact grows more patent than the world's need of all that the Scriptures assure us of Jesus. There is no light from heaven if it does not shine in Him, no bread from heaven if He does not supply it. IV. In the issue of this converse we see THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE manifested. "He went on his way rejoicing." The fulness, variety, and harmony of Scripture; the compassion, wisdom, steadfastness of God through all the preparatory measures which led up to the advent of Jesus; the power, grace, and life brought by Him; rest of mind in this truth, and of heart in this mercy; the new creation into which the receiver of Jesus passes and rises—these were some of the glorious elements of this man's joy; and meditation, prayer, experience, would but deepen that joy, as he passed further and further away from the "old things," and further and further into the "new things" prepared and ensured for ever to them that love Him. (*G. B. Johnson.*) *Preaching Jesus, not self*:—St. Bernard, preaching one day very scholastically, the learned thanked him, but not the godly; but another day he preached plainly, and the good people came blessing God for him, and gave him many thanks, which some scholars wondered at. "Ah," said he, "yesterday I preached Bernard, but to-day I preached Christ." 'Tis not learning, but teaching; not the wisdom of words, but the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit that is welcome to saints. (*R. Venning.*) *Preaching to one*:—I remember, years ago, one Sunday that I had to preach at the Chapel Royal; and in those days the old duke used to attend service there, and when he was in town the congregation may have numbered generally some seven or eight persons, but when he was out of town perhaps two or three. And on this occasion he was out of town. Well, the morning prayer was over, and the clergyman who had said it had to leave for duty elsewhere; and by the time I had mounted the pulpit the clerk had gone into the vestry to stir the fire. I was left alone with the congregation! Under the circumstances it would have been ridiculous to have preached the sermon, and I went down to the congregation and told *him* so. *He* said—it was a young man I knew—"Oh! I have come a long way on purpose to hear you preach. I beg you will proceed." "No!" I said, "I really can't. Besides, how personal you would find the sermon. But I will walk across the park with you, and give you the heads of my sermon as we walk along." Then I and Samuel Wilberforce, *Esquire*, walked across the park together. (*Dean Hook.*) *Preaching to one person*:—One very stormy Sunday Dr. Payson went to church more from habit than because he expected to find anybody there. Just after he had stepped inside the door an old negro came in, and asked if Dr. Payson was to preach there that day, explaining that he was a stranger in the town, and had been advised to go to his church. "Upon that," said Dr. Payson, "I made up my mind to preach my sermon if nobody else came." Nobody

else did come, so the doctor preached to the choir and the negro. Some months afterward he happened to meet the negro, and stopping him, asked how he enjoyed the sermon that stormy Sunday. "Enjoy dat sermon," replied the old man, "I 'clare, doctor, I nebber heerd a better one. Yo' see I had a seat pretty well up front, an' whenebber you'd say somethin's pretty hard like 'gin de sins ob men I'd jess look all roun' ter see who you's a hittin', and I wouldn't see nobody on'y jess me. An' I says to m'self, he must mean you, Pompey, you's sech a dretful sinner. Well, doctor, dat ar sermon set me a thinking what a big sinner I war, an' I went an' jined the Church down home. I'se a deacon now."

Vers. 36–39. **The eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?** *The baptizing of the eunuch*:—Note—I. THAT TO AN OBEDIENT AND CHEERFUL HEARER THE WORD OF GOD IS NEVER PREACHED WITHOUT SUCCESS. This one discourse prevailed through God's mercy to the enlightening of the eunuch's mind; it wrought also upon his affections in such a measure that nothing was more desired of him than to show himself a Christian, and to have some pledge of the favour of God. The Word never is unprofitable where it meets with such an auditor. Learn, then, the true cause why there is no such profiting of the Word preached as there should be and was in purer times. Then one sermon won many; now, many sermons scarce prevail with one. Surely the cause is men want that ready, cheerful disposition, which the good people in those times had; then they sued to be taught, as the eunuch here, those at Pentecost, the Antiochians, and the jailer. II. THAT WHERE THE HEART IS TRULY TOUCHED, AND THE SOUL INDEED TURNED UNTO GOD, THERE IS A DESIRE TO BE PARTAKER OF THE SACRAMENTS. The apostles urged the use of the sacrament upon the people yielding to the doctrine as a trial of them. If they had refused it, their hypocrisy had been soon discovered; if they embraced it, it was an evidence that their hearts were seasoned as was meet. Thus John Baptist bound his hearers to the sacrament (Matt. iii.), and Peter, "Amend your lives and be baptized"; and after that order did the rest proceed. There be just causes of desiring the sacrament in him that is enlightened. 1. He knows the use of the sacraments to be God's ordinance, and therefore, in obedience to His will, he will make conscience thereof. 2. He conceives them to be "seals of the righteousness which is by faith," assurances of society with Christ; for which cause they must needs be sweet unto his soul. 3. He apprehends them to be badges of his profession, and of his service unto Christ, and therefore he cannot but desire them. 4. He believeth them to be bands of the communion of saints, and in that respect he must needs affect them. In these days there is not that respect to the sacraments that there should be. Baptism we have received in our childhood, but what man of many laboureth to make the right use of it? And as for the Lord's Supper, generally it is made no more reckoning of than some three-half-penny ordinary, save only at some season of the year. Certainly this is an argument of scantness of grace amongst men. There cannot but be a stomach to the sacrament, where there is felt sweetness in the Word. III. THAT IN WHOM THERE IS ANY TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY, IN HIM THERE IS ALSO A DESIRE TO MAKE IT KNOWN TO THE WORLD THAT HE IS A CHRISTIAN. It was an evidence of great resolution in this convert to return into his own country as one of that sect which was everywhere spoken against. This is the nature of true conversion, albeit, it may stir but weakly at the first, and seem almost not to dare to show itself, yet, when it is come to a fuller growth, then there will be a desire to show the colours of the Lord Jesus. So Nicodemus, when he was but a beginner, came to Jesus by night. Yet in time he joined with Joseph in the interring of our Saviour. This deserves to be commended to the care of all that fear God, that howsoever the vain applause of men be not to be hunted after, and it be hypocritical and pharisaical to practise the duties of godliness to be seen, yet it is necessary to make it appear what we are, and that we be not ashamed of it. Will some say, This is a needless exhortation, for we have done as much for the showing of ourselves to be Christians as this eunuch did? I answer, that albeit baptism might be a witness unto this man's Christianity, among a people not esteeming it, yet some further thing is necessary to the end our sincerity may appear. There be some things as hateful among the men of this generation as the name of a Christian could be among the Ethiopians, as, namely, for a man to make conscience of his ways to show himself fearful to offend God, to follow after holiness. IV. THAT HE THAT ADMINISTERETH THE SACRAMENT OUGHT TO BE CAREFUL TO INSTRUCT THE PEOPLE IN THINGS NECESSARY TO THE COMFORTABLE PARTAKING OF IT. Every one

that is entrusted with the dispensing of the sacrament is bound to acquaint the people carefully upon what conditions only they may receive it to their comfort. The doctrine appertaining to the right use of the sacrament is part of the counsel of God, and therefore not to be secreted by him that desireth to be pure from the people's blood. V. THAT SINCE THE COMING OF CHRIST THERE IS NO PRECEDENCE OF ONE PLACE ABOVE ANOTHER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF HOLY THINGS. Here is baptism administered by the wayside, and that in an ordinary river: the sacrament had been no whit better to the eunuch if he had received it in some hallowed place, or in some consecrated vessel. Formerly the worship of God was limited to a certain place, but Christ being manifested, who was the Body of all former shadows, the distinction of places is abolished, and neither is God's worship tied to Jerusalem, nor to Gerizim. Therefore Christ's forerunner exercised his ministry openly in the wilderness, and baptized in the river Jordan; and our Saviour preached in mountains, by the seaside, and out of boats, anywhere where the audience was. So the apostles after, preached in houses, in fields, and baptized in any river which came next to hand. "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name," &c.; there is no exception of place, so that in other things the due form be observed. Conclusion: This may put us all in mind what use to make of our baptism. 1. So often as we think upon our baptism, it ought to be a spur to holiness. A servant to a great man, when he looketh upon his livery, cannot for shame be an enemy to him of whom he had received it; the sight of it is rather a common caller upon him to be faithful to him into whose service he is entered. So baptism is the cognizance of a Christian, and by it we have taken on us to wear the colours of our Captain; the very thought thereof should restrain us from doing the business of Satan, and work us by all means to the willing obeying of the Lord, to the studying, learning, and practising of His will. How excellent were it, if in doing of anything, which we rush upon without any scruple, we would say to ourselves, Is this according to promise, is this agreeing to the vow of baptism? 2. To those that thus make use of baptism as a motive to obedience, it is a storehouse of much comfort. When men's titles to land be in question, they fall to perusing their sealed evidences; and so a Christian must often look to the will and deed of his heavenly Father sealed up in baptism, and by it he shall have comfort. (*S. Hieron.*)

The open door of the Church:—As you read this story you get the impression that the way into the kingdom of heaven, in the days of our Lord and His apostles, was a very obvious and straightforward way to any willing to enter it. It might cost one an inward struggle to consent, but to one consenting, the way of entrance was plain, even if it was not easy. Such an one might find difficulties in himself; but he would have no hindrances put upon him in the name of the Lord—nothing but helps and encouragements. How wide open "the happy gates of gospel grace" did seem to stand in those days! And what a simple business they seemed to make of it! Not a word about a judicious deliberation and delay in the case of new converts. Not a word about preparing them by catechism, or taking them awhile on probation, or about examining them on their religious experience. "Here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?" says this eunuch; as if to one who had learned about Jesus Christ and wished to be His disciple and follower, it was the most natural thing in the world. And at once the evangelist seems to answer, "Of course; why not?" And right then and there he baptized him. I. RITES. Our Lord, providing for the need which His believing followers would have of some way of declaring their discipleship in visible form, named two ordinances. The commonest acts of daily life—the daily bath and the daily meal. The bath, by which one coming to Him signified his putting away, from that time forth, of the sinful, defiling service of the world, and his new, clean life of consecration to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the supper, in which he remembers his Master and Friend, declares his dependence and allegiance, and shows his Lord's death until He comes. II. EXPERIENCES. Needless, it should seem, to declare that the experience of other disciples was meant to be a help and encouragement to each one of us in one way into the heavenly kingdom. Looked at in any large and reasonable way, the lesson from the vast diversity in the spiritual history of true and holy Christians is a lesson of unbounded encouragement. He who is the Way, and the Door to the way, does not care by what path we come up to Him, if only we do come. III. DOCTRINES. God's truth is very plain; very easy; and oh, how helpful! What confidence it gives you toward Him! As He declares to us the great fact of the reconciliation of the world to Himself in Christ, how it wins us to trust in His plain, faithful promise, and to rest in the perfect peace of

Him whose mind is stayed on God! (*L. W. Bacon.*) *Baptism, Water in:*—Some one sent to know whether it was permissible to use warm water in baptism? The doctor replied, "Tell the blockhead, that water, warm or cold, is water." (*Luther's Table Talk.*) *Baptism and the visible Church:*—One of the parish ministers preaching at Whitewell Chapel, Mr. Philip Henry and his family and many of his friends being present, was earnestly cautioning people not to go to conventicles, and used this as an argument against it, "that they were baptized into the Church of England." Mr. Henry's catholic charity could not well digest this monopolising of the great ordinance of baptism, and thought it time to bear his testimony against such narrow principles, of which he ever expressed his dislike in all parties and persuasions. Accordingly he took the next opportunity that offered itself publicly to baptize a child, and desired the congregation to bear witness "that he did not baptize that child into the Church of England, nor into the Church of Scotland, nor into the Church of the Dissenters, nor into the Church at Broad Oak, but into the Visible Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. (*Whitecross.*) *The Word and the Sacrament:*—There are two means of grace which mutually complete each other, and the one must not be valued over the other, or despised in comparison with the other. When the sacrament is despised, the body of the Church falls to pieces: when the Word is set aside its spirit dies. (*K. Gerok.*) **The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more.**—*The rapture of Philip and the eunuch:*—The eunuch was the earliest first-fruits of the Gentile Church, his baptism was therefore authenticated by a remarkable operation of the Spirit of God, both on the part of its subject and its administrator. 1. The subject went on his way rejoicing, and in order to connect his joy with the Spirit we have but to remember that the first-fruits of the Spirit are "love, *joy*, peace." 2. The missionary was "caught away" by the Spirit—the same word as that of Paul, "caught up into the third heaven," only there the region was invisible and heavenly, and the apostle knew not whether he was in or out of the body; here the transportation is merely to another spot of earth, and was clearly "in the body." The same word is used of those who are alive at Christ's coming, who shall be "caught up together" with the dead in Christ "in the clouds." Here the transport will be of the glorified body, not to another spot of earth, but into the air. The more complete parallel, however, is the case of Ezekiel, of whom we read on several occasions that "the Spirit took him up," &c. And that the prophets underwent this kind of transport frequently may be gathered from the apprehensive words of Obadiah to Elijah (Kings xviii. 12), and from the petition respecting Elijah (2 Kings ii. 16). 3. There is something striking in this instantaneous confirmation of baptism which reminds us of the descent of the Spirit on our Lord at His own, and we may parallel with it the old legend that at St. Augustine's baptism, he and Ambrose, the administrator of it, were so filled with the Spirit that they burst forth alternately into the "Te Deum." Note—I. THE BODILY TRANSPORT OF THE EVANGELIST. 1. This was miraculous, but we may learn from it—(1) That there may be an operation of the Spirit on the body of man. "I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and *body* be preserved blameless." "He that raised up Christ shall also quicken your mortal body." We commonly regard the body as an encumbrance, and look to our disenthralment from it by death. But St. Paul, who felt painfully enough the infirmities of his body—"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened"—yet cautions us against supposing that he wished to lay down his body at death, "not for that we would be unclothed," &c. Nor while he felt the burden of the flesh did he ignore the possibility of the body's consecration, and the noble uses it may serve (Rom. xii. 1). Let us, then, conform our view to Paul's. Let us consecrate our eyes to God by mortifying their lusts, and by studying His words and works; our ears by turning them from flatteries and sinful enticements, and by opening them to His Word; our hands, by labouring in our vocation, and by giving alms; our feet, by making them carry us on errands of mercy, &c. (2) That the minister's ambition should be to lead men to Christ and leave them there. The Baptist pointed his disciples away from himself to the Lamb of God, and, without a single pang of envy, saw them following the Lamb, and thus fulfilled his own joy. So with Paul, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." But while the minister may not personally obtrude himself, it is quite possible to thrust his office into undue prominence. Christ did not send us to preach His ministry, but Himself. 2. Philip was found visiting the district afterwards traversed by Peter, thus again preparing the way for apostles. He had had a most interesting and refreshing conversation with the

eunuch, and it must have occurred to him that thus it might please God to open a door for the evangelisation of Ethiopia. But now he was snatched away and planted down in a town full of heathen associations. The lesson is, that spiritual refreshment must be succeeded by work. The Christian must not expect to spend his life in delicious feeling. II. THE MENTAL TRANSPORT OF THE CONVERT. The evangelist was carried away in one direction, the Ethiopian in another; which may be the force of "for" (A.V. "and"), or "for" may mean the convert's ecstasy was so great that he did not notice Philip's departure. This seems strange, and hardly the conduct due to so great a benefactor. But we must remember that the ordinary ministerial tie could scarcely exist between these two strangers who had only known each other for an hour. And then, again, a glorious field had been opened to the eunuch in the new light thrown upon the Scriptures. But like all such strong emotions, the joy would presently subside, when Philip's absence would be noted; and this, with his advent, so miraculous, would confirm the convert's faith, as assuring him of a personal interposition of God. This joy, however, is the great evidence of having received Christ. It was so with the Samaritans (ver. 8), and with the jailer. Have we this evidence? Do not let us deceive ourselves. In the sunshine of life it is possible to mistake happiness for joy. But happiness arises from circumstances, joy from an internal spring in God. (*Dean Goulburn.*) **He went on his way rejoicing.**—*The rejoicing life:*—I. IN WHAT IT CONSISTS. I have read of a man who, though possessing all the good things of this life, declared that he had never known one happy day. And here is one who "went on his way rejoicing." What makes the difference? The one knew and loved his Saviour and Friend, the other had not so learned Christ. Of all secrets the best is the secret of a happy life. Some people imagine that it consists in having plenty of money, but money cannot cure a sick man or sweeten a bad temper; some that it lies in having good health, but a healthy man is not happy if he is discontented; others that it lies in great positions, but we know that many of the greatest statesmen and rulers have been haunted by fears and anxieties; others again that it may be found in scenes of continual amusement, but they are mistaken. There was once a famous comic actor whose appearance always created laughter. Once he went to consult a doctor who did not know him, and told him of his low spirits and bad health. The doctor advised him to go and see the famous clown, and his patient answered, "Alas! I am that unhappy man." No, the secret of a happy life is to be found only in God. David, St. Paul, Mary, and others found it so. II. WHY IS IT THAT WE HAVE SO MANY GLOOMY CHRISTIANS? It is because they have not learned to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Friend. They believe in Him as some one else's Saviour perhaps, but have not realised Him as their own. This is not because they have too much religion, as the scoffers say, but because they have not enough. Be sure of this, that if your religion does not make you go on your way rejoicing, you have not learned it aright. But why are we who come to church not equally happy? The same seed is sown in all our hearts, but our hearts are not all the same. I have got a stony plot in my garden, and however much good seed I sow there, it won't grow. So it is with some of our hearts—they are not prepared, and the good seed falls as on a stone. Our first care, in learning the secret of happiness, should be to pray to God, the heavenly Husbandman, to prepare our hearts that we may receive the Word, and find the joy of that good part which no man taketh away from us. Sometimes people tell us that their food does them no good—they eat and drink, yet they waste away. Why? Because there is something wrong with their digestion. The food is good enough, but the mischief is in themselves. If religion does people no good, the fault is not in the religion, there is something wrong inside them, they cannot digest their spiritual food. They have lost a healthy taste for what is good; some sin is spoiling their taste for religion; they are like children whose appetite is clogged with unwholesome sweetmeats, so that they cannot enjoy honest food. You know that if you sow good seed in your field or garden, but suffer the thorns and thistles to grow, the good seed will have no chance. So it is with our lives—the good seed of God's Word cannot grow if we allow the thorns to choke it. And how abundant those thorns are! There is the thorn of pride. A young girl or lad is reproved for doing wrong. Instead of expressing sorrow, the one who is in fault stiffens their neck. Religion cannot benefit such an one. Then there is the thorn of bad temper. Some people hear the message of Divine love, and go home and straightway fly into a passion, and so the good is lost. III. HOW TO LEAD THE REJOICING LIFE. 1. Let us be sure that we are

on the right way; if our way be not a rejoicing way, it is not the right way; we must quit it, and start again. Have you ever seen a child which has lost its way, wandering along crying? Well, when you have put that child into the right road, all is changed. We who are not happy in our religion are the children who have lost their way. "Hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." 2. If we are once on the right way we cannot help rejoicing, because we have so much to be thankful for. The man who takes all the good things which God sends him, and never feels thankful, cannot expect to be happy. I have read of a man who was once telling his religious experiences at a public meeting; he dwelt upon his trial, his troubles, and the hardness of the road on which he had to travel. Presently another man spoke, and said, "I see our friend is living in Grumbling Street. I lived there myself once upon a time, and nothing prospered with me. I never had good health, the air was bad, the house was bad, the sun never seemed to shine there, and no birds ever sang in that street. I changed my residence. I moved into Thanksgiving Street, and now I have good health. The days are bright, the sun shines, the air is pure, and the birds sing oftener than anywhere else. I advise our friend to change his quarters, there is plenty of room in Thanksgiving Street." One great secret of happiness is to be thankful—"in everything give thanks." A woman who was too poor to cover her little boy with extra bedclothes to shelter him from the snow, which drifted through the broken wall, used to shelter him with boards. One night the little fellow asked, "Mother, what do the poor folks do who have no boards to cover their children with these cold nights?" That little child was thankful, even for a bit of board! But to be thankful we must be contented; that is another great secret of happiness. The poorest Christian has all that he needs, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." He has God for his Father, Jesus Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Guide, and heaven for his home. 3. You must love your brethren, and strive to help them along the road. If you would be happy yourselves, try to make others so, "learn the luxury of doing good." There is a beautiful story of a woman who had met with many trials and sorrows, yet was always cheerful, as though she were always in the sunshine. When she was dying, a stream of golden sunlight streamed across her bed, and a butterfly lighted on her breast. As she breathed her last the beautiful insect flew upward into the sunshine. So passes away a Christian soul into the light of perfect day, and goes on its way rejoicing. (*H. J. W. Buxton, M.A.*)

Divine working in the unions and separations of man:—I. DIVINITY BRINGING MEN TOGETHER. II. DIVINITY SEPARATING MEN FROM ONE ANOTHER. They had to part, but who parted them? "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more." Two thoughts are suggested. 1. Their attachment was already strong. Christ brings souls together, and centralises them in Himself. 2. The separation was only bodily. Souls thus united cannot be separated—no distance, no time, no force can do it. Indeed, bodily separation often deepens and intensifies soul attachments. III. DIVINITY UNITING AND SEPARATING MEN FOR THE HIGHEST ENDS. 1. The eunuch departs with a new joy. "He went on his way rejoicing." 2. Philip departs to prosecute his evangelic mission. "But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through he preached in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea." Thus the Divine Spirit that united and separated these men did it not only to bless them, but through them to bless undoubtedly countless throngs. Thus Divinity ever works for beneficent ends. (*Homilist.*)

Spiritual joy:—I. THE CAUSES OF THIS ETHIOPIAN'S JOY. 1. He had heard the best of all news. 2. He had seen the most glorious of all sights (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2, 5, 6). He saw the glory of the wisdom of God, of the power of God, of the holiness of God, of the justice of God, of the faithfulness of God, of the grace and mercy of God, manifested in the salvation of men; therefore "he went on his way rejoicing." 3. He had found the richest of all treasures. He could say, with an air of spiritual pleasure, as the two disciples did (John i. 41): I have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote; I have found riches of goodness, riches of grace, riches of glory, unsearchable riches, a kingdom that cannot be moved, a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 4. He had attained to the greatest of all honours. He was made a servant of the King of heaven; and some suppose that from this time henceforth he became a preacher of the gospel of His kingdom. Nay, "not only a servant, but a son; a son of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. If a son, then an heir; an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ." 5. He had got his title-deeds to heaven and eternal glory ratified and sealed. 6. He was blessed with all spiritual blessings, and had obtained the most glorious pros-

pects for time and for eternity. II. THE NATURE OF THIS JOY. 1. The Holy Spirit is the author of this joy. It is planted in the heart by the power of the Spirit, it is drawn forth into exercise by His Divine agency. 2. The knowledge of our interest in Christ and God as our reconciled God in Him is the source and spring of this joy. 3. All the tribulations to which the people of the Lord are subjected in this present state cannot extinguish this joy. 4. The Word and ordinances of God are the means of communicating joy to the souls of the people of the Lord, and they are the means of feeding this joy. 5. The Christian himself, when in the highest raptures of spiritual pleasures, cannot fully describe the excellence of this joy. 6. This joy is perfected at death, and prolonged to all the endless ages of eternity. III. INFERENCES. 1. Learn that pure and undefiled religion is not a melancholy thing. 2. That the Lord knoweth them that are His. 3. From this subject at large see the danger of returning home from the ordinances of God without your proper errand. 4. From this subject learn that men may wait long on God in the ordinances of His grace before they meet with Jesus. The man who gets a saving sight of Christ, though not till the last day of the feast, though not till the time of the preaching of the last sermon, the presenting of the last prayer, the singing of the last praise, the pronouncing of the blessing—nay, though not till he be on the road to his habitation, he will nevertheless go on his way rejoicing. 5. Is there a broken-hearted believer, under painful apprehension, that though he has been seeking Jesus, he has not found Him, and now saying, in the bitterness of his soul, I must go on my way sorrowing? Godly sorrow is not only consistent, but is inseparably connected with this joy in the Lord (Isa. xxix. 19). (*John Jardine.*) *Address after communion:*—Your condition is in several respects similar to that of this man. He had solemnly avouched the Lord to be his God: you, with equal solemnity, have this day done the same. He had just received one seal of the covenant of grace: you, this day, have received the other. He had a long journey before him: ye also are travellers through this wilderness, toward the promised land of rest. In these circumstances I take occasion to address you with a twofold exhortation. I. ARISE AND GO FORWARD. Many who mistake the nature of this ordinance are very anxious and busy for a few days in making a sort of formal preparation for it. Then their countenances are demure, and their conversation is precise, and their attendance upon the most protracted services of devotion indefatigable; and this they call religion, and trust in its merit to absolve them from all the dishonest, worldly, uncharitable, and ungodly practices of which they are guilty in the other periods of their time. But I trust that ye have not so learned Christ. Let your present attainments, instead of satisfying you, only incite your zeal and ambition to rise still higher in the excellencies of the Divine life. Do not flatter yourselves with the prospect of uninterrupted ease and unclouded enjoyment; but consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself when at any time ye are weary or faint in your minds, and study to know Him in the power of His resurrection, and in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. Exercise yourselves daily in mortifying the deeds of the body; in crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts; and in opposing your inclinations as often as they oppose your duty. Thus labouring to be examples of patience, meekness, contentment, and to come behind in no good thing to which you are called; go on in the strength of the Lord. II. REJOICE AS YOU GO ON. 1. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, then rejoice that ye have passed from death to life, and that there is now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. 2. Rejoice that you are advanced to the dearest and most intimate relation to all the persons of the ever-blessed Godhead. By your new birth ye are become the sons of God, members of Christ, and temples for the Holy Ghost. 3. Rejoice that God has made with you an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure. 4. Rejoice that the life which is begun in you is an immortal principle that can never be extinguished. 5. Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Even amidst our most sublime delights we are conscious of a certain blank in our feelings which reminds us that this is not our rest; but in the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore. (*R. Walker.*) *Christian joy:*—How is it that so few are like this eunuch is a very solemn and practical question. Some easily dispose of it. 1. They tell us, we are not now in days of persecution, and that when God tries His saints, He stands by His saints with peculiar consolations. No doubt He does so; but the Word of God that is written, not for that day, but for all days, sets before us this truth—that gladness of heart is the very element of our dispensation. 2. Neither do they dispose of this matter who account

for it by the sovereignty of God—alleging that God has so appointed it, and that therefore we must be contented without it. What God's secret purposes are we know not; but what His Word is, we know—"Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." Note, then—I. HOW THE SCRIPTURE DESCRIBES THE JOY THAT IS HERE SPOKEN OF. It is especially marked out as a "fruit of the Spirit." If you turn to Phil. i. it is described as the fruit of faith. "Your furtherance and joy of faith." In Heb. iii. rejoicing is said to be the fruit of hope. "The rejoicing of the hope"—that rejoicing that hope giveth. It is needful to lay some stress upon this description because some imagine of joy as if it were always some ecstatic state of mind. It is rather the highest exhibition of peace. High peace and low joy come so near to one another that it would be difficult to draw the line of distinction. But joy may still stop short of that which is ecstatic. A man may be "joyful in the Lord," peacefully and quietly. And numbers imagine, too, that one who "rejoices in the Lord" is one who always rejoices in Him; as if there were no ebb and flow. But if this is a holy joy, it must be affected by sin; and you may be assured that that man's joy that is not affected by sin never came from God. It is the joy of a sailor that has faith for his cable and hope for his anchor, but he is in the midst of the stormy ocean, and continually does he stand exposed to all the changes of the storm, tempest, and the treacherous calm. It is the joy of a traveller through a wilderness, which he finds to be a wilderness, for it would show a want of sensibility (and a want of holy sense too) not to feel it so; but a man may have the keenest sense of the desolation of the wilderness, and yet realise this joy in his soul. It is the joy of a penitent; one who knows what is the element of a broken heart and contrite spirit; for where faith is repentance is, and they that have "joy in believing" know it to be the joy of a penitent spirit. It is the joy of a returning prodigal, and they who know the most of what this holy joy is can understand the most of what that state of mind is—"Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." There are many things said concerning this joy which I cannot touch on. I would only say, "the stranger intermeddles not with it"; it is a joy that is "unspeakable, and full of glory." It is a union of opposites. The more a man rejoices after this sort, the lower he walks before God; the lower he walks before God, the more he ascends in holy desires after Him. II. THE INDUCEMENTS WHICH ARE GIVEN US TO GO ON OUR WAY REJOICING. 1. God's command. I do not object to its being called a high privilege; but the highest point of all is God's command, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Do not trifle with this Word of God. It may be one of the holiest precepts if the Holy Ghost should lay this upon your soul. And if it leads us into a serious inquiry wherefore it is not so, it shall be one of the most sanctifying inquiries both as it regards the causes that lead to it and the effects that follow from it. 2. The example of the family of God (1 Thess. i. 6; Phil. iii. 2). 3. The privileges of a believer. Does he look at God in the greatness of His perfections? All His perfections are the favour of God, the light of God's countenance, the strength of God's arm, the love of God's heart, the hearing of God's ear, and the omniscience of God's mind (to say nothing of His justice, His holiness, His faithfulness), all surround His child day by day, night by night, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Do we look at the covenant? All that I can want is there; the pardon of my sin, the acceptance of my person, the sanctification of my soul, the help to strengthen me in my hours of need. III. SOME OF THOSE HINDRANCES THAT PREVENT THE CHILD OF GOD FROM "GOING ON HIS WAY REJOICING." I do not speak now of those who have no right to joy. Ah! there are some whose joy I should be glad to see turned into heaviness. And there are numbers of God's children that cannot rejoice. They are living at an uncertainty with regard to their "election to God." But with regard to those who do know something of what joy is, let me give you a word of caution that you lose it not. Beware of—1. Unbelief. It is the great hindrance (Psa. lxxvii.). It led Asaph to write hard things, not only against himself, but against God. 2. Low views of Christ. In proportion as Christ sinks, everything sinks in you. 3. A hasty spirit in dark dispensations (Psa. cxvi.). 4. Worldly entanglements. 5. An uneven walk. Indulged sin, indulged neglect, the tampering with sin upon the conscience will quite prevent the joy of a man's soul. 6. All selfishness in religion. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *Christian joy*:—I. THE SOURCE. "He went on his way rejoicing," because of—1. The great discovery he had now made. He had found a Redeemer—Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write. (1) As a man awakened to a sense of spiritual danger, he must have felt the need of a Saviour prior to this. (2) As a proselyte to the Jewish faith, he must have been

expecting the "consolation of Israel"; all the faithful longed for the "coming one" at this time. And now he discovers the deliverer in Jesus of Nazareth. 2. The great change which he had now experienced. His mind was enlightened and his heart was changed. No thoughtful man could have reflected on what had now taken place within him without feeling grateful and happy. The joy of the bondman is great when delivered from the slavery of earth; but the joy of the emancipated is greater. We read of an ancient race who had been slaves for many years, and who were at last released; and when the great blessing of liberty was tasted by them they cried for several hours, "Liberty! liberty! liberty!" Some years ago we redeemed 800,000 of West Indian slaves, and we are told that when the night of their emancipation arrived the excitement among the poor slaves became most painful, and when the midnight hour came the shouts of gratitude and joy were utterly beyond description. The deliverance of the slave of sin is a greater source of joy still. 3. The clearer views he must have had of God's nature, and the character of His dispensations. He was a worshipper of the living God before, but his views must have been very contracted in regard to the object and nature of worship. He confined his ideas of worship to one place far distant from his own home. He must have thought, too, that it was by becoming a proselyte to Judaism only he could be saved, "salvation being of the Jews." But now his mind was expanded by Divine truth, and he has broader views of the Father of Spirits, and of the spirituality of his religion. The wilds of Gaza were now converted into a house of God, and the very gate of heaven. 4. The prospects of usefulness; the hope of doing good in his own country. Every good man is happy at this. Having tasted that the "Lord is gracious," he is ever anxious to tell others of "what God has done to his soul." When a true-hearted man has any good news to publish, he feels a burden resting on his soul and finds relief only when he accomplishes his mission. This is especially the feeling of a true Christian. Religion is expansive in its very nature. "She seeketh not her own." 5. The glorious scenes opening before him in eternity. His views of futurity must have been unsatisfactory before he became a hearer of Philip. The heathen had but faint notions of a future life, and even among the Jews the idea of immortality was not clearly understood. Many of the saints of the Old Testament were "all their life subject to bondage through fear of death." But now "life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel," and the Ethiopian was filled with the "hope of the glory of God." II. THE LESSONS. We find here—1. A noble example of regular attendance on the means of grace, and the study of the Holy Scriptures. 5. That true happiness is connected only with true piety. Happiness is not found in wealth, honour, or worldly pleasure. This distinguished man possessed all these before his conversion; but till now he was not happy. Nor does true happiness consist in mere outward forms of worship, or mere profession of religion. The eunuch was a convert to the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion; yet never before this do we find him "going on his way rejoicing" from the great feasts. His soul was not satisfied with shadows. Now he finds the reality, and he finds "joy and peace in believing." The path of duty is the path of safety, it is also the path of pleasure. 3. That the grand theme of the gospel ministry in all ages is Jesus and His Cross. (*H. P. Bowen.*) *Happiness and joy*:—Happiness, according to the original use of the term, is that which *happens*, or comes to one by a *hap; i.e.*, by an outward befalling, or favourable condition. Some good is conceived, out of the soul, which comes to it as a happy visitation, stirring in the receiver a pleasant excitement. It is what money yields or will buy —dress, equipage, fashion, luxuries of the table; or it is settlement in life—independence, love, applause, admiration, honour, glory, or the more conventional and public benefits of rank, political standing, victory, power. All these stir a delight in the soul which is not of the soul, or its qualities, but from without. Hence they are looked upon as happening to the soul, and in that sense create *happiness*. But joy differs from this as being of the soul itself, originating in its quality. And this appears in the original form of the word, which instead of suggesting a *hap*, literally denotes a leap or spring. The Latin has *exult*, which literally means a *leaping forth*. The radical idea, then, of joy is this—that the soul is in such order and beautiful harmony, has such springs of life opened in its own blessed virtues, that it pours forth a sovereignty from within. The motion is outward not toward, as we conceive it to be in happiness. It is not the bliss of condition, but of character. The soul has a light in its own luminous centre, where God is, which gilds the darkest nights of external adversity—a music

charming all the stormy discords of outward injury and pain into beats of rhythm and melodies of peace. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The joy of the first Christian experiences*:—What delight there is to us in first things! The first primrose pushing through the clods telling of winter gone, and summer on the way; the first view of the sea in its wondrous expanse of power; the first sense of peace that came through faith in Christ as a Saviour. A certain authoress who became very famous, speaks of the exquisite sense of delight she felt when she began her first literary work in the reviewing of books: the opening of the first parcel was as the "bursting of a new world" on her eyes. Dickens describes how he dropped his first published paper stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box up a dark court in Fleet Street, and his agitation when it appeared in all the glory of print—"on which occasion I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." (*H. O. Mackey.*)

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